

Void 611

Chapter 611 Storm Heavens [1]

The festivities surrounding the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm only became more pronounced as the time for its opening drew closer. All around, uninvolved parties fervently discussed their predictions on how the present geniuses would place after exiting the Mystic Realm.

"Heavenly Jewel Palace's Marcus Scrow is already at the peak of 3rd class. There's no way the other geniuses will be able to match up to him!" A wandering practitioner commented with surety.

"That's true, but have you heard about the Eclipse Sect's princess? I heard that she's a member of a Hidden Clan. Even if her level is weak, her combat power might be astonishing!"

The first practitioner nodded his head in agreement. In terms of raw power, Holy Son Marcus had an undoubtable lead, but it was unsure how many geniuses surpassed his combat power. After all, these geniuses didn't show themselves to the outside world very often. It was difficult for the common eye to estimate their strength.

"Has anyone noticed the Sun and Moon Sect? Their peak genius hasn't shown themselves yet. Only their normal disciples have left the spirit ship." A more observant onlooker said.

Those around him immediately shifted their attention, and slowly, they realized the truth of his words. There were no outstanding youths in the Sun and Moon Sect's camp. While those present were still geniuses, it was to a far lesser extent.

This discovery made the crowd increasingly curious. Was the Sun and Moon Sect unable to produce a genius or were they hiding a true gem?

Only when the Mystic Realm opened would the answer be revealed.

Damien and Zara went unnoticed in the fervor. They were already relatively low profile, and after merging their auras into the world and becoming less noticeable to the untrained eye, this effect became more exaggerated.

This time, Damien truly couldn't be bothered to cause problems or get caught up in them. These surrounding disciples were just kids in his eyes, people who'd never experienced reality outside of their comfort zones.

Mystic Realms always held the threat of death, this much was true. There were even some Mystic Realms that functioned in a battle royale format. However, at the end of the day, Damien didn't put this experience on the same level as his own.

In a Mystic Realm, trials were simulated and rewards were promised with every success. The mentality and will forged by these younger geniuses naturally wouldn't match up to the bloodlust formed through years of slaughter and brutal training.

Still, he had to applaud the Divine Realm for its standards. Even geniuses from a tiny corner of the sector like the Dawn World were able to match up to the Human Domain's younger generation. Only the heaven-defying human geniuses like Long Chen could surpass them.

If that were the case, then those true Holy Land-level influences would surely have immensely capable geniuses. Those were the people Damien actually wanted to meet.

Still, experiencing the novelty of being powerful enough to dominate everything wasn't a bad thing. In recent times, Damien had become too used to the presence of Demigods at every turn.

His figure quietly departed his position and arrived next to the princess. He'd already heard the surrounding conversations, but his opinion differed from theirs.

This princess had some sort of strange physique or bloodline, he could understand that much from a glance, but her current elemental comprehension hadn't progressed enough for her to compete with that Marcus character.

The princess was the main reason Damien could integrate with Divine Realm society as rapidly as he did. Without her aid, even convincing the Eclipse Sect Master to accept his presence would've been far more difficult.

It wouldn't have been strange if he roused the entire sect to stand against Damien. In that situation, even Damien wouldn't come out unscathed. But because of the princess' trust, he was given the benefit of the doubt.

Luckily for Damien, the princess had a lightning affinity. This was an area where he could provide some help. In this way, he could clear the debt between them.

"Princess, close your eyes and spread your awareness." Damien's mental transmission entered her ears.

By this point, the princess already viewed Damien as a spiritual god in her heart. She trusted him without a sliver of doubt, following his instructions.

Damien nodded his head and put his finger up to the princess' forehead. A spark of silver lightning danced around his hand and entered the princess' spiritual world. Afterward, it burst into a domineering aura that clouded her mind!

The princess was afraid at first, but rapidly adapted to this new situation. As she probed the mysterious aura, she found that it contained the purest lightning essence she'd ever felt!

If she could comprehend the secrets of this lightning even a little, her power level would experience a sharp incline!

After all, Damien's lightning was infused with Heavenly Lightning from the universe itself. While it wasn't the highest tier of lightning in existence, it was definitely near the peak! For a practitioner at the princess' level, this was the best gift he could give.

What she did with that gift would depend on her own talent.

This small interaction was likely the most interesting thing that happened for Damien during the wait. In many areas, geniuses had already begun warring words, and many existing blood debts were resurfacing in such an immense gathering. People were even betting on the geniuses' placings when they exited the Mystic Realm.

In this atmosphere of excitement and anticipation, days passed. Finally, on the 9th day of waiting, a change occurred in the Mystic Realm gate.

Thick bolts of lightning danced around the opaque portal. The sound of rumbling thunder emanated from its body. At one point, the portal itself began shaking uncontrollably.

And finally, after so long, the opaque portal became translucent. Through its screen, it was possible to see the foggy outline of a different world.

"Go! Remember, you are the prides of our sect! Show them what it means to eclipse the heavens!" The Eclipse Sect Master shouted. His cries mixed in with the countless others in the vicinity as all the surrounding powers prepared to enter the gate!

Battle intent soared to the sky, excited cheers becoming louder and louder with time. After hearing the words of their Sect Masters, all the present geniuses roused their mana and bolted into the spatial gate!

It was like a tsunami of bodies, the scene was incredibly overwhelming to some of the mortals in the crowd.

Near the middle of the group, Damien and Zara silently flew. In the crowd, only the Eclipse Sect Master noticed their presence.

He felt a foreboding feeling in his heart, as if some major event was about to occur. Thinking about it, only these two could cause such a feeling in him, right?

He suddenly began to worry about his disciples. It wouldn't just be Damien and Zara, but countless other geniuses from other worlds. Mystic Realms were brutal competitions that could crush one's spirit instantly.

It was something Damien didn't realize because he already stood at the peak of talent and potential. When the geniuses of the Divine Realm competed, they did so with every other genius on the Dimensional Leaderboard.

In an instance where a top 1,000 or even top 100,000 genius appeared, how would these lesser geniuses keep their hearts firm? Half of a genius' pride came from the fact that they didn't know how high the heavens were.

How could a genius keep their pride if they were repeatedly exposed to people who they'd never be able to touch? How could they continue after realizing that they'd never achieve even a fraction of what these true geniuses would in the future?

However, this was the path of a genius. They were like moths edging closer to a flame. No matter how one attempted to convince them otherwise, they'd never let their paths be hindered.

That was the marking of a true genius.

The only thing the Eclipse Sect Master could do was wait patiently and hope for the best. Chapter 612
Storm Heavens [2]

The atmosphere was desolate.

Dark plains of grey and withered dirt spread as far as the eye could see. An eternal canopy of thick black clouds hung in the sky, blocking any potential sunlight this land could've received. In the center of this desolate land sat a single altar large enough to hold hundreds of people. This pure gold piece of land was the only splash of color in the otherwise bleak area.

This space was the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm. As soon as the group of geniuses entered, they were met with this scene.

Every Mystic Realm was different at a fundamental level. It wasn't always certain that one would be allowed to understand the task before completing it. In some Mystic Realms, one had to understand every facet of the trial on their own.

"Everyone! Follow my lead if you don't wish to be killed!" A voice suddenly resounded. This was none other than Marcus Strow from the Heavenly Jewel Palace. He was undoubtedly the one with the highest status here.

"This Storm Heavens Mystic Realm should be a talent-based trial. I believe we should first search the altar and see if there are any clues there. If we can't find anything, we can split into small groups to explore the Mystic Realm's other areas." He continued to say.

Marcus Strow was an ambitious person, but also a charismatic leader. He was already set to be the Heavenly Jewel Palace's next Sect Master. Hearing his logical words and authoritative tone, many geniuses felt the instinctive urge to follow his command.

