

Void 551

Chapter 551 Escalating [5]

In one night, 37 Niflheim Executives died.

In the next, another 42.

These people weren't high enough on the ladder to be called the true upper echelon of Evotech yet, but they were just a step away. Their losses would genuinely harm the organization's workflow and power.

Fear spread rapidly. Especially in such precarious times, fear had an extreme hold on people's hearts. A rumor began circulating that the Death God of the Outer Wilds had arrived in Evotech to claim their lives.

The ordinary researchers with 3rd class strength went into hiding, taking their findings and holing themselves up away from the Death God. As for the military, they were oddly silent. It was as if the ongoing scenario had nothing to do with them.

And that was partially true. The military's mercenary-like attitude wasn't anything new. To Evotech, people like them naturally wouldn't be allowed too much internal power. There was a separate guard force responsible for internal threats, while the military handled external matters.

But this guard force was proving to be extremely pathetic. Every night, dozens of important personnel would die without leaving even bones behind, yet they weren't even able to find a trace of the killer.

To die meaninglessly without hope for vengeance, wasn't this just too cruel?

Evotech went into high alert for the second time in the past few months, but even this didn't help their situation. People continued to mysteriously die under the hands of the Death God.

The only choice left for Evotech, and the greater Niflheim, was to fight even more fiercely.

The small scuffles between warriors escalated rapidly, turning into battles where countless tens of people would die like ants. Both sides were already probing each other's military strength in preparation for war.

But even though Niflheim's situation looked bad, it wasn't nearly as poor as Asgard's.

From the beginning, Asgard wasn't a united organization. Those who submitted and those who resisted fiercely opposed each other at every turn, making the internal strife in Asgard a harrowing struggle that took the lives of many geniuses.

If there was one positive note, it was that Aishia was relocated before things went horribly. Even if she couldn't accomplish anything while she was in Evotech, she at least wouldn't be harmed. This was because the current Aishia simply didn't pose any threat to the organization.

...or so Odin thought as he sat on his throne.

Regarding the struggles of those under him, he no longer had the power to control the situation. He was nothing more than a puppet ruler at this point.

He was a 5th class being! A true Demigod! Yet, he was an indecisive person. While trying to please everyone, he always angered both sides. Until slowly, his power over Asgard was wrested away from him.

Of course, with his strength, it was impossible for them to take his power away completely. If Odin had any thought of resisting, even with Niflheim's help, removing him from the throne would cost them a great deal. But, as mentioned before, Odin was indecisive.

Even now, he sat in his empty throne room surrounded by reminders of the past's glory. He stared at these reminders and wished to return to these times, but he completely ignored the situation outside.

Regardless of how domineering the Empire was, a faulty Emperor would bring it to ruin in just a few years. This was precisely the situation with Asgard.

If this Emperor knew that his very own daughter was being controlled and used at every turn, how would he react?

Regardless, there was no turning away from the situation anymore. There was no hiding the rift in Asgard or attempting to pretend to be good anymore.

With war on the horizon, people would clearly delineate where they stood. And at that time, perhaps Asgard would lose a majority of its fighting power in a single swoop.

The days passed extremely slowly for those who experienced them, but in the grand scheme of things, were extremely slow. Especially in the starry sky where time seemed to stagnate, understanding its flow was nearly impossible.

Of course, this phenomenon was only present for those who didn't have any comprehension of the concept itself. In reality, the starry sky was the place where time's machinations were the most concentrated.

The thick Time Laws drifting through the chaotic space were the reason why there was never a time difference between the various worlds in the Human Domain and even the larger 9 Sectors combined. This time essence was so ethereal and all-powerful that it set the entire known universe in balance and let it flow together.

It was only natural for normal people to perceive this time chaotically, or not perceive it at all. It was simply too profound!

Currently, there were many people experiencing this feeling, but only one able to benefit from it.

These people stood on two starships that shuttled through the void, directly moving towards the unnamed world where Niflheim was located.

Naturally, these were the Celestial and Star Squadrons.

On the Celestial Squadron starship, a woman looked out the window at the chaotic space nervously.

"Scared? As long as we're inside, it can't hurt us, you know." The woman sitting next to her consoled gently.

The woman nodded, but her body wouldn't stop shivering. "Even then, this vast expanse is too domineering. Even when I was told of the universe's infinite vastness, I never imagined it could be so palpably true."

These two women possessed unparalleled and unique beauty that caused the flames of desire to rage in the hearts of many elites, but none dared to approach them. After all, their backing was none other than their Commander himself. These women were naturally Rose and Ruyue.

"Mm, it's still terrifying even though it's my second time doing something like this. The thought that if anything happened to this ship, we'd be thrust into that endlessness..." Rose's voice trailed off, causing Ruyue's shivers to become more pronounced.

Seeing this, Rose let out a fit of bell-like laughter, attracting the attention of many. "Relax, I was just kidding. Even if the ship is destroyed, isn't Senior Tian here? He's not only your husband's master, but yours as well. He'd never let you suffer under his watch."

Ruyue smiled with a bit more assurance after hearing these words. This journey had been a true eye-opener for her.

Damien had already told her multiple times about the grandness of space, but Ruyue didn't take him entirely seriously. After all, Damien practically idolized the starry sky.

It couldn't be helped. He was both a Celestial and a space-time practitioner. To him, the starry sky was heaven; he simply didn't understand or consider how terrifying it could be to others.

Nevertheless, the Celestial and Star Squadron ships continued to push forward rapidly. By now, it would only be around a week or two longer before they arrived in the new world.

But what waited for them was no longer the situation they desired. It was a chaotic place where their presence could lead to a war far outside of their caliber to participate in.

If Bai Xieren had the means, she would've directly told the two attack squads to turn back to prevent further aggregating the situation.

But that wasn't possible. Besides, Bai Xieren only had total control over the Moon Squadron. The true controlling force of the operation was...

Chapter 552 Escalating [6]

The Sun Squadron had been more than just quiet since the beginning of the operation, it was more like their presence vanished entirely.

Shangguan Yu had taken his squad directly to Asgard and integrated with them when the mission began, but of course, back then he didn't know the situation in Asgard at all.

With his mind, he was naturally able to deduce it rapidly after seeing it for himself, but knowing something and truly acting upon it were two different things.

As Shangguan Yu was organizing his forces to begin stabilizing and conquering Asgard, he was met with fierce opposition.

And not just any opposition.

He met the first Demigod of Asgard a month after arriving in the world, and though it wasn't Odin, this person was a powerhouse in his own right.

When he understood what Shangguan Yu was attempting, he acted without care for face and directly threw him and his people into a dungeon thousands of feet below Asgard's main headquarters.

This is where they'd stayed even until now, when the situation was on the verge of exploding.

Although it was called a dungeon, the treatment wasn't cruel at all. Every squad member would receive three meals per day, had a soft bed to sleep on, many recreational centers to visit, and even a personal servant to tend to their needs. If anything, this place was a 7-star resort.

But this was only on the surface. Regardless of how they were treated, they were still being forced away from the surface. Their position was taken away from them entirely.

For the first few days, some held hope that more noble souls would rescue them from confinement, but that hope faded away long ago.

Because it was a Demigod who acted.

Even if there was a Demigod willing to aid them, he wouldn't be able to do so unless he wanted to blow the powder keg that was Asgard.

"Haa..." Shangguan Yu sighed to himself. In his hand, he twirled a strange item that looked like a golden metal pencil without an edge.

'Things are getting chaotic. I wonder if Bai Xieren will be able to take care of things without my guidance?'

His sleek blonde hair already fell to the ground and then some. He got bored and decided to grow it out as a more fun measure of telling the time.

According to the strand length, it should almost be time for the main show to begin. Yet, he wasn't being given the opportunity to participate.

'And I thought I'd finally get to see something fun. With how the old man has been going on about seed this, seed that, I wanted to be there when it blooms...'

Shangguan Yu sighed once more and put down the small golden object in his hand. His pupils dilated as his gaze extended to its limit.

