

Void 72

Chapter 72

Damien's eyes widened in shock as he tried to process what was going on. He knew they'd eventually reach this point but he didn't expect it to happen so soon, not to mention the current circumstances.

While every fiber of his being screamed at him to respond in kind and kiss her back, he couldn't bring himself to do it.

Regardless of her reasoning, with the way things played out, he'd feel like any progression in their relationship that happened now would be taking advantage of her weakness.

Damien grabbed her shoulders and gently pulled her away from his lips, though he still allowed her to lean on his body. The look of betrayal on her face truly made him feel like an asshole, but it had to be done.

"Y-you don't want me?" She asked in a weak voice.

"Kath- no, Rose. Of course I want you but look at yourself right now. Would you ever be the type of person to even ask if I wanted you before doing this kind of thing? Knowing you, you'd pounce first and ask questions later."

Rose blushed at his words but couldn't deny it. After all, that was her plan if he didn't confront her before they left the secret realm. Suddenly, she felt a sharp pain in her forehead.

“Ow! What was that for?” She yelled at Damien, who had just flicked her.

“First, return to your normal self. If you can still act so bold at that time, I’ll gladly accept it.” Damien replied with a smirk.

She knew he was right, and it only made her appreciate him more. Right now, she was still shaken from her experience in the trial. She craved some sort of intimacy and chose the first thing she thought of, which was Damien.

Putting aside the fact that kissing Damien was the most prioritized form of intimacy in her mind, just the fact that she was craving such a thing for support made this a bad start to a proper relationship.

If they started things off like that, it would only lead to a future of toxicity and codependence. This type of relationship would never be healthy, most likely leading to the emotional breakdown of one or both parties.

Rose slightly nodded but she still refused to get off of him. She cuddled further into his chest and appreciated his warmth. Although Damien wanted to tell her they had more important things to do, he noticed that she had already fallen asleep.

‘This silly woman. Does she seriously have so much trust in me?’ He couldn’t suppress the slight grin that began to form on his face.

If he thought about it, that was technically his first kiss. With his social life on earth, it was obvious he didn’t have a girlfriend, and ever since the world awakening, he hadn’t had the slightest thought of romance.

However, thinking about his first kiss brought up another memory. Although it wasn't real, his 16-year-old self had still kissed Elena. Thinking about that experience, Damien's expression turned complicated.

It'd be a lie to say that he didn't have any feelings for Elena. He didn't know how it functioned, but the trial had perfectly replicated every person in his life.

Even Elena was a carbon copy of her true self. Even if the memories themselves were fake, the experiences were fresh in his mind.

Besides that, he couldn't confidently say he had no feelings for her true self back on earth. Before they had ever met, he had a crush on her. Although that crush had died, with them being so close for such a long time, it was impossible for him to feel no attraction.

Only, time didn't wait for him to realize his feelings. Time didn't allow him to even consider the possibility of a relationship back then. Thinking about the tsundere-like actions Elena would show sometimes, Damien truly felt the need to curse time itself.

As his thoughts wandered in this direction, he once again looked at the princess that was sleeping on his chest. 'So basically, I have feelings for two women like some sort of creepy playboy.' He sighed at his own thoughts.

He had no idea how he would handle this. Perhaps if he hadn't spent that year within the trial dating Elena, if he didn't pile up experiences of what could have been, he wouldn't be having this problem.

He hadn't even seen her in 3 years, so he thought it'd be impossible for anything to develop.

Unbeknownst to him, a certain someone was watching his every action. Seeing the complicated light in his eyes, Rose thought of an old saying her mother used to tell her.

‘Powerful and charismatic people will never end up with only a single partner. If you ever end up falling for one of these types, your best option is to secure the top position in his heart.’

At that time, Rose was more confused about why her mother said people instead of men, but it didn’t take a genius to understand the nuance behind her words now that she was grown. The thought of having a reverse harem made her want to laugh, but she held it in so she could keep observing Damien.

She knew she had put Damien in a tough spot with her sudden actions, but she didn’t know he had another woman in his heart. Rather, she knew there wasn’t another woman who could make him ponder like that until after the trial had ended.

‘If he experienced the same thing I did, then maybe it was someone from his past?’ If Damien knew how much Rose had deduced based simply off the complicated look in his eyes, he’d probably be terrified.

But Rose wasn’t stuck on the ‘who’ or the ‘why’ of the situation. She was taking her mother’s words to heart. She would sit in the number one spot among any women Damien would gain in the future. Not through scheming and deceit, but love and aid. This was the best way to earn her place with him.

