

Void 621

Chapter 621 Atticus [5]

Before the Black Demon Lightning space was the Golden Heavenly Lightning space. Here, a small portion of Fallen Star Holy Land disciples along with Zara patiently meditated and tempered their bodies. Aside from them, there were only two present.

These two men stood at nearly the same height, and their combined natural auras pressured the surrounding atmosphere to the point where the Golden Heavenly Lightning instinctually avoided them.

But while their auras contributed to this fact, the main perpetrator was the small ball of electricity that floated between them.

"...it's not Black Demon Lightning. It was most likely formed through countless years of accumulation using the Black Demon Lightning's residual aura, so while it bears some of the same characteristics, it doesn't have the same strength." Damien said as he observed the lightning.

"Regardless, it's a top-tier lightning seed. Are you sure you want to give this to me?" Atticus questioned suspiciously.

The two hadn't even known each other for an entire hour yet. As for their conversations thus far, they'd been filled with Damien asking Atticus for general knowledge about the Divine Realm. Other than understanding that Damien was truly clueless about everything, Atticus didn't learn much about the latter.

To offer up such a high-quality lightning seed without asking anything in return, was anyone so generous?

In response, however, Damien shrugged indifferently. "I don't need it. What am I supposed to do with it if I take it? Sell it? Oh, now that I think about it, I'm actually in need of some money so maybe I should."

Damien's eyes brightened at the prospect. The Divine Realm was different from the Human Domain in many ways. One of those ways was the fact that here, Damien would genuinely need money.

The Divine Realm was far more organized than the Human Domain, and everyone was connected through the Dimensional Leaderboard. Even to travel back and forth between Mystic Realms, Damien would need to utilize teleportation arrays.

That is, until he'd ventured enough of the realm to Warp wherever he pleased.

If he wanted a large sum of money as soon as possible, was there a better way than to sell a lightning seed like the one in his hand?

As Damien's eyes slowly curved into crescents, Atticus was sweating. He never thought Damien would take his words of courtesy seriously!

"Now, now. Let's calm down a bit and think it over. If you want to sell it, I can't stop you, but how about considering the Fallen Star Holy Land first? I can promise we won't disappoint you." He said hurriedly.

It wasn't just because of the lightning seed. Damien was a top talent without any backing or connections. If the Fallen Star Holy Land could rope him in, it'd massively benefit them. And even if they couldn't acquire Damien himself, being on good terms with a rising genius was never a bad thing.

Damien raised his brow with a sly smile as he realized Atticus' intent. Honestly, he liked the latter's personality.

Atticus was well aware of Damien's strength yet still invited him into his Holy Land. It was impossible for Atticus to not know the implications of this decision.

It was wholly possible for Damien to take his spot as the sect's Holy Son.

Yet, he still put the good of the sect over his own position. This was the making of a good man, a man who Damien could respect.

"Hmm, since you're already here, I might as well ask you first. What can you give me for this lightning seed?"

Atticus furrowed his brows in thought before firming his will and speaking, "one black card. I'll give it to you right now."

Damien's eyes widened in surprise as he watched Atticus take out a metallic black card the size of a playing card. An entire black card! That wasn't a small amount of money at all!

Of the things Damien learned through Atticus, one was currency. In the Grand Heavens Boundary, these currency cards were the widely accepted currency.

At the lowest level were bronze cards. 100 bronze cards was a silver card, 100 silver cards was a gold card, 100 gold cards was a platinum card, 100 platinum cards was an amethyst card, and finally...

1000 amethyst cards were equal to only a single black card!

It had to be known, to travel through intra-sector teleportation arrays only took 50 platinum cards. Even inter-sector teleportation arrays cost around 100 amethyst cards at most. The value of a black card could only be imagined!

For Atticus to toss out black cards like nothing only went to show his status.

Damien did the calculations in his head. While the lightning seed was powerful, it was violent and untamable. If sold in any regular market, it wouldn't receive a high price because it couldn't be properly used.

A treasure like this could only be sold to elders of great sects or young geniuses of the generation. For these people, the value of the treasure was extremely subjective.

Even if Atticus was the buyer, the lightning seed would only sell for around 700-800 amethyst cards at most.

Giving Damien a black card was a clear sign of goodwill.

As for Damien, he smiled and took the black card out of Atticus' hand after a moment of thinking.
"Pleasure doing business with you."

Atticus nodded his head with a pained expression and took the lightning seed. It had already been sealed by Damien earlier so there was no risk in handling it.

"So then," Damien suddenly said, "let's get back to the main topic. Tell me about this Death Emperor Star."

Their business was already over and Damien didn't feel like having small talk with Atticus at the moment. He wanted to know his next destination in this realm, any place where he could go to properly temper himself. The name Death Emperor Star was intimidating enough, and made Damien feel some slight anticipation.

Atticus smiled brightly. "Right! I'd completely forgotten about it due to the lightning seed. I apologize for being hasty, but allow me to reintroduce myself. My name is Atticus Flamesworth. I am the Holy Son of the Fallen Star Holy Land, but that isn't my only identity. I could be said to be a type of talent scout. My job is to bring young geniuses to Death Emperor Star so they can temper themselves at a rapid pace."

"And Death Emperor Star is...?"

"Death Emperor Star is a star at the edge of the Divine Realm. It is home to a Holy Land-level influence, Hidden Death Valley, but its function is inherently different from a sect. In reality, those who study in Hidden Death Valley aren't restrained by the sect at all. Instead, the sect encourages youths to become powerful and independent so they can brave the wider universe with their own strength."

Atticus began proudly giving a speech about the Death Emperor Star, but as Damien listened, his heart dropped. A sudden feeling of dread overcame him.

'This Hidden Death Valley...why does it sound so much like...an academy?'

Damien's face turned pale. He never would've thought that, as a man in his mid-twenties, he

would be encouraged to endure yet another academy arc.

Chapter 622 Atticus [6]

Atticus' speech about the Death Emperor Star went on for far longer than Damien would've preferred, but by the end, he'd already decided that it was his next destination.

From Atticus' words, Damien realized that while Hidden Death Valley was indeed an academy as he dreaded, it wasn't so simple. Under that veil was a military institute in disguise.

"Death Emperor Star is one of the most dangerous stars in our sector. Nearly every inch of its surface is a death zone, excluding Hidden Death Valley. Those who choose to attend its institute aren't there for fun, they're there to push themselves in the harshest conditions possible. I know I'm the one who invited you, but truthfully, it isn't wise to go if you aren't ready to risk your life. The death rate amongst those who do is...far worse than you can imagine." Atticus said.

Damien nodded his head in understanding. Atticus didn't sugarcoat his explanation at all. He made it crystal clear just how terrifying Death Emperor Star truly was. But this gave Damien a clearer picture of the institute itself.

It wasn't just some place for geniuses to go and train. It was a military institution meant to turn them into killing machines. Hidden Death Valley was most likely established as a method to rapidly raise geniuses before the war grew to an irreversible scale.

After all, in a universal war like the one occurring, there were three battlefields. The true warzone in Eden, the plant races' domain, the silent war between experts, and finally, the battle between the younger generation.

The most embarrassing defeat the universe had faced thus far...was in the last category.

Damien sighed as an ethereal golden scroll appeared in his eyesight. This was the Dimensional Leaderboard, or at least the small version he could access without being registered in its records.

Throughout that list were 99 foreign names and one he knew. However, among those 99, over 30 were only referred to by their titles.

These 30 or so individuals...were Nox beings.

The older generation couldn't touch the younger generation; this was one of the compromises made by the Nox and universe experts to avoid catastrophic losses to both sides so early in the war. And using this compromise, the Nox sent a few geniuses to enter the universe and wreak havoc.

Naturally, they targeted the Dimensional Leaderboard. What better way was there to slap the universe's youths in the face?

But this slap resounded far louder than anyone would've expected.