'At least they're kind enough to let me watch them crumble from the inside. If you were going to do it even without my help, then was there a need to ever lock me up in the first place.'

A small grin spread on his face. 'But this is fine too. I quite like this new feeling of being a spectator. Besides, it's not like my harvests were small.'

The golden pencil on the floor began rapidly spinning like a drill, drilling a hole into the dungeon floor below. As Shangguan Yu controlled this action, the light of curiosity in his eyes became more and more pronounced.

'How can such an inconceivable thing be possible? How could such a secret remain hidden for eons? Hahaha, how interesting!'

Shangguan Yu soon became enamored with his task once more. Since being thrown into this dungeon, he'd rarely ever left his room.

The elites outside were slowly becoming acclimated to their new lifestyles, completely forgetting about the original mission.

But this wasn't some kind of conditioning done by Asgard, it was entirely by the fault of those elites.

They had witnessed a Demigod casually manhandle them as he pleased, and this Demigod wasn't even Odin! What did that mean? It meant there was an unknown number of Demigods in this world that would actively be involved in the coming struggle!

With this kind of information, it was impossible not to get demotivated.

But things wouldn't always go how one wished. On one fateful day, the massive cellar-like door of the dungeon was blasted open and sent flying across the room.

Through the entrance walked a bumbling old man who looked like a homeless beggar. A large gourd was present in his hand, the stench of the liquor within alone causing many elites to become intoxicated.

"Yo~ little brat YuYu! Where are you?!"

His voice reverberated through the dungeon. If it wasn't for his fear of breaking into the dungeon, perhaps nobody would've taken this old drunk seriously.

"YuYu~! YuYu~! Come out for this father!"

The old man kept yelling, confusing the elites. Just who was the YuYu he was looking for, and why would they be in a place like this?

At this time, a lone door near the back of the area slowly opened. Shangguan Yu walked out, his face pale as paper.

The elites suddenly had a thought. YuYu...couldn't have been...?

"Ah! YuYu, come give this grandfather a hug! How long has it been since we've seen each other, yet the first thing you call me for is my power? You brat, you've really become arrogant, huh!"

The old man slapped Shangguan Yu on the shoulder heavily and pulled him into a hug. Seeing this, the elites were once again flabbergasted.

Shangguan Yu was actually letting this old man hug him? Wait, how did the old man get over there?

It had to be known, there were many hundreds of meters between the two just a second ago, but the old man had traversed that distance so rapidly that the elites didn't even notice he moved!

Gasp!

"Is he...the Demigod senior who will be joining us?" One curious Elite muttered.

Hearing this, the rest also widened their eyes in realization. Right, the Cloud Plane also had a Demigod! It was just that the sheer number of Demigods in Asgard made it hard for them to trust the might of one man.

But Shangguan Yu was different. Even though he looked angry on the surface, he was elated to see his grandfather here.

Although they referred to each other as grandfather and grandson, they were actually separated by many generations. Shangguan Yu was simply a descendant of his that gained the qualifications to personally meet him. And after they met the first time, they hit it off.

"Geezer, get the hell off me. We have work to do." Shangguan Yu muttered.

"Hah? Brat, don't be so cheeky. Actually, you've been locked up so you don't know. There isn't much left to do besides sit back and enjoy the show."

"Hm?" Shangguan Yu's brow raised curiously. "It hasn't been that many months, are you saying the situation has been fully saturated?"

The old man grinned. "Saturated or not, who cares? Come, let's go watch the good show. If something of note happens, we may even have a chance to intervene."

The old man grabbed Shangguan Yu without another word and disappeared, leaving the rest of the elites behind in the dungeon.

They looked at each other still shocked about the preceding events, but in the end, even though the dungeon door was clearly open, none of them decided to leave.

They had comfort and safety down here, and according to the old man's words, things were far more chaotic on the surface.

And if it came to a choice between their lives and their duty, none of them would hesitate to pick the former.

But their presence didn't matter at all.

From the starry sky, two starships and a lone angel were infinitely close to arriving.

From Niflheim and Asgard, 4th class forces were being moved without reservation. Perhaps even Demigods would be allowed on the battlefield soon.

From Shadow Garden and the Moon Squadron, forces unceasingly to further the ongoing conflict and blow it out of proportion.

And from Avalon, a pulsating light covered the entire city and tinted it red. It seemed as if a massive metamorphosis was on the verge of happening.

In this unnamed world, fate seemed to be especially playful. With all the main players finally congregating where they needed to be, it was almost time for the game to begin.

Chapter 553 Fate [1]

BOOM!

A massive explosion rang out, sending a shockwave dozens of kilometers in every direction. A large facility was burnt to the ground in seconds.

Cough! Cough!

A man covered in dust emerged from the rubble, his eyes burning with hatred.

"You...!" He pushed the word out of his mouth along with a mouthful of blood as he looked at the group of men in the sky.

"Are you really doing this?! Do you actually wish to drop all pretenses and start a war?!" The man screamed.

There had already been many small and large scuffles that led hundreds and thousands of people to their deaths, but these people were insignificant in the grand scheme of things. Until now, neither party had moved in a way to damage the other party's benefits.

But that was merely until now.

The large facility that was currently burning to the ground was one of Asgard's most important facilities. It was located in Hub City Primus, one of the few territories controlled by Asgard, and dealt mainly with the production of Nodal Weaponry.

With the way the unnamed world's Mana Utilization method worked, Nodal Weaponry facilities were every organization's lifeblood. If the production of these weapons was halted, it'd heavily impact the combat power their armies could show.

And although this facility was just one of many, it was also one of the largest. Asgard would take a massive blow from this raid.

"Target Eliminated. Erasing Evidence."

A cold mechanical voice left the man at the forefront of the attack. His arm lifted, a beam of condensed mana shooting out of his palm towards the man who screamed.

"Ahhhh!"

With a final shout of unwillingness, the man fell to the ground with a massive hole in his chest, dead.

"Searching for signs of life..."

"Search completed. Task completed. Returning to designated position."

When the mechanical voice determined that there were no other survivors, it led the rest of its team back to the rendezvous point that was set beforehand. Here, an abyssal figure cloaked in shadows was waiting for them.

"Jejeje! The first test went far better than I hoped! It looks like this method will be viable!"

The abyssal figure put his hand on the being in front of him, causing a wisp of mana to exit its body. Soon, he did the same for all the rest.

Right, these beings were not human at all. They are Puppet Mechs that had been enhanced and mass-produced by Niflheim after acquiring Aishia's data!

This was their first field test, and it was a major one at that. But now that they'd come back successful, there was nothing more to say. Niflheim had come into possession of a massive number of disposable troops through this invention, and now, they could start a war without worries.

"Jejeje! I wonder how that little girl will react when she learns of this. Ahh, I truly wish to see that expression."

With an eerie chuckle, the abyssal figure swept his arm and collected the Puppet Mechs into his spatial ring, returning to Niflheim thereafter.

News of the attack spread rapidly. The fact that Niflheim had done it was obvious, as if they were proudly boasting of their achievement.

Asgard was hit hard on the first day, losing any chance of initiative they had. They were forced into a passive position where they could only receive a beating.

And at this point, even the pro-Niflheim faction was beginning to have doubts. Even if they supported Niflheim, wouldn't they be killed along with everyone else if Asgard was destroyed? If Niflheim planned to shelter them, why hadn't they done so already?

With every day, news of another attack was spread, but Asgard wasn't able to stop it at all. The attack patterns were simply too random, and they didn't have enough 4th class existences or space to spread their forces so thinly.

As these attacks continued, Asgard slowly united. Not by choice, but by necessity. They slowly realized that every single one of them would die if they didn't fight back, so their only option was to go fully offensive without care for losses until they evened things out.

And that was exactly what happened.

Asgard's forces began desperately attacking the 12 Hub Cities under Niflheim's control. If Asgard's 3 Hub Cities and the completely neutral Avalon were removed, these were all that remained.

