

Void 571

Chapter 571 Baptism [11]

With the dark space trial nearing its close, the World Energy Barrier began to show slight signs of fluctuation, but these weren't noticed at all by those outside forces.

Niflheim and Asgard had a nearly endless supply of 3rd class beings that they threw into the war. But no matter how impossible it seemed for them to have such a massive reserve of troops, it wasn't strange when one considered their status.

Regardless of anything else, Niflheim and Asgard were the only influences that reigned over the unnamed world. Even organizations like Shadow Garden were only formed by those who escaped the previous two.

In this sense, it was similar to if the Celestial Star Palace controlled half the forces of the entire Cloud Plane. Even producing millions of 3rd class beings was a simple matter at this level.

But this reality only brought despair to those who rebelled against them. Doing so meant taking the entire world as one's enemy. And when the entire world arrived on a single battlefield, holding them off was more difficult than anyone could ever imagine.

But those of Shadow Garden and even those from the Cloud Plane had resolved themselves to give their lives to their cause long ago. If they didn't have even this much commitment, they would've never been chosen by their respective organizations.

Therefore, they continued fighting. Even as their brothers and sisters died in droves, they fought with everything they had.

The forces of these two powers were nowhere near adequate enough in size to combat the endless wave of 3rd class beings, but at least on the 4th class side, they were relatively even. It was only due to this that Niflheim and Asgard's forces weren't able to mop up hundreds or even thousands of enemies in a single swoop, allowing Shadow Garden and the Cloud Plane forces at least some minor respite.

Still, they wouldn't last much longer. If the situation continued to deteriorate, they would inevitably lose.

Aishia knew this better than anyone. Until several hours ago, even she'd been part of Asgard's forces. Her current actions of siding with their enemies could even be considered a temper tantrum on her part.

Even she didn't understand why she was fighting so hard. Even though she'd lived for over 10,000 years, it was a sheltered 10,000 years where she only ever fought with the protection of many elders.

Now, experiencing the reality of warfare, she was disgusted. She couldn't believe that the world was so vile, that the people who smiled at her so warmly could become such cold-blooded killers when the situation called for it.

But in the end, was she much different? Even as she endured her disgust, she cut down people who used to look up to her like cabbages. She didn't give a single care to their lives, using them to vent her grievances with the organization they belonged to.

Did these 3rd class beings harm her in any way? Were they even aware of the truth behind Asgard? In the end, these were just people who only knew how to follow orders. They didn't deserve to be targeted by her hatred.

Aishia began to understand. She began to understand that the justice she held in such high regard was nothing more than a pipe dream. Even if one had absolute power, creating such justice would be impossible.

Because the fundamental makings of human nature didn't lean towards morality, they leaned towards survival and survival alone.

This was the curse of any existence with spiritual intelligence. Even if one overcame the fear of death, they wouldn't accept it even at the last moment.

At least, those who built the proper resolve as a practitioner wouldn't.

Aishia's eyes hardened. If she wished to even maintain a semblance of her personal morality, she would need to adapt to this cruel world. She would need to change and accommodate it before she could change it at all.

But would she live that long?

Surrounding her was a mob of 4th class existences. On Shadow Garden's side, she was doing a large portion of the heavy lifting when in terms of 4th class battles.

She didn't mind it, though. She only wished that her mana capacity would last her until all her enemies fell.

However, this was an empty hope. With every second, her mana dwindled further. Those facing her were 4th classes at the end of the day. Despite their apparent weakness in front of her spear, they were absolutely qualified to be her opponents.

Aishia's awareness spread, taking account of her surroundings. The scent of hopelessness assailed her senses no matter how hard she tried to block it.

Her grip on her spear tightened. The mana in her body circulated fiercely, shining with a bright ethereal light that didn't match the bloody image and aura she built on the battlefield.

If her enemies were to title her at the moment, she was like a holy asura. Just this temperament alone was enough to strike fear in their hearts.

They never wished for this fight! They didn't want to throw their lives away like dogs! But what could they do?! Disobeying a Demigod would lead to a far more pitiful death. The most they could do was hope to die valiantly on the battlefield, or be lucky enough to survive in the end.

The hopelessness Aishia sensed wasn't just from Shadow Garden or the Cloud Plane forces, but from all the ordinary foot soldiers on the ground.

It was true that war was the best opportunity for growth, but out of these millions of troops, only the smallest minority of them would survive long enough to enjoy those benefits.

In that atmosphere of utter hopelessness, a faint sound resounded from the horizon. It was faint, but for some reason, it was loud enough to announce its presence even through the chaos of this massive battlefield.

Aishia looked over curiously, her mana still moving ceaselessly to slay her enemies. Approaching the battlefield was a massive unknown object.

Its shadow alone spanned thousands of kilometers. The sound coming from its movement was becoming increasingly deafening as it neared the battlefield.

Aishia's face inadvertently paled. If this object were to fall onto the battlefield, the shockwave from its impact would be enough to kill more soldiers than she'd killed in the time she'd participated in this war.

But nothing of the sort would happen. Considering the individual who piloted this massive object, such a crass methodology would be more than just condemned.

As the flying object neared, its figure became more defined, and its presence became harder to ignore. There were some sections of the warfront where people stopped fighting, focusing their attention on the mind-boggling sight in front of them.

A massive city that floated in the sky. With this sight in front of them, could anyone remain calm?

It seemed as if this city's arrival was planned for the direst moment. When the scales were just about to tip in favor of Niflheim and Asgard, it revealed its presence and entered domineeringly.

But those on the ground had to wonder...

Just who would this floating city align itself with? And what effect would its presence have on this war?

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"Is that...Avalon?!"

It was unknown who first spoke those words, but once they were put forth into the world, they spread like wildfire.

After all, even before the city began floating, it was a central location in the unnamed world. More than just a few of these soldiers had visited it before.

Now, looking closely at the city in the sky, they began to see the resemblance. The steampunk architectural style that diverged from the unnamed world's overall aesthetic, the general technological expertise it took to even create something like a flying city, and many other factors seemed to confirm this conclusion without leaving any room for doubt.

Because, in the end, this conclusion was the undeniable truth!

Standing at the forefront of the flying siege weapon and looking down on the battlefield from atop it was a single woman, quiet and unassuming amongst Avalon's domineering ambiance.

But unknown to those who ignored her presence, a single word from her could easily decide their fates.

This woman was none other than Lynn Carter!

Looking down at the scene below, saying she was shocked was an understatement. In reality, Lynn never expected things to turn out this way.

She had been laying down plans to collapse the unnamed world's societal structure for many years, and after finally deciding to launch Avalon, she'd acted on those plans.

Ignoring this battlefield that she believed would just be one of many, she took her forces around the world and conquered Hub Cities without reservation. Now that many days had passed, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that Lynn held the most political power in the world. She was nearly its ruler!

But standing in the way of her truly ascending to this position were the two organizations she despised the most. The two organizations that put on a false show of good and evil to lull the citizens of this world into a false sense of understanding and security.

The reason she conquered the remaining Hub Cities before visiting the main battlefield was precisely to undermine a large portion of the influence these two organizations held. Through absolute power and striking charisma, she was able to bring many of the seeds she planted into bloom, easily taking control of the world.

Finally, it was time for her to face her enemies directly. Any schemes were useless in front of absolute power, she wished to illustrate this point to those who were so used to scheming in the dark.

However, when she arrived, the scene she saw far surpassed her expectations.

It wasn't just a battle anymore, this was a full-scale war! And in the center of all that chaos was a whirlpool of World Energy!

