

# Void 761

Chapter 761 Samsara [1]

A pair of eyes turned somewhere deep in the starry sky, their gaze focused on a land almost unseen due to its distance.

An amused light lit up those eyes.

"Sir, is there a problem?" A voice came from the side.

The owner of the eyes smiled lightly.

"Nothing, I just noticed something fun."

The man turned his attention back to the scene in front of him.

"Fire on my command."

He lazily watched the proceeding scenario from his seat. Behind him, a number of eyes watched with him through various devices, though their attention remained mainly on the man.

"Fire."

He gave his command.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Three cannon blasts resounded with enough force that they could be heard from within the starship. Beams of brilliant white light shot through space and exploded upon contact with the nearest physical object.

RUMBLE!

Space trembled upon their collision. The enemy starship caught flame and nearly exploded, but an illusory blue film surrounded its chassis and saved it from total destruction.

"Alpha Squad, move in. Beta Squad, watch the right. Their reinforcements have arrived."

The man's voice sounded again, and the forces below him moved on his command. Hundreds of powerful auras lit up the starry sky as they charged into battle.

The man's eyes suddenly closed. Using the starship as a medium to boost his range, he spread his awareness over 1,000,000 kilometers, observing the entirety of the battlefield around him.

It was a nightmare.

The wreckage of countless broken starships littered the empty void. These pieces of debris were being further destroyed by the rampant mana spreading from the deployed troops from both sides.

Hundreds of millions of Lesser Nox infested the area like a plague, almost melding in with the surrounding blackness if it wasn't for their feral charging. Standing against them, an array of universe denizens fought with all their might, keeping the horde away from the main battlefield.

There, tens of starships far eclipsing any others in the area faced each other. The Nox's main force of extreme peak 4th class experts also remained on this battlefield, fighting against the universe's experts.

Chaotic explosions and spatial ruptures filled the starry sky and turned it into a collage of different spatial sections. The atmosphere was becoming so chaotic that a Dead Zone was already on the verge of forming.

Watching this scene, the man's smile grew wider.

'Though it's annoying to maneuver, the creation of these Avatars is truly a blessing from the Dark God. Not only am I able to crush these pests myself, I also got to see something quite interesting.'

He nonchalantly glanced into the corner of the command center where he sat. A man stood there quietly, his body half burnt to a crisp. Yet, he stood silently without showing a single sign of pain.

"Does it hurt?" The man asked.

"No, Master. Since these wounds allowed me to bring you valuable information, they bring me bliss rather than pain."

The response was instant.

"Sometimes I believe you might be too loyal, Sebastian."

"My loyalty was earned by Master. It is an expression of the Saint Emperor's immense charisma."

"You should train your strength rather than your flattery. To lose so miserably to a human child, aren't you embarrassed?"

"...I will accept any punishment Master gives me."

The Saint Emperor turned his head away without responding, facing Calypto once more.

"That child...indeed, Dante will not be that boy's match if they meet too early in the future. Who would have thought that such a treasure would be buried in this measly section universe?"

The Saint Emperor's gaze was lit with greed, lust, and amusement.

"However, isn't this fun? Rather than an opponent for Dante, have I found a future opponent for myself? If I slay him after he grows into that power..."

The Saint Emperor clenched his fist. A wisp of pitch-black mana unconsciously swirled it.

"Heuk...!"

Sebastian coughed in the corner of the room. He felt something in his heart pound, forcing blood up his throat.

"Hahaha, interesting, how interesting!"

His gaze turned cold.

"Sebastian, you understand what you must do, no?"

"Yes, Master. I shall observe the human's growth and keep the Young Master from encountering him."

"Good. If you carry out your duties properly, I shall heal those wounds of yours. For now, you will keep them as a reminder of your failure."

"Yes, Master."

The Saint Emperor's indifferent gaze returned to the battlefield.

"Now, let us remove these pests standing in our way."

As he continued commanding his troops, he clenched his fist.

It was charred, completely crippled.

Arcing on its surface were traces of golden lightning...

...along with a barely-noticeable scent of the Void.

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Hak!

Hak!

Hak!

"Khhh..."

Blood splattered across the ground. Bits and pieces of organs were strewn about. A man kneeled on the floor and coughed up a copious amount of blood, adding to the vital fluid pouring out of his body.

"FU— HEUK...!"

He wasn't even able to finish his cursing exclamation before another wave of blood climbed up his throat and forced its way out of my body.

'What...is happening?!'

After entering the Sanctuary, Damien immediately placed Zara in the isolated prison space for her safety. Afterwards, he moved to his own personal chamber to deal with his bodily situation.