Even those who didn't want to follow his lead had no choice. His words were indeed the most practical way to continue.

At the back of the crowd, the Eclipse Sect princess stood together with Damien and Zara. Her loyalty had reached an almost fanatic state after Damien's previous gift, and she refused to leave his side.

"Big brother, should we follow him?" She asked curiously.

Damien shrugged and responded blandly, "Follow him if you want. Why ask me?"

"Hmph! I know big brother is better than that fool. I'd rather follow you!" The princess uttered defiantly.

Damien shrugged once more. He decided to just let the little princess do as she pleased. It wasn't like she was wrong.

Damien felt the strangeness of this world immediately upon entry. The thick clouds in the sky weren't simple at all, and even the desolate and withered soil below emitted a dangerous aura.

'Storm Heavens Mystic Realm, huh. The name is quite on the nose.' Damien thought to himself. As he continued examining, he realized that the soil's condition was most likely related to the clouds above.

The entire desolate atmosphere was connected. And the key to that connection was...

Damien grabbed Zara and the little princess and disappeared. In the next instant, the three appeared standing atop the golden altar.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?!" Marcus yelled. He couldn't believe that people were recklessly moving without listening to him.

He soon realized the princess' identity, but Damien and Zara were still unknowns to him. He only assumed they were her servants.

"Jiao Mei, what do you think you're doing?! Do you think being reckless will allow you to surpass me?!" He yelled furiously.

The princess looked up at Damien for a brief instant. Seeing him smile slightly, she was immediately emboldened.

"Hmph! You do not matter enough for me to compete so fiercely with you. Did you never think that perhaps I understood the trial before you did?" She sneered back.

In truth, she did have a partial understanding towards the nature of the trial. This was because she was a talented lightning affinity practitioner who'd just absorbed a strand of heavenly lightning. Her perception was more than just acute.

However this perception would only get her so far. She was mainly relying on Damien's guidance and word.

"Hahahaha! You think you can surpass me? Just because of your mysterious physique? Don't make me laugh!" Marcus yelled. He turned to the surrounding geniuses and continued speaking.

"Everyone! The Eclipse Sect princess is acting without thinking and trying to sabotage all of our chances at proceeding! Lend me your aid in defeating her and removing her from the podium!"

His ability to instigate a crowd wasn't a joke. Hearing that someone was attempting to sabotage them, the crowd's hearts turned cold. There was no mercy in Mystic Realms, regardless of status!

But with Damien present, would these normal geniuses even have a chance to attack? While nobody paid attention to him, he casually observed the altar.

It was a large flat pedestal for the most part, with ancient runic engravings etched on its surface. The only protrusions from this flat plane were two gargoyle-like statues worshipping a ritual grail at the back center of the altar.

Damien moved towards the gargoyles without hesitation and ripped the ritual grail out of their hands. In that instant, the originally calm atmosphere erupted!

Rumble!

The ground started quaking ferociously. The black clouds above swirled in outrage. Thick bolts of lightning coagulated, striking the soil with unstoppable momentum!

"Ahhh—" A bolt of lightning fell on a nearby genius and turned him into ashes instantly. Everyone's faces paled. This lightning...wasn't something they could handle!

"The altar! The altar is safe!" Someone screamed. Geniuses turned into streaks of light as they bolted to the altar, but the lightning was faster!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Hundreds of lightning bolts danced through the air, creating chains of lightning as they interacted with each other and proliferated through the air. Every genius caught in this lightning web died without fail!

Marcus Strow's eyes turned red with madness. Seeing the surrounding scene, he realized that the princess truly understood the trial before him!

Mystic Realms weren't always singular spaces. Most of the time, they contained two to three trials to accurately test every genius that entered. But now, Marcus had already lost the lead from the first instant!

He flew through the air, brutally destroying any lightning that got near him. A small force field spread around him and blocked off any elemental essence other than wind, his affinity. This was the elementary form of the domain he was building.

Under its protection, Marcus dashed through the lightning heroically, rushing at the divine altar!

Crackle!

An abrupt bolt of lightning appeared from the sky only inches away from Marcus' body. He realized that it was already too late to dodge! In the last moment before impact, he twisted his body at an impossible angle to subvert fatal injuries!

BANG!

The lightning made impact on Marcus' side, burning through his flesh and even a portion of his rib cage. Luckily, he managed to survive, though his mana capacity was near empty.

But that didn't matter. He wasn't too far away from the altar now. With a final push, he bolted through the air and broke through the altar's protection, finally reaching safety!

Marcus breathed heavily as he stabilized himself. That trial was more perilous than he'd expected.

Sadly, Marcus' fate wasn't very lucky. The time he chose to arrive at the altar was the worst one possible.

After all, Damien stealing the ritual grail was the reason the trial began. If he wasn't punished for disturbing the space's sanctity, how could it have peace?

The dark clouds around the altar became increasingly thick until finally...

BOOOOOM!

A heaven-shaking eruption of bright silver light encompassed the entirety of the divine altar.

Chapter 613 Storm Heavens [3]

Beautiful silver lightning painted the otherwise desolate atmosphere in its color. While the sight itself was mesmerizing, its connotation made every genius pale.

They were desperately escaping the lightning around them in hopes of reaching the altar, their only hope, yet they found that the altar itself was the most dangerous part of the trial. How could they not be terrified?

Unfortunately, they didn't even have time to panic. The altar's situation didn't change the fact that lightning was still attacking them. Instead of caring about those in a worse situation than them, they'd rather think about how they'd survive!

However, the scene within the altar's brilliance wasn't what these geniuses imagined. The silver lightning constantly attempted to strike the altar's surface, but it wasn't given the opportunity to. The bright eruption viewable from the outside was caused by residual lightning alone.

On the divine altar, Damien stood with his hands on Jiao Mei's back. Whenever lightning arrived around them, he circulated it through his and her body, creating a circuit that would enhance both of their power.

While it was true that he could absorb all the surrounding lightning alone, the truth was that he didn't need it. This silver lightning wasn't Heavenly Lightning, only a mimicry. Therefore, even if he absorbed it all he wouldn't benefit much.

The princess, on the other hand, would benefit immensely. Instead of wasting this lightning, what was the harm in using it to raise another genius who could aid in the war later?

Nevertheless, Damien, Zara, and Jiao Mei were entirely relaxed inside the silver lightning storm. Only Marcus Strow was drowning in distress.

He used a great deal of his mana just to survive the lightning outside the altar, and now that he was inside, he didn't have the energy to survive. The only reason he could stay alive until now was because most of the surrounding lightning was absorbed by Damien and the princess.

Still, his body was covered in gruesome burn wounds from the residual lightning alone. If the trial went on for too much longer, he'd surely die.

He could only count himself lucky that the Dimensional Leaderboard rarely ever conjured death zones that were impossible to survive. Only about 10 minutes later, the lightning storm ceased.

But Marcus' luck didn't reverse. In that final instant, a stray lightning bolt flew out from Damien's body and struck him in the skull, immediately vaporizing his spiritual world and killing him.

The environment returned to its previous quiet.

Of the few hundred disciples that entered the Mystic Realm from the Dawn World, only around 120 survived. Of them, 12 were from the Eclipse Sect.

Without a word, everyone sat down where they were and began recovering. They had no idea when a new trial would begin.

On the altar, Jiao Mei's face was pale and fear-stricken. While she was mostly focused on absorbing the lightning Damien fed her, she was still aware of her surroundings. She clearly knew that Marcus' death wasn't an accident.

"Do you want to ask why I killed him?" Damien asked casually. He could see the panic on Jiao Mei's face.

She shakily nodded her head in response. She and Marcus had a few problems due to their status, but she never had true enmity with him. Moreover, besides uttering some hateful words, Marcus didn't provoke anyone enough to deserve death. She couldn't understand why Damien killed him so indifferently.

