

Void 661

Chapter 661 Prominence [3]

Sun rays shot through Aquazyl's crystal clear water as daybreak arrived upon it. The various settlements that had appeared during the nighttime vanished along with its entrance, hidden in the depths of the sand below, far separated from the outside world.

Damien stood alone and gazed at this empty Aquazyl. The wonder and youthful exuberance he showed the Ruvia Clan Elder were already gone from his visage.

'This Mystic Realm...is interesting.' He commented internally.

The Prominence War that the old elder boasted so heavily about, clearly he was only open because he was sure Damien couldn't make any waves in this massive conflict. However, to Damien, the information he received was crucial.

The way the Prominence War and Aquazyl as a whole were structured, with Damien's knowledge that Aquazyl was indeed a Mystic Realm, held a completely different meaning.

'The Prominence War is this Mystic Realm's task. It must've been something else when it first appeared in the world, but that Sea God character managed to manipulate it and place it under his control, changing its structure to his liking.'

There was no reason to give the Sea God Clans sovereignty over the Emperor Bone Sea. While these clans were blinded by tradition and the prospect of absolute control, they didn't realize just how limited their control was.

As long as they remained in Aquazyl, the Emperor Bone Sea could only serve as a factory to produce more clan members for them. Their actual authority remained limited to Aquazyl itself.

'The only way to utilize the full extent of this authority is to leave Aquazyl, but they don't have the ability to do so. Even when they enter this realm, they do so unwillingly, forcefully transported here. Yet, they don't realize this due to their idolization of the Sea God and the fact that his machinations are the root of their intelligence. In reality, the entire conflict is pointless. The Prominence War was designed in a way where outsiders gain the most.'

Damien's blood began to boil with excitement. Only people with Sea God bloodline qualified to bear the Emperor Bone Sea's crown? Laughable. For Damien, this obstacle was practically non-existent.

'Tephit Clan, right? I wonder how they taste...'

A devious plan began cooking in his head. At first, Damien's only goal was exploration and satisfying his curiosity. He could only spend a maximum of three months in the Emperor Bone Sea before he needed to return to Hidden Death Valley for closed training in preparation for the yearly assessment.

But with such a delectable cake placed right in front of his face, how could he stop himself from taking a bite?

'The Prominence War...isn't this a buffet for Damien?' Zara thought to herself after hearing the old Oga woman's explanation.

Damien's Devour ability could easily grant him the qualifications to participate in the war. And if he decided to claim the Emperor Bone Sea for himself, could anyone truly stop him?

"Ah, it's a Mystic Realm! I get it now!" She exclaimed out loud, though there was nobody nearby to hear her.

Zara's brain worked at maximum capacity and after a strenuous amount of thinking, she came to a similar, albeit less detailed, conclusion to Damien.

'Then, we need to participate, right?' She asked herself. Without much thought, she pulled out her transmission token and poured mana into it.

"Hm? Zara? What's up?" Damien's voice came from the other side.

"I just found some great information! It's about the Prominence War..."

"Oh? Okay then, let's hear it."

Zara gave a brief rundown of what the old woman told her. While it was almost the same speech Damien received, it didn't have the same level of detail just like her previous inference.

It was Zara's first time prying for information, after all. There were a few questions she could've asked that she missed due to inexperience.

But for her first time, she truly did a spectacular job. Damien couldn't help but be impressed at her growth rate.

"What do you think we should do?" He asked, curious about her response.

Zara took a moment to think before answering. "We should participate."

"And why is that?"

"Hm? Because we can get stronger that way? These Sea God Clan members smell tasty; I think they can aid my evolution. And also, don't tell me you aren't interested in controlling the Emperor Bone Sea?"

"Hahaha!" Damien laughed wildly. "You're right! There's no way I'd let such an opportunity go. In fact, I already have a plan in mind. By the way, how are things going over at the Oga Clan?"

"The Oga Clan village was destroyed in a battle with the Tephit Clan. But don't worry! I helped them defeat the enemies and even kept them alive for questioning! How is it, didn't I do good?"

"Haha, I can't say you didn't. You've actually created a perfect opportunity for me..."

Damien's voice faded. While Zara questioned what he was doing, she noticed an aura approaching from the horizon.

Damien's figure materialized in a bout of warped space, not far away from her location.

"This should be...around the right place?" He muttered to himself. As he looked around, he spotted Zara and smiled.

"Yo! A little wolf told me that you prepared a gift for me?" He teased.

"I'm not little!" Zara harrumphed, "if you want your gift, say I'm not little."

Damien scratched his head awkwardly. "Alright, you win. You're a big girl now and I'm an old man who has eyes but can't see. Are you happy now?"

"Very!" Zara said with a beaming smile. She waved her hand, allowing the Shadow Rose to rise from the ground and open up. The squirming bodies of the Tephit Clan members were revealed to the world.

Damien smiled wolfishly as he saw them. Could he ask for a more perfect situation?

"Well then, I'll thank you for this meal." He said.

Void Mana materialized at his fingertips and shot out as a group of hundreds of strings, each attaching to a Tephit Clan member.

Their bodies slowly faded into essence as Damien devoured them. Since they were already on the verge of death, the process didn't take long at all.

Damien took a deep breath as he felt the changes in his body. Along with an evolution of his physique that allowed him to breathe underwater, a fourth bloodline had been added to his system, forming a link with the other three in their perpetual cycle.

'This is the Sea God's bloodline? Honestly, I'm a little disappointed.'

With the way the elder praised the Sea God, Damien at least expected the man's bloodline to be magical or domineering. Instead, it was quite ordinary. He didn't gain any traits or strength from it at all. Even the experience he should've gotten from those kills was swallowed by his Void Mana for its own improvement.

But devouring the Tephit Clan members wasn't without reward. While he might not have gained anything material, he never desired material rewards in the first place.

Now, he was a bonafide Tephit Clan member himself.

Because of Zara's help, he had easily gained the qualifications to take control of the Sea God's legacy.

All that was left now...was to stir the pot a little.

Chapter 662 Prominence [4]

Night fell in Aquazyl once more, leading to the rise of civilization from the depths. The Sea God Clans' aversion to sunlight was strange to say the least, as it didn't seem to stem from a physical condition at all. Their actions were completely random from an outsider's perspective.

Damien and Zara returned to the Ruvia and Oga Clan branches respectively when they came out from their burrows. During the brief moment of respite they gained during the daytime, they had come up with a vague course of action to follow.

The plan was simple.

"I want to speak to your Clan Head. I have a proposal that he surely wouldn't want to miss out on." Damien said with confidence.

"The Clan Head? Even if you wish to meet him, it will be difficult. The Clan Head rarely exits seclusion, and when he does, it is only for the most important events concerning the clan as a whole." The elder replied with furrowed brows. He didn't doubt Damien's qualifications to meet a figure with the Clan Head's status at all. After all, Damien's strength wasn't too different from his own.

Damien nodded. He'd already expected this. Still, the village elder wasn't some small character, considering his strength. It was likely that the clan had positioned a large portion of its elders in these small battlefields to ensure that their subdivisions could survive. If Damien took this into consideration, he could be somewhat assured that the village elder had the means to contact the Clan Head as he wished.

And if there was a point of contact, nothing more needed to be said.

"I can swear on my mana that you won't regret helping me this time. If my proposal succeeds, the Ruvia Clan will benefit more than you could ever imagine. It might even be possible...for the clan to usurp the throne."

The village elder's eyes narrowed. "Can you stand by what you just said? I'm aware that you haven't known about the Prominence War for long, so I can excuse your mistake this once. Do not play games with me."

Damien shook his head in rebuttal. "I'm not playing games. I truly have a plan."

The village elder glanced into Damien's eyes. Strangely, he couldn't take Damien's words as mere nonsense. He hadn't known Damien for long, nor did he have any reason to trust him. Still, he had the itching feeling that Damien's words contained some truth.