These attacks were incredibly fierce. It wasn't just the experts panicking, but the common soldiers too. They all desperately fought for a chance to keep their lives.

And like this, the Hub Cities Eminence, Protos, and Weine were destroyed one after another.

Long Chen sat in his office with his head in his hands. The constant reports that kept coming in were like buckets of oil being poured onto a fire that was already raging across the world. It was like every single chaotic variable exploded at once, tipping the precarious balance that had been kept for many years beforehand.

The only safe haven remaining in the world was Avalon. Nobody dared to touch this city, as even the city itself was a weapon that could be used to slaughter 4th classes like chickens. The craftsmen of Avalon would work for anyone as long as they provided materials and money, so it was integral to never offend them.

"Haa, when things reach this point, you just have to disappear. Isn't this the part where you jump in like a badass and fix everything?" Long Chen inadvertently muttered.

He'd been managing things alone without Damien's help for many months already, and he found that it wasn't fun at all. He didn't understand how Damien could move so confidently and recklessly while still achieving the result he desired.

"At this rate, I won't be able to do anything besides continue my assassination missions, but that isn't saving anyone!"

His hand banged against the desk in frustration. The situation had developed to the point of no return in less than a week. This just went to show how bad things already were under the surface. With this kind of development speed, Long Chen wasn't given any time to think.

Long Chen's eyes hardened. He couldn't believe he actually ended up thinking about Damien at this critical juncture. He didn't realize just how much he idolized the man's carefree persona until this moment of crisis.

But if that was what he idolized, then why was he acting in a way opposite of it?

Long Chen's mind cleared as if he gained enlightenment. "Right, I was never born to be a general who hides behind his soldiers. I was born to be on the frontlines slaughtering enemies! Instead of being holed up here, I should fight!"

He wasn't going to fight for Niflheim or Evotech. Now that they'd reached this stage, all pretenses were being dropped.

Long Chen stood up, draping himself in battle armor and grabbing the Empyrean Dragon Sword. As he marched out of his office, each of his steps carried an untold momentum that couldn't be stopped.

"Line up! Get ready! From today onward, we fight! I don't care who you kill or what you kill for, we are not picking sides in this conflict! Kill, kill, and kill until you can't kill anymore! This is my only order!"

Hundreds and thousands of troops gathered under his command. Their bloodlust combined into a frightening momentum that almost directly crushed the barracks.

Long Chen looked at these men with a profound expression in his eyes. As they looked back at him, he could see the trust they had in him. If he asked them to die, they'd do so without hesitation.

Long Chen grinned beside himself. He couldn't help but be proud of what he'd achieved these past few months.

And in order to retain everything he cared and stood for...

"We march!"

With his command, bloodlust filled the heavens. An earth-shaking roar was formed from the combined voices of these thousands of troops.

In this conflict that had now escalated to the pinnacle, a new force would soon enter the fray.

Chapter 554 Fate [2]

Until this point, both sides had only been sending out 3rd class soldiers and the occasional 4th class to manage them. Even Niflheim's mass-produced Puppet Mechs couldn't surpass the barrier of 4th class strength.

This was the result of choosing quantity over quality.

When Long Chen and his private militia entered the fray, things became even more chaotic. Asgard and Niflheim weren't able to just focus on each other anymore, they had to be wary of countless others who wanted to reap benefits from their conflict.

But Long Chen's group was different from those vultures. Their advent onto the battlefield earned them the nickname of "Bloody Cavalry," depicting how they charged in without fear and caused a river of blood to flow under their feet.

The Bloody Cavalry was one of the most difficult threats to deal with, because they weren't interested in anything other than killing. Whenever battle broke out in important capture points, they'd always appear and ruin the flow, taking the battlefield as their own stage.

And due to their interference, the battlefield itself slowly moved away from the Hub Cities and territories of the two organizations. Because this was the only way the Bloody Cavalry would lessen their intervention.

Long Chen grinned as he watched this change take place in real-time. From the beginning, his goal wasn't to kill.

He wanted to save people.

The innocents residing in these Hub Cities unaware of the world's undercurrents, he didn't want to see them harmed as collateral damage. This was why the Bloody Cavalry only acted when important capture points or facilities within Hub Cities were involved.

And their reputation slowly grew to a point where it preceded them. The thick bloodlust that signified their arrival would immediately cause battles to end and relocate, achieving the purpose Long Chen aimed for all along.

While Long Chen led the Bloody Cavalry from its head, Athan Strohm acted as their tail, staying behind the desk and taking care of the troublesome matters. The two together formed a perfect combination.

As for Long Chen, he was ecstatic. If this was how Damien felt whenever he acted, it was no wonder he became an arrogant asshole. Living like this was simply too good!

"Hahaha! Good job, boys!" Long Chen laughed raucously as he raised his mug of liquor into the air. "We've become heroes of our generation, but this isn't our end! By the end of this war, the entire universe will know our names!"

""OOOOOOOOOH!""

The Bloody Cavalry was a brotherhood, and they celebrated like one as well. Now that their main goal of diverting the battlefield had been achieved, they had the capital to celebrate for a bit.

But not everyone was as jovial as them.

Within Evotech Headquarters, a woman stoically stared at the screen in front of her. On it was a status report of the happenings in Avalon.

'So that bastard actually managed to absorb it. I don't know if I should praise him or curse him.' Lynn Carter thought to herself.

She had originally put the World Core Fusion Reactor up as bait to lure Damien into her plans, but who knew the situation would erupt without her help? Ironically, things had developed to the point where it'd actually benefit her more if Damien became more powerful, making her loss hurt far less than it would have.

But as she looked at the screen, a frown still colored her face. 'He won't wake up in time to guide the conflict, and his friend is too justice-minded to be of any help. Is it finally time to begin?'

Lynn hesitated for a second. After building strength for so many years, it almost felt like a waste to use it all. But then again, what else was the strength she built for if not this very moment?

The hesitation coloring her face faded, replaced by a cold determination. Without suspense, she took out a communication device.

"Victor, proceed with the plan. Let everything loose and stir things up. Make it so that even the 4th-class experts are unable to persist. Only at that point will things be saturated enough for us to usurp everything."

"...I understand, Master." A hoarse voice responded to her cold command. This was the same voice of the rancid man Damien had seen when he first entered Lynn's workshop.

The rancid man, Victor, put down his communicator and sighed. "Haa, it's such a shame. A force like this would normally be enough to conquer an entire world, but this world is just too convoluted. Just how many years of hard work will be destroyed in the coming days?"

Even while complaining, his hands danced along a holographic keyboard. Parts of his body turned into smoke and drifted into different parts of the room, activating certain mechanisms that had never seen the light of day.

"I feel bad for whoever ends up dealing with all this shit, but I'm also incomparably excited. Just how will things develop? And how will they change after that man finally wakes up? Hahaha, the master is always up to something interesting!"

Victor pushed down on the final command he needed. Now that everything was properly loaded, it was time for Avalon to show its strength.

Deep below Victor's location, Damien's body lay curled up in a fetal position submerged in a vat of red liquid. This was the same position he'd maintained for almost an entire month at this point.

Within his mind, countless scenes kept flashing by. The creation and destruction of stars, the foundational workings of the universe, these esoteric concepts flooded his brain until he couldn't think of anything besides them anymore.

At the same time, he watched supernovas and black hole formations, understanding the relations between stars and celestial bodies. Slowly but surely, something within him was awakening.

And at the same time, the three projections in his spiritual world that represented his three bound worlds were inching closer and closer to each other, influenced by the power of the mysterious red liquid around Damien's body.

The World Laws stirred in excitement. Thunder clouds formed in the roof of the massive cave, shrouding the entire place in shadow and sparks of lighting.

Damien's consciousness jolted awake. "No!" He exclaimed inwardly. Now that he had control over his body again, he rapidly suppressed his mana, coating his body in a cocoon of Void Essence.

And when he was finally hidden away from the world, the thunderclouds and worldly phenomena began to disperse as well.