Damien smiled slightly. "I guess you could call it a preemptive strike? Or maybe it's just me not wanting to deal with troubles. You see, I've built a habit of nipping problems in the bud before they can ever bloom, and this was one of those situations."

"B-but how could he cause problems for you? He doesn't even have half your strength!" Jiao Mei questioned.

In response, Damien could only shrug. "He seemed like the type of person who'd latch onto someone else's thigh to borrow a knife to kill. I mean, if you doubt my reasoning I can't really argue. My judgement was based on instinct alone. Still, as practitioners, sometimes our instinct is the most accurate warning sign."

Damien didn't lie to Jiao Mei. From the beginning, he was never one to allow his enemies to hold a grudge and come back for revenge. He killed them as soon as he had the power to do so, regardless of identity or consequence.

Aside from that, his instinct was what allowed him to survive when he was at his lowest, and it was what brought him some of his most fortuitous encounters to date. He trusted his instinct over anything else.

When he heard warning bells in his head looking at Marcus, he also thought it was strange. He could clearly see the vengeful light in the latter's eyes, but someone so weak couldn't harm him.

But then he realized something: the only way for Marcus to cause him any trouble at all was through a powerhouse. This conclusion led to two different paths. First, Marcus would wait until the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm ended and use the Heavenly Jewel Palace's influence to trouble Damien. Or second...

There was a powerful genius in the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm that could rival Damien.

Being the person he was, Damien naturally hoped his instinct pointed to the second option, but he couldn't be sure. However, it was true that his anticipation for this Mystic Realm became more pronounced.

As for Jiao Mei, she quietly took in Damien's words. While he spoke them as a matter of course, it didn't feel the same to her.

She was someone who'd been sheltered and carefully raised since birth. Whenever she went to train, she'd always have protectors with her. Only recently did she begin entering Mystic Realms and Challenge Gates, but she still hadn't learned how different it was fighting beasts or men.

Jiao Mei wasn't an idiot. She understood that Damien's reasoning, while flimsy on the outside, came from unwavering confidence. In that case, his assumptions were most likely correct. Still, what kind of life did one have to live to become so untrusting?

Even a minor slight from Marcus, a small slip-up in his demeanor, was all it took for Damien's senses to go on alert. This was all it took for him to meet death.

Could this be called the right path?

Jiao Mei looked at Damien, a different sort of curiosity in her eyes. She suddenly wanted to know more about him. She wanted to know what experiences shaped his character, what created the man that stood before her today.

He was just too mysterious. Whether it be his background, his power, or even the benevolence he'd shown her and his general demeanor, she couldn't understand it at all. Not to mention Zara, who always quietly stood by his side.

Sadly, Jiao Mei knew she likely wouldn't receive answers even if she asked. And more than that...

The clouds parted, creating a rift in the sky. Above those clouds there was no light and no darkness, only a single gate with archaic text engraved on its surface, matching the divine altar.

The ringing of titanic bells sounded from the gate in the sky, and with those rings, stairs materialized from the surrounding lightning essence.

Slowly, a stairway to heaven formed. This was the entrance to the next trial.

Chapter 614 Storm Heavens [4]

"Hahaha! Finally, I can escape this hellhole!" A genius shouted. His robes held the Sun and Moon Sect's emblem.

He rushed to the stairway and began climbing. His foot stepped on the first stair, and instantly, he felt a current of lightning coursing through his body. A light pressure enveloped him, but it was still negligible at the first step.

Soon, he proceeded to the second step. Seeing him safely climb, the other geniuses also rushed to the steps and began their ascent.

5 steps...10 steps...15 steps...

The geniuses climbed slowly but steadily. The foremost of them stood at the 15th step already. However, they found that as they climbed, it became harder and harder to continue.

An all-encompassing pressure weighed on them externally and lightning attacked them internally. It was a cohesive test of both talent and bodily strength.

"What are you doing? Go join them." Damien commented to Jiao Mei. His group of three was still standing on the altar without moving.

"It's safe?" She asked hesitantly.

"Don't ask me, go find out yourself. If you're babied too much, you won't learn how to fend for yourself." He said matter-of-factly.

Jiao Mei hesitated for a few more seconds. It was true that she became far too reliant on Damien since meeting him. Even her recent increase in power was wholly due to his own effort.

It was a shame that her only rival in the Dawn World died, and she still didn't completely understand Damien's ruthlessness, but her trust in him didn't change. She simply realized that Damien was a person, a complex existence that couldn't be defined by his power alone.

Jiao Mei built up her courage and flew to the stairway, climbing it with ease. Her lightning affinity and talent were already high, so the stairway wouldn't pose too much of a threat to her.

She surpassed the competition in seconds, dashing up the first 33 steps without pause. After passing this mark, the intensity of both the pressure and lightning of the stairway increased drastically.

Even then, it only slowed Jiao Mei down somewhat. In the end, this stairway was only a pseudo-trial. It wasn't meant to be difficult, only slightly challenging.

It only took Jiao Mei 10 minutes to reach the 99th step. When she did, she sat down and began meditating. The lightning essence in the air and the step below her were invaluable to her cultivation.

When the geniuses below saw this, they felt the hope in their hearts shatter. Jiao Mei was a true genius! She wasn't the kind of person they could measure up to.

On any normal world of the Dawn World's size, they would be heaven-sent geniuses. They would enjoy all the riches and power they wanted as they sat at the top of the world. Unfortunately, the Dawn World produced not only Jiao Mei, but also the even more terrifying Marcus Strow!

"Hm? Where's Senior Brother Marcus?" A Heavenly Jewel Palace disciple suddenly asked.

"He wasn't with you?" Another disciple questioned back.

"I saw Senior Brother entering the divine altar! Maybe he obtained a lucky chance?"

"But the Eclipse Sect princess also stood on the altar, why is she still here?"

"Because Senior Brother is so much better than her!"

"If he entered the divine altar and was struck by that silver lightning storm, then wouldn't he be recuperating from his injuries right now? He's probably still down below!" A more observant disciple chimed in.

"Hm? But the princess is fine?" The first disciple responded, confused.

The observant disciple smacked his head. "You're too stupid! Obviously, Senior Brother took the brunt of the lightning and saved the princess! She's just being ungrateful and climbing without him!"

"That makes sense!" The surrounding disciples agreed. They sent hateful glares at Jiao Mei. A heartless woman like her was meant to be scorned.

As time passed, more and more geniuses made it to the 99th step. Even Damien and Zara appeared there at some point. Yet, there was no sign of Marcus Strow.

At this point, the Heavenly Jewel Palace disciples began to panic.

"Don't tell me...Senior Brother died?" Someone whispered.

"Who said that?! Senior Brother is invincible! He wouldn't die so easily!"

"Yeah, that's right! It must have something to do with that treacherous princess!"

"Yeah yeah! We demand answers!"

Of the remaining disciples, roughly 50 of them were from the Heavenly Jewel Palace. When their shouts combined into one, it was truly hard to ignore them.

Jiao Mei was sweating inwardly. If they asked her, what was she supposed to say? They would never believe her if she said he died naturally, but if she said anything else, she'd surely cause problems for the Eclipse Sect once they exited the Mystic Realm!

The Heavenly Jewel Palace disciples rushed closer with every second, congregating on her position. But before they could reach her...

A thick wall of silver lightning sprung up from the 99th step, as it danced in the air, the group of youths could clearly feel a familiar aura.

This was the same aura they'd been bathing in for so long!

"The trial land is protecting her!" Someone shouted. This opinion spread like wildfire, making the Heavenly Jewel Palace disciples' faces turn red with fury.

"She killed him! She must've killed him! She killed Senior Brother to take the trial privilege that was rightfully his!"

They couldn't believe it! The Eclipse Sect princess was truly a vile woman! Watching her hide behind a veil of terrifying lightning, they wanted to rip her to shreds!