At the very top of the Dimensional Leaderboard, glaringly obvious in blood-red letters, was a single name.

Saint King.

The number one genius in the entire Grand Heavens Boundary, this spot was being held by a Nox.

The universe had experts. The older generation had already reached saturation, containing an untold number of 4th classes and even many Demigods.

However, the younger generation desperately needed to improve. If they couldn't...

Damien shook his head. There was no need to think about "what ifs." All he needed to do was make sure that spot would belong to a true denizen of the universe.

Himself, of course.

The top of the Dimensional Leaderboard was his goal since the second he learned of its existence. Now that he learned there was actually a Nox waiting for him there, why would he be saddened?

That just meant Damien didn't have to care about his enemy at all. He didn't need to be mindful of the fact that the geniuses he was facing would be his comrades in war later.

He grinned as he thought about face-slapping a Nox genius. He needed to have a nice and long talk with their race anyway, so wouldn't it be better if he beat them into obedience first?

"I'm going. Take me there." He said firmly to Atticus. It didn't take long at all to make his decision.

Atticus looked deeply into his eyes, clearly sensing his determination. He nodded just as firmly in response. "Great! I knew you weren't weak! But, we have to wait for the Mystic Realm to close before we leave..."

Damien clicked his tongue in derision. "You think this tiny Mystic Realm can stop me from going where I want to go? Tch. Give me an hour and I'll have this damn place collapsed."

"Ah, but—" Atticus tried to say something, but Damien had already vanished. He really couldn't understand this mysterious genius. With how succinct their conversations were, one would expect

Damien to be a cold and indifferent man. However, he wasn't like that at all. He was expressive and didn't hide his emotions, which made his behavior even stranger.

Atticus furrowed his brows. 'Maybe...he just doesn't like me?'

With a downcast expression on his face, Atticus sat down and silently waited for Damien's return.

Besides, he was curious if Damien could really pull it off.

Collapsing a Mystic Realm...what kind of rank would he debut at on the Dimensional Leaderboard if he could pull off such a stunt?

Frankly, Atticus couldn't wait to find out.

While Atticus was wondering whether to brood or watch on in anticipation, Damien had already arrived in the Black Demon Lightning space.

His goal for coming was simple.

"You like this stuff, right? Go devour it all!" He shouted.

His aura burst forth. Pitch-black Void Mana wantonly spread from his body and permeated the atmosphere. As it did, it immediately shot into the Black Demon Lightning Sea below!

Damien didn't understand Void Mana yet, but if it wanted to act like a sentient creature, he'd treat it like one. And one thing he did know for sure was that the Void was insatiable.

While it was true that Damien could collapse this Mystic Realm with Dimensional Magic and All-Seeing Eyes alone, that would take an unknown amount of time and effort to accomplish.

The easiest way to collapse the Mystic Realm was to simply destroy it until it forcefully ejected everyone within.

And that was exactly his plan.

Void Mana snaked through the Black Demon Lightning Sea, nearly invisible in the realm of blackness. However, as it devoured and devoured, its color began to overtake the sea itself.

It had to be said, this devouring wasn't initiated by Damien nor did he receive any strength from it. In fact, he didn't even know where the Black Demon Lightning was going. In his perception, it seemed to just vanish into thin air after being devoured.

But he didn't mind. It was the same reason he gave Atticus the lightning seed. Right now, he didn't want more power. Before he began adding more to his plate, he first needed to finish what was already there.

The key was Death Emperor Star. If it was truly as Atticus said, Damien could rapidly understand his strength through the star's trials and even improve on it afterward.

But before that could happen...

The Black Demon Lightning space began to quake. Unlike the space cracks that formed during battle that would heal over time, the cracks emerging in space at the moment were irreparable.

Shattered spatial fragments fell through the air like snowflakes. In the space they once occupied, a hazy image of the Real Plane appeared.

Unfortunately, this exit didn't lead to any place Damien knew. Because he was shattering the Mystic Realm instead of naturally exiting, the exit point itself would be the Mystic Realm's true location in the universe.

But Damien didn't care. He had no reason to.

Damien separated a portion of his mana and latched onto the connection between the Mystic Realm and the Real Plane. Next, he activated Warp and merged the portal that formed from it to the Dawn World where he came from.

Just like that, an exit was formed without a hitch.

"Light work," Damien commented with a smile. Now, all that was left to do was drag Atticus into the Divine Realm and use him as a taxi to get to Death Emperor Star.

Chapter 623 Dawn World [1]

The Black Demon Lightning Sea slowly faded from existence over time, and within half an hour, it'd been completely replaced by a swirling black mass.

This mass was none other than the Void Mana Damien unleashed to devour the sea. Now, it has eaten its fill and finished its job. The Black Demon Lightning space lost its support and collapsed.

But Damien's plans didn't end there, the portal he set up was a separate matter. Once he collapsed the Mystic Realm, Atticus would be sent back to the entrance he used to access it. Naturally, he couldn't allow this.

The portal's use was to bring Atticus back to the Dawn World with him. Collapsing the Mystic Realm, on the other hand, was to enter the scene with a bang.

When the Black Demon Lightning space collapsed, the Mystic Realm became unstable. Most of its power was located in that space, and it was integral to maintaining the realm. After its destruction, small cracks began to spread in every direction, invisible to all present.

At least, invisible to anyone that wasn't Damien. With the combination of Dimensional Magic and All-Seeing Eyes, he easily pinpointed these cracks and expanded them, helping them grow with fervor.

Within 15 minutes, the Golden and Silver Heavenly Lightning spaces began to quake. The lightning sea beyond them was practically submerged in lightning tsunamis and earthquakes as the realm malfunctioned.

It was incredibly abrupt. Before the present geniuses could even understand what was happening, they found an inviolable force covering their bodies and ejecting them from the Mystic Realm.

Among these people was none other than Jiao Mei. Even as her body vanished from the Mystic Realm, her eyes remained on the horizon. She had a strange feeling that she understood what caused this event.

Damien stood in the Silver Heavenly Lightning space and watched these changes. 'That was easier than I thought...'

Perhaps it was because this Mystic Realm was relatively simple and easy to understand, but Damien felt like destroying it should've been harder. After all, it was a product of the mighty Dimensional Leaderboard. It was impossible for its structure to be flimsy.

'Hmm, maybe it's beginner's luck?' He thought to himself. He wasn't stupid enough to think he was just that powerful, not after understanding how chaotic his inner state was. In the end, he could only give up and assume that this specific Mystic Realm was weak.

His body flashed, reappearing in the Golden Heavenly Lightning space. After calling Zara, who recently awakened, over and absorbing her into his shadow, he grabbed Atticus and teleported to the Black Demon Lightning space once more.

"Alright, I made this portal so you can exit the Mystic Realm with me. Let's go to the Dawn World and figure out where Death Emperor Star is from there." He said.

"Hm?" Atticus responded, "go with you?"

"Well, yeah. How else am I supposed to know where to go?" Damien questioned.

"Ah, I see there's been a miscommunication somewhere," Atticus said with a bright smile. "You see, Death Emperor Star's first trial doesn't even take place on the star at all!"

"Don't tell me..."

"Yup!" Atticus' smile widened. "Admissions into Hidden Death Valley begin in exactly 6 months. If you can't make it there on time, you don't get accepted! Here are a few information jade slips and a star chart to help you out a bit since you're so oblivious. Other than that, you're on your own. Good luck buddy! I'll see you there!"

Atticus rapidly removed a few items from his space ring and threw them at Damien. In the next instant, he smiled and winked, his body fading and turning holographic.

"Hey!" Damien shouted. He extended his mana to lock space, but soon noticed that he couldn't interfere with Atticus' teleportation!

'A Demigod...' he realized. He couldn't even grasp Atticus' position in the spatial layers after he activated his teleportation method. The only beings capable of outwitting Damien to such an extent were Demigods.