Within the cocoon, Damien sighed a breath of relief. 'Hah, to think I almost crossed into 4th class on accident! It seems the comprehension stemming from this mysterious treasure-machine hybrid was enough to finally push me over the edge and saturate my boundary...but it isn't time yet. I can't promote until I've finished absorbing the World Core Fusion Reactor, or the consequences will be disastrous.'

Because his realm had been saturated, it could be said that Damien was at the perfect state to attack 4th class, but reality was different.

As Damien submerged himself into the World Core Fusion Reactor's illusory world and experienced the visions it showed him, his World Cores had already begun the process of fusion. If he stopped now before finishing this process and wantonly promoted, he'd suffer a heavy injury from the backlash.

'It shouldn't be long. Another week at least, a month at most. Within that time, the Celestial and Star Squadrons should arrive and the war should begin. I need to hurry.'

Damien returned himself to the Fusion Reactor's illusory world, sinking into the visions of universal truth once more.

Only, he never would've expected that, unlike what he assumed, the war had already begun, and it was blazing with fervor more intense than the sun itself!

Chapter 555 Fate [3]

Currently, the Outer Wilds were a massive battleground. It wasn't just one or two battles that were taking place within the vast expanse of corrosion; practically the entire plains were covered in the flames of war.

On one of these battlefields particularly close to Avalon, two separate fronts were being occupied. On the ground, leagues of 3rd class existences fought to the last breath like common soldiers. Their numbers blotted out the earth, painting a sea of black and red.

In the sky, dozens of 4th class beings were engaging in their own battle. Now that war had completely broken out, these forces were not being spared any longer. And they were fighting with everything they had.

This massive battle created a swirl of rampant mana and blood that enveloped the area outside of Avalon.

"Haa! Your vile kind will not triumph over us!" A man dressed in all white yelled as he brought his greatsword down. A large sword projection made of light followed its path, crushing down on his opponent.

"Hahaha! Vile?! You call us who just want to survive vile?!" The man across from him was dressed in dark green clothing and had a particularly ugly face. It was clear he'd been experimented on at least a few times while in Niflheim.

The two fighters' mana clashed, causing a wolf explosion that consumed them both. But even within these chaotic shockwaves, they continued fighting. Greatsword against spear, their every collision shattered space, creating dangerous pockets in which if they ever accidentally entered, they'd die.

The clash between these two wasn't even the greatest among the 4th classes on the battlefield. Across from them, two massive men stood facing each other, their fists connecting hundreds of times every second.

Just like everyone else, they caused massive destruction as they fought, however, there was a stark difference. That was, these two men only used physical strength and mana reinforcement to battle.

Although it was strange to do so in a life-or-death confrontation, nobody questioned their actions. After all, if those two began to utilize their Nodal Weaponry and push their mana externally, everyone around them would die without fail.

This was because they were both peak 4th class existences just a single step away from Divinity!

The battle continued to rage on for many minutes, but before anything even close to a proper conclusion could be reached, the air began to tremble.

The ground followed soon after. A terrific earthquake shook the earth, creating chaos on the battlefield taking place there. Even the 4th classes in the sky weren't safe from these wild shockwaves.

The battle inadvertently paused as everyone questioned the ongoing situation. Their eyes wandered and their awarenesses spread, but to no avail.

"What's going on?!"

"Are we being sieged?!"

"Shit! It's a trap! Everyone run!"

It was unknown who said it, but after it was said, chaos ensued. Everyone in the vicinity rushed to escape, trampling each other as they did so.

Unfortunately, there wasn't a single place for them to go.

Far in the distance, the earth pulsed around a certain Hub City. The entirety of Avalon buzzed as if the city had a life of its own.

As the oscillations continued, a massive moat began to form around Avalon, disconnecting it from the surrounding land.

From the start, Avalon was different from the other Hub Cities. Because under Lynn's command and careful years of hard work, the entire city had been turned into a siege weapon.

RUMBLE!

Avalon dislodged from the ground, finally letting the earthquakes end. It became a floating island that slowly ascended into the sky.

And not long after, it began to move.

With its sheer size, Avalon wasn't a target that could be easily missed. From the battlefield many kilometers away, countless practitioners witnessed its ascent.

"That is...!"

"Oh my god..."

"We're done for..."

The exclamations became muted, and the chaos came to a halt. With such a striking visual impact, the fighting spirit of these weaker 3rd class fighters had been directly crushed.

But was Lynn a kind person?

Within Avalon's main control room, the same room he always occupied, Victor watched the proceedings outside through the countless camera devices placed around Avalon's perimeter.

When he saw the battlefield, there was only one order he needed to give.

"Kill."

Whether it be Niflheim or Asgard, they were all the Master's enemies. This made things far easier for him.

Avalon listened to his command. Massive cannons spanning tens of feet in length surfaced on the city, perimeter. An even larger number of smaller weaponry units did the same.

And then, they fired.

DU! DU! DU! DU! DU!

The sound was deafening. These dozens of cannons all gathered and compressed different kinds of elemental mana, forming an array of blasts that razed everything in their path.

When they reached the battlefield in a mere instant, a heaven-shaking explosion rang out. All the 3rd classes immediately perished in the blast.

As for the 4th classes...

"Fuck!"

The white-robed man cursed while coughing out a mouthful of blood. His body was hit by the explosion's shockwave, blasting him even closer to Avalon's position. He was incredibly unlucky!

As he saw the siege city preparing to fire again, panic washed over his face. He knew that in his current condition, he didn't have enough mana to escape. Hell, none of them did.

But if he was going to die...

His eyes landed on the green-clothed man he'd been fighting before. His body moved rapidly, arriving at the man's position in an instant.

"If I'm dying, I'll at least do it after I kill you! Hahahaha!"

He laughed maddeningly, burning his blood vitality in a final attempt to kill his enemy. His body turned into a beacon of holy light that was even able to cleanse a small portion of the corruption in the atmosphere.

"You...!"

The green-robed man called out in panic. He rapidly revolved his mana and attempted to form a sturdy barrier, but how could he have that sort of time?

The white-robed man's light beam fell onto his body, cleaving him directly in half. And only a second later, Avalon let off its second volley.

The white-robed man grinned without fear. "To eliminate one more enemy before I go, and fight until the bitter end!"

He charged fearlessly into the coming barrage, his sword in hand. As the light of explosion swallowed him whole, nobody could bring themselves to scorn him.

He'd died better than the rest of them at least.

That was their final thought before the explosion swallowed them as well. Coupled with the precision weapons that were firing at the same time, this blast guaranteed their deaths.

When the battlefield cleared with not even a single bone remaining, Avalon stopped firing. Victor's lips curved into a bright smile.

"On to the next location."

As he hummed happily, the siege city drifted away, ready to peruse the Outer Wilds and kill anyone it saw.

Of course, there were two forces safe from this death sentence. First was Shadow Garden, which Lynn was a part of, and second was the Cloud Plane's forces, which Damien was a part of.

Luckily, these two forces were quite easy to differentiate from Asgard and Niflheim, so there was no need to worry about friendly fire.

Chapter 556 Fate [4]

"What is this?"

Deep in the starry sky, a lone angel looked down upon an unnamed world. His eyes clearly reflected his shock as he did so.

After all, he didn't expect that when he finally arrived in the Human Domain, the scene he would see was war.

Actually, he'd been in the Human Domain for quite some time, but he wasn't able to find anything substantial. Only when he finally checked the flow of fate did he find that the fate of this sector was concentrated on a single world at the moment.

As for how he did so, naturally, it was due to his status as a High Angel. Angels were beings who already had heavy ties to Fate and Karma. Once they reached a high enough boundary, it was even possible for them to perceive and read it.

Though, they couldn't do so as intrinsically as Rose could with her Eyes of Destiny.

Nevertheless, when Parsiel finally arrived at this planet, he found a war. Combined with the fact that the sector's fate was being attracted to this world, it meant this war was incredibly important for the sector's future.

'Don't tell me this is...'