Sadly, they didn't have the ability to bypass the lightning wall. They could only glare from beyond its reach and hope that they could get revenge in the next trial.

Standing behind Jiao Mei, Damien's brow perked with curiosity. While this phenomenon seemed like his work, it truthfully wasn't.

The trial was actually protecting Jiao Mei.

Damien's eyes narrowed in thought. 'Is it because of her affinity, or...?'

Damien took out the ritual grail he'd stolen from the altar. He could faintly see sparks of white lightning gathering within it.

'So it was this after all? Jiao Mei wasn't being protected, she just conveniently fell within the protection range. Still, this grail...'

After gathering a portion of lightning essence, the grail emitted a slightly holy aura that it didn't possess before. The profundity of its existence suddenly multiplied many times over.

Damien played with the grail a bit, spreading his awareness into it and even attempting to drink from it, but he didn't find anything of note. Everything about the grail evaded his senses.

Despite this outcome, though, Damien still happily kept the veil. After all, the phenomenon it caused on the 99th step was indication enough that the grail was special.

Perhaps he just hadn't met the requirements to understand its specialty just yet.

Nevertheless, after putting away the grail, Damien focused his attention on the giant gate behind him. No matter how much he focused on the ancient engravings, he couldn't understand their meaning. They weren't written in the universal language or any language related to it.

In fact, they weren't related to any language Damien had in his memories. After absorbing both Alaric and the Fifth Primal Sovereign's memories, the number of languages he understood wasn't a joke.

This could only mean that the gate in front of him was primordial. It was a construct that would've been considered ancient even 100,000 years ago when Alaric lived.

The Dimensional Leaderboard suddenly became far more mysterious. How long had it existed? What was its purpose? Why did it possess sole control over these Mystic Realms?

As he watched the ancient gate slowly open and reveal its interior, Damien found himself itching to find out.

Chapter 615 Storm Heavens [5]

With the gate's opening, the Heavenly Jewel Palace disciples were forced to shelve their grievance until a later time. As the Dawn World group walked through the gate, they found themselves in yet another realm. It shared the same canopy of black clouds as the last, however, the ground was vastly different.

The Dawn World's group stood on the rocky shore of a massive sea of lightning. Its currents danced like water snakes, attracting lightning from the sky to strike down on its surface.

But before they could observe in detail, they realized that they were no longer alone. All around them, different portals opened and different groups emerged. Even discounting them, there were plenty of groups already standing at the shore.

"This trial seems pretty straightforward." A random genius spoke to no one in particular.

"Mm," a nearby practitioner agreed. "I've been here for a few minutes already and I've managed to grasp the pattern. But even then, this won't be an easy test to pass."

The Dawn World group began paying attention to these conversations. Before anything else, they needed to get a grasp of the trial itself.

"The lightning sea clearly becomes more dangerous as you go deeper. Even though the lightning's strength and frequency aren't too great near the shore, it isn't the same in the depths."

"That's true. Even I wouldn't have guessed the dangers of the depths if the Fallen Star Holy Land disciples didn't go ahead!"

"The Fallen Star Holy Land sent disciples this time?! Why would they enter this Mystic Realm?!"

The sudden large reaction drew Damien's gaze. He'd been searching for the peak genius that may have been present, but he couldn't find any traces. But now, his interest was piqued by this so-called Fallen Star Holy Land.

The genius who spoke first had a smug look on his face, as if giving out his knowledge was a gift to mankind. Seeing the reactions he wanted from the crowd, he continued loudly:

"Not only did the Fallen Star Holy Land send disciples, even their Holy Son, Atticus Flamesworth, is present! Only a few minutes before your group arrived, he led the Fallen Star Holy Land disciples into the lightning sea and disappeared into the horizon!"

A collective gasp spread. The Fallen Star Holy Land was a true peak Holy Land. It wasn't something anyone present could compare with. Compared to the Fallen Star Holy Land, the Eclipse Sect couldn't even be considered gravel.

And to become the Holy Son of such a prestigious Holy Land...this Atticus was truly a stunning character!

Still, most of those present were from smaller worlds without much contact with the Divine Realm as a whole. After all, transmission arrays weren't cheap to activate and not everyone could use them. Individuals from these smaller worlds had to use spirit ships to venture the starry sky and find opportunities or wealth.

Their worldviews would only expand through experiences such as the current one, where they met face-to-face with these true geniuses and witnessed their glory.

At this time, the gloating disciple finished speaking. After talking about Atticus Flamesworth for a few more minutes, he switched to retelling the events prior to their arrival.

In his words, the lightning sea became exponentially more difficult as one traveled deeper, and the quality of lightning increased as well.

When Atticus and the Fallen Star Holy Land disciples vanished, the gloating genius swore he saw a flash of silver lightning.

These geniuses all experienced the might of silver lightning in the previous trial. If there was silver lightning on the horizon, what kind of terrifying lightning would be beyond it?

Once again, these regular geniuses marveled at the depths of a true peak influence. Comparing oneself to a genius from these influences was merely seeking disappointment.

Nevertheless, with a rough outline of the trial's contents, the surrounding geniuses began to move in droves, flying out over the lightning sea to join those already present within.

Some only flew a few meters before stopping to temper themselves with the ambient lightning essence, while some continued much farther. However, none managed to make their way over the horizon.

Seeing this sight, Damien shook his head. With a goal in mind, he no longer needed to mingle with these lesser geniuses. Thinking about the strength of a Divine Realm Holy Son, Damien's blood boiled with fighting spirit.

Besides, he was different from the rest.

Damien bid a quick goodbye to Jiao Mei, giving her some words of encouragement and telling her that he'd meet her past the horizon. After doing so, he grabbed Zara's hand and vanished.

Their figures waded through the spatial layers and easily bypassed a large majority of the lightning sea. As they looked into the Real Plane, they could clearly see the color and aura of the surrounding lightning changing and becoming more brutal.

Boom!

When Damien and Zara exited the spatial layers, they were immediately met with booming lightning. It struck from above and below, connecting with them at the center point.

Yet, a single wave from Zara was enough to disperse it. This lightning wasn't even pseudo-heavenly lightning yet. How could it harm them?

The duo calmly stepped forward, crossing into the next territory of the lightning sea. At the same time, two tiny black dots vanished on the horizon.

The only person who witnessed their existence at all was Jiao Mei. And even then, she could only sigh as her own weakness. Damien and Zara were her introduction to a grander and more magisterial world, not to mention they were fun people to hang around. Jiao Mei wanted to continue forward with them, but she knew she lacked the ability.

'I must temper myself well in this trial. If I don't push my limits, I'll never catch up to them or even be able to see their backs!'

Jiao Mei charged into the lightning sea without hesitation. Her body was struck by lightning soon enough, but she shrugged it off without worry.

She continued doing this until she made it three-quarters of the way to the horizon. She could see the silver lightning cover with her own eyes now, though sadly, she'd reached her limit.

Jiao Mei didn't fret over this. She knew it would happen. She sat down in the air, allowing the surrounding lightning to baptize her while doing her utmost to suppress her pain.

This could only be a long and grueling process. Jiao Mei had absorbed a great deal of lightning above her caliber due to Damien's aid. Now, what she needed to do was make that power her own and thoroughly understand it.

First, she sat for hours on end, tempering her body with lightning so she could withstand the pseudo-Heavenly Lightning on the horizon. Afterwards, she internalized her consciousness and sunk into comprehension, studying the principles of Damien's Heavenly Lightning.

After spending a few days or weeks like this, she was guaranteed to enter the silver lightning level. But time was always a variable in Mystic Realms.

Some Mystic Realms would only stay open for a set amount of time, while others would only close after a certain condition was met. Within a Mystic Realm, one always had to act as if they had no free time at all.