"Dammit!" He yelled exasperatedly. Of course things wouldn't be so easy. It was no wonder why Atticus seemed so eager for their departure.

Damien begrudgingly grabbed the items Atticus left behind and sifted through them. There were jade slips denoting general knowledge about the Divine Realm and Death Emperor Star. Using these, Damien could establish a solid grasp on the Divine Realm's mechanics.

The last item was a small black ball. At the moment, there was nothing reflected on its surface. However, Damien could easily infer its purpose from its name alone.

In the end, he stored these items in his subspace and sighed. 'I made that portal for nothing...rat bastard.'

As he complained inwardly, he silently walked through the portal he created. Since it already existed, he wouldn't let it go to waste.

Just like that, the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm expedition came to an abrupt conclusion.

The Dawn World's current atmosphere could only be described as "alit with fervor." Even those in the far reaches of the world knew of the Storm Heavens Mystic Realm and its implications. Everybody wanted to see if a Dawn World genius could rise to fame this time.

This anticipatory atmosphere was especially prevalent around the Mystic Realm Gate. Numerous spirit ships lined the skies and bodies polluted the earth until it looked like a mass of blackness.

These people had no idea when the Mystic Realm would end, nor did they know what was occurring inside. Yet, they still decided to wait.

Conversations ran amok, guesses as to whether Jiao Mei would surpass Marcus Strow, of the talents that made up the universe's peak, there were even some proudly facing off while supporting their respective geniuses.

The Eclipse and Sun and Moon Sects were especially heated. They'd been in competition for a very long time, and the results of their geniuses would supremely impact their standing after the secret realm ended.

Late at night in this lively atmosphere, flashes of light began appearing around the portal.

"They've returned!"

"The Mystic Realm closed!"

Countless exclamations rang out. Along with the appearance of these geniuses, a massive golden holographic scroll appeared in the sky. This was the Dimensional Leaderboard.

On it, millions of names shone with splendor. Its visage made the sect leaders in the audience especially excited.

The Dimensional Leaderboard had appeared! This could only mean that one of their geniuses performed spectacularly in the Mystic Realm!

One by one, people materialized in the square and flew to greet their sect members. Some were ecstatic, some were downtrodden, and some were entirely expressionless. However, none of these people provoked a response from the Dimensional Leaderboard.

Until one person came out.

A body materialized, but its countenance was hidden under the brightness of the Dimensional Leaderboard.

The shift didn't occur in the top 1000 or even the top 100,000, but nobody was discouraged by this fact. Even reaching the top 1,000,000 was a feat to be praised for generations.

But in front of everyone's eyes, the name that appeared wasn't at the 1,000,000th spot.

There, ranked 500,431...

Jiao Mei.

The Dimensional Leaderboard's brilliance dimmed, acting as a natural backlight for Jiao Mei's beautiful veiled form. Looking at the leaderboard in the sky, she felt a strange mix of joy and loneliness.

This was the goal she'd always dreamed of. With her power before entering the Mystic Realm, she would've never reached the 500,000s. She knew that this achievement was due to the contributions of a single person.

And now that she'd met him, the top 1,000,000 didn't seem as grand anymore. Jiao Mei's aspirations already exceeded the Dawn World's limits.

Jiao Mei's eyes darted through the crowd in search of that familiar face, but before she could find him, a booming voice rang out from above.

"Marcus...where is our Marcus?!"

Chapter 624 Dawn World [2]

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master's voice responded loudly in everyone's ears. Suddenly, their excitement over Jiao Mei's position dimmed.

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master was furious. His gaze panned across his own disciples, but he only saw clueless looks on their faces. Soon enough though, his eyes crossed a boy whose head was hung in shame.

"Look at me." He commanded. The boy shakily obeyed his direction. If he didn't, he would surely die.

"Tell me what happened before I force it out of you." The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master continued.

The boy's body trembled in fear. He didn't want to say what he witnessed. He was terrified of the consequences. Yet, if he didn't speak, he'd be punished worse!

Realizing this, he hesitantly opened his mouth. "S-senior brother Marcus is...he is dead."

The disciple didn't speak loudly, but his words reached the ears of everyone around him. Hearing them, the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master froze.

"You said...he died?"

The disciple nodded fearfully. "Y-yes. Senior brother took a strike from terrifying silver lightning to save us. Afterwards, we didn't see him at all, even before entering the next trial."

"Nonsense!" The Palace Master roared. "Marcus wouldn't die from a mere bolt of lightning! Who are you trying to save with your lies?!"

"I swear on my life that I am not lying! But...I also think Senior Brother shouldn't have died! My fellow sect brothers who were with me can attest, when Senior Brother was struck, the only one near him was...the Eclipse Princess!"

The disciple hatefully glared at Jiao Mei. It was only a suspicion at first, but now that Jiao Mei had achieved such wondrous results in the Mystic Realm, his guess was all but confirmed!

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master's gaze coldly turned to Jiao Mei. His domineering awareness covered her body and examined her internal situation.

'This lightning energy...'

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master's eyes hardened. With the strength he sensed from Jiao Mei, it wouldn't be impossible for her to kill Marcus, especially with the Mystic Realm's aid.

"You vile woman...you dare kill my sect's young patriarch?!"

A towering aura spread and covered the square, enveloping Jiao Mei within.

"Keuk...!"

She coughed out a mouthful of blood and fell to her knees, pale. The pressure placed on her was far more than she could bear! She would surely die if the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master didn't stop!

"Mas...ter..." she struggled to speak. Her desperate gaze landed on the Eclipse Sect Master, begging for his help.

However, he merely sighed and turned his head away. The Heavenly Jewel Palace ruled the Dawn World. Rebelling against them was futile.

It was just a shame that he'd lose such a talented genius.

"Hmph." The Palace Master scoffed upon seeing this interaction. "Do you realize the weight of your sins?! Since you felt that Marcus deserved death, I'll allow you to join him in the afterlife!"

The Palace Master's aura exploded! In that instant, the square shattered to pieces and Jiao Mei's body flew back with immense force, blood leaking from her orifices.

Jiao Mei wanted to cry. This pain was terrible. If she hadn't tempered her body in the Mystic Realm, she would've died already.

Still, she was going to die in a few seconds anyway, so her improvements hardly mattered.

She smiled wryly to herself as she realized this. She was the only one who knew the truth of that incident, that Damien was the true perpetrator. She also knew that Damien definitely had the power to contend with these sect masters.

Yet, she didn't pin the blame on him. He was the one who showed her the wider world she desired and gave her a proper goal to aspire to. Even if she had to die to protect him, it wouldn't be enough to repay the gratitude she felt.

At least, because of him, she achieved the dream she'd held for so long, and surpassed it by leaps and bounds. For her, this was enough.

The smile on her face turned wholesome. She regretted dying young, she regretted not being able to fulfill her ambitions, she regretted not being able to see him one more time. But if she had to die here for his sake, she would do so with grace.

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master raised his hand. The ground around Jiao Mei began to move as if it were alive, swallowing her.

But before she could be swallowed whole...

"Yeah, let's not do that."

A casual voice rang out, dispersing the surrounding pressure. Jiao Mei's body vanished and reappeared far away amidst a cluster of golden light.

At the same time, the Dimensional Leaderboard in the sky began to shine with splendiferous light. It was Heaven and Earth compared to the reaction Jiao Mei induced.

The audience, who had yet to adapt to the first sudden change of events, was dazed beyond belief. Even the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master halted his attack in shock.

Innumerable eyes locked onto the massive scroll in the sky. Whether it was the 1,000,000s, 100,000s, or even the 1,000s, there were no changes.

At this point, shock transformed into confusion. Why was the Dimensional Leaderboard acting so wildly if there were no changes?

"L-look!" A voice suddenly rang out from the crowd. There, a little boy pointed at the Dimensional Leaderboard, his eyes wide as saucers.

When people saw the direction he pointed in, their confusion intensified. Wasn't that...a bit too high?