He furrowed his brows in thought. He wasn't lying when he said contacting the Clan Head would be difficult. If he had something of note to tell the Clan Head, he might be able to rouse the latter's interest, but Damien was seemingly intent on keeping his proposal hidden.

"At the very least, hook me. If you can convince me to help you, then I can convince the Clan Head." The elder said firmly.

Damien raised his brow. The elder's words sounded like a guarantee, and powerhouses didn't make guarantees easily. If the elder was truly so connected to the Clan Head...

"Very well. For this plan, the end goal is...the total annihilation of the Tephit Clan."

Damien and the Ruvia Elder's conversation was mirrored by Zara and the Oga Elder. The two worked in tandem, securing meetings with the central figures of these two great clans for only a single purpose:

The downfall of the Tephit Clan.

Now that Damien had the qualifications to compete for sovereignty, he wasn't going to waste it. But at the same time, he couldn't stay in Aquazyl until the Prominence War reached its finale.

The Prominence War between the five clans was on the level of planetary warfare. To kill millions down to the roots would take time, especially when the enemy was of equal strength as the attacker. The Prominence War would at least take 5 years to a decade to reach completion.

In this time, Damien would be long gone. He might even reach Demigod status in 5 years, considering his past and current trajectory. He couldn't allow the war to prolong, especially since the Emperor Bone Sea would become a pivotal weapon in the war against the Nox if he could obtain it.

The best way to use the 3 months he had was to get rid of the greatest competition.

The Tephit Clan who won the previous Prominence War was far larger and more powerful than the other 4 clans. Any single clan wouldn't be able to defeat them alone in a head-on battle.

Even if the clans worked together, reaching the Tephit Clan's peak experts was a challenge in itself. The number of 4th classes they'd raised over the years was immense.

Damien and Zara's help could change a great deal of things.

For one, they both had specialized spatial skills that could be used for concealment and transport. If one wanted to launch a heaven-shaking ambush, their combination was the greatest tool.

The two of them were also experts in their own right. Their combined combat power surpassed a large majority of the elders of any clan. Plus, Damien's mana was nearly inexhaustible. Against a large number of enemies, he was a war machine.

To eliminate the Tephit Clan, they didn't need to cut the weeds and stomp the roots. This job could be left for the other four clans after they left Aquazyl. As long as they could eliminate the Tephit Clan's experts, their victory would be confirmed.

"...what you're saying is true, but can you match your claims? It seems as if you consider yourself a force that can match an entire clan." The Ruvia Elder questioned doubtfully.

He knew Damien was strong, but to suggest turning the tides against the Tephit Clan was insane.

"Maybe not by myself," Damien openly admitted. He wasn't stupidly arrogant enough to put himself on such a pedestal.

"But what if I can bring my own force to match? And what if the Oga Clan also agrees to cooperate with us?"

The village elder's eyebrows jumped as he fell into thought. He ignored Damien's claims about his own force since he didn't believe a young child like him could accomplish so much at his age, but if the Oga Clan and Ruvia Clan cooperated with a spatial expert aiding them in bypassing barriers...

'It might be possible.'

It was a wild thought to have. In normal circumstances, the two clans together still couldn't compete with the Tephit Clan.

In the 100,000 years after the previous Prominence War, the Tephit Clan's society had taken major leaps. Their techniques and technologies were far too advanced for the other clans to understand.

This meant that their defenses were nigh-unbreakable.

But Damien's spatial ability erased this obstacle entirely. If they could ignore the Tephit Clan's technology and only had to focus on battling their experts, their chances of success were greatly heightened.

"I can't completely trust this plan, nor do I have the appropriate knowledge to judge its success. Haa, I guess I should congratulate you for hooking me thoroughly. To discuss further, the Clan Head's presence is necessary."

The village elder was cynical about their chances, but he wasn't an idiot. The plan Damien suggested was full of holes due to his lack of knowledge, but the overall structure was indeed viable.

A transmission talisman lit up in the elder's hand. On the other side...

Chapter 663 Prominence [5]

Geographically speaking, the structure of the Ruvia Clan was extremely loose. The clan was divided into countless subdivisions and their forces were spread thin. Only within a single section of Aquazyl could the Ruvia Clan be considered truly strong.

This was the same location where the village elder's message was directed.

Within a relatively large city containing many thousands of Ruvia Clan members, there was one building that stood out more than the rest. Nothing about this building gave away its uniqueness. Whether it was the architectural design or materials, they weren't much different from any of the surrounding buildings.

However, whenever a Ruvia Clan member passed in front of this building, they'd take a moment to bow in reverence.

This was the home of their Clan Head. He was a stoic man and often his gait would terrify people even if that wasn't his intent, but in his heart, he was a man who put his clan above all else.

The Clan Head was benevolent. His existence was what allowed the Ruvia Clan to flourish to its current apparent prosperity. Even when it came to matters of succession, he promoted democracy. He didn't want to see the Ruvia Clan fall into a pit of internal conflict.

The Clan Head was a large man, standing around 7 feet tall. He had short, spiky black hair and an angular face, the deep scar running from his forehead to his collarbone being his most eye-catching feature.

At the moment, he held a transmission talisman in his hand, his brows creased in thought.

'Elder Abul? What could this be about?' He wondered.

The second he injected his mana into the talisman and heard the message's contents, however, the sternness of his face became increasingly firm.

'This...this could work.'

He didn't waste his time doubting the fractured plan. With the framework he'd been provided and his own tactical knowledge, he was able to piece together the makings of a truly viable plan.

'That spatial expert will become the key to this plan's success or failure. Before I make any decisions, I must first test his worth.'

Just like that, Damien's entry into the Ruvia Clan's main headquarters was secured. As long as he could properly display his prowess to the Clan Head, his journey would be infinitely smooth.

However, the same couldn't be said for Zara.

Compared to Damien, she received entry into the Oga Clan's headquarters much faster, but the atmosphere was much different.

Unlike the benevolence and tactical prowess of the Ruvia Clan, the Oga Clan specialized in brutality. As Zara had witnessed for herself, the Oga Clan was a realm of berserkers where results would be obtained by any means possible.

For the sake of destroying the Tephit Clan, their disposition was actually welcomed. Their recklessness would greatly aid the allied force in pressing forward.

But to convince them to even take part in said plan was a hurdle of immense proportions.

Zara stood in a large palace facing a woman sitting on a throne of bones. Her eyes were cold and ruthless, her body prone in preparation for any danger.

"Still not willing to submit? Presumptuous!" The woman roared.

Five men and women appeared from the shadows and launched themselves at Zara, their eyes dyed red with bloodlust.

Before they could even reach her, they were frozen into blocks of ice and skewered by shadows.

"Your people are not strong enough to force me. Give up before I decide to get serious." Zara stated.

The woman in front of her wasn't even the Oga Clan Head. She was merely a Great Elder.

While her status was also high, she didn't have any authority to move the entire clan.

Only, when Zara first entered the clan, the Great Elder took a liking to her. Wanting her as both a beast companion and a sex slave, the Great Elder began to pressure Zara through strength and numbers.

Unfortunately, she overestimated herself. Now that they'd reached this point, a few tens of her subordinates had been mercilessly slaughtered and Zara looked just as pristine as she did when she first entered.

Her claims about the Great Elder being too weak to force her...were extremely true.

"I haven't attacked you because I have business with your Clan Head. Aside from that, any extra strength will be welcome in the future. Before I'm forced to strike a blow against the Oga Clan, stop your nonsense."

Zara spoke coldly and calmly as if she was unbothered, but she was boiling with fury on the inside. She wanted to rip this woman to shreds. She wanted to show the Great Elder the true meaning of brutality, the brutality of the First Dungeon. Her bestial instincts and bloodline were screaming at her to raise hell.