And while Jiao Mei cultivated in this environment, a different scene was taking place beyond the silver lightning wall...

Chapter 616 Storm Heavens [6]

After crossing the horizon, Damien and Zara didn't pause at all. Neither of them was even close to their limit yet.

As they continued deeper into the lightning sea, they slowly found more and more people around them. These were none other than the Fallen Star Holy Land disciples they'd heard about previously.

Damien shook his head wryly. "These are the weakest geniuses from that Holy Land yet they made it so far into the lightning sea. Their strength doesn't exceed 3rd class either. A Holy Land is truly different."

He praised them sincerely. Damien's breadth of vision had always been high, too high in fact. A genius like Marcus who he killed previously had the talent to reach even the top 100,000 of the Dimensional Leaderboard, but that rank meant nothing to Damien.

Whether it was the Top 100,000 or the Top 100, none of these were good enough for him. Whether it was arrogance or confidence, he knew his worth.

And now that his Celestial powers had become much more flexible and his Void Physique was somewhat integrated, his worth had skyrocketed.

"I don't care about the rest. Let me go find that Atticus character and see what he's worth." Damien muttered. Without another word, he increased his speed and shot into the distance!

The pseudo-Heavenly Lightning slowly became purer and purer with time. At some point, Damien crossed a threshold and was met with genuine Silver Heavenly Lightning!

This was the same lightning he used himself. And while absorbing it wouldn't affect his strength at all, he could surely comprehend something from its existence.

Yet, he didn't stop. He continued, stepping into pseudo-Gold Heavenly Lightning territory and even further into its true form. At this point, he released some Void Mana into the surroundings and activated Devour. Even as he moved, he contained Gold Heavenly Lightning in his body and integrated it with the lightning seed in his Mana Heart.

In normal circumstances, Damien wasn't strong enough to even face true Gold Heavenly Lightning. But this situation was different.

For Heavenly Lightning to show its true power, it needed to be wielded by the universe itself. Even if this space could somehow create and contain the lightning, it could never use its full power.

Due to this, the Mystic Realm unintentionally became Damien's feeding ground. With Transcendent Regeneration making his body nigh-impervious, even this Gold Heavenly Lightning could do nothing to him.

Zara, on the other hand, was different. While she was also strong enough to easily resist the Gold Heavenly Lightning, she could still benefit immensely from studying it. Compared to Damien, her comprehension was lacking.

Even if she didn't have a lightning affinity herself, she could study the way lightning worked and incorporate it into her own abilities. Aside from that, she could also temper her body, which was the ideal path for a beast.

"Damien, I think I'll stay here." She said quietly. Even though she already made the decision, she still looked to him for approval.

Damien laughed and patted her head. "Aren't you grown now? You were so excited to show off, yet you're still acting like a kid. If you want to do something, just do it. You know I'll never stop you."

"Mm," Zara nodded. His respect and encouragement made her happy, but she couldn't help but feel bitter in her heart.

It was true that she was no longer a kid. Having a human form meant she could walk beside Damien, and having strength meant she could help him when he needed it. This was everything she wanted, but for some reason, she felt a subtle change in the way Damien treated her.

He no longer let her stick to him the same way she did in the past, whether it was physically or emotionally. It felt like he'd unconsciously put up a boundary between them, a boundary that she didn't like.

'But, didn't he tell me to do whatever I want to do?' Zara tilted her head, confused. She'd learned plenty from Tang Lingzi, but in regards to relationships, she didn't have any knowledge or experience. After all, how could Tang Lingzi teach her something she herself didn't know?

If Tang Lingzi had a weakness, it would be her "lone wolf" personality that couldn't cooperate well with others.

Naturally, the "unconscious barrier" Damien put up was only because of Zara's new form. Even if her beauty couldn't change his opinion of her, he could still recognize it. Zara was now an incredibly beautiful woman with a mesmerizing face and body. If he allowed her to cuddle up with him like she used to do, things certainly wouldn't end well.

He wanted to evade the awkwardness of that situation, so he pushed Zara away a bit. While this was a comfortable platonic distance for humans, Zara wasn't a human. She was a wolf, and one who craved Damien's affection.

In the end, Zara sighed and sat down to train. She didn't like thinking about things she didn't understand, but Tang Lingzi taught her to face her problems. Now that she'd met with Damien, properly interacting with him was the next hurdle.

'Patience, Zara. You can do it!' She cheered herself on. Shortly after, she closed her eyes and entered meditation. To temper the mind and body, and then temper her social anxiety...

The tasks on Zara's plate really filled it to the brim.

Meanwhile, Damien had long since left the Golden Heavenly Lightning zone. In front of him stood a wall, a wall of blackness.

"Black Demon Lightning..." he muttered. Of the different variations of natural lightning, Black Demon Lightning was by far the strongest.

Damien's face hardened. The strength of this next level would be far too exaggerated compared to its predecessors.

Black Demon Lightning was thoroughly untamable. It was like every strand had its own spirit, domineering and unbending to external pressure.

This meant that, unlike Heavenly Lightning, Black Demon Lightning wouldn't be suppressed at all even without the universe's control. If Damien stepped into this next level, he'd face his first true challenge in the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm.

He hesitated slightly. It was true that he wanted to challenge himself, but he wanted to find the Fallen Star Holy Son first. That man was Damien's path forward. He was the guide that'd give Damien the way to true competition.

But before he could hesitate long, his worries all vanished at once. Within the sea of Black Demon Lightning, a commotion broke out.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Just by streaking through the air, the Black Demon Lightning tore holes in the void. Tens of individual strands coiled together to form a snake-like creature. Its burning red eyes glared hatefully in a single direction.

There stood a man. His long black hair spread wildly through the air, his spear carrying an indomitable will within. Facing the Black Demon Lightning, the man broke into raucous laughter.

"Hahahaha! To think that I would find such a treasure on a minor excursion like this one! Come, show me the power of the mythical Black Demon Lightning!"

Raaaaah!

The Demonic Lightning Snake let out a roar and streaked forward. It reached the man's position in an instant and attacked, meeting his spear with its tail!

BANG!

A loud explosion rang out as the two forces collided. Space in the surrounding ten thousand kilometers shattered into pieces, giving way to a mystical cosmic backdrop.

In the center of this destruction, only the man and the Demonic Lightning Snake remained unmoved. And outside the boundaries of the Black Demon Lightning Space, a man stood watching them.

A wide grin spread on his face. He cracked his knuckles and recklessly rushed into the Black Demon Lightning Space.

'I finally found you.'

His battle intent blazed. Damien, Atticus, and the Demonic Lightning Snake, these three heaven-shaking forces were set to collide.

Chapter 617 Atticus [1]

Damien's body rushed through the Black Demon Lightning zone with fervor. He instantly spread his domain into the surroundings and infused it with Void Mana.

The Mirror Domain was no longer what it used to be. During the battle of the unnamed world, Damien thoroughly integrated his new law-suppressing ability into its structure. Not only that...

An iridescent blue river shimmering with starlight materialized above Damien's head. This river was only a few feet long at the moment, but it already emanated a powerful aura surpassing the Mirror Domain.

This improved domain was modeled after the Space-Time River Damien saw at the start of its journey. To this day, it was the most mysterious force he'd ever encountered, seemingly containing the truths of the universe.

Under the influence of its replica, the surrounding Black Demon Lightning was slowed as if it was flowing through molasses. Atop this effect, the unruly lightning was endlessly diverted through the twisting spatial pockets and sent away from Damien's body.

His figure rapidly approached the ongoing battle in these favorable conditions. He felt the heat of the collision on his face. Powerful waves of mana impacted his body without pause as if warning him of the battle's dangers.

But this only served to make him more excited. His adventures in Niflheim were filled with people either too much stronger or too much weaker than him. Finding a battle that matched his level was his greatest wish at the moment.