Still, out of curiosity, many turned their gazes over fast enough to see a single name etched into the Dimensional Leaderboard's surface. Each letter was carefully written, containing endless profundity.

This scene of a name being written letter by letter would only appear once per person; during their introduction on the Dimensional Leaderboard.

"T-this...what is this?" The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master exclaimed.

"That is...it couldn't be..." the Eclipse Sect Master's face paled in sudden realization.

Written slowly and steadily for all to see...

[420. Damien Void]

Damien's name rested proudly in its spot. Its grand appearance was accompanied by waves of golden light and auspicious signs, as if the Dimensional Leaderboard was showing its support.

These phenomena continued for many minutes without end, and when they finally concluded, the Dimensional Leaderboard also began to fade from the sky.

Damien didn't pay attention to any of this, though. His eyes were focused on Jiao Mei's bloody form in his arms.

[Heal]

As her body was covered in greenish-white light, the fury in Damien's eyes slowly increased.

While he didn't have any strong connection to Jiao Mei, she was still an acquaintance. She was a kid with a lot of potential, potential he felt worth investing in.

And now, someone decided to put their hands on the kid he was raising?

Unacceptable!

Not to mention, Jiao Mei kept his involvement secret even at death's door. Her loyalty to her comrades couldn't be questioned at all!

Damien's eyes didn't leave Jiao Mei's body, but his awareness was already spread to its limits. His gaze alone was cold enough to lower the surrounding temperature.

"I wanted to leave the Dawn World peacefully." He spoke. His voice was neither loud nor soft, but projected to every corner of the audience clearly. "Since the strongest people here are only around the middle of 4th class without any substantial law comprehension to speak of, I wanted to let you live your small lives without getting involved."

His gaze panned the crowd before landing on the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master. "But, I guess it's true that no matter where you go, there'll be some idiots begging to die."

"Fine. If that's what you want...just die then."

Chapter 625 Dawn World [3]

Damien's words seemed to precede an attack, but he didn't make any move to do so. Instead, he recalled his aura and plunged his mana into the Dawn World's surface!

This mana, guided by his awareness and Celestial abilities, penetrated the world's barriers and arrived in front of its core with ease.

'You have two choices. You either submit to me, or die.'

Damien's voice resounded in the World Core's space. Unlike his approach when dealing with his previous bound World Cores, he was extremely forceful.

His abilities as a Celestial became far broader after his Baptism. Not only could he utilize starlight to attack and empower himself and use World Force even when apart from his worlds, he also no longer needed mutual consent to bind a world.

However, there was a prerequisite. For Damien to use the forceful approach, he had to be the strongest practitioner present in the world.

In the Dawn World, he easily met this condition.

The World Core had no means to defend itself besides the practitioner residing on the world's surface. If they couldn't kill Damien, what else could it do? He truly had the capabilities to threaten this World Core with extinction.

And the World Core clearly knew this. Even though its spiritual intelligence wasn't as developed as Apeiron or the Cloud Plane, it had enough conscious thought to judge Damien's qualifications based on his actions thus far and read his power level.

No World Core would choose death over survival.

Damien's Celestial Mana Thread easily penetrated the World Core's defenses. A bond was formed without a hitch. This was the convenience that came with great power.

On the surface of the world, Damien felt a sense of euphoria rush over him as every piece of the Dawn World was placed under his control. His eyes shone with brilliant blue starlight as he searched the surface.

"Found it." He said lightly. Under the crowd's stunned and wary gazes, he raised his hand and pressed down.

Rumble!

An earthquake spread through the world. By the time it reached the gate's position, it was negligible, but the impacts it had were anything but.

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master's face paled. As he traced the origin of the quake, he realized that...it was infinitely similar to the location of his sect!

"Send out a transmission talisman and contact the forces remaining at the sect! Find out what happened right this instant!" He yelled to the disciples behind him. His gaze, however, didn't leave Damien.

The previous events were too coincidental. Damien's hand movements seemed to trigger the earthquake that took place. An ominous feeling crept into the Palace Master's heart as he watched Damien's expression morph into a cold smile.

"Pa-palace Master...the sect is..." a disciple whispered. His hands were shaking as they held a glowing transmission talisman.

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master's face twisted. "What did you do?!"

Damien's smile didn't change. "Hm? It's more fun if we go see for ourselves, no?"

With a snap of his fingers, he and the Palace Master vanished from the gate. When they reappeared, they were a few hundred kilometers away from a vast and beautiful mountain range. Spiritual waters flowed freely throughout, the ambient mana far richer than anywhere else in the world. This place was none other than the Heavenly Jewel Palace.

However, in the middle of this immortal scenery was a single extremely prevalent stain. The location that was once the sect's central mountain where the Palace Master resided...

Was collapsed entirely. All that remained in its place was a large pile of rubble.

"Now that you're here, the real fun can begin. After all, I have to thoroughly help you realize the sin you've committed."

Damien's hand pushed down once more. The entire outer ring of mountains collapsed one by one, the inner mountains following soon after. It was a truly apocalyptic scene, one that almost brought the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master to tears.

He wanted to yell out and tell Damien to stop, he wanted to use everything in his power to destroy his enemy, but from the moment his figure vanished from the Gate location, his body has been frozen.

Damien controlled his every action.

"Ah," Damien suddenly said. "Don't think I'm some kind of villain. I haven't harmed your disciples at all. However, I did blow up all their spatial rings. Aside from that, everything I saw that could be considered the sect's foundation and legacy has been destroyed. There's just one more thing to do..."

Bang!

The Heavenly Jewel Palace Master remained frozen as his middle finger was blasted apart. This was naturally caused by the explosion of his spatial ring.

A stream of black mana entered his body immediately after. Slowly but surely, the mana in his body began to disappear.

The Palace Master's eyes dulled. Even when the sect was being destroyed, he was simply saddened. As long as he remained alive and possessed the sect's methods, it could always be revived. But now...

Whether it was his strength or the sect's legacy, both were being destroyed before his eyes.

"You look like you have something to say," Damien commented lightly. "I'll allow it. Say what you want."

"..." the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master was silent for a moment despite his voice being freed. In the end, he could only ask one question.

"...why?"

Damien raised his brow curiously. "What do you mean 'why?' You tried to kill one of my people first. Is my action not justified?"

"SHE KILLED MY SON!" The Palace Master exploded. His revenge on Jiao Mei was just! Even if Damien wanted to get revenge, he didn't have to go to such lengths!

But in response, Damien could only shrug. "And? Do the lives of people you value matter more than the lives of people I value?" He asked.

"What matters in this world is strength, and the reason you're suffering now is because I'm more powerful than you. In truth, I'm the one who killed your son. If I wasn't powerful enough to defend myself and gain others' respect, would I have survived our interaction?"

His words were true of course, but they didn't justify destroying the Heavenly Jewel Sect and its legacies. What the Palace Master wanted to know was something else: since the grudge was between them, why involve the Heavenly Jewel Palace?

But even if Damien understood this, he truly didn't have any way to answer this question. Even he didn't know why his first thought was to target the sect; it was instinctual.

But he didn't feel bad about it. The Heavenly Jewel Palace disciples would be fine as long as they found other sects to be accepted into. The only one who truly suffered was the Palace Master.

To those disciples who looked on at Damien and the Palace Master from below, this day was a rude awakening; a glimpse into what true genius was like.

For some, this would be a mental scar that inhibited their training for the rest of their lives. But for others, this would be motivation to grow and become strong enough to prevent the reenactment of such tragedy.

Only the latter category was worthy of Damien's attention.

Nevertheless, his business at the former Heavenly Jewel Palace ended the moment he crippled its master. With one last look at the destruction he caused, Damien vanished, returning to the gate location.

Chapter 626 Dawn World [4]

The crowd around the gate location was silent the entire time Damien and the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master were gone. They used the brief moment of respite to process the events that took place prior.