But she suppressed these instincts to the best of her ability. She wouldn't allow her bloodline to control her into making more mistakes. She would tame it and force it to submit.

The Great Elder could only count herself lucky for Zara's consideration. She, unfortunately, didn't seem to realize the great grace she'd been bestowed.

"You lowly mutt. A great being like me has declared you worthy of being my slave, yet you reject? Then die!"

The Great Elder outstretched her arm, causing her bone throne to rattle. The countless humanoid bones raised into the air and sharpened into blades, moving thereafter to fill Zara with holes!

However...

"What the hell do you think you're doing?"

A chilly atmosphere filled the throne room. The bone weapons, mid-flight, were halted in their tracks.

Another woman walked through the entrance. The sight of her instantly caused the Great Elder to cower.

"C-Clan Head..." she whispered respectfully, bowing her head.

"Clan Head? You have the audacity to call me that? You took my guest and tried to turn her into a slave, is that the behavior a Great Elder should show?"

"B-but...!" The Great Elder protested. The Clan Head had never objected to her behavior before. Many so-called "guests" had become dogs for the Great Elder to abuse as she pleased.

But Zara was different. The weight Zara held surpassed the Great Elder by leagues, should her claims be true.

The Great Elder immediately felt a grand sura envelop her. Her bone throne shattered into countless fragments that pierced into her skin, and the aura suppression's weight forced her to her knees, her head planted on the floor.

"You must be Zara." The Oga Clan Head said, ignoring the groveling Great Elder. "My name is Ria, and I am the one you came here to meet."

Zara nodded noncommittally. "Well met."

"Mm, I guess your attitude is reasonable considering how you've been treated until now. But don't you think you're looking down on me too much?" The Clan Head said.

"No, you're the one looking down on me. Don't try to be subtle with your bullshit and tell me outright. You want to fight, no?"

Zara bared her fangs. Ever since entering the Oga Clan, her battlelust had been at an all-time high. Something about the primal atmosphere made her want to rip everyone who even slightly disrespected her to shreds.

And it wasn't like she was the only one feeling this way. The Clan Head, ever since hearing about Zara's proposal, had been itching for a fight.

A girl weaker than she was actually dared to dream so big? She dared to think up a plan that even she, the Oga Clan Head, wasn't able to realize?

Audacious!

Before anything else, she wanted to put Zara in her place. Because a dog that didn't follow orders...

Wasn't a dog she needed.

Chapter 664 Prominence [6]

Ria, the Oga Clan Head, and Zara switched locations, arriving in an empty field where they could fight to their heart's content.

Rather than saying they held animosity towards each other, it was better to say that they were just looking for excuses to fight.

Ria was the head of a berserker clan, so her bloodlust could be easily explained. Zara's situation, however, was far more complicated.

Whether it was her nature as a beast, her mysterious bloodline, or even her inherent disposition, none had ever been peace-loving. Zara and Damien grew up together in the First Dungeon and were equally influenced by its environment.

But while Damien slowly learned to control himself and somewhat adapt to society, Zara wasn't the same. Unlike him, she had no reason to do so.

She was a beast. Unless she went to the Beast Domain, she would never be treated the same as other existences. The humanoid races of the universe considered both beasts and plants as below them, but unlike plants who were left alone, beasts were often enslaved and controlled as mounts or companions.

Zara despised this idea. As she became more comfortable with her identity, as she understood what it meant to live as an individual, she became unable to accept this reality.

The only exception was Damien. Because while she did indeed view him as a sort of Master, he never treated her as such.

In fact, he was the main driving force behind her quest for independence and her ability to realize problems on her own.

In the current situation, Zara's behavior could be considered venting. Along with this, she was well aware that with the Oga Clan's nature, this duel was clearly a test of her worth.

If she couldn't prove herself, she'd be demeaned and rejected. If she could...

She'd thoroughly force the Oga Clan to submit to her.

"You're quite brave following me out here," Ria said mockingly, pulling Zara out of her clouded mental state.

Looking at Ria, Zara didn't feel any fear. Instead, she felt an excitement she'd been missing for a very long time.

"Don't talk with words. Use your fists instead!"

Without entertaining pointless sophistry, Zara turned into an array of shadows that split and snaked through the ground at different trajectories. They instantly surrounded Ria before reforming into a physical body as Zara shot her fist out at lightning speed!

Ria scoffed and moved her body slightly, allowing the fist to pass by. Her arm shot out to grab Zara's throat right after.

"Ha! This is all you had? And you think you're worthy of my help? Pathetic!"

Ptui!

Zara's split landed square in Ria's eye. "Shut up, bitch. We haven't even started yet."

Thanks to the swearing habit she picked up from Damien, she was able to easily enrage Ria, whose ego had become bloated due to her position.

Just as Ria tried to ruthlessly crush Zara's throat, her body turned immaterial, dispersing into the air.

"Engulf."

Zara's voice rang out from her original position. Her body remained there as if she never moved. Her shadow expanded from beneath her feet, following her words and engulfing the entire area.

"Die."

The pseudo-domain she created pressed down on Ria, limiting her speed. Zara's body shifted the second it happened, arriving next to her and striking with precision.

Bang!

Her claws collided with Ria's outstretched arm, letting out a dull thump. Instead of drawing back, Zara pushed on with her attack!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Her claws slashed like drifting shadows, elusive and ethereal, but every single swipe of her arm contained the power to tear a normal early 4th class to shreds.

In comparison, Ria's movements were crude. She used the most basic blocking patterns imaginable, but the raw power of her defense was enough to contend against Zara's technique.

"Not bad! I thought this would be boring, but you might actually give me a good fight!" Ría exclaimed.

"It's my turn now!"

In that moment, her arm became a flash of light. Before Zara even realized it, a fist was mere millimeters away from her face.

'Chronolock!'

She rapidly utilized her Ice Laws to freeze time, but Ria's capabilities far exceeded her imagination. The fist, though somewhat slowed, was still too fast for her to react in time.

Bang!

Zara took a punch to the face and was sent flying backwards. Stabilizing herself in the air, she wiped the blood from her nose and sneered.

"Weak!"

Without an ounce of hesitation, she dove back in. Now partially transformed into her beast form, Zara continued her melee with Ria.

Her brutality slowly began to match her opponent's. The two danced around each other in a battle of blood, dying the ground red in their own. Whether it was Ria or Zara, neither was unscathed as they clashed hundreds of times every instant.

Zara was skilled in mid-range combat more than anything else. While she did have a strong body as a beast, it had to be remembered that the Sea God Clans were Godbeast descendants. On top of that, the Oga Clan specifically was specialized in physical combat.

Challenging Ria in this way was completely impractical, but Zara didn't care about practicality. She didn't even care about winning as fast as possible.

She wanted to destroy Ria in her area of expertise. Only in this way would the Oga Clan bow down to her.

'Now!'

Zara's eyes hardened. Her claw slashed out, laced with a grayish mana that had never seen the light of day before.

'Deconstruction: Lightspeed'

Xiu!

Her body moved too fast for sound to keep up with her. Her claw turned into a blur of light, and as if it teleported, completely changed trajectories in an instant.

Zara retreated immediately. As she did, a fountain of blood sprayed out from Ria's chest. The gash Zara created only stopped expanding when it reached her neck.

'She's strong!' Zara realized. Her slash had surpassed the speed she could move without the help of her self-created skill. She used Light Laws themselves to aid her speed, yet Ria still managed to narrowly dodge her throat being gouged out.

"Keuk...!" Ria coughed. A trail of blood leaked from her lips.

"Not bad...at this level, maybe it really will be possible to carry out your plan..."

"Fine! I've decided! The Oga Clan will earnestly hear your proposal and make the decision that benefits us most without an ounce of bias! While I can't say for certain, we will most likely participate in your insanity!"