As the person who stirred him into action, it wasn't difficult for Lynn to understand who was within that barrier. Especially after seeing Rose, Ruyue, and Aishia surrounding that barrier like Death Guards, her conclusion became set in stone. She had been following his progress from the start, so she naturally knew about those who were close to him.

Lynn invested in Damien because she believed the chaos he stirred up would benefit her goals, but she never expected him to do it so flawlessly. Due to his actions, the large battle in the Outer Wilds became an all-out war where no single side could hold back any of their cards. Almost all of the experts of the unnamed world, regardless of affiliation, had been gathered in one place.

For Lynn, who desired to destroy both Niflheim and Asgard with her entire being, was there a better outcome?

Her eyes became complicated as she realized this, but in the end, she only sighed. There was nothing for her to contemplate over. Since her enemies were gathered in one place, her course of action was already set.

"Open fire on Niflheim and Asgard. If even a single fighter from Shadow Garden or the Cloud Plane is injured as collateral, it'll be your heads on the line."

Lynn's cold command rang out, and Avalon responded immediately. Everyone in this city worshipped her like a go; they wouldn't dare to even think about betraying her expectations.

As the cannons primed and all weapons turned towards the battlefield, a single thought entered the mind of every soldier, whether ally or enemy.

When that city began its siege...

They were fucked.

Compared to the chaos taking place outside, the scenery within the Authorities in the sky was far different.

Currently, Wrath was looking at Albeus and the Drunken Old Immortal with a condescending smirk. Beads of sweat dripped down his brow and blood leaked from various parts of his body, but his demeanor was still that of an Emperor.

After engaging in battle with these two, he was able to slowly regain his calm and reign in his madness. He didn't need anything interfering with his rational thinking at this critical moment.

Whoosh!

An unassuming breeze passed by Wrath's body, but he dodged without hesitation. After all, this breeze was a coagulation of Laws. Even he wouldn't be unscathed if he let it hit him, a point which could be easily proven by witnessing the state of his body.

"Do you think anything you do here has relevance? I am not shameless enough to say that you two pose no threat to me, however, it is true that you will not be able to kill me no matter how hard you try."

In response to Wrath's words, Albeus spat, "Pah! Stop the nonsense and fight me already!"

He already knew this fact. It wasn't hard to guess it. Wrath had been concealing himself far too deeply, this was something Albeus realized through their small bouts so far.

He and the Drunken Old Immortal working together could only stand equal to Wrath, and this was only because of how casual their battle had been up until this point. If they truly fought with everything they had, it was unknown who would come out on top.

However, their goal was never to kill or even defeat Wrath. They only wished to stall him long enough for the Seed to bloom safely. When that happened, their true battle would begin.

"Why so serious?" The Drunken Old Immortal stumbled. "The Seed is useless to you, anyway. You can't control the power it possesses. Even if you consume it, you will only implode from the burden!"

Compared to Albeus, he knew far more about what the Seed entailed. Even then, most of the information he had was hard to imagine.

As a Demigod himself, he could be said to have reached the peak of the universe. Without leaving for the Heavenly World, ascending to True Godhood was impossible.

The universe simply couldn't bear the burden of housing a God.

Therefore, Demigods were the true peak. Yet, the Seed was an existence that surpassed even them.

The legends he read from the Ancient Texts were incredibly vague, with many portions lost in the annals of time, but from what he could make out, if the Seed was allowed to bloom to its full potential, even at the Demigod level, it would surpass the universe.

To possess such a thing, and to even try to consume it for his own benefit, the Drunken Old Immortal couldn't decide whether Wrath was absurdly stupid or hiding a pivotal card.

But would Wrath ever reveal himself to his enemy?

"An ant with a hint of knowledge thinks he can compare to me? You do not understand what the Seed entails. You do not understand how imperative its existence is to my race. To consume it?! That is a meager goal. I will not only consume the Seed, I will usurp it and take its place! A mere junior who is just undergoing his first Baptism isn't qualified to house it!"

Wrath didn't bother conversing with his enemies anymore. Even if he told them everything he knew, they still wouldn't understand.

Besides, his focus was never on them. Whether it be the war, the Demigods around him, or even the world itself, they all faded from his vision.

The only thing Wrath could see was the slowly fading World Energy Barrier that was turning into a whirlpool connecting the Heavens and Earth.

Chapter 573 Baptism [13]

The World Energy Barrier was fading, or rather, it was becoming one with the outside world, synchronizing their time flows and laws.

As Damien saw this happen, a wave of vertigo overcame him.

It'd only been roughly half a day in the outside world, but to Damien, a full two and a half years had passed since his Universe Baptism began.

The ratio between the two time flows was almost 1:2000! As Damien was forced to rapidly adapt to the drastically differing time flow of the outside world, it was only natural that he was incredibly disoriented.

But more than that, he was confused.

His Baptism hadn't ended, this much he was aware of. If so, what significance did the World Energy Barrier's movements have? Why was he being reintroduced to the real plane?

Before he could question it further, his thought process was interrupted by a massive chain of explosions. His eyes moved instantly, locking onto the sight of a familiar city in an entirely unfamiliar position.

'That's...Avalon?!'

He wasn't given time to remain surprised. From the floating island on which Avalon rested, dozens of massive artillery weapons emerged, blasting the battlefield without a single care.

But if one looked closely, they'd notice that these shots were aimed quite precisely. They only fell in locations where Shadow Garden and Cloud Plane forces weren't present. In this way, these attacks with massive blast radii wouldn't affect the allied forces.

However, this didn't mean that Avalon couldn't provide support for its allies. Aboveground and lining the roofs of nearly every building were smaller precision-based weapons. These weapons were operated by Avalon's citizens, accurately aiding their allies in repelling the swarm of enemies encroaching upon them.

But swarm wasn't even a substantial enough word to describe the scene of hundreds of thousands or even millions of enemy soldiers wantonly charging through the battlefield without a care for their lives. It was a terrifying sight.

Above the ground, some few hundred meters in the air, the 4th class combatants held their battles. Even Rose and Ruyue were included in this group. Here were the true powerhouses, those who could kill thousands of those on the ground with a single swing.

But because they were all locked down by each other, this kind of scene didn't appear.

Even Rose and Ruyue, who were still at 3rd class, were now being watched by 4th class beings after their destructive power was recognized.

'This...how did things escalate so much?!'

Damien had a great understanding of time after studying it for so long in the World Energy Barrier, so understanding how much time had truly passed while he was gone wasn't difficult.

Still, even half a day wasn't enough for things to become so chaotic!

If Damien knew that he was the reason for this situation, it was unknown how he would react. After all, the only reason the battle reached this scale was because of Wrath's order to capture him or interfere with his Baptism.

While things had surely spiraled out of control after that order was given, it was still true that this was the reason everything started.

But Damien still hadn't taken in all the scenes around him. Even further in the sky, far above the clouds, the Demigods stood in stalemate. Due to their Authorities, the normal soldiers below them weren't even able to witness their battles, but Damien was different.

Authorities were separate dimensions, separate space-times. As this was his forte, wouldn't it be embarrassing if Damien didn't notice their presence?

However, noticing them was all he could do. His power level hadn't jumped nearly high enough for him to interfere with an Authority.

Regardless, these scenes all entered Damien's eyes within a few breaths time. Not long after, he was able to accurately understand the gist of the situation.

After all, it was relatively simple. The powder keg had finally been set off.

Voom!

The World Energy whirlpool soon finished its growth, and in the next second, it charged into Damien's body. Doves upon doves of World Energy filled his every cell, nourishing him and destroying him at the same time.

"Keuk...!"