He barely made it before he completely broke down.

Thump!

"AGH...!"

Losing so much blood made it impossible for him to properly control his body. He collapsed onto the floor and clutched his chest in pain.

Ba-dum! Ba-dum! Ba-dum!

His heart beat violently. His Mana Circuit burned. The only stable area of Damien's existence was his spiritual world.

Luckily, this meant that he could still access his awareness.

Damien's perception spread through his ruined body. Every detail of his internals was revealed to him in full resolution as if he was watching through the most advanced camera in existence.

'This...what...?'



It didn't make sense at all.

The wounds in his body were bad, sure, but the main source of his trouble didn't stem from them. Instead, his body was actively rebelling against and destroying itself.

His blood boiled up and forced its way out of his system, his Mana Circuits collapsed into each other and became a mess, and even his ethereal Mana Circuit began to lose function, desperately sputtering as it tried to evolve to cope with the current situation.

Pui!

Damien spit out another mouthful of blood and dragged himself to a nearby wall. He propped his person up against it and closed his eyes, entering a semi-meditative state.

The pain was unbearable. Damien had endured pain before, but he usually had a reason to put himself in pain, allowing him to endure it easily.

This time, there was no gain, no benefit. There wasn't even a proper reason for his situation.

Sebastian had injured him greatly, and so had Zara, but neither of them had the means to disrupt Transcendent Regeneration and the Ananta Matrix.

Damien circulated his mana carefully, drawing in the atmospheric mana and converting it into his own usable mana, thereafter using this energy to cleanse his Mana Circuit.

Unfortunately, it wasn't as effective as he hoped.

"ARGH!"

The clean mana he absorbed clashed with his existing mana and worsened his bodily situation. The Anata Matrix began to crack, the Mana Veins in his body shattering into countless pieces.

"Haa...haa..."

With every attempt he made, his internal situation only became more confusing.

Chapter 762 Samsara [2]

Minutes passed but felt like weeks. Damien continued observing his body as it changed, enduring the pain and holding onto his vitality with everything he had.

He'd lost far too much blood. If it wasn't for the immense amount of vitality he'd gained over the years through Devour, he would've already died.

But as the situation continued to worsen, Damien was able to find a glimpse of hope.

'That is...'

His senses went to his Mana Heart. His gaze was attracted by a fleck of white and black that was hidden in one of the heart's crevices.

'That speck holds so much vitality...'

The amount of vitality in the small speck of light was enough to match an entire vial of Damien's blood. It was immensely stronger than anything he currently had access to.

'If I can reproduce it, I can finally get out of this fucked up situation.'

Damien was, quite frankly, annoyed. It didn't matter if he was close to death already. Since he couldn't feel its ghastly hands creeping across his skin, it meant that panic was unnecessary...

At least, for now.

His awareness concentrated on the white and black fleck of light, digging into its material and carefully observing its structure.

It was only a full minute later that Damien finally came back to his senses.

'This thing...is it related to what happened before?'

The energy coming from the speck of light was incredibly familiar. As Damien became more in tune with it, he was able to realize where this familiarity came from.

This mysterious and contradictory energy signature was the exact same feeling that spread through his body as he fought Sebastian. It was a result of the strange interaction between his mana and Sebastian's, something he still hadn't had the chance to completely explore.

Nevertheless, Damien's comprehensive abilities were unparalleled in the universe. It didn't take him long to feel the origins of the energy.

'Life and Death. This is absolutely a combination of Life and Death Laws...! But how could two completely contradictory energies come together like this? Their duality is being destroyed...'

Damien's eyes widened.

'No, are they perpetually empowering each other?'

Within that tiny speck of light, countless mysteries of Life and Death swirled together in perfect harmony. They interacted, but they didn't merge. Their energies meshed, but didn't completely overlap.

'What a confusing state. On the surface, it contradicts duality, but in reality, it is the most foundational representation of it. When Life and Death come together properly, can they form such a beautiful cycle?'

When he thought about it, the relationship between these two concepts had always been like that. Life and Death swirled together and the fine line where they overlapped was the basis of reincarnation. Together, these processes formed the cycle of Samsara.

'Is that cycle...being represented within my body?'

The situation changed immediately.

It wasn't a physical change. Damien's body was still breaking down by the second. His blood was still forming a river on the ground. However, the connotation was completely different.

'Am I being rebirthed?'

A flash of yin and yang enveloped his mind.

'I see...'

The mysteries of Life and Death flowed into his spiritual world and formed a seed within the vast starfield decorating it.