First, Jiao Mei placed extremely high on the Dimensional Leaderboard. Afterwards, she was almost killed by the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master for killing his son. But before this could happen, a mysterious man appeared, ranking in the top 1000 of the Dimensional Leaderboard and saving Jiao Mei.

How he and the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master disappeared or where they were going was a mystery. But before they could even make their guesses, Damien returned. The total time he was gone wasn't more than 10 minutes.

And when he returned, he did so alone.

His eyes panned the crowd, causing them to freeze up in terror. His gaze briefly stopped on the Eclipse Sect Master before turning to Zara, who was holding Jiao Mei.

Compared to when he left, Jiao Mei's complexion was far better. She only looked like she was peacefully sleeping at the moment.

But as if she sensed Damien's presence approaching, she grumbled quietly and slowly opened her eyes.

The first thing she saw was his face. In that instant, memories rushed into her mind in waves. The fact that she was alive settled in.

Quiet tears dripped from her eyes. No matter how much she prepared herself to die, she never truly wished to. She was infinitely grateful for the chance to live again.

Damien allowed her to have her moment for as long as possible, but unfortunately, he didn't have much time. While returning, he looked over the Star chart Atticus gave him and approximated Death Emperor Star's relative position. And frankly, "far" wasn't a good enough word to describe it.

To reach it in 6 months, even if he teleported with all his power, he needed every minute he could get. Especially considering that he was only allowed to use long-distance teleportation arrays a single time during his journey.

This was a rule in place to even the playing ground for people at the far reaches of the universe. If they had the ability, they could shorten their travel time by weeks or even months.

Even though Damien had a black card at his disposal, he didn't want to use it to cheat his way through this first test. At most, he'd use a teleportation array in the final stretch of his journey. Before that, he wanted to use the 6 months he was given to temper himself whether that was by traversing the starry sky or entering Mystic Realms he found along the way.

"Jiao Mei, do you want to come with me?" He asked.

"You're leaving?" She responded immediately with wide eyes.

Damien nodded firmly. "I have to go. But there is a place I can take you where you can train in peace for a while. If you don't want that, I can take you with me and drop you off at a more suitable world for your talent. However, don't make this decision for me, but for yourself. Even if you choose to travel with me, you and I won't cross paths very often at all."

What Damien could do was sent Jiao Mei to the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary's atmosphere was perfect for slow and quiet practice, and there were powerful experts within who could guide her. However, she wouldn't be able to get the same life-or-death experience she would in the outside world.

This was one thing Damien wanted to change about the Sanctuary. Its residents could grow slowly, but they needed a harsher environment to foster growth. Only, he didn't know how to add death zones into its fold. After all, no matter how much power he had in the Sanctuary, he couldn't create life. If he wanted to make a beast domain or a natural death zone, he'd need help from the outside world.

Hearing his words, Jiao Mei sunk into thought. She already decided to go with him, but she didn't know which option to choose. What she knew was that the Dawn World couldn't contain her anymore.

But, even if she stayed with Damien, she wouldn't see him often. These were his own words. In that case, what was the point?

While Jiao Mei worshipped Damien, especially so after he saved her life multiple times, she was a girl with her own ambitions. She didn't want to risk her own cultivation for the sole purpose of staying with him.

In the end, she lamentably sighed. "I...will go to a more suitable world."

She made the decision that was better for her future, and frankly, Damien wholly supported it. In his opinion, while this was the more dangerous option, it was also the best one.

Therefore, he nodded with a smile. "Okay. I'll make it happen. But before we leave...what do you want to do with them?"

Damien's gaze panned back to the Eclipse Sect Master. During the previous altercation, he made the choice to abandon Jiao Mei, something that haunted his mind ever since the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master was suppressed.

He was of half a mind to retreat and hide away in the Eclipse Sect, but his information network was too good for him to easily do so. He heard about the Heavenly Jewel Palace's destruction before anyone else.

Jiao Mei looked at his figure. Right now, he didn't look like the illustrious sect master she used to see. Instead, there was only a pitiful old man in his place.

"What...I can choose to do anything?" She asked hesitantly.

"Anything," Damien confirmed. "As long as we're in the Dawn World, I can do anything."

"Destroy it all." She immediately answered. Her eyes were cold and indifferent. The second the Eclipse Sect Master decided to abandon her, she did the same with the sect.

"And the disciples?"

"Everyone I trust is in my personal palace. I don't care about the rest."

"Wait! Jiao Mei, please reconsider! Think about everything the sect has done for you! How could you betray us like this?!" The Eclipse Sect Master screamed in panic.

"Betray?" Jiao Mei responded mockingly. She couldn't contain her laughter when she heard it. "You betrayed me first, yet you actually have the balls to talk about betrayal? Preposterous!"

"You little demon! If it wasn't for your special physique, you would be nothing! You're just an abandoned daughter of the Jiao Family. If it wasn't for me taking you in, you'd be dead on the streets by now!" The Eclipse Sect Master roared with bloodshot eyes.

"That's enough." Damien cut him off before he could continue. "Shut up and experience the consequences of your actions personally. Remember, the only reason this is happening is because you couldn't support your disciple at her lowest. If you're like this with your top genius, what will your reaction be like for other disciples?"

Damien's words immediately flipped a switch in the heads of those present Eclipse Sect disciples. Right, Jiao Mei was the best of them yet she was still abandoned. What would happen to them in a similar, hell, even in a lesser situation?

They'd surely be treated even worse!

Suddenly, the Eclipse Sect disciples backed away from the sect master. They couldn't trust a man like him.

And as Jiao Mei saw this, she suddenly changed her mind. "Can we go to the Eclipse Sect? I want to give the disciples a choice."

Damien quietly nodded and teleported the involved parties to the Eclipse Sect. Standing in the air above it, Jiao Mei felt a sense of power envelop her.

She poured mana into her voice and yelled, "fellow disciples! The Eclipse Sect Master is scum who abandons his sect members in cowardice! Now, the sect is set for destruction! For those who wish to live, leave now! Anyone who remains in the sect after half an hour will die!"

Her words resounded to every corner of the sect. Jiao Mei was incredibly famous and popular. Just by hearing her voice, most people recognized who she was.

"Isn't that the princess?"

"The princess is acting against the sect master?"

"The sect master betrayed the sect?"

Countless questions flew around, but there was nobody capable of answering them. The disciples were left with only a single choice to make.

Stay or leave?

Jiao Mei's status in the sect was so high that not a single person dared to compete with her for the position of sect master. Jiao Mei had absolutely no reason to lie. Aside from that, her moral character had always been just, as seen when she rescued Damien and Zara.

If Jiao Mei said the sect was going to be destroyed because of the sect master's actions...

It was likely true!

Those who realized this left the sect immediately. Hundreds of disciples swarmed the sky as they fled.

This mass exodus caused a shift in public opinion. Humans were herd animals, after all. Seeing so many people decide to leave, hundreds more followed.

What was left after the 30-minute mark were elders absolutely loyal to the sect and a few disciples who were the same.

Damien sighed as he saw this. He respected their loyalty, but unfortunately, they stood on opposite sides. Since he was supporting Jiao Mei at the moment, he'd do so in full.

"Are you sure about your decision?" He asked one more time.

Looking at those who stayed, Jiao Mei nodded. "I have no regrets. If my karma is damaged by this act, I will shoulder that burden and continue forward. Right now, I simply wish to cut ties with this sect entirely."

"And your own people?"

"I'd like to bring them with me. Is that possible?"

Damien nodded. Adding a few hundred people to the Sanctuary's population was nothing at all.

"Well then, since you're sure of your decision, let's end things on a high note."

Damien raised his hand to the sky. World Force swirled around him, empowering his movements. His mouth opened slowly, giving way to a single word:

"Starfall."

Chapter 627 Voyage [1]

"Starfall."