Damien coughed in agony. World Energy was likely the highest form of energy he'd ever encountered, discounting Void Essence. It was energy only usable by the universe itself and Celestials like him.

Now that it was flooding his body, he didn't know what to do. It felt like the World Energy was prying into every nook and cranny of his internals in search of something it couldn't find.

'What do...!'

Before Damien's thought could even finish, he found his body paralyzed. A slew of system notifications appeared in front of his eyes.

[The Universe has acknowledged your qualifications.]

[You have successfully completed the Universe Baptism.]

[Your class has been changed to—]

[Unknown entity interfering with procedures.]

[The Third Test will begin.]

Damien panicked. Now, of all times, the Void Physique decided to mess with him?! He was already in a precarious position, disoriented and unprotected, but now he was also paralyzed?! If someone decided to attack him...

A flash appeared in front of Damien's body. Time seemed to slow to a crawl.

This was an attack. Not only was it an attack, it was an attack that could instantly kill him if it landed.

Damien felt the horrifying energy fluctuations coming from this attack. It wasn't something a mere 4th class being could conjure. No, this was the work of a Divinity.

In that moment of crisis, the world slowed nearly to a halt in Damien's eyes. His mind remained incomparably calm, racing in search of a solution to his predicament.

If he couldn't find one, he would die.

This was a Demigod. There was no lucky chance, no miracle ability, no life-saving opportunity that could protect him from a Divinity.

In front of a mortal, a Divinity was absolute.

The feeling of death encroached upon Damien. It was a strange yet familiar feeling, but today, it seemed far more defined than usual.

It was almost as if his senses were telling him he had no chance to escape this situation.

It was almost as if the universe paralyzed him on purpose so that he could die under this sneak attack.

The figure in front of Damien coalesced. Under his gaze, the visage of a bulky old man with a domineering beard and tired yet maddened eyes appeared.

This man...was none other than Odin himself!

The exalted leader of Asgard, the Demigod whose presence allowed Asgard to remain standing under Niflheim's regime...

This man was currently standing in front of a junior, his arm slowly extending while being encased in mana and mysterious law fluctuations that Damien couldn't comprehend.

He had already given up any sense of independence he had. The current Odin was no more than Wrath's dog.

In the strange mental state he was in, Damien clearly saw every motion Odin took as if it was in slow motion. But seeing these movements wouldn't help him.

He was just a being in the process of ascending to 4th class. Even among mortals, he had a long way to go before being the strongest.

His body simply didn't have the ability to react.

Chapter 574 Baptism [14]

Throughout the entire war in the Outer Wilds, Odin had been a bystander.

He watched as the situation escalated, he watched as Damien began his breakthrough, he watched as the Demigods around him began fighting, but he didn't move.

Odin didn't know what to do.

He wasn't a person who lacked morality. At one point in his life, he'd been a just leader who fought against Niflheim with everything he had.

When did things change?

When he looked down at the lower battlegrounds and saw Aishia killing her own people with indifference painting her face, he felt a heart-wrenching pain. His being felt empty.

Aishia was just a little girl not past 100 years old when he first met her. Her power level was barely scraping the bottom of 3rd class due to how intensely the Valkyries around her cherished and protected her.

That little girl had lost everyone after the war ended. There wasn't a single Valkyrie left in existence, there was no place for her to call home.

And that's when Odin found her. As he swept the world that was previously known as Asgard for any survivors, he found a single little girl crying amongst a mountain of corpses.

His heart warmed in that instant. It wasn't just pity he felt for the girl, but a sense of camaraderie.

War wasn't something that deserved to be glorified. Regardless of the heroes who appeared during wars, regardless of the various opportunities that would spawn in the chaos, for soldiers, wartime was represented by death and depression.

Back then, Odin wasn't as powerful as he was now. Although he was still a Demigod, he was the weakest kind, not even worthy of kissing Wrath's feet.

And when war broke out on a universal scale, there was a rule that almost always had to be followed.

Demigods would remain in the Ancient Battlefield. If one side dispatched a Demigod, their enemy would be allowed the same privilege. In this way, it was impossible for Demigods to appear and turn the tides with absolute power.

It was yet another method the universe used to maintain balance.

So even though Odin could barely be considered a Demigod, he was forced into the Ancient Battlefield. He was separated from those who made up the world known as Asgard.

And when he was finally allowed to return, when the war reached its conclusion, the only member of Asgard remaining was that small Valkyrie he found amidst the rubble.

She wasn't the only one who had everything she loved stolen from her. Odin was the same, and an uncountable number of existences shared their pain.

But in Asgard, there were only two.

When Odin took Aishia in and raised her, he'd done it more for his own self-satisfaction than anything else. Seeing Aishia grow truly made him happy. It gave him the determination to rebuild Asgard.

But fate was cruel. Niflheim claimed their world long before Odin returned from the Ancient Battlefield. Even after Asgard was rebuilt, it became a minor power that had to struggle to survive. And even then, it was only able to do so because of Odin's existence.

As time passed, the worries that plagued his mind became ever prevalent. He was spending less and less time with Aishia, holing himself up in his study to desperately keep Asgard afloat.

This was when the two started drifting apart, and this was when things began going downhill.

Aishia wasn't just a daughter or a disciple to Odin, she was his emotional support. Her existence allowed him to maintain his sanity even through trying times. But due to his own actions, he lost this support.

Aishia began to act on her own, integrating herself into Asgard and actively working to take down their enemy. Meanwhile, Odin became lost.

He wanted Asgard to survive. He didn't want everything he knew and loved to fall in war again. And to do so, the easiest and least bloody option was to submit to authority.

But never did he imagine that the decision he made that day would hurt his daughter so much, nor did he imagine that he'd become nothing more than a dog who could only move on the orders of others.

Looking down at Aishia, he realized that he couldn't condemn her, he couldn't pity her. The path she was walking was far better than his own, even if it would lead her to the precipice of death more times than she could ever expect.

At least she wasn't empty. At least she was able to regain herself.

As he remembered the scene of Aishia's Puppet Mechs acting against Asgard, his heart tore. He couldn't imagine what Niflheim had done to her to make her hand over such imperative research without even realizing it.

But it was too late for regret. Odin was an indecisive person, but he no longer had a choice. He wouldn't be accepted if he tried to redeem himself. He had sided with the same people who had slaughtered his family and friends, slaughtered his fellow Asgardians.

There was no redemption for the wicked.

And as the World Energy Barrier was torn down, Odin heard a command enter his head.

Kill the man within the barrier. This was what Wrath ordered him to do.

His eyes widened in shock. Didn't Wrath wish to consume this boy? Wasn't he obsessing over it for a reason? If so, why would he suddenly ask Odin to kill him?

But even as he thought these useless thoughts, Odin was well aware that he didn't have the qualifications to receive answers.

He was just a dog. A dog who sold his soul to the devil.

Odin gritted his teeth as he watched Damien. He wasn't an uninformed person, he naturally understood the relationship between Damien and Aishia.

And he had personally witnessed the scene of Damien swooping in like a hero and saving Aishia from harm. Knowing that innocent little girl, this action alone was enough to sprout feelings in her heart.

If Odin were to kill that man...

He wouldn't just be outcast. The little girl he raised for over 10,000 years would most likely take him as a revenge target, eventually killing him when she became a Demigod.

And Odin had no doubt that Aishia would become a Demigod. He knew her talent and determination best.

'But perhaps...that might not be so bad.' He thought to himself.

It was too late for redemption. Odin was doomed to die on the hill he built for himself. If so, wouldn't it be best if karma came full circle? If Aishia was the one who killed him, if he could provide Aishia with a goal to become stronger, he would at least do one good deed amongst the pile of terrible ones.