'I must survive.'

The seed lit up and dyed the world black and white. The glamorous light gathered into a beam and cut through the bounds of reality, connecting with its counterpart in Damien's body.

'If I can get through this process...'

The seed within the mysterious white space lit up when the beam connected with it. Just like its predecessor, it formed a connection that transcended reality...

'...I will transcend humanity.'

...with a barely noticeable fleck of light in Damien's Mana Heart.

The light refracted instantly.

A triangular connection was formed between three separate representations of the same force.

And finally...

"AHHHHHHHH—!"

Damien was dyed white and black. An incarnation of light flew out of his chest and hovered in the air. His physical body, however, exploded like it was shot countless times. Every ounce of blood within his system was forced out, splattering across any surface existing in the room as his withered form fell to the floor.

However, the blood didn't stay in place for long. It dripped down onto the ground while completely ignoring the concept of cohesion. It collected into a ball, a globular mass that floated into the air in the center of the room.

VOOM!

Damien's light incarnation shot rays of its power into the mass of blood. The blood shone with iridescent light as it began to change form.

It became thicker, yet more ethereal. It became subtle, yet the vitality within was preposterous. The blood completely changed forms into a different substance, a higher existence than its former state.

It was blood that represented the wheel of Samsara. Even as it existed, it was in a constant cycle of Life, Death, and Reincarnation. The properties of this blood were ever-changing and the possibilities it opened the gateway to were limitless.

With this blood substituting his natural lifeblood, Damien could truly become something that transcended a human.

The infusion process was finally completed. The new substance shot through the air and pierced Damien's heart.

Thump!

Damien's dry and withered heart let out a weak thump.

A small bead of white and black blood dissolved in its center.

A flicker of light shone brightly from his Mana Heart, empowering the bead of blood.

Ba-dum...!

Ba-dum!

Ba-DUM!



A burst of vitality filled the heart. The white and black blood bead merged with it, giving it a flow of blood to restart its processes.

THUMP!

THUMP!

THUMP!

The newly revived heart was beating louder than ever before. It beat with such force that space trembled under its immense vitality.

Damien's heart utterly transformed, and the blood that came out of the new organ wasn't red...it was white and black.

VOOM!

The new blood spread through his body in an instant. His withered form was being revitalized at an observable pace, almost to the extent that it was miraculous.

His skin returned to its jade-white color, a rosy complexion alighting his face and even enhancing his beauty. He gave off a strangely contradictory aura, as if he was both existing and not existing at the same time.

The Ananta Matrix whirled to life. A stream of Void Mana snaked out of the ethereal circuit and entered Damien's body, merging with his bloodstream thereafter.

A devouring force spread, eating away at a small portion of the overflowing vitality coming from the white and black blood. The vitality itself was broken down into pure essence which was transferred back to the ethereal circuit.

At the same time, almost as if by fate, Damien's physical Mana Circuit was repaired by the immense circulation of vitality.

"Mana" was introduced back into Damien's body.

"Vitality" was present in droves.

And with that...

'De...vour...'

The purple-eyes genius who'd been hanging onto life by an extremely thin thread was finally able to take action.

A gaping black hole opened above his head.

Every single strand of essence in the surrounding several thousand kilometers disappeared as if it had never existed.

And the fabric of reality trembled ever so slightly.

Chapter 763 Samsara [3]

A body sat silently within the infinite void. It was motionless and nearly lifeless, resembling a stone Buddha more than a true living being.

This was because, while the outer frame of this body was completed, the internal structure was still in the process of forming.

It had been over a day since Damien moved from his personal chamber to the infinite void. In this time, he'd been wholly absorbed in the processes in his body, disregarding all else in the world.

'If I connect this here...ah, that blocks bloodflow to the left leg...'

'What about...that'll work, but I'll have to rewire the digestive system somewhat to accommodate it...'

Damien's thoughts spun rapidly in his mind. As he observed his internal body, he endlessly experimented on which structure would allow him to perform as perfectly as he wished it to.

After the original restructuring and blood-washing process, Damien was finally able to access his mana again. Using this advantage, he wrestled partial control over the process and gained the chance to restructure his body.

This was the only time when it'd be possible. Using the immense overflowing vitality of the white and black blood that had yet to settle and consolidate within Damien's body as a fallback, he could ruin himself as much as he wanted without the risk of repercussions.

Thus began a gruesome process of trial and error.

Damien first played with his Ananta Matrix, further increasing the cohesion between the multiple Mana Utilization Methods he combined into the Mana Circuit.