Her gaze locked on Zara, a light of madness coloring her eyes.

"But...we aren't done with just this much, right?"

A red aura covered her body. A thick smell of blood permeated the air as her bloodlust spread.

From now on, she was clearly going to take this fight seriously.

And Zara wasn't one to deny such an entertaining battle.

Her body shifted. Her beautiful form expanded into that of a terrifying winged black wolf. Her shadow turned murky, almost mirroring the appearance of muddy water.

Within that shadow, a pair of golden eyes shone ruthlessly.

Zara's maw widened into a harrowing grin. Her wings flapped a single time in a motion that could only be called graceful.

But the aftermath...was anything but.

The surrounding few thousand kilometers were enveloped in a terrifying explosion, signifying the beginning of the battle's second round.

Chapter 665 First Act [1]

Now that she'd reached 4th class, the sheer size of Zara's beast form had reached untold proportions. If she truly expanded to her greatest size, she would become a being that stood a few hundred kilometers in height.

For a large-scale brawl, this form would allow her to net a greater amount of damage for the same amount of effort. Since she was only fighting a single opponent, though, Zara made sure to limit her size to the appropriate level.

She wasn't much bigger than Ria when they clashed. Her terrifying paws were coated in a deep blackness that seemed to suck one's soul. Her gaping maw was lined with razor-sharp teeth sharper than any Chaos-ranked artifact.

With this body made for killing, she became a completely different monster. The way she used her Laws also morphed, becoming more bestial and instinctual.

Concepts like techniques were simply thrown to the wind.

BOOM!

Ria's body slammed into Zara's side heavily, the dark red aura around her expanding into a material construct and exponentially heightening her striking power.

"Keuk!"

Zara coughed out a mouthful of blood, but didn't budge from her spot. Shadows shot up from the ground and mounted her to her position. At the same time, a massive shard of ice jutted out from the area Ria impacted, heading straight for her forehead!

"Haa!" Ria shouted enthusiastically. She ducked her body under the ice shard and punched upward, shattering it with a single fist. Her leg kicked up at Zara's underbelly in hopes of finding a weak spot.

Bang!

Zara bowed in pain. In the first place, Ria was stronger than her purely based on levels. Zara's advantages came in the form of elemental affinities and human techniques, both of which she learned to use in the outside world.

Ria's striking range was limited to where her body could reach. But for Zara...

The underbelly that Ria tried to attack was coated in a thick layer of ice. Even the shadows projected by her body onto the ground responded to her calls, forming an airtight defense for her most obvious weak spot.

Ria's kick made impact, and the shockwave caused Zara immense pain, but she didn't get off scot-free either. She found a murky black layer of frost covering her leg, slowing her movement by a small amount.

Only, this small amount would become far greater if she allowed Zara to continue. Ria narrowed her eyes. She wasn't used to fighting against somebody who could counter her so well. In Aquazyl, there

were no clans who held either shadow or ice affinities, both of which being exclusive to creatures of the surface or of environments that matched their affinities.

Despite Aquazyl's denizens living their lives nocturnally, they were never truly connected to the darkened. Instead, their Sea God bloodline forced them to maintain a connection with the sea alone.

The two clashed for what seemed like the thousandth time. Regardless of how much blood they lost or how brutal their fight became, neither seemed to have any intention of stopping.

Off to the side, high-ranking members of the Oga Clan watched in awe.

There were never enough opponents. Whenever enemies came, the elders were usually enough to slaughter them. In reality, they'd rarely ever seen their Clan Head fight to her full capabilities.

At the same time, nobody dared to fight her and find out her limits. They were well aware based on her aura alone how much stronger she was than them.

But seeing this current battle, they realized they'd vastly underestimated their Clan Head. The mere shockwaves from the ongoing clash continuously forced their bodies back, and that was after they'd been dispersed by the seawater!

Among this group, the Great Elder was especially shaken. Zara could fight head-to-head with the Clan Head...

What right did she have to act the way she did?

Her body shivered in terror. If Zara didn't hold back during their previous interaction...

'It's not too late...it's not too late...' she chanted religiously in her head. As long as she could keep her life, she didn't mind becoming Zara's dog.

She wasn't someone with a strong mentality, anyway. She was the type to vent her inferiority complex on those under her.

Nevertheless, the Great Elder received several pitying glances from the surrounding elders while they observed the battle.

At this time...

Zara and Ria stood 10 meters apart. Zara's fur was matted in blood, deep holes puncturing into her body. Rather than external injuries, the internal injuries she wracked up were far more terrifying.

As for Ria, she was also covered in blood from head to toe. Harrowing gashes ruined her toned visage, making her seem like a mutated science experiment rather than a sentient being.

Blood dripped down her face and splashed into her eyes and mouth. She licked her lips and savored its taste.

"It's been so long...it's been so long since I could fight like this! Kuahahahahaha!" She roared. She'd truly gone mad from battlelust.

Zara watched her indifferently, but internally, she was suppressing the same madness that Ria was letting loose.

'This battle won't end for a very long time...we are evenly matched in physical defense, and while her physical attack is better than mine, my elemental attacks can match her. If this goes on...'

"Enough." She spoke out loud, attracting Ria's attention.

"Enough? You think this is enough?! It won't be enough until one of us is dead!" Ria shouted in protest.

Zara shook her head. "Get it together. We aren't here to fight each other, but to talk about cooperating. Continuing further isn't good for us."

No matter how much she wanted to continue fighting, she knew her priorities. It wasn't just Damien who wished to finish their part in this war quickly and return to Hidden Death Valley.

Zara also had this desire. She wanted to compete with peak geniuses who were similar in age to her. Aside from that, she wanted to see the ongoing war.

The Nox played a large role in her origins. She could grow by consuming their power, as she'd learned through the Death Seed. Rather than waste time in a fight where she would gain nothing, she chose progress.

The Zara of the past would've never made this decision, nor would she have even realized the decision's existence in the first place.

"I refuse to end this fight without declaring a winner!" Ria said. After listening to Zara, she did manage to regain a semblance of sanity. She understood clearly how important Zara's proposal would be to the Oga Clan's survival.

But still, she couldn't run from her nature. It was in her blood to fight until the brutal end.

Zara sighed. She figured it would be this way. Then, there was no other choice.

"The solution is simple. Instead of physical combat, let's compete in status."

"Status?" Ria asked, tilting her head curiously.

Zara nodded in affirmation. "Right. You're a Godbeast descendant, aren't you? Let's compete in bloodlines. The first to fall to the other's suppression loses."

Ria raised her brow in surprise and said, "hm? You want to compete with me in bloodlines? Haha, you're quite the confident one!"

Her aura flared in excitement. "If it's bloodlines, I will never lose! Come! Show me what gives you the confidence to contend with the Sea God!"

Chapter 666 First Act [2]

"Come! Show me what gives you the confidence to contend with the Sea God!"

With a heroic shout, Ria galvanized her aura. The slumbering Sea God bloodline in her body began to boil, coming to the forefront.

In that instant, her appearance went through a massive shift. Aquamarine reptilian scales covered her body, her eyes turned into hollow sockets filled with blue flames, her hair lengthened and seemed to gain sentience, and finally, her mouth turned into a maw of jagged teeth.

The Godbeast Ancestor of the Oga Clan was of a species called Charybdis. The original Charybdis was a gargantuan creature even more terrifying than the Fifth Primal Sovereign, and after her bloodline merged with the Sea God's to create the Oga Clan, the bloodline's monstrosity only grew.

Unfortunately, the Sea God bloodline that the current Sea God Clans carried was heavily diluted. The Sea God and his wives were existences from millions of years ago, after all.

Therefore, unfortunately, Ria's bloodline wasn't anywhere near the original Charybdis in power. It was the same reason she didn't have a beast form of her own, at best having a partial transformation similar to Damien's.