His body moved without hesitation. For the sake of Asgard, for the sake of Aishia, and for the sake of himself, the boy named Damien had to die. It was his fate for being too weak to keep the treasures he had.

Odin arrived in front of Damien within a tenth of an instant. Strangely enough, though, he could feel Damien's gaze on his body. This gaze only made him move ever faster.

His arm snaked forward, his hand outstretched like a blade. The least he could do was provide this boy a quick death.

But when he looked into those eyes, he only saw indifference and disdain. Even at the edge of death, Damien didn't fold in the slightest. His heroic spirit only became all the more obvious.

Odin's eyes narrowed. This was the kind of person. The kind of person he despised the most. What gave them the right to be so haughty?! Why must they act so domineering with death inevitably in front of them?! Wasn't it common sense to do anything in one's power to live?!

These heroic youths who inadvertently forced Odin to face the pathetic person he'd become, he wouldn't allow them to exist!

The mana and law fluctuations around his arm became fiercer! Even though the attack hadn't connected yet, half of Damien's body had already been charred to a crisp, seemingly burnt through.

And in that instant before the attack finally connected...

"Haa..."

A sigh resounded through the battlefield.

Chapter 575 Baptism [15]

"Haa..."

A sigh resounded through the battlefield.

To those weaker beings, this sigh didn't mean anything. They simply ignored it and continued their battles. But to the experts present, this sigh had a completely different intent.

In that moment, Odin's momentum halted. His hand was already pressed into Damien's neck, drawing a few drops of blood. If he had stopped his movements only a second later, Damien's head would've been cut clean off.

But regardless of how intentional and skillful his actions looked, Odin knew best that this halting wasn't his intent at all. A strange and profound law fluctuation appeared around him, disallowing him from moving further.

No matter how he tried to push his mana, no matter how he tried to counter these laws with his own, all his attempts were futile. Despite the amount of time that had passed since he first met Aishia, Odin hadn't made too much progress in the Demigod realm.

It was too vast and too vague of a power level even to someone who had reached it. The path forward from this point on was incomparably difficult. Characters like Wrath who surpassed others to the point where two normal Demigods had to work together to suppress him were rare enough as it stood.

This was the fate of those Demigods who refused the universe's laws. By right, a Demigod was to break through the universe's boundaries and reach the Heavenly World upon their ascension. This was the path they were meant to follow.

If they truly desired to stay in the lower universe, it was entirely possible. However, this also meant that the path forward was something they'd have to learn for themselves.

The Universe barely had the capacity to contain Demigod-level existences. Naturally, it wouldn't have the proper foundation for them to raise themselves easily.

This was why, when a character appeared whose breath alone could suppress another Demigod, regardless of how weak the opposing Demigod was, it was a shocking display of power.

"I had no desire to participate in these squabbles, otherwise, why would I remain hidden for so long? However, it seems you do not desire for me to remain a mere bystander."

The voice from the void was languid and indifferent, but there was an unstoppable momentum contained within. Simply listening to his words forced those in the surroundings to halt, a powerful sense of oppression washing over them.

But the figure didn't reveal himself yet. Clearly, Odin wasn't enough to make him do so.

Damien looked down at the hand inserted into his neck in shock. Regardless of any appearance he showed to the outside world, the vivid threat of death that assailed his senses wasn't something he could easily cope with.

This was true, inescapable death. It wasn't a situation where he could maneuver his way out with enough wits and craftiness.

But somehow, he'd managed to survive. It was only due to the grace of the mysterious senior that saved him. Damien was well aware of this fact.

He wished he could thank this senior or perhaps understand his identity, but let alone speak, he couldn't even move his body. He was still paralyzed by the World Energy spreading within.

He could only move his eyes to watch the scene playing out before him.

Flash!

It was unknown when it happened, but Odin was no longer in front of Damien. His body had been forcefully transported many feet away, finally giving Damien space to breathe.

"This...this is...!" Odin stammered in shock. It wasn't strange for Damien to miss his movements due to the massive power difference, but even Odin wasn't able to tell when he was moved!

If it wasn't for the fact that Damien's skin was no longer in contact with his body, perhaps he wouldn't have noticed at all!

"T-this senior..." Odin started. Facing such a mysterious foe, he didn't dare show the slightest sign of disrespect. "Forgive this junior for being rash, however, this matter is between this junior and that boy. Senior does not need to worry about this junior interfering in the ongoing battle."

As Odin spoke, Rose, Ruyue, and many others in the vicinity felt a sense of disgust welling in their hearts. Even while boot-licking, Odin was still trying to find an opportunity to kill Damien!

To this move, they could only shake their heads in disappointment. Even an exalted Demigod could be blind at times.

And as they expected, nothing good came from Orin's words.

Pah!

A crisp slap rang out, seemingly trumping the sound of even Avalon's unending barrage. Odin's body was sent flying back like a ragdoll, his face swelling uncontrollably.

Once again, an attack that Odin couldn't even begin to sense was sent towards him. Even facing the humiliation of being slapped in front of so many people, even after losing an immense amount of face, he no longer dared to speak.

In front of someone so powerful, a single misstep would lead to his death. And Odin in particular was a man who desperately clung to life.

"Hmph. For me to interfere at this step, it should be obvious what my reason is. Anyone who dares touch that boy will die."

At this point, even Wrath was paying attention to the sudden change in the situation. The appearance of this new Demigod wasn't something he could've predicted.

From the start, he never intended to let Odin kill Damien. In reality, he understood that the Seed's blooming process couldn't be stopped halfway. Any action against Damien could only be taken after his Baptism was completed.

However, even Wrath wasn't aware of the repercussions of interfering. He only sent Odin out to test the waters. In essence, he was a sacrificial lamb.

Yet, the pitiful Asgardian couldn't even do this job properly! Before Wrath could obtain any useful information, this new Demigod appeared out of nowhere and ruined everything!

This made Wrath warier than anything that took place until this point. When concerning this mysterious expert, even Wrath couldn't judge his depths. This meant that at the very least, he was on par with him.

While most of the involved parties were sunk in shock and confusion, only a single person stood with a silly grin on his face.

This person...was none other than the Drunken Old Immortal!

Hearing the voice that cut through the battlefield, he couldn't help but think that it was extremely familiar. Only after feeling the law fluctuations from the previous slap did he realize the newcomer's identity.

Without a care in the world, he took a swig of wine from his gourd and cackled. "Hahaha, you finally decided to reveal yourself? Old Void, quit acting mysterious and come out here!"

His voice wasn't too loud, but the intent behind his words grabbed everyone's attention. By the looks of it, the Drunken Old Immortal actually knew this newcomer?

"Haa, why do you have to ruin my fun every time?" The mysterious voice responded despondently. "Can't you just allow me to have my moment even once?"

The Drunken Old Immortal grinned like a fox. "Ha! You and your obsession with those mundane things! If you want to look good in front of these kids, just come out and slap this Wrath character silly!"

"Don't joke with me. You just want me to clean up your mess since you're too lazy to do it yourself." The voice's tone was deadpan with a trace of annoyance, clearly fed up with the Drunken Old Immortal's antics.

"Hahaha!" The Drunken Old Immortal laughed raucously, not ashamed at being exposed at all. "Of course! Isn't that what you always do?"

The void trembled. An old man walked out of space next to the Drunken Old Immortal and slapped him on the back of the head, directly taking the gourd out of his hand and drinking the wine within as if nothing else concerned him.

"Tch. Don't say that as though it's my job. If you didn't create trouble everywhere you went, would I have to do so much needless work?"