Mirage entered his right hand and Hel entered his left. He teleported behind the Demonic Lightning Snake, sending three shots through Hel's barrel into its head!

Roar!

The Demonic Lightning Snake roared in pain as the cohesion of its figure was disturbed. In the end, it was an avatar made of lightning with no true physical body. Damien's spatial abilities were deadly to it.

Its red eyes glowed with hatred. Unlike Atticus, Damien already put a wound on it, making him its target!

The snake twisted its body impossibly and opened its jaw wide, threatening to swallow Damien whole. Its figure curled in the air and its mouth snapped down on his body!

Damien dodged to the side, but the lightning snake's fangs still managed to pierce his left arm. Rampant lightning currents entered Damien's body and ran wild like a pack of raging bulls. However, with Void Mana coating his internals, there was no way Damien would be injured by this small amount of lightning.

Just as Damien prepared to counterattack, a different flash of lightning appeared from behind the snake. Atticus appeared atop its head with his spear raised high, thrusting it into the snake soon after! Gold and black lightning danced together in the sky as their mana collided, blowing everything apart!

Damien flashed away from the blast radius just in time, staring at the wild lightning storm in the distance. A wide grin spread on his face.

"Good!"

His body rushed forward again, paving through the lightning sea and diving into the storm. There, he clearly saw Atticus' figure wrestling the Demonic Lightning Snake. Considering the snake's size, it was quite the comical sight. But Damien didn't have time to be amused.

The Demonic Lightning Snake was truly angry now. Not only had its rest been disturbed and its battle been interfered with, but now it was being ganged up on by mere humans! It couldn't accept this!

It wasn't a true avatar, but it was a being formed by thousands of strands of Black Demon Lightning merging into one. It was something of an artificial consciousness for the surrounding space.

In its domain, how could it let itself be beaten so easily?

RUMBLE!

Space trembled in fear. The menacing aura of Black Demon Lightning covered everything, forcing Damien to strengthen his domain for protection.

BOOM!

The first strike was aimed at Atticus, who was closer to the lightning snake. Sensing the force of the attack, he rapidly retreated and covered himself in mana. He coated his spear in powerful mana and swung out with incredible force, meeting the lightning head-on!

Bang!

A dull sound rang out as his spear met the lightning. For a single second, he managed to hold off against its force, but this stalemate didn't last long. The lightning bolt split into dozens of strands, coursing through Atticus' metal spear and entering his body to wreak havoc!

Atticus wildly revolved this mana to defend, and at this time, another bolt of lightning struck!

The target of this attack was Damien. He only just returned to battle, but he'd already been targeted!

Still, there was a large difference between Damien and Atticus. It wasn't a matter of skill or power, but inherent traits. The Void Physique would always be Damien's greatest advantage.

Damien met the oncoming lightning bolt with Mirage. Fluctuations of the Void Sword Art scattered around as he utilized Bladeless to banish a portion of the lightning to the void. At the same time, the Space-Time River sent out waves of powerful suppression that took away around 30% of the lightning bolt's power!

When it finally collided against his body, it wasn't anything Transcendent Regeneration couldn't handle. But Damien wasn't done after deflecting the bolt. He turned to the Demonic Lightning Snake and raised Mirage into the air, bringing it down for a clean forward slash!

'Void Sword Art Fifth Form: Dimensional Severance'

The world seemed to turn grey as all things came to a stop. A thin black line turned the dimension in two, then four, then six, continuing until it split into countless fragments. The Demonic Lightning Snake's body was torn into pieces and separated along with these fragments.

But Damien's eyes remained focused. While the Demonic Lightning Snake was a frightening manifestation, its true body was...

RUMBLE!

The Black Demon Lightning Sea below burst forth with madness, creating multiple tsunamis that covered the heavens with their reach! All around Damien, the sea furiously churned, Black Demon Lightning exiting it to strike him at every turn!

Every bolt of Black Demon Lightning was instant death even to someone at the early 4th class range. Even with Damien's powerful body, enduring too many strikes from this lightning would inevitably kill him!

His face turned dignified when he realized this. While he expected backlash, he didn't expect it to be so fierce. His mana raged through the air, doing its utmost to suppress the incoming lightning.

Mirage vanished from Damien's hand, replaced by Freya. The Twin Moons acted as one, guiding Damien's mana and letting off a torrential downpour of mana bullets!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The guns fired multiple shots per second, each laced with Damien's unique mana. While these guns showed great power when he first used them, they couldn't be compared to right now.

After all, the current Twin Moons were utilizing Void Mana.

The spread of Void Mana caused the spread of law suppression and devouring force. Due to the influence of Damien's laws, space and time were especially affected.

The Black Demon Lightning Sea churned below and space churned above. As Damien took control over the surrounding tens of thousands of kilometers, he brought his hand down and used space itself to battle the ferocious lightning sea!

Chapter 618 Atticus [2]

What was it like to use space itself to attack?

While Damien was used to manipulating space or using spatial mana, he'd only recently begun utilizing space itself to his advantage. An example of this was his Dimensional Cage ability.

Dimensional Cage was a matter of imposing his will on a section of space and dominating it, forcing it to separate from the Real Plane and become his domain.

By dominating space, he could influence it through his will. This was the base concept of even mana usage. But only now that he could use laws did Damien have the ability to affect space on such a fundamental level.

This time, after dominating space, he didn't choose to section it off. Instead, he used it as a divine hammer to crash down on the Black Demon Lightning Sea!

Bang!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Turbulent waves of Black Demon Lightning tried to forcefully push through space and attack him, but how could it? It was fighting against the space it existed in!

Despite Black Demon Lightning's terrifying abilities and power, it couldn't survive in the void, at least, not without being actively guided. Even if it truly broke through the spatial suppression, the sea would only lose territory and weaken!

Damien thought himself stupid for not taking this route earlier, but it couldn't be helped. He didn't come here looking to quickly defeat the Black Demon Lightning, he came for a fight.

On that note...

His gaze panned a few thousand kilometers, landing on the figure of Atticus watching him with piercing eyes. In those eyes, Damien could clearly read astonishment and battle intent.

He immediately smiled in realization. Right, this Atticus character was supposedly a supreme genius. He was someone who shared Damien's sentiments of not easily finding worthy opponents.

Especially in a place like the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm which was clearly meant for 3rd class geniuses, Damien's presence was a mystery.

In truth, Atticus didn't come to this Mystic Realm willingly. His master forced him to escort his junior disciples, spouting nonsense about how he'd receive an incredible lucky chance if he went.

While Atticus was doubtful, he couldn't deny his master's words. In the end, not only did he find a perfect tempering area in the Black Demon Lightning Sea, but he also found the trace aura of...a lightning elemental!

The Demonic Lightning Snake was something of a protector. Its presence meant that the lightning elemental was nearby. But just as he entered combat, he was met with another surprise! A genius who could match, or even slightly outclass him!

The Fallen Star Holy Land wasn't nearly the strongest Holy Land, but it was definitely close enough to the universe's peak. As Atticus was its Holy Son, matching him wasn't something an ordinary person could do.

After thinking this far, he took a breath and spoke, "I am Atticus Flamesworth from Fallen Star Holy Land. Who might you be?"

His tone was that of making acquaintances, but Damien wasn't in any mood to talk at the moment. The fight against the Demonic Lightning Snake...had been too short!

He still hadn't completely understood his power. He needed challenges to bring that power out of him. If he formed a connection with Atticus before fighting him, it was doubtful whether the latter would truly put his life on the line.

If that was the case...

'Fight first, talk later!'

The Twin Moons vanished into Damien's subspace, replaced by Mirage. Without a single word, he charged at Atticus!

"Hey!" Atticus shouted. He raised his spear and blocked mirage, his muscles bulging as he forced out every ounce of his physical strength.