Still, this didn't mean her bloodline wasn't powerful. The second its immense aura blanketed the surroundings, the Oga Clan elders watching the battle were forced to their knees in submission. Zara felt the bloodline's coercive force wrap around her body, arrogantly trying to force her to do the same.

But instead of gritting her teeth and enduring, she scoffed. It wasn't intentional at all, but rather an instinctual reaction.

She didn't even control it.

Nor did she have to rouse her bloodline to counter.

The mystery of Zara's bloodline began at birth. In truth, she never had something like a parent.

There were other wolves Zara grew up with before being chased by the First Dungeon's 40th-floor Boss Wyvern, but none of these were her kin. They merely included her due to their shared species.

Zara, however, never felt a connection to these wolves. She knew from the start just how different she was. After all, her intelligence started developing far earlier than most beasts.

In essence, Zara always felt a sense of loneliness deep within her. The source of this loneliness was none other than her bloodline, the unique part of her being that separated her from all others.

The only one she'd ever felt a true bloodline connection with was Alea.

Through her years of traveling with Damien, she'd been to multiple worlds, multiple realms, fantastical environments with new species she'd never seen before, but never once did these provide any clues about her bloodline.

Alea was the first hint, and the second was the Death Seed.

Through these, she could only confirm that she had some sort of connection with the Nox.

But...did that really explain her bloodline in any way?

As said bloodline voluntarily boiled inside her body, she found herself wondering again: just what was she?

The stronger she got, the closer she got to the answer. For now, though...

Zara's mysterious bloodline flared in response to Ria's challenge, as if insulted by the fact that a mere diluted Sea God bloodline dared even think to compete.

Her beast form became more pronounced, not only growing to its full size of several hundred kilometers, but also becoming more powerful with each passing second.

Woong! Woong! Woong!

A strange sound followed the waves of power fluctuation leaking from her body. Her bloodline aura spread and engulfed Ria's, dying the world black.

This blackness didn't cease. It expanded to cover thousands of kilometers both in distance and height. And as it did, the aura it gave off caused several manifested phenomena.

Death, destruction, blood, violence, brutality, these concepts were only some encapsulated by her aura. Scenes of brutal slaughter, of universal destruction, of unthinkable torture, spread and infected the minds of those trapped in the blackness, submerging them in an inescapable illusion.

"Khh!" Ria let out a strained breath and bit her tongue until it bled, doing her best to keep consciousness.

Her body shivered in fear. Her Sea God bloodline...desperately tried to retreat into her body to escape Zara's bloodline aura.

'What...is...this?!' She panicked inwardly. Never in her life did she expect to encounter a bloodline more powerful than hers, let alone one that trumped her to this extent.

"AHHHHHH!" A piercing shriek came from far away. The Great Elder, among the crowd of Oga Clan Elders, fell to her knees clutching her head.

"STOP! STOP! MAKE IT STOP! AHHHHHH!"

Her soul-rending cries cut through the blackness, inadvertently helping the others regain some sanity. Unfortunately, reality was even more terrifying than those illusions.

The smell of death lingered around them. It felt like perverted hands were crawling up their bodies, grabbing them by the throats and ordering them to submit.

The elders shook, unable to bear the disgusting feeling. The Great Elder was even worse. She was foaming from the mouth, blood leaking from her every orifice.

Only Ria could withstand the bloodline's pressure, albeit barely. Her knees were bent as if begging her to let them touch the ground. Still, she refused to submit.

She glared up into Zara's massive eyes with an unyielding gaze even as her bloodline abandoned her.

She accepted it. She couldn't beat Zara. Even if she used her bloodline earlier, if Zara just used her own, she'd have lost in an instant.

But just because she couldn't win didn't mean she would lose. At the very least, she'd resist until the bitter end.

Zara herself didn't notice the commotion she caused at all. In her mind, a fierce battle was taking place.

She fought against a shadowy being without form, a manifestation of her bloodline. She fought so she could control her body.

There was a reason Zara didn't touch her bloodline often. Whenever it came into effect, she maintained the risk of losing her ego to it, becoming an insatiable slaughter machine.

If Zara lost this fight, there was no hope left for her.

Nonetheless, this fight was one she'd fought endlessly during her time with Tang Lingzi. Controlling her bloodline was half the training she did, and by far the most grueling.

"Not yet! I won't fall to you!" She roared in defiance. Her eyes shone with brilliant golden light, creating a thick mental barrier around her body.

"Jejeje! Child, why fight? Become one with me, and you will obtain the power to rule the world. Tell me, didn't you want to stand by that little boyfriend of yours?"

Zara gritted her teeth in anger. "You deceptive bitch! What's the point in having power if I have to give up my soul in exchange?! I want to stand by Damien as myself, not the lunatic you turn me into!"

Her mental barrier strengthened to its maximum. The golden light around her spread through the surroundings, cleansing the bloodline's darkness.

"Jejejeje, then it is not time yet. Do not worry, child, for we shall become one in time. When that moment arrives, we will see whether or not you still reject us."

The being's voice faded. The shadows in Zara's spiritual world faded. Now alone, she took many deep breaths to readjust her mental state.

She didn't like the way that being spoke. Even ignoring the strangeness of the fact that it could speak at all, its tone seemed to suggest that Zara would eventually submit to it regardless of the circumstances.

As her consciousness returned to the material world, she made a silent vow to herself; a vow she'd made dozens of times in the past.

'The day my bloodline succeeds in enveloping me...will be the day I die.'

Chapter 667 First Act [3]

As soon as Zara regained control over her body, her bloodline suppression vanished as if it never existed. Her body shrank and morphed back into her human form, wrapped in a beautiful black dress.

Ria undid her transformation as well, sighing in relief. Despite her ferocity in the moment, she didn't actually want to die. It was relieving that the whole ordeal was done with.

Her rationality had long since been returned to her. The unquenchable bloodlust she'd been emitting was gone entirely.

Her body flashed over to the elders to check on their conditions. Other than some light trauma from the prior illusions, they were completely intact.

The Great Elder on the other hand...

Her mind nearly shattered. It was unknown whether Zara did it consciously or subconsciously, but her aura had specifically targeted the Great Elder among the crowd, bringing her an utterly mind-breaking experience.

She would never be the same again, and even if her mind was healed, her combat prowess would take a steep dive.

Ría sighed. Such was the consequence of offending someone who shouldn't be offended. The Great Elder's antics, though silently allowed by her, were bound to bring her downfall sooner or later. It was just a shame that Ria didn't have the ability to save her when that time came.

Nevertheless, she didn't hold any grudges against Zara. In fact, her opinion was the exact opposite.

A domineering and mysterious bloodline, strength that far surpassed her level, strong law comprehension, and endless talent; facing someone who had all of these factors combined, how could she not be in awe?

It didn't take long for her to make a decision.

Her knees bent, hitting the ground with a dull thump. With her head lowered in Zara's direction, she spoke:

"We, the Oga Clan, have never submitted to anyone regardless of strength. We are prideful beings who dare to contend with any and everything. However, you have completely suppressed us. Even if our entire clan decided to battle you, your bloodline alone would be enough to defeat us. Thus, I have made my decision."

Her eyes raised, meeting Zara's. Within was a light of admiration that wasn't present before. "The Oga Clan will submit to you as our new leader. Former Clan Head Ria greets the Clan Head!"

The elders' eyes widened in shock at this declaration, but without fail, they all mirrored Ria's posture.

""The Oga Clan greets the Clan Head!""

Zara's eyes widened in just as much shock as theirs. Clan Head?! Since when did she ask for such a position?!

Inwardly panicking, she hurriedly waved her arms in denial. "What are you talking about? I don't have the experience or leadership ability to lead a clan! If you follow me, it'll only hurt you in the long run."

Ria immediately refuted her, saying, "you're wrong. Someone who can make the bold decision to fight the entire Tephit Clan, regardless of the means you use, is worthy of leading us. Please accept this position!"