The old man's appearance wasn't anything shocking, and his method of revealing himself made him seem like nothing more than a passing scholar. But seeing this old man, two people on the battlefield felt a shock so immense that if it were possible, they would've coughed blood and fainted on the spot.

After all, this was an incredibly familiar old man.

With his hair, greyed from age, whipping in the wind, and his sagely beard falling down his front, the man who casually revealed himself as a Demigod...was none other than the Great Elder of the Celestial Star Palace...

Tian Yang!

Chapter 576 Baptism [16]

Shocked? Flabbergasted? Could these words even begin to describe how Damien was feeling at the moment? It wasn't just him, even Ruyue was in the same position.

To them, Tian Yang was both their master and a kind old man that provided them support and helped them grow into the people they were today. As people so close to him, they naturally understood that he was strong.

This point was further illustrated by how easily he crushed Xue Yebai. The strength he revealed truly was at the extreme peak of 4th class.

But the difference between the extreme peak of 4th class and scraping the bottom of 5th class was still like Heaven and Earth. Divinity wasn't something that a mortal could compare with.

How could it be easy for these two disciples to suddenly accept that their master was a Demigod?!

Damien's mind raced. Logically, Tian Yang's status made sense. Damien was already aware that the Celestial Star Palace had a Demigod ancestor.

The problem was, when Damien first found out about this, he'd asked Yun to do a comprehensive search for every Demigod in the world. Even Tang Lingzi was discovered through this search.

But Yun didn't say anything about Tian Yang. According to the information Damien received, the Celestial Star Palace's old ancestor was residing many kilometers below the sect, submerged in meditation.

The confusion on Damien's face was evident even through his paralyzed state. Naturally, Tian Yang noticed it too.

He grinned mischievously. "Brat, you're ten thousand years too early to compete with me. I'm a Demigod specializing in Spatial Laws, you know? Do you think I've never had contact with the World Core before?"

Realization struck Damien like a truck. Of course Tian Yang would've spoken to Yun before. Even if they couldn't communicate as thoroughly as he and Yun could, Tian Yang had more than enough power to roughly understand Yun's intent.

As for Yun, why wouldn't it favor the Demigods born on its surface? Back then, Damien had only recently formed a contract with it, so their relationship wasn't solid at all. Choosing to protect Tian Yang's identity wasn't even something he could blame Yun for.

Compared to Damien, Ruyue's reaction was even more exaggerated. She's been with Tian Yang far longer than he had, and she didn't have nearly enough information to draw the same conclusions as him.

It was only after Tian Yang gave a brief explanation through mental transmission that she was able to somewhat calm down, but she forced him to promise an in-depth explanation when things were done and over. She wouldn't be resigned until she knew everything.

Tian Yang smiled wryly as he dealt with his two disciples, but at the moment, his priorities lay elsewhere.

His eyes focused on Wrath who was standing before him. A savage grin spread across his face.

"I've been wanting to meet you for a long time." He said slowly.

Wrath's eyes narrowed. "And why is that?"

"Hahaha!" Tian Yang chuckled. "Do you see anyone else around who can entertain me in battle? I finally found a worthy opponent, and he's a scummy Nox as well. How can I not be excited?"

"Your confidence is massive for someone who hasn't even given his name yet. Don't you think you've bitten off more than you can chew?" Wrath spat back.

"Hm? Ah, I didn't think your kind was civilized enough to care about such things. Mm, I am called Tian Yang, as for my title, I am the Void Old Immortal."

Damien dearly wished he could move at the moment so he could slap Tian Yang silly. If anyone was going to have that title, shouldn't it have been him?!

But Damien had lost relevance in the current matter. All eyes were focused on Tian Yang and Wrath.

The Void Old Immortal of the Cloud Plane. While this wasn't a name Damien had ever heard before, to the native Cloud Plane denizens that joined the operation against Niflheim, this title was like an explosion going off in their heads.

He wasn't just a legend, he was a mythical existence that surpassed anyone and everyone who had ever existed on the Cloud Plane! His name was known by every child, decorated glamorously in the books they were read by their parents.

For that figure to be standing before them...these denizens felt as if they were dreaming, floating on cloud nine.

"To use the void's name in your title is quite bold. Don't you think you'll incur its wrath by doing so?" Wrath sneered. He didn't know anything about Tian Yang, so naturally, his title wouldn't matter either.

Tian Yang scoffed in return. "If you want to test my qualifications, I'd be more than happy to show you. What, did you not hear me the first time I challenged you?"

Wrath gritted his teeth. No matter how enraged he was at Tian Yang's constant rebuttals, he couldn't move rashly. Tian Yang wasn't someone he could bully like the rest of the Demigods present.

The conversation between the two naturally progressed from this point, with many verbal blows being exchanged. Wrath didn't have the confidence to directly face Tian Yang yet, so this was the most he could do to maintain his face.

But standing below them quietly, Damien could no longer hear them.

His mind was buzzing, a high-pitched ringing resonating in his ears and blocking out all other sounds. Even his eyesight was taken from him.

The World Energy whirlpool around his body flared up again, the energy that was keeping him paralyzed dispersing back into the atmosphere.

Yet, Damien still didn't move at all.

Within his body, a change was occurring. Damien was already aware of what this signified.

Whatever mode the Void Physique wanted to make, it was making it now.

Bang!

An explosion occurred within. Damien's left side, just below his ribs, was blasted into pieces.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Both legs were turned into mush in an instant, but they soon began to regrow under the effects of Transcendent Regeneration.

While Damien's body randomly combusting was a strange and harrowing sight, in reality, it was nothing more than a byproduct of the processes taking place within his internal systems.

Massive changes were taking place. The true effects of the World Energy that wracked his body moments prior began to show.

If Damien had to put it into words, that influx of World Energy was a primer. By adapting to the flow it forced into his body, bai circuits were already heated and his bodily systems working at full power. Even the World Core Fusion Reactor hungrily interfered with his body, attempting to consume every trace of World Energy it found.

The reason his body was changing was because it was finally adapting to the pathways laid out by World Energy. The combustion was due to major changes that completely inverted or countered the existing flow of energy through his body, creating a naturally chaotic reaction.

Yet, this was only the primer. While his body rapidly changed, Void Essence leaked from his mysterious connection to his physique, randomly appearing in his body like black clouds.

'This...what does it want to do?' Damien questioned, his expression becoming dignified. Despite the pain, he was still clear-headed. By this point, he'd gotten used to losing limbs every once in a while.

What he questioned was the Void Essence's purpose. For it to intrude into his body without his control, there had to be some sort of plan.

And soon enough, this plan was introduced to Damien in a bout of pain so unimaginable that he didn't think it was possible.

While the entire battlefield was paused and focused on Tian Yang and Wrath, a tense silence had enveloped it.

But in that moment, the silence was interrupted by a harrowing scream of agony.

Chapter 577 Baptism [17]

"AHHHHHHHHH!"

Damien's agonizing roars rang out even through the frozen battlefield around him. The process of change his body was undergoing suddenly became far fiercer.

Against his will, the Void Essence clouds in his body began circulating through it, fusing into his Mana Circuits.

And although he was usually unaffected by the harmful side of Void Essence, the same couldn't be said about his current situation. As Void Essence attempted to penetrate his Mana Circuit, Damien was subjected to endless waves of scorching pain, as if he was being burned alive by the fire that created the universe.

It had to be known, Damien's mana circuit wasn't simply a circuit inside his body. There was an ethereal component as well that didn't exist in the Real Plane. This ethereal circuit was like a backup and supplementary circuit.

When his physical circuit didn't work, it took over. And when his physical circuit worked fine, it'd assist and double the efficiency of any work it was doing.