'His strength...fierce!' Atticus thought to himself. In a battle of physical strength alone, he could tell that he already lost!

Suddenly, Damien's figure disappeared. Atticus spread his awareness warily, but Damien's speed was too fast! He emerged at Atticus' side, slightly lower in the air, and punched upward!

His fist snaked through Atticus' defense and reached its target, but at the same time, Atticus' eyes hardened.

"Fine! If you wish to play, let's play!"

BZZT!

Golden lightning exploded out of his body and covered the surroundings, brightening the darkness like a second sun!

Damien's sword swung through the storm, spatial mana covering its blade. Using Dimensional Magic, Damien gracefully slashed through the lightning storm and divided it into pieces like nothing.

Atticus frowned. "Spatial Laws? I underestimated you."

He brandished his spear heroically, properly posturing himself. His battle intent soared to the sky in a single instant, his momentum bursting forth like a tidal wave!

"Lightning conflagration!"

With his shout, his spear thrust forward. Lightning danced on its surface like blistering flames, fanning out into the air as it left his spear tip!

"Burn!"

BOOOOOM!

Damien was immediately caught in between tens of towering lightning pillars. These pillars behaved and spread like flames, climbing up his body and attempting to turn him to cinders!

His eyes hardened. The law fluctuations of this attack were clearly different from anything he'd felt before. This was a level of comprehension that he was still too far away from reaching!

He'd confirmed it! While his raw power was amazing, he wasn't nearly as refined as these peak geniuses! Against them, he'd be forced to throw away any sort of comprehension in exchange for pure brute force. Only then could he win!

"Good! Good! Good!" He shouted wildly. This was what he wanted! This was exactly his ideal! While competing against these people and fighting in the war against the Nox, his strength would rise rapidly!

Rumble!

The stormy clouds above became restless. While he was submerged in revelry, Atticus already attacked again!

"Turn him to ash!" Atticus roared into the sky. His face was pale and his mana drained. He knew Damien was strong, so he had no intention of prolonging the battle. Therefore, made a risky decision.

He exerted his control into the sky, wrested control of the storm clouds, and summoned the ambient lightning essence to form Black Demon Lightning for his attack!

From the heavens, a ferocious black beam of light thicker than any tree trunk barreled towards the ground. It was set to strike precisely on Damien's location.

Facing a strike from such a concentrated blast of Black Demon Lightning, even Damien would sweat. A single mistake could leave him dead!

Even being crippled didn't faze him. Transcendent Regeneration made his body almost unkillable as long as he had a single breath of life left. But Damien wasn't invincible yet. If he met a force that could injure him faster than Transcendent Regeneration could heal, he'd be just like anyone else.

His gaze met the lightning head-on. His posture stood straight like a sword. In his current situation, his gait was like defiance of the Heavens.

Damien's body began to rapidly change. His draconic features burst through his skin, demonic runes etching themselves onto his scales. His long white hair flowed down his back gracefully, and with his demonic black sclera and purple irises, he truly looked like a Demon God.

The blood runes morphed into their defensive form, giving Damien a huge boost. At the same time, the greenish-white light of [Heal] covered him from head to toe.

Mirage rested calmly in his hand, completing his look. In this state, the power coursing through his body was unholy. This was the greatest amount of strength he could muster.

To use his full power to confront Atticus' full power...

Only this could bring their battle to a proper conclusion.

Chapter 619 Atticus [3]

Tumultuous pitch-black thunderclouds blanketed the sky, bathing the realm in shadow. Submerged in this blackness, the thick pillar of Black Demon Lightning hurling towards Damien was nigh-invisible.

But it made its presence known.

Its massive aura spread even faster than it, taking only a fraction of a second to reach Atticus who was many thousands of kilometers away. Every inch of space it passed through was thoroughly shattered, breaking the barrier between the Real Plane and the Mystic Realm.

Even below, confined by space itself, a roaring sea of Black Demon Lightning fought with fervor to reconnect to its realm. If this happened, even Damien wouldn't survive.

But whether it was lucky or unlucky, the Black Demon Lightning pillar traveled too fast. In a mere instant, it was already looming above Damien's head.

In this realm of blackness, the pure snow-white hair flowing down Damien's back made his figure especially prominent. Facing the Black Demon Lightning's pressure, he was unfazed.

His eyes stared into the sky, those mystical purple irises swirling with profundity. As the All-Seeing Eyes activated for the first time since Damien's Baptism, he found the world unraveled before him.

That thickly interwoven pillar of Black Demon Lightning separated into the individual threads that formed it. Even the surrounding space developed a sort of physical presence that made it more pronounced.

Under these conditions, Damien readied himself. His defenses were at their maximum power, his healing abilities the same. With only sparks of time separating him from total annihilation, he closed his eyes.

Time slowed to a crawl. Damien's awareness coated Mirage, allowing him to precisely guide his mana along its surface.

Mirage was a space elemental sword to begin with. While Devourer's ability was to grow and amplify his mana, Mirage's was to control space with its own power and consciousness. When combined with Damien, it didn't just amplify his power, it added its own power to every attack as well.

Damien's spatial mana covered Mirage first, forming a link with the sword. Next, temporal mana followed suit. With the way these two laws interlinked, the fusion between it and the sword was perfect.

Lightning and flames came next. While these were secondary elements in Damien's arsenal that he didn't utilize often, they were still incredibly strong. However, unlike space and time, these two elements were incredibly explosive and unstable, especially when mixed together as one.

The balance between these four forces was disturbed by their chaos. This was an inevitable circumstance. But while for most, their mana would backfire and explode, Damien was different.

Void Mana coated the four other essences and forcefully tamed them. After it fused into Mirage, the sword began to glow with a deathly light.

In that instant, he swung Mirage upward with all his strength! The Black Demon Lightning pillar crashed down at the same time, meeting the blade head-on!

BOOOOOOM!

The two forces collided with such grandeur that the foundation of the Black Demon Lightning space shook. Space and time quaked, flames and lightning raged, if there was a true depiction of hell on earth, this was it!

With the All-Seeing Eyes' guidance, Damien's mana split into threads and attacked every individual strand of Black Demon Lightning. Spatial mana separated them, temporal mana locked them in place, and flames and lightning followed for the killing strike!

This superb show of precision left Atticus shocked, but it wasn't quite over yet. A thread of Void Mana entered every thread of Black Demon Lightning, and after said lightning was destroyed, it devoured the leftover essence whole. In this way, Damien was not only resisting, but he was also growing at the same time!

ROAR!

The Black Demon Lightning roared like a beast as it crashed down on Damien's body. With every fiber of his being, he resisted its invasion. However, Black Demon Lightning wasn't the strongest natural lightning source without reason.

Damien's mana was able to stop over half of the pillar's strands from reaching him, but Black Demon Lightning was semi-intelligent. After multiple strands were destroyed at once, the remaining strands actively dodged his attack to strike him!

And strike they did. Damien's scales lit up with blood-red light as his demonic runes did their best to numb the penetrative force. The screech of metal clashing against metal resounded piercingly.

Within a second, the demonic runes were no longer able to resist. Bloody black dragon scales flew wantonly through the sky as Damien's defenses shattered. Raging Black Demon Lightning spread through his veins like a plague, burning his body from the inside out.

'Fuck!' Damien roared inwardly as he felt a striking pain worse than anything he'd felt in a very long time. He revolved Void Mana through his body as quickly as possible, but soon found that the lightning was equally matched with his mana!

'This...' his eyes widened in shock. To date, the Void Physique had never failed to resist internal invasion. Any energy-based attack would be dissolved and devoured easily.

However, his Void Physique had changed. It was no longer babying him as it did before his Baptism. For him to use its power so domineeringly, he had to earn it!