Zara continued to hesitate even after hearing Ria's impassioned speech. Really, she wasn't even the one who came up with that plan! The basis of their trust was a scam!

But before she could deny again, a voice in the distance stopped her.

"Oho? Something interesting is happening here, I see."

Two men appeared on the horizon, one old and one young. Naturally, they were Damien and the Ruvia Clan Head.

"Damien!" Zara yelped upon seeing him. She didn't expect him to come perfectly when she was in such an embarrassing situation.

"What? Why are you embarrassed? If they want to take you as their leader, accept them. Even if you can only act as a spiritual pillar for now, it doesn't mean you'll never grow into your role. Just follow your heart without worrying about the consequences. After all, aren't I here to clean up after you if you make a mess?"

Damien smiled warmly as he watched Zara's bewildered reaction. He'd been forced to realize it over and over again, but it never seemed to fully set in.

That little wolf from back then, the one who was too shy and insecure to leave his shadow, had grown into a fine woman. Every time she took another step forward, it filled him with immense joy.

He didn't know what it was like to have siblings, but seeing Zara grow up made him understand what the closeness of family was truly like. Even if he had to eat a loss, if it meant Zara's happiness, he wouldn't mind doing so.

'Haa, I'll need to have a long talk with Tang Lingzi when I get back. If she doesn't let me see what Zara went through after separating from me...'

Damien shook off the thought. He didn't even know when the Grand Assembly would take place, so there was no point thinking about his people in the Human Domain.

Doing so would only depress and distract him.

Just as Damien was warmed by Zara's growth, Zara felt bliss from Damien's encouragement. If there was one thing she desired above all else, it was praise from the person she idolized.

He would always be there to support her. Just this fact alone gave her immeasurable confidence.

"Fine. I will accept the position of Clan Head. But! I will not stay here forever. When I leave, I will delegate my authority to Ria until my return. Is that acceptable?"

"Yes, Clan Head!" The Oga Clan elders and Ria shouted in unison.

"Good then," Zara said smilingly. "Now, onto the important matter..."

Her gaze traveled back to Damien and the Ruvia Clan Head. Finally freed from their kneeling position, the Oga Clan members finally looked over at the two as well.

"You...Maximus?!" Ria shouted in astonishment. Damien was the only one who talked previously, so she didn't even notice his presence. Now that she had, she felt a deep sense of shame bubbling up inside her.

"Haha, Ria, have you been well? It's been a very long time since I've seen you in such a position." The Ruvia Clan Head, Maximus, responded jovially.

Ria's face immediately went red. "What are you saying in front of everybody?! Hmph!"

"Haha, alright, I'm sorry, okay? While I do want to take some time to catch up with you, we have important business to discuss first. My little friend Damien here came to me with an interesting proposal, you see. I trust little Zara had done the same with you?"

"Mm," Ria responded. "We, the Oga Clan, have already decided to follow Clan Head Zara to death. And you?"

"Of course, my Ruvia Clan will also be joining. With what the Tephit Clan has done to our people, how could I reject? Besides, this boy seems to know much more than I expected. With the help of these two, our chances of success are surprisingly high."

Damien smiled off to the side as he listened to them converse. Ignoring the...deep relationship that Maximus and Ria seemingly shared, Maximus' last sentence was the main source of his smile.

Damien had almost forgotten after all this time, but Devour experienced a tremendous evolution during his Baptism.

Namely, it allowed him to consume memories.

After devouring those Tephit Clan members that Zara caught, he actually acquired a substantial amount of information on the clan's subdivisions and structure. After all, one of those who Zara caught was a Tephit Clan elder.

Unfortunately, he didn't have information on the Tephit Clan's main headquarters, but with Damien's new ability, it was only a matter of time.

To Maximus who was unaware of this fact, they only had a high chance of defeating the Tephit Clan.

But to Damien, this future was all but assured.

The three parties who would be participating in the raid were finally gathered, their cooperation secured. If Damien added his own forces on top of that...

The Tephit Clan's total annihilation was just around the corner.

Chapter 668 First Act [4]

The overall structure of the plan was simple.

Between the three forces, there were several hundred thousand able-bodied soldiers who could be dispatched. These soldiers would be used to attack the Tephit Clan's subdivisions, most of which Damien knew the structure of and location of.

When the Tephit Clan's attention was divided trying to support these subdivisions, they would launch a fierce attack on the main headquarters, killing the Tephit Clan Head and his strongest subordinates.

Each secondary team was led by three 4th class beings, one from each of the involved forces, in case of emergency. Lucius, White Dragon King, Elvira, and the two Phoenix Matriarchs were placed in these secondary teams. In fact, even Feng Qing'er and Lunaria Snow exited the Sanctuary for the first time to participate, following their mothers.

Since Damien and Zara independently briefed Maximus and Ria about the outline of the plan, the actual strategy meeting didn't take long. Maximus and Ria provided their own input based on their knowledge

and fleshed out the plan. After revising the improved version for an entire night, there was no need to say more.

The plan was set in motion.

The secondary teams shot into the horizon, spreading thin as they chased down their targets. Now, Damien and the rest only had to wait for results.

Feng Qing'er looked around as she flew threw the crystal clear waters of Aquazyl. She'd never imagined the possibility of such an environment existing.

The 3000 Beast Mountain Range was entirely landlocked, and while it did have its fair share of rivers and lakes, the volume of water in the entirety of the mountain range couldn't even match a portion of Aquazyl.

If she'd remained trapped in her own bubble for the rest of her life, it was unknown if she would have ever truly grown into a powerhouse.

A sigh leaked from her mouth. That Damien she got to know in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range seemed so distant now. In a few short years, he'd promoted to the same level of strength as her mother. Meanwhile, she stagnated, unable to cross the final barrier and receive her Baptism.

'How do you do it?' She wondered. She knew he was a freak from the beginning, but she was still astonished to see his progress.

And at the same time, she mourned a bit thinking about what he had to go through to reach that point.

She was able to leisurely train in the comfort of the Sanctuary, slowly accumulating her comprehension and raising her level to grow. While this environment was wonderous, Damien clearly didn't have any semblance of this peace in his own life, despite being the Sanctuary's creator.

In fact, he rarely ever visited the Sanctuary at all. He treated it like an independent world that he was visiting rather than his own domain.

Nevertheless, Feng Qing'er didn't remain thinking about Damien for long. Her anticipation was killing her.

There were plenty of conflicts in the Sanctuary, but because everyone was on the same side, there were never any life-or-death battles.

The Storm Heavens Realm that was recently added to the Sanctuary was a breath of fresh air, allowing her to once again experience growth through struggle. But even then, the Storm Heavens Realm didn't align with her affinities, so at most, it could only train her physical body.

Now that she was outside, and partaking in a war no less, she was guaranteed the experience she so desired.

How could she not be excited?

Feng Qing'er's gaze refocused on the horizon. Their force had already been traveling for a few days. They'd traveled through multiple barriers that separated different battlefields and were now finally arriving at their destination.

And they were just in time for nightfall.

Roughly 3 hours of flying later, the sun faded behind the horizon. The Fire Phoenix Matriarch, Feng Yuxiang, took a spatial ring off of her finger and poured mana into it.

What exited wasn't items, but rather people. Since they traveled during the daytime to increase their speed and distance covered, Damien designed some pocket dimensions to hold the Sea God Clan members who were traveling with them.

This convenience was the only reason they reached their destination in a matter of days rather than weeks.

Feng Yuxiang spoke, "we are only a few hundred kilometers away from our destination. This Tephit camp is the most peripheral camp in the western region of Aquazyl. We will start from here and make our way inward until we meet the main force at the Tephit Clan's headquarters."

The Sea God Clan members rapidly regained their wits upon hearing her words and nodded.