Parsiel was a smart man. It was the reason why he was the only angel who realized the Human Domain's importance. It didn't take long for him to deduce the world's identity.

"Just like your Fallen Heaven and our Demon Abyss, this must be the Infected Source World of their Sector. Parsiel, my good friend, why didn't you tell me you were going to explore something so fun?"

A figure materialized next to the High Angel. This was none other than Demon Emperor Lucifer, the ruler of Sector 2.

"Lucifer, to think you followed me all the way here. But why are you acting so high and mighty? Can't you sense the sheer number of Divinities in that world?" Parsiel asked without any surprise at the sudden visitor. Even if Lucifer was powerful, he wasn't powerful enough to hide from him.

Lucifer shrugged in response. "How could I not be aware? However, doesn't their presence just validate your theories? They are not involved with us, nor are we involved with them. I am content with sitting on the sidelines and enjoying the show."

Parsiel shook his head and returned his attention to the unnamed world. From his vantage point, he could even see the two Cloud Plane starships that had just landed on the planet moments prior.

"If I'm reading the flow correctly, the final participating force has just arrived. Now all that is left to see is whether or not they can truly uproot this Infected Source World. If they can manage it, they'll have accomplished something unimaginable."

There was an Infected Source World in every Sector, not just the Human Domain. However, these Infected Source Worlds were far more terrifying than the unnamed world where Niflheim resided.

These worlds were Nox-infested. There wasn't a single being within that wasn't enslaved by the foreign race. And on those worlds, there would be thousands of 4th class Nox and dozens of Demigods. These worlds truly had the strength to contend with the entire Sectors they occupied.

Infected Source Worlds were ticking time bombs where the Nox multiplied and grew in power. It was every sector's wish to destroy them.

But they were too powerful. When there were Nox pressuring them from outside and within, no sector could afford a full-on war with the Infected Source Worlds.

But the Human Domain was different. Not only were they largely cut off from the wider universe, but they had also been struck incredibly hard in the previous war.

There was only a single Nox Demigod and many Corrupted Demigods. With the number of Demigods on the allied side, destroying them wouldn't be a problem.

This was an advantage only the Human Domain possessed, and it was an advantage they thoroughly earned for themselves.

After all, the Human Domain's current situation was only such because of how fiercely its precious generation had fought.

Parsiel shook his head in wonder. "Now that this final force has arrived, it shouldn't take longer than another month for the situation to reach its climax. Let us stay and watch. I really am curious about what these humans can achieve."

With that, Parsiel and Lucifer entered a small personal space vessel where they'd spend their time for the next few weeks.

They would thoroughly enjoy this show while also evaluating the Human Domain. If they could meet the expectations that'd been set, it could only mean good things for their future.

The Celestial and Star Squadrons landed on the unnamed world precisely on the 3rd day of the 6th month. They were perfectly on schedule.

But the scene that greeted them was chaos.

After Bai Xieren explained the chain of events that led to this outcome, Tian Yang immediately sent his troops out.

They were going straight to war!

The Celestial and Star squadrons rapidly made their way to Hub City Evalion. Once they reached it, Tian Yang stared into the earth seriously.

Evotech was Niflheim's front on this unnamed world, and Evalion was its concealment formation. The true layer of the Nox known as Niflheim was present directly underneath this Hub City.

'Little Bai should start attacking that Asgard soon enough. I guess we should get working too. Still, I wonder where that brat is?'

Tian Yang glanced at the two women behind him as he thought so. This brat was truly unable to appreciate what he had. Shaking off his unnecessary thoughts, Tian Yang raised his arm into the air.

"We are cultivators who challenge the Heavens themselves! When a mere group of insects dares to steal from us, what should we do?!" He roared. His mana washed over the troops standing behind them, causing their blood to boil.

They stood as one and chanted with fervor in their eyes.

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

"Good!" Tian Yang exclaimed. "If you're itching to kill so much, then go! Charge!"

He brought his hand down. Space within thousands of kilometers compressed and bore down on Evalion heavily. The city was already situated over a gaping abyss, so when such an immense amount of pressure was forced onto it...

VOOM!

The city imploded in on itself. The abyss below was revealed. Following Tian Yang's command, the Celestial and Star Squadrons swarmed into the darkness.

Sounds of battle rang out soon after, coupled with pitiful screams and horrific inhuman shrieks.

Tian Yang watched casually from the sky, but his awareness was actually spread completely.

'The underground is just where the unintelligent 3rd class and below Nox stay. That isn't even mosquito meat. When is my premium steak going to show up?'

Tian Yang was a patient man. He waited nicely for many minutes before the rushing sounds of wind invaded his ears.

"Finally!" He exclaimed in excitement. How many years had it been since he found a good battlefield like this one? With all this chaos came a great deal of fun!

He would thoroughly play with these little early and mid-level 4th-class beings as much as he wanted.

And perhaps...

'Perhaps I'll kill a Demigod while I'm at it.'

Tian Yang grinned at his own exceedingly arrogant thoughts.

Right, if a Demigod came, things would be even more fun.

Chapter 557 Fate [5]

A woman rushed through the halls of a large silver castle that didn't quite match the architectural style of the buildings around it, her eyes shining with worry.

This woman was naturally Aishia Grey, and the castle she was in was none other than Asgard's main headquarters.

The war had escalated far past the level she expected it to. And the Cloud Plane's forces were moving far differently than they were supposed to.

It'd already been a few weeks since they arrived, and they'd been barraging Niflheim nonstop ever since that day. The Celestial Squadron stayed in the underground and continuously killed 3rd class Nox and below while the Star Squadron launched a direct assault on Evotech.

While Niflheim was preoccupied with these two forces, she assumed Asgard would receive a moment of respite to recover, but even this was untrue!

The second Niflheim's attention was turned away, Asgard began facing an assault from both inside and out, and the ones heading this assault were Bai Xieren's Moon Squadron and a few remnants of Shangguan Ty's Sun Squadron!

Aishia rushed out of Evotech the second she received the news. She didn't even care if her status as a spy was exposed because of her actions. She was already learning of the situation many weeks late, so how could she sit still?

When she finally made her way to Asgard, she found that the atmosphere was extremely desolate. The soldiers didn't seem to have an ounce of morale to defend their land.

But she couldn't understand why.

And so, she directly ran to the main palace and rushed to the throne room, wanting to meet with Odin right away.

Her hazy purple eyes were filled with concern as she made it to the door, but before she could push it open, she heard voices coming from the other side.

"...supposed to do?! We can't handle an assault like this any longer!" A woman yelled. Aishia immediately recognized her. She was the First Division Captain Loretta Stone, a peak 4th class existence and an integral figure in the army.

As Aishia pressed her ear against the door and continued listening, the sounds inside were amplified, allowing her to hear more clearly.

"My Liege, what Captain Stone says is true. With the outsiders and the Just Faction attacking at the same time, we're slowly losing control over everything. It isn't just the military, but many assorted divisions that have already been swayed. If we continue with this inaction any longer, we will lose all relevance!" Another man followed. He was yet another important member of the army like Loretta Grey.

"Loretta, Alec, I understand your concern, however, there is nothing I can do." A weary voice answered them.

Hearing it, Aishia's heart clenched. She hated hearing such pain and helplessness in Odin's voice. However, it didn't take long for her heart to go cold.

It was unknown why Odin didn't notice her presence. Perhaps he was too stressed, or perhaps he knew she was there but no longer had the mind to care. He spoke freely as if nothing in the world could stop him.

"Niflheim has already cut off any source of aid. They're too busy dealing with their own problems to help us. If we wish to fight back against a force composed of dozens or hundreds of 4th-class existences, we simply don't have the capital. We can only let them pick apart Asgard while we go take shelter in Niflheim later. Otherwise, even we will become elimination targets."

Odin knew that the Cloud Plane brought their own Demigod, and that Demigod was far stronger than him.

Actually, once one reached such a profound level of strength, the gap between people in the same class range vastly increased. Even in 4th class, a level 250 couldn't compare at all to a level 300.