The sky caved, giving way to tens of portals. Under Damien's guidance, meteorites breached the Dawn World's atmosphere through these portals and rained down on the Eclipse Sect!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Their impacts were rapid and heaven-shaking. Regardless of how the remaining Eclipse Sect disciples tried to defend themselves, they couldn't escape the Starfall's destruction.

Flames raged as the earth caved. Magma burst through the ground and turned the Eclipse Sect's land into a flaming sea. At the same time, the craters left behind by the meteorite rain expanded into massive chasms that led deep into the Dawn World's surface.

It was a hellish scene. Even before the meteor rain ended, everyone remaining in the Eclipse Sect was dead. Those few hundred people lost their lives so easily.

But Damien wasn't trying to destroy the entire Dawn World. The meteorites rained down solely on the Eclipse Sect's area, and after only a few seconds, Damien closed the portals they entered through.

But this was more than enough. Rather than the Eclipse Sect, the only thing remaining in the area was a death zone.

Damien, Zara, Jiao Mei, and the restricted Eclipse Sect Master stood in the air above this destruction. While Zara and Damien didn't show much reaction, the same couldn't be said for the other two.

Jiao Mei's shock was apparent, but more reserved since she was already aware of Damien's power. Still, seeing him destroy the entire sect in seconds left a deep impression in her heart.

As for the Eclipse Sect Master, his expression was lifeless. After that scene, how could he have any more thoughts of resisting?

Damien glanced at him indifferently. "He's yours. I've taken away his mana and left him crippled, so anything you decide to do, he'll be forced to endure. I'll come find you tomorrow so we can depart."

After saying a few more words to Jiao Mei, he and Zara disappeared. Jiao Mei's gaze landed on the Eclipse Sect Master's pitiful form. With a sigh, she slashed her arm through the air, swiftly decapitating him.

With his will already broken, there was no point in torturing him. She wouldn't receive any joy from the act either. She just wanted to kill him and sever her karma with the Dawn World.

Taking one last glance at the Eclipse Sect's remains, Jiao Mei left the area. She would spend this day of respite preparing her people for departure and resting.

In an isolated cave somewhere, Damien sat quietly with his back against his wall. A large black mass was draped over his lap as he did so. This was naturally Zara.

Her beast form had gone through some changes after her ascension and Baptism. Not only was her fur sleeker and more attuned to darkness, those massive fallen angel-like wings of hers were made of terrifying feathers with the strength of SSS-rank artifacts.

The most noticeable difference, however, was the addition of another two tails at her rear, bringing the total number to four. Damien didn't know the significance of these tails, but considering how they multiplied according to Zara's strength, they were surely related to her bloodline somehow.

As for her bloodline, this was exactly the topic of Damien and Zara's conversation as they rested for a day. Zara had found out some clues about her origins from Tang Lingzi, but with her bloodline being so strange, even Tang Lingzi couldn't accurately pinpoint her ancestry.

Nevertheless, the fact that there was Nox blood running through her veins was all but confirmed. While she fretted about how to tell Damien this for a period of time, she finally ended up spilling the truth on their final day in the Dawn World.

But frankly, Damien didn't care. Whether she was a Nox or a Universe Devourer, she was still the same Zara he found and befriended in the First Dungeon. He didn't think their bond could be broken by something as vague as race.

The two's conversation continued until daylight shone down on the world once more. Whether it was Zara's origins, their personal experiences during their separation, or the improvements in their power sets, they were finally able to take time to catch up on everything they needed.

"Haa," Damien sighed as he stood up. "I guess it's time to go. Six months...with my current abilities, I should be able to make it in 5 if I rush with everything I have. That leaves us a month of leeway in case we encounter anything fun along the way."

He took out the star chart Atticus gave him and looked at it once more. "Death Emperor Star is relatively isolated. Unfortunately, we'll only be passing a few inhabited worlds along the way. Of those, I don't know how many are worthy of our time."

As he muttered to himself, he wasn't disheartened. After all, even if there were no special events along the way, he'd still profit.

Uninhabited worlds also had World Cores after all. While he couldn't take every single one for himself, it wouldn't be difficult to take over a few on the way.

"You ready?" He turned around and asked Zara.

"Mm," she replied with a nod. Her body was covered in a dim black light as she transformed back into her human form. A long black dress materialized soon after to cover her naked body.

The two vanished from their cave, arriving at Jiao Mei's personal palace. After giving a brief overview of the Sanctuary to those present, Damien sent them in to see it themselves.

"The place you're going to now is the peaceful world I told you about before. If you like it, you can stay as long as you want." He told Jiao Mei as he teleported her to the Sanctuary.

After receiving her nod, Damien also sighed in relief. Everything he had to do on the Dawn World was now done.

'I guess I have to check my rewards from the Mystic Realm, but I can do that after I've already made some progress in my journey.'

If the Dimensional Leaderboard could only rank geniuses who explored its Mystic Realms, it wouldn't have become so popular. Those who ranked in the top 10 of a Mystic Realm would receive rewards, and the top 3 would gain even better harvests.

If Damien hadn't proven his strength after exiting the Mystic Realm, he likely would've been hunted by opportunistic people who wanted his treasures.

This was most likely part of the reason the Heavenly Jewel Palace Master acted so rashly against Jiao Mei.

Regardless, checking his rewards could be done at any time, and at least for now, he didn't need any power-boosting treasures.

Damien's gaze panned to the sky. Zara was in his shadow, Jiao Mei and her people were in the Sanctuary, the Dawn World's World Core was under his control...

He smiled lightly. His entrance into the Divine Realm was truly superb.

With that final thought, his figure faded from existence, never to be seen on the Dawn World again.

Legends of his actions would be passed down for generations, stories of a man who rampaged through the world and destroyed two of its greatest sects with ease. This man was later titled the Demon God as stories of his feats became more and more exaggerated. Despite his brief appearance, in the Dawn World's history, he was both someone to be feared and respected by all.

But, that was a story taking place far in the future.

At the current time, only the name Damien Void rooted itself in the hearts of those who witnessed him.

Chapter 628 Voyage [2]

6 months was both a long and short amount of time depending on how it was viewed. For the current Damien, it was ironically both.

His surroundings were oddly silent and still. Despite the fact that all creation revolved in perpetual motion around him, it felt frozen as he passed through the illustrious starry sky.

It was a calming experience. Damien's mind, which was still extremely stressed from his sudden entrance into the Divine Realm, was given the chance to calm down and reflect.

He had plenty of lingering fears about the Human Domain's fate, but he realized that even without him the Human Domain's strength wouldn't decrease by much. Without his Void Physique attracting trouble, they might even flourish.

Besides, he did have an avenue to meet with his wives and friends once more. Damien didn't know the exact date it would take place, but he remembered Tian Yang and Bai Xieren mentioning a Grand Assembly where the Grand Heavens Boundary's forces would gather to prepare for all-out war.

At the time of that assembly, Damien would surely see the people he wanted to see. Until then, he truly did need to grow his strength as fast as possible.

The Elven Domain was already destroyed by the Nox and Eden wasn't far away from joining it. The war was already taking place on a universal scale. If it was allowed to draw out for too long, the losses would be catastrophic.

After reaching this point, these thoughts were shelved. Damien wholeheartedly focused on improving himself.

In the expansive starry sky, Damien was able to freely wield his power at its best state and assess his level and faults. While he couldn't do this with total accuracy due to the lack of enemies and actual battle, he could at least identify the broader issues that he could later define to the last detail.

It'd been three months already.

Aside from strenuously and futilely attempting to heighten his comprehension on the Void and practicing space and time laws, assessing his strength, and purely traveling with no other thoughts in mind, the only other thing Damien did was bind every uninhabited world he came across.

While at first, this seemed like an easy way for him to gain power, the truth was different. These World Cores, despite being plentiful, didn't actually have a great deal of strength and World Force.

A world's strength was mainly made up of two factors: the solidity of its foundational laws and its residents.