"This plan cannot fail. If it does, our entire alliance faces the threat of total annihilation. Everyone! Lady Feng's orders are absolute, as declared by the Clan Head! Disobedience means death!" A man shouted to his fellow clan members.

He was the Ruvia Clan 4th class assigned to Feng Yuxiang's group, named Leon. Next to him stood a muscled woman with tan skin from the Oga Clan, Tera.

"The Tephit's rule is over! Let's let them experience the taste of defeat!" She roared.

OOOOOH!

The Oga Clan members let out a fierce battle cry that shook the waters. Smiling at their actions, Feng Yuxiang gave the order.

"Charge!"

Hundreds of kilometers were covered in a matter of minutes.

And the Tephit Clan peripheral subdivision was destroyed only a few minutes later.

They didn't stand a chance. Feng Yuxiang didn't even have to act. When they first arrived, Tera ripped out the throat of the overseeing elder, killing him instantly and causing the remaining Tephit forces' morale to steeply drop.

It was a slaughter after that. With Feng Qing'er at the head, the Ruvia, Oga, and Sanctuary forces acted without mercy.

When the battle was over, nobody thought to rest. Their time was extremely precious at the moment, and as rapidly as they could, they had to destroy as many Tephit subdivisions as possible.

Feng Qing'er grinned to herself. In this aquatic environment, she wasn't just severely limited, she was essentially crippled. The strength of her fire element without the backing of Laws was decreased to a negligible level, forcing her to use both technique and creativity to make up the difference.

In such conditions, the fighting capabilities she could show dropped to match her level, but this only excited her more.

The challenge she had been seeking, this was it. A place where she was pathetically weak and a place where she could become abnormally strong.

Her gaze drifted to the horizon.

'With this environment...I should be able to at least touch the precipice of 4th class by the time our raid is over...how fun!'

With a smile on her face as she followed the rest of the troops to the next Tephit subdivision, she suddenly had a thought.

'Luna...is probably thriving in this environment. Hahaha, I almost feel bad for the people who have to fight her.'

Lunaria and the Ice Phoenix Matriarch were a terrifying combo even on land, but in this environment where they held a complete environmental advantage...?

They truly did show the Tephit Clan the meaning of fear.

Chapter 669 First Act [5]

Even compared to the haste Feng Yuxiang's team made when destroying the peripheral camp, the Ice Phoenix Matriarch, Bianca Snow's team was even faster.

The other didn't even have to act. With a few taps of her finger, she turned the entirety of the eastern peripheral camp into a block of ice, freezing even the 4th class overseeing elder at a molecular level. When she shattered this ice and let it return to the rest of the seawater, there wasn't a single trace of the camp left.

"Mm, this is good." She commented as the others watched her in awe. Even Willhelm and Tania, the other two 4th classes on her team, were astonished by her rapidity.

"I won't continue doing this every time," Bianca stated. "I, along with Willhelm and Tania, will conserve as much strength as possible while moving forward. We must be prepared to support the main force at any time."

""Yes, Ma'am!"" A collective affirmation rang out. The respect in their hearts for Bianca reached an all-time high.

The group moved through the night, destroying every Tephit subdivision they came across. Just as she said, Bianca didn't move unless it was absolutely necessary.

Though, it never was.

As she watched the destruction continue, she fell into thought. That boy she didn't place much stake in had really become a character. Judging by their behavior, the other Sanctuarian Clan Leaders had completely settled into their subordinate roles, not questioning Damien's authority in the slightest.

She couldn't blame them. After seeing his prowess and extreme growth rate, it was natural to feel submissive. He was someone who would become a Demigod one day, and he was someone who'd established his own world when he was still a 3rd class being.

It was insane to put him in the same category as anyone else.

Bianca sighed. Her personality didn't let her submit easily. Even more than the outspoken Feng Yuxiang, the defiance in her heart was prominent.

Still, she could feel it. She was starting to submit to Damien as well.

It was quite funny to think about it. The last two times he summoned the Sanctuary's forces were both during wars of massive scale. While the last one was easier since it was a head-to-head melee where strategy was necessary, this time was different.

There was a concrete plan in place. And rather than being enveloped in war...Damien was starting one himself.

He was becoming more domineering by the day. He was throwing away his doubts and his struggles trying to appear more "human," truly embracing himself for what he was.

This internal change that was slowly taking place was reflected in the eyes of others, especially those like Bianca who'd seen him before it started.

'Haa, that brat is truly incorrigible. I hope my Luna doesn't end up like Qing'er...poor lass.'

That playboy who flirted with everyone but couldn't follow through and take responsibility, she really ought to smack him across the head a few times for beguiling her little niece.

And from what Feng Qing'er had said, he even managed to seduce a girl who entered the Primordial Undying Realm as a Nox spy!

Unimaginable!

While she couldn't help but praise his charisma, it also made her wary.

She could joke about his seducing women whenever she wanted, but if that charisma continued to grow...

Just how much of the universe would he end up conquering?

'What am I thinking?!' Bianca wondered as she shook off her thoughts. Universal sovereignty wasn't something so simple that a young genius like Damien could achieve it.

Universal sovereignty was competed for on a racial level. Let alone a single human, even a Demigod-level influence didn't have a shot at conquering the entire universe.

Besides, after the Nox arrived, the concept of universal sovereignty became obsolete. Instead, ensuring its survival was the main point on everyone's minds.

Still, the Sanctuary seemed to grow infinitely. As one of its residents, Bianca truly couldn't get rid of that slight feeling within her soul...

The feeling that the boy she served would accomplish something unimaginable.

The multitude of secondary teams continued moving without fail. The Sanctuary's forces were much stronger than the regular 4th classes of Aquazyl, so naturally they moved faster.

Still, the other secondary teams couldn't be underestimated. With their synergy and familiarity with the environment, their speeds weren't much slower than the Sanctuary teams.

Like this, the Tephit Clan's forces were rapidly being destroyed. With so many elders dying in succession, it would be stranger if the main clan didn't hear word of the happenings.

The Tephit Clan's headquarters were far more advanced than the other clans. Not only because of their 100,000 years of development, but also because the Godbeast they were descended from was far more intelligent than those of the other clans.

Within a skyscraper-like building was a planetarium-esque room that projected scenes mirroring the black depths of the Emperor Bone Sea. The fluctuating waves made ripples in the darkness, shining pale light on the face of the man who sat in the room's central position.

He was Tephit, the Tephit Clan's leader. Every clan had a different method of choosing its ruler. The Tephit Clan's was particularly special.

It seemed like a random child would be crowned the Holy Son whenever the old leader was nearing death. His name would be changed to Tephit, the name every leader took for themselves.

This child would stay with the old leader during his waning years and learn from him, eventually succeeding his seat when the time came.

Only, each Clan Head possessed an uncanny resemblance to the last. It was almost like the Tephit Clan was blessed with the fortune of a great Clan Head every time they made the change.

Tephit was a man with broad shoulders and dark skin. His grey eyes were like swirling storm clouds, turbulent and unfocused. His gaze remained on the projected Emperor Bone Sea around him.

'Why...why...just why won't you submit?!'

His eyes turned red with fury. It had been nearly 100,000 years! Why wasn't the Emperor Bone Sea willing to submit to the Tephit Clan's rule?! As the Prominence War's rules stated, the Tephit Clan did indeed become the sovereign of the Emperor Bone Sea.

But if they were trapped in Aquazyl for life, what was the use of this authority?!

'Calm down...it won't be long before my sovereignty is complete...it'll only take...a few million more deaths.'

His face twisted into a perverse smile. There wasn't a single being in Aquazyl with the power to stop him. He couldn't let his insanity take control and destroy his years of painstaking effort.

'But...it's been too quiet recently. Is something the matter?'

He took out a transmission talisman and injected mana into it. At that exact moment...