This circuit was untouchable. It was the pinnacle of Damien's technical knowledge and the Ananta Matrix's ability to evolve.

Yet, this circuit was currently infected with Void Essence, turning into what looked like a diagram of complexly intertwined roots projected over his body.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!"

His terrifying screams had no end. Compared to his paralyzed state from before, his current situation was far more vulnerable. And when it came to pain, this was the most he'd ever felt in his entire life.

Damien was only lucky for Tian Yang, no, the Void Old Immortal's presence. Because of him, Wrath didn't have the confidence to move, and Odin had been put in his place and was scared witless. Even Albeus and the Drunken Old Immortal left their positions, moving to aid their lessers against the four Demigods from both Niflheim and Asgard.

This left Damien unthreatened by those terrifying existences in the sky. As for the 4th classes, they didn't have time to even think about Damien under the combined barrage of the allied 4th classes and Avalon.

But none of this mattered to Damien. How could he stay conscious about the outside situation?

Void Essence finally managed to penetrate his Mana Circuits. Immediately upon contact with his free-flowing mana, it reacted and spread like a virus.

It was like watching a river turn black with squid ink. The iridescent blue and purple colors of Damien's mana were wiped completely, replaced by a black deeper than the abyss.

Damien felt his mana reserves plummet immediately. It felt like if he checked his status at the moment, the Mana Capacity section would have a glaring "0" written in it.

"NO! I WON'T ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN!"

His words came out as a bellow only he could hear. In this situation, he didn't even have time to despair before collecting his thoughts.

The burning will he forged through the countless trials before this moment was being tested in the harshest conditions. Even though the process itself was incredibly strange, it was still a product of his Baptism.

The second he realized the emergency situation with his mana reserves, Damien acted. He didn't waste time trying to think up a plan. This time, he had to trust his natural instincts and comprehensive power.

And the first thing he instinctually did...was circulate his mana.

Whether or not it could be called mana anymore was still in question, but regardless, Damien circulated the essence polluting his Mana Circuits as fiercely as he could.

One revolution...two revolutions...five revolutions...

The process repeated on loop. Every time a revolution was completed, it became far easier for him to move the Essence. At the same time, the leak in his mana reserve was slowly being patched up as well.

VOOM!

A wave of power spread from Damien's body, incorporating into the revolving World Essence whirlpool around him. The process that Damien instinctively tried to activate was starting.

Ba-dum!

Damien's Mana Heart thumped powerfully. With every thump, the mana in his body, rather than returning to its previous state, turned an even darker shade of black.

'This is...!'

Now that the immediate danger was gone, he had the time to at least assess the situation.

As he watched how the Void Essence corrupted his mana, Damien suddenly realized something.

'This is Devour?!'

Right, the Devour skill was activated and devouring his mana on its own. But that wasn't the only thing. Mixed with the Void Essence was a hidden and almost unnoticeable trace of World Essence that was guiding it.

'What is it...?'

Before Damien could question again, another wave of power spread from his body. His Mana Circuits began physically changing.

The Ananta Matrix was made to adapt. This was its first and main function. It was made and constantly improved so that it would never break, someday becoming entirely invincible and perpetual.

Even in a situation like this one, even when facing the ferocity of Void Essence, this quality shone through.

After all, the damage he was undergoing was a byproduct of the Void Essence's invasion. When it came to the situation itself, things were actually simple. As long as his Ananta Matrix could contain Void Essence, all other problems would naturally solve themselves.

This was the card Damien relied on. If it wasn't for this evolving ability, perhaps he truly would've been crippled by the sudden change in his body.

Damiens Mana Heart thumped wildly. His Mana Circuits continued to morph, becoming sturdier and thicker, expanding their channels to hold more mana. At the same time, they seemed to take on a mysterious property that allowed it to house Void Essence without a problem.

Naturally, this change was caused by fusing with Void Essence and mirroring its properties. Small bits of World Essence were fused into the Circuits as well.

His current Ananta Matrix had gone through a significant change. After the World Energy Baptism and Void Essence Baptism it received, it could hardly even be called the same circuit anymore.

When the process finally completed, everything fell into a lull.

The World Energy whirlpool halted, the battle beyond its reach freezing in time. Only Damien was moving in the static world.

But this moment was like the calm before the storm. Before Damien could even admire the mystical scene that made him feel more powerful than Divinities, he felt a feeling like millions of ants crawling through his skin.

When he looked down, he noticed his body turning black. His extremities were already encased in the unbreakable obsidian-like substance. His torso was rapidly enveloped even as he watched it happen.

Damien couldn't stop the process no matter how he pushed his mana. He couldn't even move his body now that he was petrified from the neck down.

He could feel it clearly. As the obsidian-like substance crawled up his face and into his orifices, he felt like he was being drowned and suffocated.

It was at this moment that panic finally set in.

But it was already too late.

Damien's body was frozen in the obsidian substance like a statue, frozen in time along with everything else.

While the change Damien underwent took a long time to explain, the actual time it took was extremely short. From the first scream that jolted the battlefield around him, not even 5 minutes had passed. This drastic turn of events left people flabbergasted.

Rose, Ruyue, Aishia, and even Lynn looked towards the black statue in which Damien was encased with worry. It was only natural that they wouldn't be able to understand what was happening.

As for the Demigods, even they were in the dark. The Void Physique was an existence that surpassed even them. The only reason for its lack of power was Damien's lack of power.

But there were a few who roughly understood what was happening. Among them, Wrath and Tian Yang.

Chapter 578 Baptism [18]

In terms of Demigods, Tian Yang was among the strongest. This wasn't something limited to the Human Domain, it held true even when comparing him to the wider 9 Sectors.

To reach this level of power, staying in the Cloud Plane, no, staying in the Human Domain wasn't enough. Tian Yang had lived for around 50,000 years, and in that time, he'd explored the surrounding sectors and even made a name for himself on the Dimensional Leaderboard.

The average Demigods of the Human Domain couldn't compare to him, whether it be in strength or breadth of knowledge. As such, it was natural for Tian Yang to have a greater understanding of the situation than even the Drunken Old Immortal.

Yet, the Void Physique wasn't some common physique that the other sectors had a great deal of information about. Regardless of what he knew, he couldn't compare to Wrath.

The two strongest experts present stood in the sky across from each other. While their eyes remained on Damien's statue, their awarenesses were clashing mid-air. If one of them dared to move, the other would stop them without hesitation.

Tian Yang cracked a half-smile. "What, didn't you want to absorb his power? Now is the perfect time, isn't it? Why are you hesitating?"

"Tch. There is no need for you to provoke me. I am not so foolish as to fall for your little tricks." Wrath spat back.

Tian Yang nodded in disappointment. "I see, so you're just a coward like the rest of them. From how obsessed you seemed with the seed, I'd expect more from you."

"Obsession is one thing, and rationality is another. If I move right now, what end awaits me?"

"Who knows." Tian Yang shrugged. "Don't you want to find out?"

He cracked his knuckles in anticipation. Tian Yang wasn't some kind of savage, but that didn't mean he didn't love battle. In fact, battle maniacs were more common than not in this universe where the fastest path to strength was slaughter.

Only, at his level of power, there weren't many who could challenge him anymore. Even if he wished to go find opponents in the other sectors, they wouldn't accept his challenges. On the precipice of wartime, nobody wanted to waste their strength or risk injury, at least among the Demigods.

Therefore, the only viable enemies for the current Tian Yang were the Nox. Now that he'd found an opponent he'd been waiting so long for, how could he just let him go?