These two were entirely related to each other. When a world's laws became more defined, its capacity would increase, allowing it to house stronger practitioners in larger quantities. And with their level cap lifted, these practitioners would in turn become more powerful and contribute back to the world by giving it strength.

This was an unconscious process that most beings didn't even know was taking place, but it was a symbiotic relationship that a world and its residents held. While a world protected, housed, and gave its residents the means to gain strength, the residents would in turn protect the world and give it strength.

However, this meant that uninhabited worlds were unable to grow. While their laws would become more defined with time, the lack of inhabitable atmosphere meant that no practitioners would live in the world, making it impossible to form the positive feedback loop worlds used to grow.

These uninhabitable worlds could contain powerful lifeforms with ease, but they couldn't support and sustain life on their own. The World Force Damien received from these worlds didn't equate to a fraction of even Earth's World Force.

By his estimate, he'd need to bind roughly 1,000 uninhabitable worlds to reach Earth's World Force when he first bound it. Its current World Force, however, would require tens of thousands of uninhabitable worlds to match.

It could be said that for Damien to gain substantial World Force from these worlds, he needed to conquer entire sectors.

However, this didn't mean that he didn't benefit at all. While he didn't gain much World Force, he felt an inexplicable feeling every time he bound a new uninhabited world. It was a feeling similar to dominion.

It made him wonder. Celestial were conquerers, conquerers on a much grander scale than mere kings and emperors. Wouldn't it make sense for there to be some kind of benefit the more worlds he bound?

After coming to this conclusion, Damien's days became much more fun. Before, he and Zara could casually pass the time whenever he got bored by having conversation or playing around, but now, he had another hobby to keep him sane...

Binding World Cores!

The entire process didn't take more than a minute for these weak uninhabitable worlds. Considering that he'd delegated an entire month to side adventures, he had more than enough leeway to do so.

The number of planets manifesting in his spiritual world multiplied rapidly. The red light of the World Core Fusion Reactor shone through the entire space as it took every new world Damien bound into its system.

100...500...1000...

By the time he reached the 1000 mark, three months passed. He was midway through his journey and making decent progress towards Death Emperor Star, perfectly on track to reaching.

Sadly, aside from the occasional spirit ship that passed by, Damien didn't encounter anything special in the starry sky. There weren't even many Space Beasts that dared to approach him after sensing his natural aura.

A bit of the Fifth Primal Sovereign's authority was mixed into his aura after he devoured the latter's body and acted as a natural deterrent for most Space Beasts.

Another week passed in this dreariness. At this time, Damien finally saw something different amongst the monotonous scenery.

It was an inhabitable world!

While this wasn't the first inhabitable world Damien had passed, the rest were only around the level of the Dawn World or a bit higher. This world, however, was different.

His perception of celestial bodies became incredibly sharp as he continuously bound worlds. Even from a distance, while he couldn't tell exactly, he could at least understand that this world was special in some way.

'Finally!' Damien celebrated inwardly. Even if there wasn't an adventure here, he'd still make great gains as long as he could bind the World Core.

Plus, this might be the perfect location to foster Jiao Mei's growth.

Damien's figure rapidly shot through the starry sky, breaking through the world's atmosphere and approaching its surface.

Unlike his entrance into the Dawn World though, his landing was far more skillful this time.

His feet touched the ground silently, his presence completely erased. His awareness spread tens of thousands of kilometers, enveloping around a fourth of the world.

"Hmm, there isn't anything crazy in this hemisphere. A few middle 4th classes and a single person on the verge of leveling into the late stage...but this flow of mana, there should be a more developed continent beyond my awareness' reach."

Damien understood this world to be a smaller variation of the Cloud Plane in both its geography and strength. If his inference was correct, there was no need for him to stay on this continent.

His figure flashed to the far reaches of his perception. He appeared atop a tumultuous ocean infested with terrifying sea beasts, but he paid it no mind. After spreading his awareness once more and finding the continent he desired to reach, he immediately left the sea area.

But never would Damien have guessed...that he'd be returning only a few hours later!

Chapter 629 Azure Rain Star [1]

Azure Rain Star wasn't too large of a world per se, but its importance couldn't be underestimated.

In the Divine Realm, Azure Rain Star acted as something of a transfer point and hub for trade. Due to its position near the boundaries of the sector, combined with the strength of its inhabitants, it easily became a world most spirit ships stopped by on their travels to other domains.

But this trade hub only existed in the Mystic Continent, the Azure Rain Star's largest continent.

From the far reaches of the Mystic Continent all the way to its center, the cities were always crowded with people. Auctions took place weekly with newly imported items, filling the continent with rare treasures that many coveted.

If it wasn't for the 10 extreme peak 4th class guardians residing on the continent and overseeing its peace, the continent would've likely fallen into anarchy long ago.

When Damien's figure emerged from the void, he was on this very Mystic Continent. The land was lush and the environment was mostly consistent. At least in the area he was in, there weren't many geographic anomalies.

'After assessing the strength of this world, I can be sure that leaving Jiao Mei here wouldn't be a bad choice. However, it's best if I investigate the world's various powers and conflicts first. I can't just drop her in a den of wolves with no protection or worldly experience.'

About Jiao Mei, Damien didn't know how he felt. It was strange. While they didn't have any major connections, Damien felt the need to give her the best,

In a sense, Jiao Mei was like his disciple. He'd taught and guided her through her comprehension of the lightning element and provided her with his own comprehension to use as a basis for her future progress. It didn't matter if he did it on a whim, in the end, Jiao Mei was still someone taught by him.

In that case, he couldn't allow her to be treated poorly. It was a matter of integrity.

With this thought in mind, Damien continued teleporting until he reached the continent's central zone. After entering the largest city he could find, Damien spent the next few days gathering general information about the world.

'Hmm...the similarities to the Cloud Plane are a bit too much, aren't they?' He thought to himself with a wry smile.

In a similar fashion to Ruyue's homeworld, Azure Rain Star had 4 Palaces and 5 Great Clans.

The 4 Palaces contained a majority of the world's experts and split the world into 4 to rule it, whether this was the Mystic Continent or the landmasses surrounding it.

'Of the Four Palaces, Seeking Lotus Palace and Roaring Thunder Palace are best suited for Jiao Mei. While the latter is more tailored to her affinity, the former will allow her an environment free of distractions to practice...'

'I guess I should visit the Seeking Lotus Palace before making a decision.'

While the Roaring Thunder Palace's qualities were mostly reflected in its name, it wasn't the same for the Seeking Lotus Palace. It was the second most powerful sect in the world, yet it was incredibly secretive. Aside from its location and the fact that it only accepted women, not much was known about it.

This was especially so for its techniques. For years, Seeking Lotus Palace disciples wandered the world and showcased their light, yet, the techniques they used didn't have any sense of cohesiveness.

It was more like every individual was using a technique tailored to their skill sets.

To Damien, this fact sounded more like a rumor. It was simply too much work for a massive sect like one of the Four Palaces to put so much effort into each and every disciple.

If he wanted to confirm this rumor, the only choice he had was to see the sect for himself.

'This is going to be quite troublesome...' Damien thought to himself as he stood before the gates to a mystical mountain path covered in illusive fog. This was the presumed entrance to the Seeking Lotus Palace.

He had to wonder whether there was a better way to go about things, but in the end, he shrugged and walked through the gates.

If any problems arose, he'd deal with them at that time.

Immediately upon passing through the gate, Damien felt like he entered a different world. The scenery around him morphed and shifted psychedelically and a strange scent permeated his nose, making him woozy.

'Break!'

In that instant, he poured mana into the All-Seeing Eyes. His irises swirled with mystery, shattering the illusions around him. He once again found himself on the same mountain path, however, he was roughly 10 feet further than he was before.

'This beguiling formation is a work of art. It's rare to find an illusion that can bypass the All-Seeing Eyes' passive perception.'