"Clan Head, you called just in time! Please send reinforcements to all of our subdivisions! Someone has been fiercely attacking and destroying them! Hundreds of elders have died already!"

"What?!" He exclaimed. "Explain the situation immediately. If you miss even a single detail..."

"Y-yes, Clan Head!" The voice on the other side replied, panicking.

Tephit soon received a not-so-brief overview of the situation. He learned about the fact that in every possible direction, the subdivisions in various battlefields were being destroyed.

It was at a rate where hundreds of elders and an untold number of weaker clan members had already died, and it had only been a single week!

If this continued...

A vein bulged from Tephit's forehead. Just as he thought things were going smoothly, a group of vermin decided to interfere!

His plans were at a critical juncture. He couldn't allow those who disobeyed him to run free. To cut the weeds and stomp the roots...

"Pass down my order. Send as many elders as needed to support the subdivisions that are still standing. Slaughter these rebels down to the last before they even see a glimpse of the main clan!"

Chapter 670 First Act [6]

The night passed and daytime blanketed Aquazyl. All Sea God Clan members, regardless of whether enemy or ally, retreated to the safety of darkness during this time.

Unfortunately, neither Damien and Zara nor the Sanctuary forces were able to get a straight answer about why they did this.

Instead, they were now left alone on the surface.

In this time of respite, Damien and Zara met up with the Sanctuarians. In the middle of Aquazyl's desolate peace, they had a proper conversation for the first time since Damien summoned them.

The group sat in a relatively large house they built with their affinities. Aside from Damien, Zara, and Damien's main Sanctuary forces like Feng Yuxiang and Feng Qing'er, the others present were elite forces that had been trained in the Sanctuary during his absence. Truly, the growth his subordinates had undergone astonished him.

Damien smiled warmly as he conversed with them. He reminisced on the Primordial Undying Realm with Feng Qing'er and Lunaria, introduced Zara to the crowd she'd never met before, and even brought Xue'er and Elitra out to play with the rest.

The overall atmosphere was jovial, but when Damien saw it, he knew there was something missing.

"Hey, come with me for a second." His sound transmission entered the White Dragon King's ears, causing his brow to raise in curiosity.

After following Damien to a secluded spot, the two began to converse.

"Why did you call me over?" The White Dragon King asked.

Damien sighed. "It's just...I wanted to talk to you about the promise we made long ago."

The White Dragon King's heart shook. How could he not remember the promise? It was a promise to find his son on the Cloud Plane, it was the most important task that had been bogging him down ever since he got stuck in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range.

"..." he couldn't force out any words. He never forgot the promise they made, he just refused to bring it up because he was well aware of how much Damien had been going through.

Ever since he left the 3000 Beast Mountain Range, he never had a single break. Even when he took breaks, they never lasted more than a day. Even those days were spent training.

With this kind of schedule, and with the wait of universal war on his shoulders, Damien couldn't be blamed even if he completely forgot the promise.

Yet, Damien never forgot.

"In fact, one of the first things I did when I bound the Cloud Plane was use my connection with it to search for anyone sharing your bloodline. However..."

Damien didn't have to finish his sentence. It was obvious that if Damien had truly found the White Dragon King's son, said son would be standing with them now.

"Is he..."

"No." Damien cut him off before he could finish. "Yun is a sentient record of all things that have ever happened on the Cloud Plane. Even if your son died, he would have known. The complete lack of presence means..."

"Nevertheless, Yun would've known of your son's presence if he was ever on the Cloud Plane. I can't be certain of what happened to him, nor can I assure you he's alive. But I swear on my name and mana that I will find him."

Damien grabbed the White Dragon King's shoulder and sighed. "I'm sorry, but this is all I can do."

The White Dragon King shook his head in rebuttal. "No, the fact that you're persistently attempting to find him is enough for me. By our Heavenly Oath, it was completely possible for you to drop the search after not finding traces of him on the Cloud Plane by simply assuming he was dead. I just...I hate my own weakness."

Damien nodded his head. He understood this feeling too well. The reason he always acted preemptively, the reason he never let himself get into situations he couldn't handle, was because of how vividly he remembered the feeling of powerlessness.

It wasn't something he ever wanted to feel again.

"We, as singular existences in this universe, will always be minute in the grand scheme of things. It is our eternal goal to grow until we have the power to rid ourselves of that minuteness. Bai Yuxuan, follow me to the peak. Do not let your inner struggle cloud your mind." Damien said earnestly.

Bai Yuxuan, the White Dragon King, smiled wryly. "Even if you say that, it isn't easy to follow those words. The struggles of the mind are the most difficult to overcome, and even after overcoming them, other mental problems arise to replace them. It is a neverending battle that I can't seem to win."

Damien felt sympathy towards the White Dragon King's plight. The battles of the mind...these were what kept him company on his journey to the top.

He almost started cherishing his trauma, because he didn't know what type of person he'd be without it.

He didn't want to know that person.

It was only through countless brutal experiences, endlessly being forced to face his trauma, that Damien grew to his current level. But just as Bai Yuxuan stated, when the old problems were solved, new ones rose to take their place.

The two stood in silence, unmoving. Their gazes looked off into the horizon.

In a universe where killing meant strength, where war was opportunity, where selfishness was the only way to grow rapidly, it was hard to maintain relationships.

Love, whether familial or romantic, became an afterthought. Those loved ones became a safe haven.

Just as Bai Yuxuan dearly missed his son, Damien dearly missed his wives. Seeing the relationships between people as he traveled the Divine Realm and even the Human Domain prior, he felt both lucky to have his wives and guilty for his treatment of them.

Ironically, there had never been jealousy problems in his harem.

The reason for this was simple: Damien's wives spent far more time with each other than they did with him. They developed an unbreakable bond through countless adventures and experiences that couldn't be broken by something as insignificant as jealousy.

In the same vein, their love for Damien and vice versa would never break.

Damien was aware of this fact. And perhaps, he'd subconsciously used this fact as an excuse to spend less time with them as he focused on his responsibilities.

It wasn't entirely his fault. He was constantly dragged around by various events, forced into situations where death was all but guaranteed. He trusted his wives and their strengths, but that didn't mean he would willingly put them in those situations if he could help it.

'Then again, maybe I'm just being hypocritical.'

The more time he spent away from them, the more he realized how little time they'd actually spent together. He wanted to return to them and spend years bonding with and loving them until they were satisfied, but he knew it wasn't possible.

'But that isn't an excuse to continue my behavior...when we meet again, I swear I won't disappoint you.'

His eyes reflected the refracted light rays shining through the waters. Perhaps being in Aquazyl for so long made him accustomed to viewing day as night and vice versa, because he felt like he was staring into a beautiful moon.

Before he knew it, he was already approaching 30. The passing of time was light and airy like a spring breeze, almost unnoticeable if one didn't consciously pay attention to it. His journey, from the moment he fell into the First Dungeon, would reach an entire decade in length by the time the Hidden Death Valley progress assessment ended.

He thought back to those simple days on earth. He thought back to the various people he'd met.

Jin Horten, Ethan and William from Apeiron, Long Chen and the Xue siblings on the Cloud Plane...

Aquazyl's peace made him fall into a reminiscent mood, and he warmly smiled as he did so. There were many tribulations, too many to count. He'd been crippled and nearly killed an equally countless number of times.

But he didn't regret it at all.

Because if he didn't go through those experiences, he never would've grown.

If he didn't experience failure, he never would've understood what it meant to succeed.

He stood up from his spot and held a hand out to help Bai Yuxuan do the same.

A war was on the horizon, and not a small one. He had a feeling that the final confrontation with the Tephit Clan would take place within the month, far earlier than he expected.

But he welcomed this haste.

The Prominence War was more than just a Mystic Realm that would give Damien a pivotal weapon, it was training.

Training for the true war he'd have to face once he left.