So Odin long lost his will to fight back. His only hope of survival was taking refuge with a stronger power, which just happened to be Niflheim.

To Odin and the other two in the room, this was the natural course of action, but to Aishia who was listening from outside, her entire world felt like it was collapsing.

Seek refuge in Niflheim? THE Niflheim?!

Aishia's body shivered uncontrollably as a rush of unwanted memories flashed through her mind.

Scenes of carnage and blood, scenes of her entire family being slaughtered in front of her eyes, scenes of her people doing everything they could to whittle away at the Nox's strength before perishing, saving her from their fate...

Hearing her second family speak about Niflheim as if a savior rather than an oppressor, her entire worldview was flipped.

Weren't these supposed to be the good guys? Hadn't she been fighting for justice on the side of Asgard for so many years? When did the justice-driven Asgard become an organization that sipped wine with the enemy?!

"Khh!"

Her head hurt. No, the pain stemmed from her soul. This level of betrayal wasn't something she could handle. Her eyes turned red with fury.

'Is this the truth of the world?! Is it truly such an unforgiving place?! Was everything else I was told throughout my life a lie too?!'

It had to be understood that the people Aishia was questioning were more than just organization leaders to her. They were her family, her father, aunts, and uncles who raised her since young.

When all these people suddenly betrayed her at the same time, how could she remain calm?

Aishia's feet stumbled. She walked away from the throne room shakily without ever entering. Even she didn't know her current destination.

Her entire world was dyed red. The only thing she could see was blood. Her body naturally left Asgard, left civilization, and entered the Outer Wilds. Here, she was going to kill until her fury was satiated. And afterwards, she'd die.

There was nothing else worth living for, anyway. All her hopes had been crushed in a single instant.

So, she'd pour everything she had into the battlefield.

The Outer Wilds hadn't been a safe place for a long while already, but today, it was particularly dangerous.

After all, there was nothing left of Niflheim's main headquarters. The Celestial and Star Squadrons had thoroughly wrecked it.

And while they did so, an unknown third party, Shadow Garden, took advantage of the chaos and assassinated the Board of Executives. Just like that, a ferocious group of 4th-class Nox were slaughtered like chickens.

They weren't even given the opportunity to display the horrific might that earned them their positions.

With Asgard facing internal strife as well, neither organization could afford to prolong this war. They both wished to end it as fast as possible, and none of the intruding third parties had any problems with this either.

The faster Niflheim and Asgard went down, the better it was for them.

With tensions reaching an all-time high, the small skirmishes and large battles all came together, forming a massive battlefield that expanded for thousands of kilometers filled with war.

The troops on both sides fought desperately. Thousands of 4th classes in the air and hundreds of thousands of 3rd classes and below on the ground were giving everything they had...

Because they knew that this would be a pivotal battle in the grand war.

Chapter 558 Fate [6]

Within the ranks of the 4th class experts battling in the air was a single bloodthirsty Valkyrie. She didn't differentiate between friend and foe, her spear taking the life of anyone who came near her.

Aishia was only at the middle levels of 4th class, but her comprehensive strength was enough to kill late 4th-class beings as well. On this type of chaotic battlefield, she was nearly invincible.

Her spear twirled through the air, whipping up massive gusts of wind. She clutched it tightly with both hands, heavily thrusting forward without any sort of special technique.

"Heavenly Maiden Battle Tactics 4th Form: Suppressive Whirlwind!"

The air currents around her spear twisted into a cyclone that swirled around the tip. When she thrust out, a horizontal tornado swept through the air battlefield.

Her attack naturally didn't target a single person. She was attacking without any thought at all, putting her in a position where everyone was her enemy.

If so, it was better to attack them all at once!

After the suppressive whirlwind knocked her targets off balance, she directly went into her next attack. Her spear swept up into the sky, letting off thousands of white spear lights that encompassed the battlefield.

Splat!

Splat!

Splat!

The spear lights pierced through many people. Those who weren't paying attention were directly killed, while others were killed by third parties while attempting to block the attack.

A phantom image of a massive angel-like woman clad in battle armor appeared behind Aishia, her spear shining with domineering light.

This battle phantom was proof of her bloodline, proof of her Valkyrie heritage. Whenever she was on a chaotic battlefield like such, her power would be multiplied far past what she could normally show.

And Aishia was making full use of this power. Her mana raged and her blood rolled, a ferocious war cry leaving her mouth.

Haaah!!

Her body turned into a beam of light, shooting toward one of the peak 4th-class fighters nearby.

"She's done it."

"Mm, if she was fighting a bit more conservatively, she would've been able to accomplish more before her death."

Watching her actions, a group of silent observers sighed in unison. It was simply too wasteful for such a talent to die so easily.

But none of them moved to save her. Because if a single one of them moved, all the rest would have free reign as well.

"Albeus, don't you wish to save that woman?" A man with pale white skin sneered. "I'm sure you had some sort of connection with the Valkyries. It'd be a shame for their race to finally become extinct in this Sector because you didn't move."

Albeus rolled his eyes and glanced at the man in derision. "Why does a Minor Sin like you think you can tell me how to act? At least reach Wrath's level before acting high and mighty around here."

A few chuckles rang out from those in the surroundings, causing the man a great deal of embarrassment. He'd been the one to attack, but in the end, he lost face!

He glared at Albeus with hatred, but didn't move to attack. He couldn't risk allowing these people to intervene in the ongoing battle.

This group of people consisted solely of Demigods. Albeus, 2 smaller Demigods each from Shadow Garden, Niflheim, and Asgard, the Cloud Plane's Drunken Old Immortal, and even Wrath and Odin themselves.

Because this battle would be the one deciding the outcome of the war, these exalted figures naturally showed up. Since they couldn't participate, they would at least take entertainment in the happenings of the world.

Wrath smiled imperceptibly as he watched these Demigods fight. "Now, now. You'll miss the exciting parts if you focus too much on each other."

Wrath chuckled meaningfully, his eyes landing on the Drunken Old Immortal. Of the group, only he was unknown. His purpose in this world was to suppress Wrath, and even while relaxing here, he still did so. It could be said that his guard was the highest among these Demigods.

But his emotions weren't the most chaotic. Odin hardly paid attention to those Demigods around him. His eyes remained on Aishia's valiant figure venting her fury with blood, a weary sigh leaking from his lips.

'You might not understand my decision, but that doesn't mean it isn't the correct one. Unfortunately, I'm not young and naive like you. I can't view the world in black and white like you. In these years that I've been forced to live under their rule, I've truly come to understand how terrifying they can be. Even Wrath himself...might only be considered a minor character among their experts. Why else would he be sent to this barren Human Domain?'

They are not an enemy we can defeat. For thousands of years, Odin had been convinced of this fact. And if he couldn't beat them, he'd rather submit than die.

He'd survived through the previous war, he'd survived for thousands of years even before it. Now that he stood here as a being without a definite lifespan, his fear of death had actually become more prevalent instead of decreasing.

Therefore, he made any possible move to keep it. Even if that meant colluding with the enemy.

As the Demigods watched on, Aishia slowly ran out of mana. She continued to challenge opponents outside of her power level, rapidly exhausting herself.

She leaned on her spear breathing roughly. Blood poured out of the hundreds of cuts and gashes lining her body. There was even a hole in her left side through which her organs could be seen.

All in all, she was in terrible condition.

"I don't care. I don't care, I don't care, I don't care! All of you come at me at once!"

Aishia yelled like a mad woman. Just this demeanor alone was enough to terrify her enemies. She seemed like she wouldn't stop killing until she died. Hell, she might've continued killing even after!

The surrounding experts glanced at each other and nodded in unspoken agreement. Together as one, they rushed towards Aishia.

Seeing the coming tide of enemies, Aishia's eyes glowed maddeningly. "Hahaha, good! Good, good, good! If I die, I shall die valiantly! I'll never be a coward who mingles with the enemy!"