His eyes became a bit more serious as he continued to walk. Just as he expected, the path ahead was filled with countless traps that became deadlier and deadlier as he continued on.

At first, the formations simply tried to beguile him and lead him away from the sect. But as he got closer, the true killing formations began to activate. Damien was faced with strange attacks from every direction, attacks filled with mana he couldn't identify.

'Strange...this mana shares qualities with the life mana Elena uses, but it seems to be of a higher state of existence. What could it be...?'

As Damien closed his eyes and began feeling the mana around him for clues, a gaze latched onto his body. Naturally, he felt its existence, but he showed no signs of this on his face.

He didn't want to alert those present with his strength and make things harder for him.

'That gaze is from...high-level 4th class...probably around level 360...maybe a Supreme Elder?'

Damien's thoughts wandered as he continued along the path. While evading every trap it contained, he quietly felt the surrounding mana and became deeper entranced in its mystery.

As he got closer to the mana's source, he felt an innate revulsion stemming from the core of his being. It was like his body rejected that mana's presence.

But when he tried to consume it, he did so without a hitch.

'There must be something within me that opposes this mana. The reason I can still devour it without a hitch is due to the Void Physique's abilities...'

But if that was the case, which secret in his body rejected this mana?

Before he could completely answer this question, he found himself standing at the end of the mountain path. In front of him was a large stretch of wilderness leading to the mountain peak, but no signs of the Seeking Lotus Palace.

Damien frowned. He didn't doubt that he was at the right location considering the gaze he felt and the mountain path, but if he couldn't sense it...

The All-Seeing Eyes activated again. While Damien still couldn't clearly see the sect, streams of mana became visible to his eyes.

And along with that, signs of spatial manipulation.

His frown curved back up into a grin. If it was a pocket dimension rather than an illusion, it would be much simpler for him to break in.

His mana spread into the surroundings, starlight converging on his body.

With his current achievements in Dimensional Magic, it only took a few minutes to find what he was looking for.

Chapter 630 Azure Rain Star [2]

Damien took a few light steps forward. His body melded into the surrounding space and faded from existence. As he walked in this strange physical state, all borders in space became meaningless.

He, like a wisp of stray mana, easily entered the pocket dimension that existed on this mountain. Finally, the Seeking Lotus Palace's scenery was revealed to him.

It was a paradise. Tall waterfalls filled with mana roared and raged from the heavens, meeting on the earth as they fed their waters into a large and peaceful lake. Colorful iridescent trees and foliage grew from the water and painted its surface. Even the Seeking Lotus Palace was built atop this lake.

Its structure was different from other sects Damien had seen due to this. Its buildings floated a few inches above the water, using the water's ambient mana as a repelling force to keep them afloat. The architectural style of these buildings wasn't something Damien had seen before, but if he had to compare, it was most similar to Roman architecture on earth.

Combined with the scenery, the sect's architecture created a strange dichotomy that enhanced its mystery.

"Are you enjoying the view of our sect?" A voice resounded from behind Damien.

"Mm," he nodded, "it's definitely one of the more unique locations I've seen recently. While it isn't anything special, the natural ambiance seems to be extremely suited for practice."

"That's natural. If it wasn't, we wouldn't have built the sect here in the first place. Even the pocket dimension you bypassed existed here naturally before we came and occupied it."

"Naturally formed pocket dimension? Now that's an interesting wonder of nature. Do you know if there are any more of these around for me to study?"

"I might. But before I answer that question, why don't you answer a few of mine?"

Damien smiled as he watched the scenery around him change. In that instant, he'd been teleported into one of the sect's buildings. His current location was a personal office with a view of the heavenly waterfalls outside.

And sitting in a rather fancy chair in front of him was the woman he was conversing with earlier.

"My name is Damien Void. And you?"

"Sierra Lock." The woman replied.

"I see...that's likely a name I should know, but as you've probably guessed, I'm not from around here."

"That much was obvious when you attempted to climb the mountain path. You've landed yourself in more trouble than you probably ever expected."

"Aren't you being a bit too friendly to someone who broke into your sect?"

"Not in the slightest. You'll understand soon enough."

Sierra smiled after finishing her words. "You have a meeting with the Sect Master in a few minutes. First, though, why don't you tell me why you decided to come here in the first place? Judging by your attitude and strength, it surely can't be because you lust after our beauties...right?"

A terrifying pressure enveloped the room. While Damien could easily ward it off, he knew that he couldn't actually fight Sierra if negotiations broke down. Without the full capacity of a large world's World Force, he was powerless against these characters at the high ranges of 4th class.

Still, in this instance, he had no reason to fear. His intentions were just, after all.

Taking this opportunity, Damien told Sierra about Jiao Mei and his dilemma. He essentially told her that the sole reason he visited the Seeking Lotus Palace was to vet the sect.

"That's quite bold of you. Do you think you're qualified?" Sierra asked somewhat mockingly. It was clear that she held immense pride in the Seeking Lotus Palace.

"I do," Damien responded plainly. "I've seen stronger sects and I know Jiao Mei's abilities best. I'd rather form my own opinions about your sect before making any decisions."

"And why don't you let her decide for herself?" Sierra pushed.

"Because she doesn't know anything," Damien answered without hesitation. "She's a child without much worldly experience at all. She spent her entire life in a small world whose greatest powers could all be crushed by your sect master alone. Do you think she can accurately judge which sect is best for her?"

"I do," Sierra replied. "Everyone is entitled to their own decision. Even if I can respect your intentions, I can't respect you making life choices for someone as naive as the girl you're describing."

"Well then, it's good that I'm not making the choice for her. After I've formed my opinions on the sects I think are best for her, I'll naturally allow her to decide which one she wants to join."

"Hmph. It's still controlling."

"Stop bullshitting. You and I both know that you want to trick her into joining your sect. No sane person would turn down a disciple with a special physique."

"Tch. Don't you know that it's rude to be so blunt? You'll never become a cunning old fox that way."

"I never wanted to be a cunning old fox anyway. I'd rather be a monster that can't be stopped even with the most genius of schemes."

"I guess we can't agree then."

"I guess not."

Damien and Sierra stared at each other from across the table. The tension in the room was thick enough to cut with a knife.

But at that time, a messaging talisman on Sierra's desk lit up, expelling the awkward atmosphere.

"Sect Master is free. It's time for you to go meet her." She said.

"And why am I doing that?" Damien questioned back.

"Didn't I already tell you?" Sierra replied with a sly smile, "you've landed yourself in quite the troublesome situation."

The scenery around them shifted once more. Damien and Sierra arrived in a larger room with a similar minimalistic design. Seated at the desk in the center of the room was a beautiful veiled woman.

"So you're the man who passed the mountain trials?"

Her voice flowed so smoothly that it almost became one with the atmosphere. Her words were more like the breath of the world than the actions of a living being.

Damien's eyes narrowed as he felt this. This was an incredibly familiar feeling. Familiar to the point of being terrifying.

"You..."

"The mountain trials were put in place by our distant ancestor to accommodate her lover. It is tradition that any man who passes the mountain trial has the right to marry a genius from our sect. However, there is one more thing you must do." The Seeking Lotus Palace Master cut Damien off as she spoke.

"There is a Challenge Gate open at the moment. It opened around 2 weeks ago and is projected to remain open for another week. If you can attain satisfactory results in that trial to truly prove your worth, I will allow you to continue."

"This...you...what?"

Damien was speechless. He expected this meeting to be a matter of intimidation, but the Seeking Lotus Palace Master completely subverted that expectation.

Sierra's words echoed in his mind once more. A troublesome situation, that's how she described his entrance into the sect.

And seeing the slight smile she was desperately trying to hide as the Palace Master spoke, Damien could tell that this was what she meant.

While the prospect of entering a Challenge Gate excited him, his purpose in entering was suspicious.

He originally came to the Seeking Lotus Palace to find Jiao Mei a new home, but instead...

He was now shopping for a new wife?!