Damien gritted his teeth in frustration. It wasn't a good feeling realizing that the ability he most relied on was changing. Nevertheless, he pushed on!

While currently, the Void Physique's silence was a detriment, he realized how beneficial it'd be in the long run. Rather than his body being controlled by outside forces, everything that took place would be under his control.

This meant that if he was able to raise his comprehension of the Void enough, he could achieve results far surpassing what the Void Physique showed him in the past!

Bang!

Damien's arm exploded, unable to bear the pressure. The pain cleared his mind instantly. Completely taking his attention away from the outside world, he put everything into controlling the Void Mana within him.

'Work with me!' He shouted to himself. Every time he pulled, Void Mana pushed. Every time he tried to guide it, it resisted his will! This was a consequence of Damien's low comprehension.

Without another choice, he could only allow the mana to flow and follow its path. He was like a father providing support for his son from the back.

But strangely enough, he found that when he allowed the mana to flow as it desired, it also became more receptive to his commands.

Rather than mana, it felt like a small and rebellious life that he was raising. Watching its movements almost made Damien forget his current situation.

Luckily, though, the mana's desired path was one of devouring. With Black Demon Lightning being the closest source of sustenance, its direction was only obvious.

Black Demon Lightning and Void Mana collided silently in Damien's body. The two equal forces caused reckless damage to him with every move, but Damien silently endured it.

He could only follow the Void Mana and nudge it to do his bidding. This didn't take much mental power to do, so he divided the rest of his attention to simply watch the Void Mana and understand its properties as it collided against the Black Demon Lightning.

Around Damien, space isolated on its own, as if influenced by an invisible will. At the same time, the destructive power he used to resist the lightning pillar dispersed as well, leaving the Black Demon Lightning space silent.

The only remaining battle was the one taking place within Damien's body.

Chapter 620 Atticus [4]

The process of clearing the Black Demon Lightning from his body didn't take more than a few seconds, but to Damien, it was an eternity. His perception of time froze entirely as his focus sunk into the collision between his Void Mana and the terrifying lightning.

His eyes slowly fluttered open. Under the effects of [Heal], his arm regenerated as well. Finally seeing his body back in perfect condition, Damien let out a sigh of relief.

The prior crisis was unexpected to say the least. While Damien didn't react much in the moment, the changes in the Void Physique truly frightened him.

After his Baptism, while individually each of his facets became more perfect, as a whole they were disordered and chaotic. He didn't even know his own strength anymore.

From the previous battle, it seemed he overestimated himself. But at the same time, considering that he was able to resist a Demigod, was that really true?

So far, Damien only used the Void Physique's abilities supportively. Now that he'd partially fused with it, he had no choice but to use Void Mana as part of his main offensive arsenal.

However, the physique had been strangely inconsistent.

After his Baptism, Damien fought a great deal. During those fights, including the fight against the Fifth Primal Sovereign, the Void Physique's internal resistance ability wasn't suppressed at all. Without this internal protection, he might've died or been severely injured during those battles.

If so, then why did it remain unresponsive this time?

Damien didn't know at all, nor did he have any clues. At first, he suspected that it was due to the Black Demon Lightning itself, but he soon realized that this guess held no merit. After all, his Void Mana devoured a great deal of Black Demon Lightning during this excursion.

Aside from that, his Void Mana did indeed cleanse his body later, but rather than for his own safety, this move felt more geared towards the Void Mana's growth. When he first required its aid, it didn't respond at all.

The facts he knew only led him to a dead end. Damien soon understood that his journey to Divinity wouldn't be as smooth as he originally prospected. If he couldn't comprehend the Void, his strength might even deteriorate!

Strangely enough, this realization didn't bring with it any sadness. Instead, he felt incredibly spirited.

In the Human Domain, he didn't have any challenges like this. He had plenty of mental issues and enemies to defeat, but his own strength never failed him.

But now that he entered the Divine Realm, it was like the world was against him.

He had competition in his age range, the true enemies he'd face would be stronger, the Nox invasion was already underway, and on top of everything else, his personal strength was unstable as well.

If this wasn't a challenge, what was?

Damien smiled wryly and shook his head as he removed the Dimensional Cage around him.

'Maybe I should start accepting that I'm a bit of a masochist...'

Shaking away that terrifying thought, he returned his attention to the only other person present.

Atticus was currently in a stunned state as if he was the one who just fought a pillar of Black Demon Lightning. In his mind, he replayed the current scene over and over again.

In truth, the attack he formulated was only half the size of the one that struck Damien. Only, Black Demon Lightning was notoriously feral and bloodthirsty. Hundreds of extra threads joined the pillar during its descent and enhanced its power.

Visualizing the final pillar, Atticus was forced to wonder to himself: did he have the ability to resist such an attack?

The answer was no. While he was a monstrous genius, his depth was still within the bounds of common sense. Against a coalescence of Black Demon Lightning that could even kill an undefended high-level 4th class being, how could he resist?

The most he could do was mirror Damien's first attack and disperse half the lightning pillar's power. The remaining half that struck him would, at the very least, severely injure him.

Now, the man who survived that harrowing attack was standing thousands of kilometers away, seemingly unharmed. His bestial eyes were still filled with residual fighting intent and with his transformation still active, he looked especially intimidating.

As Atticus raised his spear warily, Damien opened his mouth and spoke. His voice traveled the distance between them like nothing and arrived in Atticus' ears.

"Damien Void. That's my name." He said. His words officially signaled the end of their battle.

Atticus sighed in relief and withdrew his spear.

"Atticus Flamesworth. It's a pleasure to meet you." He said courteously. Damien was stronger than him, after all, even if he didn't directly experience that strength.

Damien nodded his head in response. "So tell me, why is a supreme genius like you in a Mystic Realm like this? Aside from that, what's your rank on the Dimensional Leaderboard?"

Atticus raised an eyebrow questioningly as he replied, "I'm here simply to guide my junior disciples. As for my rank, can't you easily check it yourself?"

"I can?" Damien asked.

"Of course! What kind of leaderboard could function properly if one couldn't check it at any time? As long as you've been registered by the Dimensional Leaderboard, you can check its rankings with a single thought."

Atticus replied straightforwardly, but in his mind, he was utterly confused. Was Damien raised in an isolated mountain somewhere? Otherwise, how could he lack basic knowledge that even mortals knew?

Damien rubbed his chin. "Hmm, this is my first Mystic Realm though so I'm probably not registered. That'll only happen when we leave, right?"

Atticus experienced another shock. Damien's words essentially meant that he raised his strength to such a level through brutal life-or-death struggles without the leaderboard's help. How could Atticus not be surprised?

But at the same time, he was curious and excited. The Grand Heavens Boundary was in need of every genius it could get. And while his main goal in this Mystic Realm was to obtain the lightning seed residing within, he actually had a secondary goal that he never thought he'd accomplish.

In fact, it was a goal that every peak genius in the Grand Heavens Boundary shared.

"Come to Death Emperor Star," he blurted out unintentionally.

"I mean, sure, but let's finish our previous conversation first."

"Uh..."

"What?"

"Nothing, nothing," Atticus said, embarrassed. "The top 100 of the Dimensional Leaderboard are visible to all people. As long as you call it out, you'll be able to view it. I'm ranked 53rd if you were wondering."

"53? I guess that's not a bad starting point..." Damien muttered to himself. "Anyway, I think we can save the rest of this conversation for later. Before we talk about all that Death Emperor Star nonsense, do you want this lightning seed or should I just take it for myself?"

Atticus' gaze panned down to Damien's hands. There, he witnessed Damien spinning a small black ball covered in lightning bolts on his finger like a basketball. Even from a distance, he could hear the lightning's furious booms as it attempted to resist Damien's control to no avail.

Atticus was...stumped.

He had a sudden premonition that he'd lose a great deal of sleep if he involved himself too deeply with Damien.