Her spear shot out, covered in burning white light and another unknown energy. The mana fluctuations coming from it became increasingly volatile.

It was clear that Aishia was putting everything into this last attack.

If her actions had to be classified, anyone who understood the story would call them a tantrum. While her reasoning was somewhat justified, her course of action was extremely stupid.

But did she know any better?

Despite the bloodthirsty angel she was on the battlefield, Aishia was a sheltered child. She'd been taught by Asgard only what they wished for her to know, while the rest was kept hidden.

As such, she didn't understand what it meant to properly vent her emotions, she didn't understand what it meant to keep a cool head and a blazing heart.

So as this final wave of attacks hit her, as she embraced death, she smiled. She smiled in relief that she would be escaping the hell her world became after she discovered Asgard's true nature.

Because the only thing she wished to do now was escape.

A pair of strong arms wrapped around her waist.

Without even realizing it, Aishia found herself far away from the impact zone, an imperceptible barrier shielding her from the shockwaves.

She didn't die.

She'd been saved.

But...who would do such a thing?

As she turned around and looked at the one who she was inexplicably both thankful and furious towards, her eyes widened in shock.

A man smiled back at her. It was a cheeky smile.

"Sup, wifey? What happened to the whole 'till death do us part' thing?"

The youth stood in the midst of such a chaotic battle casually as if it was just another common street brawl and smiled.

Seeing him, Aishia felt an unknown warmth in her chest.

Damien had finally returned.

Chapter 559 Fate [7]

As Damien looked down at Aishia's form in his arms, he felt nothing but pity for the woman. The feelings between men and women weren't present in his eyes at all.

When he first arrived in this world and met Aishia, she had been both his greatest help and the one he was wariest of. But back then, he didn't truly understand her plight.

And he was sure that even at this moment, Aishia didn't understand how pitiful she was.

When Damien exited his seclusion after swallowing the World Core Fusion Reactor, he found himself within the floating siege weapon titled Avalon. It was quite the jarring change from the Hub City he had grown to know.

His first instinct after being absent for so long was, of course, to gain information. And luckily, Victor, the rancid man, was happy to provide it. Damien learned about the gist of events that had taken place in the world while he was absent from the man. Along with it, he was able to use his previous knowledge to form some guesses about things he only theorized previously.

Aishia was one of these things.

At first, he'd been incredibly suspicious of her position. Especially with that little girl Reva who carried the scent of the Abyss, there was no way for Damien to trust her easily.

But he was wrong, he was overly suspicious because of his lack of knowledge.

In fact, of this world's natural denizens, perhaps Aishia had suffered the most.

Her entire race was slaughtered in front of her eyes, and the family that took her in turned out to be a group of hypocritical scum, even in her final moment, she most likely didn't understand the complexities of the situation that caused it to devolve to such a level. She didn't have the mental capacity to question it in her current state.

Damien sighed with emotion. Even as an exalted 4th class existence, Aishia was still forced to bear the struggles of the weak. Her plight truly allowed him to understand the vastness of the world.

But none of that mattered now. Damien felt a sudden pang in his heart. When he looked for its source, he found a white-haired beauty staring at him from the ground, a teasingly questioning look on her face.

Seeing her, Damien smiled wryly and hastily withdrew his arms from Aishia's waist, holding them up to proclaim his innocence. Only then did Ruyue nod in satisfaction.

She and Rose had been present on this battlefield from the start. The two women worked in tandem to slaughter countless 3rd class existences, pushing them closer and closer to the same boundary Damien found himself resisting.

Naturally, the battlefield was the best place to gain strength. Even if the Nox beings that the Celestial and Star Squadrons were fighting also gave experience, it wasn't nearly the same.

Those Nox were a mixture of 3rd class, 2nd class, 1st class, and even classless beings. When the disparity in strength grew so large, one wouldn't even gain experience any more from slaughtering.

Therefore, the two women and many others decided to visit the main battlefield. Those remaining to take care of the Nox were those who lost the draw they had taken to decide roles.

At this time, Rose and Ruyue were mere specks of dust among the many 3rd class existences spanning the plains. Even Damien was only able to locate them due to his soul connection with Ruyue.

The entire matter between the two took place within an instant, and before those 4th classes targeting Aishia could make another move, Damien had already spread his awareness through the battlefield, thoroughly preparing to receive them.

BOOM!

A large number of elemental attacks were thrown out in tandem, meshing together into a multicolored light that rushed at Damien. But before it could reach him, space caved and bent, twisting their attack trajectories and banishing them into the void.

A nearly untraceable strand of World Force remained at the point of collision.

"What?!"

"How is this possible?!"

A variety of exclamations rang out at once. How could they not be surprised? A mere 3rd class ant had just blocked their combined attack!

But contrary to the ease at which he displayed his ability, Damien could clearly feel his blood rolling from the backlash. He had only just fused his three World Cores; it was impossible for him to proficiently control his new abilities.

He rapidly grabbed the stunned Aishia and retreated even further, completely leaving the battlefield. Finally, he was able to drop her off in a more stable position.

"Stay here for a bit. When your mind has cleared, we can speak."

"Ah..."

Aishia wanted to say something, but by the time a sound leaked from her mouth, Damien was already gone.

He returned to the battlefield, facing those 4th-class existences with a savage grin on his face.

"Good! None of you surpass the middle levels of 4th class. Although this exceeds my current limit, I don't believe I can't escape from you unharmed!"

His words were laced with clear provocation. He was telling them to focus on him instead of Aishia. And looking at the conditions of the two currently, Damien was naturally the greater threat.

"Don't underestimate him because of his level!" A red-robed old man shouted. "Let's attack him together!"

The surrounding 4th classes nodded in unison. After seeing Damien easily deflect their combined attack earlier, not a single one had thoughts of underestimating him.

Killing intent flared. The battle in the sky was only moments away from resuming. But at that moment, the Heavens lost their light.

"Hm?" Damien's brow furrowed as he looked up. A frightening aura was present in this blackness. It wasn't a simple natural phenomenon caused by someone's attack.

Within the dark skies, four men stood at a standstill. They were Wrath, Odin, the Drunken Old Immortal, and Albeus.

"Wrath, what are you trying to do? How dare you direct your aura to attack?!" Albeus roared furiously.

Just a moment ago when Damien was preparing to face off against the 4th classes, Wrath had actually used his aura to attempt to suppress him!

With Albeus and the Drunken Old Immortal present, how could they allow that to happen? Before anything negative could take place, they used their own auras to wash away Wrath's. This small collision was enough to fill the sky with rampant mana and change its color.

Seeing the men around him stare at him so vigilantly, Wrath merely smiled. "What's the problem? I was merely announcing my presence. It's not as if my attack would've harmed anyone."

His words were casual as if nothing in the world was related to him. He was just an observer present for entertainment.

But were these Demigods idiots?

Absolutely not!

Let alone the Drunken Old Immortal who knew about the Seed's existence, even Albeus and Odin were able to understand that Wrath had intentions towards someone on the battlefield. And judging by his timing, this person was Damien!

While Albeus and Damien hadn't known each other for long, they got along well. It wasn't a stretch to call the two friends, as Damien had never let something like a power gap decide how he acted around people.

Naturally, Albeus wouldn't let any harm come to this young and talented friend of his! As for the Drunken Old Immortal, his job was to suppress Wrath and protect the Cloud Plane's forces. Even disregarding the seed, wouldn't it be a great loss of face if he allowed Wrath to do as he pleased?

Their demeanors only caused Wrath's smile to widen. "What, you care about that boy so much? I don't believe you understand the importance of his existence. Come, allow me to pour just a bit of my aura into his body and you'll be able to witness for yourself his grand destiny."

Albeus gritted his teeth. He knew Damien was special long ago. If not, there was no way so many strange events would revolve around him. Wrath, the Eclipsing Shadow Sect, Lynn Carter, the Outer Wilds Death Gods, the list went on. It would be a lie to say that he wasn't curious about these secrets at all.