Tian Yang was trying to provoke Wrath into battle mainly to satiate his own urges, but also to protect Damien. At this critical juncture, Rǎn Yang didn't want his young disciple to experience any setbacks. If he did, it might leave a permanent scar on his heart.

For Damien whose greatest wish was to be unrestrained, Tian Yang felt a kinship surpassing master and disciple. He truly felt like a grandfather watching his grandson achieve what he could not.

'Work hard and achieve your dreams. As your master, I'll support you from the back and take care of the troublesome matters. After all...'

Tian Yang shook his head and refocused on Wrath. He'd given up ascension due to certain chains holding him in the lower universe. He didn't want to see Damien experience the same fate.

And for that to happen, he'd first help Damien take care of the things that he was still too weak to take care of.

When he reached the level he desired, Tian Yang would be there watching from behind. Damien's glory would be his own.

Thinking this far, he couldn't help but smile.

Damien was completely lucid within the cocoon. He could clearly feel the sticky tar-like substance snaking across his skin and devouring it. He could feel the essence attached to this substance penetrating into his body and making changes as it pleased.

It was an extremely uncomfortable feeling. Especially because Damien, the owner of this body, couldn't understand what was happening to him. He could only vaguely feel the movements of the Essence within.

This was similar to the process of evolution Damien usually underwent, but at the same time, it was different.

And after so many years of being forced to use his critical thinking skills, Damien became far quicker in understanding and analyzing. He realized that this was his chance. To throw away everything useless and bring his body closer to the perfection he desired.

However, the cocoon of Void Essence began this process without his control, doing an overall wash to its wishes.

If this continued, Damien would only reach a general perfection. There was naturally a difference between this and Damien's own perception of the concept.

He wanted to reach perfection through his own lens.

Damien began struggling against the essence in his body. Rousing his mana, he attempted to forcefully take control over the Void Essence. But did he ever have such control over it? Even beforehand, he was only borrowing its strength. He had yet to understand its structure enough to wrest its control.

At most, he could take control over a few strands. He would still get the rebirth he desired, but his jurisdiction over its direction would be limited to around 25%.

'...that's more than enough. Even if I'm not actively controlling the rest, it is still working towards what the Void Physique perceived as perfection. If so, I need to make the most out of the 25% I can control.'

The few strands of Void Essence that Damien could move were directed towards a few specific parts of his body. These were Nodal Points as well as areas that had experienced evolution.

His legs that evolved after devouring the first Lightning Wolf, his throat that evolved after devouring the Wyvern, his eyes that evolved after eating that cursed spider, and all the other areas he'd inherited from others began going through drastic changes.

But more than that, he focused his energy on was his Mana Circuits.

With his current state, he wasn't in need of another massive power boost. He'd already received more power than he knew what to do with, and he needed time to adjust to it. If he decided to continue wantonly raising his strength, he would simply become an empty shell who couldn't even mobilize a portion of his full strength, conversely weakening him.

Instead, what Damien focused on was ridding himself of problems he had in the past and preparing for problems that might arise in the future.

His physical and ethereal Mana Circuits were one of these. Evidently, his mana wouldn't be the same as it used to be anymore. The pitch-black mana flowing through his Mana Veins was completely different than anything he'd ever seen before.

If this mana continued to grow and proliferate, his body and circuits might not be able to handle it. More than that, as his mana was now intrinsically linked to the Void Physique, Damien needed to make sure it wouldn't rebel against him.

After all, regardless of how long the Void Physique had been with him, Damien couldn't completely trust such a mysterious physique that seemed to have its own consciousness.

Within the cocoon, Damien was quite literally going through metamorphosis.

The man who exited after the process was finished...

Would be a completely different monster compared to the man who entered at the beginning.

Chapter 579 Baptism [19]

Void Essence was a strange thing. In terms of profundity, even space and time combined couldn't hold a candle to it.

Even Damien's understanding of it was only 1% at most. To even claim to be in control of this essence would only be arrogance on his part.

But it was true that he had a method by which he could more easily comprehend the Void. This was the Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary's formation was by complete coincidence. Damien only wanted to borrow the power of Void Essence to make a subspace in which he could contain life. Yet, somehow, the Sanctuary was born.

In comparison to true worlds, the Sanctuary wasn't much, but it was still far more secure than an isolated space. And more than anything else, the Sanctuary had its own budding foundational laws.

This was a characteristic that even True Worlds didn't have. The foundational laws of True Worlds were inherited from the universe. Despite the differences in the qualities of their ambient mana, the rules that made up all things on those worlds were all uniform.

The Sanctuary didn't match this uniformity. It received constant nourishment from the Void itself, being situated within it. As such, it was slowly forming its own laws in a way that mirrored a human comprehending their element.

The key points derived from this process were two. Firstly, it meant that Damien, as the master and creator of the Sanctuary, had the ability to tweak and control these foundational laws, making him akin to a god within. And secondly, he could use this process to gain more understanding of the Void itself, since contacting it was nigh impossible with any other method.

But even then, Damien didn't have the qualifications to partake in this method of comprehension. With his previous power level, no matter how much he pondered upon it or tried to analyze it, he wouldn't gain anything. Any insight that he did gain would vanish from his memories like it never existed.

There was only one thing he understood: the Void was not a singular concept. If it was, there was no way it could provide the Sanctuary with the fuel it needed to maintain itself without a World Core.

The five elements, life and death, space and time, creation and destruction, and any variants that stemmed from their foundation, the Void could perfectly create them all.

It was more than just ethereal. It was magisterial to an incomprehensible level. It almost seemed like the Void could do anything.

As he underwent evolution within the Void Essence cocoon, Damien felt this even more clearly.

It wasn't just his body that was changing. It was only that his bodily change was far more rapid and easily sensed. In fact, within Damien, there were far more esoteric changes taking place.

There was a mysterious space in his body, a space that even he couldn't sense the existence of. Within this space, there were three things.

There were two colorless essences, one in the shape of a cube and the other without shape at all. These two mingled with each other and constantly intertwined, showing their affinity towards each other.

These were space and time, the representations of them that manifested Damien's affinities.

As for the third construct, it was a small reddish-black seed. On its surface, mystical runes of flame and lighting danced as if they were alive.

This seed represented the final affinity in Damien's status window, a mystery that had remained unsolved to this day.

These three forces usually cohabitated this mysterious space, continuously following the same dreary routine. But today, massive changes were taking place.

Strands of Void Essence rapidly converged within this space, invading these three constructs and forcing them to undergo changes.

The space and time essences were already mingling, but they never crossed the boundaries that would connect them as one.

This was mainly because Damien's comprehension was lacking, but also because fusing them wasn't an easy task at all. To do this would require a powerhouse to first sense the existence of this space and only then take years upon years to slowly allow them to fuse.

However, Damien was exempt from this. Void Essence coiled around these space and time constructs, pushing them together. It acted as the glue, allowing them to fuse without problems.

Let alone needing to take steps towards this process, Damien wasn't even aware that it was occurring! He could only vaguely feel that his affinities were going through an extreme change, evolving alongside him.

But even this was rudimentary. As Damien grew in power, he would've taken this step regardless.

The truly massive change within the mysterious space was the one that made the least noise.

With a few nudges from the Void Essence, that tiny reddish-black seed began to crack. From the crack, a small sprout began to bloom.

The sprout pulsated with power. The aura coming from it infected everything else, even traveling outside the mysterious space and affecting reality.

The flames and lighting resting within Damien's Mana Heart responded fiercely to this pulsation, chaotically flaring.

The Void Flames already had the ability to swallow power to grow. While this ability was usually limited to other flames, the energy from the reddish-black sprout was an exception. The Void Flames happily devoured this energy, a tinge of asuran red appearing in their visage.