Rose grew up within an imperial harem. She knew how vile things could get if too many women or the wrong type of women were introduced into a family. She wouldn’t allow such a situation to happen.

‘Let’s limit him to 3...no maybe 5...hmp 8 at most. If he wants more than that he’ll have to fight me for it.’

Clueless to the fact that his love life was being thoroughly planned out by the woman on his chest, Damien concluded his thoughts. ‘When it comes time to have the ‘what are we’ conversation, I’ll just talk to Rose about it directly.’

Proud of his decision, Damien slightly floated inside his mind. ‘Hehe, imagine me as an isekai protagonist with a huge harem, that’d be pretty funny.’

Damien didn’t even want a harem like that. He’d seen how that worked, and it seemed like too much work and trouble to deal with. If he’s having multiple women, he’d make sure to keep the number small. ‘Heart of ice, Damien. You must keep your will firm!’

Damien had spent a few hours in his thoughts after he finished up with the harem issue as he figured out his plans for the rest of the time they had within the secret realm. By his estimation, a month should have gone by in real-time while they were in the trial. That meant they only had 3 months left.

‘3 months. For the next 3 months, we disregard everything and climb to the peak. If we can’t make it by the end, we’ll come back to one of the Legacy Tombs we find along the way.’

Damien concluded his thoughts when he felt some movement on his chest.

Rose slowly pretended to wake up before glancing around the room. With all the drama that was going on, she forgot they were in the middle of a trial.

“Relax,” Damien said as he noticed her vigilance. “That should have been the last trial. All that’s left is for us to reap the rewards.”

They stood up and walked towards the small throne at the end of the hall. Damien didn’t miss the fact that Rose didn’t let go of his hand, but he ignored it.

When the two entered within 10 meters of the throne, a new stone slab entered their vision.

“To thy who hath completed my trial and proven thy worthiness, I bestow my techniques and treasures. Use them wisely and protect the world you were born into, as it shall always be somewhere you can consider home.”

Damien realized that it wasn’t just the beasts that were meant to be blocked from entering this tomb, rather it was everyone that wasn’t born on the Apeiron continent as well. ‘If so, why am I able to enter?’ Damien couldn’t come up with a good answer.

Pushing the question to the back of his mind, Damien went forward and put his hand on the slab like he had done when they first entered the tomb, with Rose joining him soon after.

The floor split into two parts as a massive storage space was revealed. Countless gold coins were strewn about randomly, but these were only the lowest tier of treasures.

Besides them, there was a section of shelves lined with countless numbers of every type of potion Damien could imagine. Recovery potions for stamina and mana, healing potions, various tonics, and even a single bottle of Elixir.

‘They must’ve had a ton of this stuff back in the ancient eras.’ Damien mused as he collected everything into his inventory.

Meanwhile, Rose’s focus was somewhere else. It was a shelf much smaller than the others, but the contents were insanely valuable to her. This shelf contained tomes of this expert’s entire knowledge on illusions and their use.

As the legacy of someone who could even create an illusion as realistic as the one in the final trial, it was sure to be priceless. Rose immediately pocketed the books. She knew Damien wouldn’t be needing them anyway since his affinities didn’t align.

The final item in the room was an ancient broadsword with golden etchings on its surface. It was still in good condition, but it wasn’t a type of weapon that either of them used, so Damien was just planning to pocket it.

But the second he touched it, something within his inventory began vibrating intensely. It was his own sword. When he took it out, as if it had a mind of its own, it shot towards the ancient blade. Without even his invocation, his devour skill activated as the billowing black aura covered the old sword.

Then, instead of retreating to his body like it usually did, it surrounded his sword. It was only then that Damien remembered the name of his sword.

‘Devourer.’

The billowing black cloud slowly got absorbed into the sword, which was still shaking as if it would shatter any second. Then, it stopped. There were no loud sounds or cool messages, the process ended silently. When Damien grabbed the sword, though, he could immediately feel the difference.

[Devourer]

[SSS Rank]

[A sword made by a talented blacksmith to embody the traits of its wielder. It is bestial and ferocious but carries its own brand of elegance. This sword was made for the sole purpose of devouring its enemies. During its creation, it birthed the special effect, [Amplification] to aid its owner.]

[Through the devouring of a higher rank artifact, it has awakened its true form. Devoured essence needed for evolution- 39%]

“Well, that’s new.”