"...but those are his secrets to keep," Albeus replied resolutely. "If he does not wish to share them, then that is his choice! Wrath, do not try to use your words to sway me. I am not so weak!"

The Drunken Old Immortal nodded from the side, tacitly agreeing to Albeus' words. Even if he didn't have a personal connection with Damien, Shangguan Yu seemed to favor him a great deal.

Not only that, but he was also the Cloud Plane's Star Master. If something untoward happened to him, the world would be affected too.

By some coincidence, these two Demigods found it in their best interest to protect Damien.

Seeing this, Wrath could only shake his head. "Greed is a natural instinct for all beings. The only reason you do not possess it is because you do not understand the value of the treasure you are protecting."

His eyes hardened, his pupils narrowing into slits. "If that is so, then allow me to show you. Perhaps only then will you take my words seriously."

Chapter 560 Fate [8]

Wrath acted without a shred of hesitation. His aura flared to its limit, causing the unnamed world's space to directly shatter.

This wasn't the level of shattering that Damien could reproduce with his abilities. This was a true destruction of space, a rift that wouldn't be healed for many years to come.

Albeus and the Drunken Old Immortal looked on seriously. Despite their wish for inaction, Wrath wasn't leaving them with a choice. They couldn't simply let him act as he pleased.

Two more massive auras erupted to counteract the first one. As the three Demigods found themselves in a standoff, the veil in the sky cleared, revealing them to the world.

The rampant aura coming from their bodies directly caused those in the sky to fall to the ground. The impact of such vast auras threw their energy into chaos.

And Damien was among these people. But having his strict control over his mana disrupted had a far more profound impact on him than anyone else.

Even Wrath was aware of this fact. It was why he acted in the first place, and it was the reason for the satisfied grin decorating his face at the moment.

"...oh shit."

It was the only comment Damien could make. In the next second, the mana circulating through his body began to rapidly expand!

The skies that had just recently cleared were filled with massive clouds again. The earth below was sundered, leaving Damien floating within an empty void of a few dozen kilometers. Even those in his surroundings were forced hundreds of kilometers away by the chaotic energy currents wrapping around his body.

World Energy raged, connecting Heaven and Earth in a massive cyclone. And in the center of this cyclone was none other than Damien himself.

It was finally happening.

The Universe Baptism he'd been suppressing for over half a year had descended upon his body at the most inopportune moment!

Universe Baptism.

It was an elusive concept that described the process of ranking up from 3rd class to 4th class. This qualitative change in a practitioner's body, mana, and legend would set them on the path to Godhood, separating them from the masses.

3rd class was the first step a practitioner took into the world, and 4th class was when they finally had the qualifications to call themselves strong!

But, the concept of a Universe Baptism was esoteric for a reason. Despite how many 4th class existences were born into the universe, it was unknown how many of them experienced the same baptism.

Some would undergo tribulations of heavenly thunder and lightning, some would find their bodies wreathed in the flames of hell, while others would undergo an entirely mental trial without any physical phenomenon involved.

A Universe Baptism represented the will of the universe itself. It was the universe's acknowledgement that one has gained the qualifications to stand proud and interact with its foundational laws. As such, it was impossible for it to be a simple process, despite its relative commonness.

However, these Baptisms always shared a single commonality. This was the barrier of World Energy that both protected the practitioner undergoing Baptism and bathed their body in Laws, the very barrier that was currently enveloping Damien.

As a barrier made up entirely of World Energy, it naturally wasn't simple. Even if one gazed at it from a distance, one would be able to borrow its aura to perceive the laws more clearly. Therefore, all practitioners wished to witness a Universe Baptism in person.

All eyes were on Damien. Even the momentum of those Demigods in the sky was overshadowed by the grand display of World Energy gathering around Damien.

Wrath retracted his aura, his eyes shining with obsession. 'Finally, finally, finally! Ahh, my dear seed, you've finally decided to bloom!'

He was ecstatic. How long had he been waiting for this moment? Due to clues he found within the Ancient Texts of his clan, he even volunteered to oversee this barren and desolate Sector of the universe, patiently laying in wait for tens of thousands of years until finally, this moment arrived in front of him!

The look in his eyes was terrifying. Even Albeus shrunk back slightly when he saw it. But now that the situation had taken such a drastic turn, he couldn't back down. He needed to protect Damien with everything he had, and perhaps this way he'd also be able to force Wrath into a desperate position!

The thoughts of those in the surroundings were incredibly mixed. Not only these Demigods in the sky, but also those 4th classes that were just recently fighting Damien were watching on with hardened expressions.

They had to take him seriously when he was still at the peak of 3rd class, so what would happen to them if he succeeded in his Baptism?

Rose and Ruyue watched on worriedly. Now that the battle had halted, they finally had the freedom to pay attention to Damien without putting their lives on the line.

And immediately after seeing his situation, they moved.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Two bodies rapidly left the crowd of 3rd class beings and arrived on the periphery of Damien's Baptism zone. Rose and Ruyue flared their killing intent, their weapons tightly clutched in their hands.

Their intent was clear. Even if they were weak, they'd protect him until their last breath. Not a single person would pass them until they were corpses in the ground.

Whoosh!

Another body soon joined them. A Valkyrie with an incomparably cold expression glared at the group of 4th classes, warning them not to get any funny ideas.

Aishia's awareness spread behind her, a complicated look surfacing on her face.

After she calmed down, she was able to grasp the situation far more easily. To say she was embarrassed about her reckless and self-sacrificing actions from earlier was an understatement.

And of this man who brought her out of that state and saved her from the brink of death, she didn't know how to feel. They didn't spend enough time together for her to have true feelings for him, and the time they spent together was done with an indomitable metaphorical wall between them.

If so, then...why did she feel so warm when she looked at him?

Aishia shook away her chaotic thoughts. For now, all she knew was that she would repay the life-saving grace Damien had shown her by protecting him in return. Although her reasoning was different from the other two women near her, she was just as prepared to lay down her life.

"All Cloud Plane forces, heed my command! Protect this area with your lives! If he succeeds in his Baptism, we are guaranteed to win this war!"

A booming voice sounded from the void. Space bent awkwardly before returning to its original position, but there now stood a sagely old man in the sky who wasn't there previously.

He didn't even have to shatter space to shuttle through it. Whenever he wished to move, space would accommodate him. This man was none other than Tian Yang.

Upon receiving his command, many hesitated. It was natural for them to do so when asked to sacrifice their lives for someone they didn't know.

However, Tian Yang was a Cloud Plane denizen himself. He perfectly grasped their personalities. "I will not speak of rewards here because you are all aware that you will be awarded! However, know this! That man who is currently undergoing Heavenly Tribulation...is Heaven's Wrath himself!"

BOOOM!

Dozens of massive lightning bolts fell from the sky around Damien, bathing him in their essence as if to back Tian Yang's statement.

When the Cloud Plane forces saw this, they erupted with fervor.

Heaven's Wrath?

The mysterious existence who razed a large portion of the Central Plains in an instant...he was a 3rd class who was just experiencing his Universe Baptism?!

This was simply too mind-boggling! Just how was it possible for someone to possess such strength?!

But in reality, that didn't matter at all. Since it was Tian Yang himself who spoke, nobody questioned whether he was lying or not.

To think that such an exalted figure was standing among them this whole time, and to think they were given the opportunity to protect this figure during his most critical moment! If they survived through this, it was equal to having Heaven's Wrath himself owe them a favor!

The Cloud Plane forces present roared into action, surrounding the crater in which Damien was undergoing Baptism.

As for the forces of Niflheim and Asgard, they still weren't sure of what to do.

If the mysterious figure was allowed to complete his Baptism, there was a high chance that their organizations would be defeated. Yet, moving against him was almost guaranteed death.

Within this chaotic atmosphere, the World Energy Barrier around Damien finally finished taking shape.

It expanded rapidly, encompassing an area 100 kilometers in diameter around him. And finally, the world fell silent.

Damien's Universe Baptism was starting.