Damien's lighting showed an even more substantial response. It had been neglected for many years, slowly fading out of prominence. When compared to any of Damien's other abilities, it lagged too far behind.

The only benefit this lightning had provided Damien recently was resistance. Because of his affinity, he was able to resist the Heavenly Lightning that struck him during his Partial and True Baptisms. More

than that, he was even able to contain a few strands of silver Heavenly Lightning to use as life-saving measures in the future.

It was just a shame that the first enemy Damien truly required these measures against was a Demigod. To combat them, a mere strand of silver Heavenly Lightning wasn't anywhere near enough.

But against someone at the same level, this lightning was deadly. Even against those peak 4th class existences, using this lightning would provide Damien a second of respite. This was more than enough time for him to warp away.

Now, with the Heavenly Lightning coming in contact with the reddish-black energy, it began to revolt.

It attempted to run wild in Damien's body, doing everything it could to destroy that energy. But with Void Essence present, how could it be allowed to do as it pleased?

Even this Heavenly Lightning was being forced to incorporate into Damien's ability, truly becoming a property of his lightning. Even if it wasn't as powerful as its original form, it was still a major power boost for Damien's previous black lightning.

Under Void Essence's guidance, every facet of Damien's being received a boost. Even his Legends became more defined.

Slowly but surely, the process continued. After a full half an hour, Damien's body finished its evolution. With his usual evolutions taking a few minutes at most, it could be seen how drastic the changes he went through were.

When a full hour finally passed, the more ethereal changes also reached completion. Spiderweb cracks began to form on the Void Essence cocoon. As the outside situation had remained still during the process, this cracking clearly resounded in the ears of all those present.

And finally, many seconds later...

A jade-white hand broke through the shell.

Chapter 580 Baptism [20]

It was strange how fast a situation could change.

Mere moments ago, hundreds of thousands of troops were earnestly fighting to kill each other, even 4th classes were dropping like flies. But with the arrival of Tian Yang and his following movements, everything went quiet.

Not even the troops below dared to move, as they feared the consequences of offending this new Demigod. After all, before his arrival, they weren't able to see the other Demigods in the sky who were covered by Authorities.

Damien's situation was the cherry on top. Even an idiot could understand that these Demigods were paying close attention to him. Hell, the start of this war was due to Wrath's desire to get his hands on the Seed.

When the Void Essence cocoon covered him, surprise was the main emotion among them. Especially the 4th classes who already underwent Baptism, they were clearest on the strangeness of his situation.

A normal Baptism was simple. One's comprehension of elements would be put to the test along with their mentality. While the method of testing and difficulty varied greatly per person, the underlying intent was usually the same.

A situation like Damien's was uncalled for. What did it mean? Why did it carry so much significance that even a Demigod would earnestly watch?

All these questions were doomed to go unanswered, but at the very least, these practitioners were happy to be present at what seemed to be a monumental moment.

Crack!

When that crack rang out, tensions reached an all-time high. And finally, Damien's hand pushed through, allowing the cocoon to crumble and fade into nothingness.

Standing in the air now was a heroic youth. His momentum was both heroic and demonic at the same time, giving him an unpredictable aura, but his true aura was actually not present at all.

If it wasn't for common sense, the previous events, and the fact that he was currently hovering in the air, it wouldn't be difficult to mistake him for a common mortal.

But this was only for those weaker beings. The 4th classes could faintly feel a hint of the power he possessed, but the Demigods were far clearer.

They could easily sense the all-encompassing yet non-existent aura radiating from his body. To be able to give them this kind of feeling, Damien didn't even seem human anymore.

Rose and Ruyue were perhaps the most surprised by the new Damien that came out after his evolution. After all, his appearance had gone through great changes!

His skin had always been milky-white, mirroring the finest jade, but this effect was even more exaggerated now. His smooth and unblemished skin made him seem like a sculpture carved out of the rarest minerals in existence.

His hair, which had been uncut for many years, fell down his back like a midnight waterfall. However, unlike before, those streaks of silver were no longer present. His hair had reverted back to its previous glossy black appearance.

And below his sharp eyebrows were two mystical purple eyes. Even they had reverted to how they were before Damien's evolution. No longer did they swirl along with the blood-red color that used to be there.

In essence, Damien's appearance regressed in a positive way. The only facet of his previous special appearance that remained were his cross-shaped pupils.

This change in appearance wasn't done on purpose, it was a natural byproduct of his path to perfection. After all, the changes in his appearance were always imperfections.

His hair and eyes were byproducts of a time when he was young and unskilled. Back then, Damien had only just unlocked the functions of his Void Physique and gone through his first evolution.

It was only natural that this evolution wouldn't be as complete as those that came after it. Whether it be his hair or his eyes, they were both caused by his first evolution.

Previously, he didn't have the ability to go back and change what had happened in the past. The damage had been done. And with the general public not raising any concerns over his flashiness, he slowly got used to it.

But that didn't change the fact that they were imperfections.

The Void Physique was able to perfectly evolve Damien's body and incorporate the traits of those he devoured. Even when he gained special bloodlines, they never affected his external appearance. This was the ideal.

The only reason the All-Seeing Eyes maintained their cross-shaped pupils is because they functioned as both a trait and a skill. While he acquired them through devouring a spider beast, they were no longer the same pupils from back then.

More than anything else, reverting to the appearance he was given at birth made Damien feel refreshed. He felt more like himself than he ever did before.

And when that was combined with the unbridled power he felt coursing through his veins...

He threw his head back and roared into the sky. Dragon Pressure spread from his body in waves, giving off an extremely threatening feeling. Some 3rd class soldiers in his direct vicinity were killed by this pressure alone.

Finally.

Finally, after so many years, his Baptism was complete.

There were no messages from the system, no indications that he passed, but he knew it instinctively. He was no longer on the same level as those small 3rd class existences.

As his hands clenched into fists, he could feel the essence of the world moving with them.

He could feel Laws.

It was a mystical feeling. Who knew that the space he had been mingling with since young could give him such a clear feeling? It felt as if he was connected with it, he had become one with it. It wasn't just his closest companion anymore. Space was him and he was space.

But at the same time, it wasn't just space. Whenever he interacted with space, he found that time would sneak its way in. And when he interacted with time, the same situation would occur with space.

Within his body, these two elements had been intrinsically linked. Rather than saying he had affinities for space and time, it was more accurate to just call it a singular space-time affinity.

'Tch. To think the difference between utilizing laws with the help of World Force would feel so different from doing it personally. I was an idiot to think that World Force alone put me on par with those experts like Bai Xieren.'

Back then, he'd mistakenly believed that even if he faced Bai Xieren, he'd have a chance at victory due to World Force. But he was older now and far smarter. More than that, he finally understood how it felt to be a 4th class.

Even if they were on the Cloud Plane and he had complete control over World Force, he wouldn't have been able to defeat Bai Xieren. Her ability was her own, while Damien would only be borrowing a mere portion of the Cloud Plane's power.

He shook his head in dismay. He didn't even realize how insane his arrogance had been. If it wasn't for the fact that those powerful beings he interacted with on the Cloud Plane were allies and those who respected his position as the Star Master, he would've been squashed like a bug.

The god-like omniscience that binding a world provided easily got to his head. With him still in the process of mentally maturing, this was even more so.

But he didn't have time to feel the true extent of his embarrassment towards his past actions. After all, he'd just received an immense boost in power.

To consolidate that power as well as understand his limits, there was only one thing for him to do.

His battle intent blazed.

Today, he would fight and kill until he either ran out of enemies, or dropped dead himself!