Even this process took multiple hours, but it was rather quick compared to his bodily modification. After all, the Ananta Matrix was created to evolve. It actively assisted Damien in his quest to improve it.

His body itself had no such function.

To observe the complex pathways of veins and nerves and to understand the relationship between organs and how they needed to be connected for the human body's systems to function wasn't an easy

task. Before he could even start experimentation, Damien needed to spend multiple hours perfecting his understanding of how his internal body functioned.

When he finally did, he began testing theories without a single qualm about the immense pain he was putting himself in.

After all, how could this pain be worse than the pain of literal death that he experienced not long ago?

With time, his body changed. The still form in the void became more complete, emitting a faint aura of strength that was hardly noticeable if one didn't focus on it.

While Damien was making changes, he wasn't planning to change things too much. The human body was already designed with such beautiful precision that he didn't actually need to make many changes.

For the most part, there were three factors he focused on.

Firstly, he built his new body with a restructured system that revolved around his Mana Circuit rather than existing under it. More than just baking his Mana Circuits into his body, this new structure was far more efficient since it was assisted by the aura of mana emanating from the circuits.

This new system also brought more importance to the bloodstream and allowed it to perform past the original abilities of the heart and blood vessels. The newly formed Samsara Blood was able to showcase its highest capabilities and adapt to any possible situation with this system, maximizing its potential.

The second factor was the same path he'd been taking through Devour all this time. Damien optimized his body for battle, turning himself into a machine of efficiency and output that went unparalleled among those on his same level.

And finally, he set up an entirely new system within his body. This system was a collection of Dimensional Spaces that existed in harmony within his body. These spaces were isolated, yet tethered to reality.

Within each space was a vital organ. Through the newly implemented system, these organs were semi-separated from reality, which made it far harder to attack them. If an enemy happened to pierce his body and attack his vitals, Damien would have another layer of protection.

Time passed with immeasurable slowness. The essence of time that permeated the infinite was almost negligible, making it difficult to understand how time truly flowed in this area.

But if one thing was certain, it was that the time flow certainly wasn't the same as the outside world.

With time crawling, Damien was given far more freedom in his actions.

And finally, an entire week passed.

A pair of eyes gently fluttered open and stared into the sky.

HONG!

The sound of an ancient desolate bell reverberated through the tremoring space.

HONG! HONG! HONG!

The bell rang continuously, and with every proceeding ring, a materialization became more visible in the sky.

It was a golden wheel surrounded by white and black wisps of flowing mana.

'The Wheel of Samsara.'

Damien calmly looked at the forming manifestation. Even though it carried the appearance of Heaven's wrath, he didn't show any fear.

"Come."

He beckoned the wheel. Immediately upon his invitation, it began rapidly rotating in the air and shot towards him.

Damien accepted it with open arms. The manifestation struck him and disappeared into his body in an instant, completely fusing with him.

"Ah...finally done."

The Wheel of Samsara's manifestation fully merged with his heart, and upon the completion of this process, Damien could clearly feel the white and black blood in his system activate.

Voom!

It finally seemed to melt into his body and become one with it. It finally conformed to the system Damien had built for it, accepting him as its rightful owner.

Damien clenched his fist. Space trembled at this mere motion,

'If I fought that butler now...would he have the chance to escape?'

Damien was well aware of the immensity of his change in the past week. Even if it didn't look like anything more than an increase in vitality on the outside, it was far more significant than that.

The power of Life and Death flowed through his veins. It wasn't a power he needed mana to access, it was a power that was one with his body itself.



'Maybe I should integrate Spacetime Laws into my body this way as well...'

Damien had a somewhat nonsensical thought. Even if it'd be great, when would he get the chance to do so?

The titanic vitality from the white and black blood was now a part of his body and couldn't be used as wantonly as before. The chance of him coming across another situation where he was overflowing with wasted vitality was nil.

'Well, it isn't a problem. If I'm right, then I got more than just a few benefits from this new blood. Namely...'

'Status'

[Status]

[Damien Void]

???

Male - Age 27

Level 240 - [Voidbringer] - [Celestial]

Experience value: 246,000/380,000

Title(s): [●●●●●●, Bearer of the Void Physique, Evolver]

Affinities: Spacetime, Samsara, ????

Physique: Void Physique

Magic Power: 250000

STR: 5500

AGI: 5330

DEF: 5000

INT: 4500

DEX: 5330

Skills: [Dimensional Magic Level 8], [Transcendent Regeneration Level 6], [Void Art Level 6], [Devour Level 8], [Dragon Transformation], [Demon Transformation], [Awareness], [Celestial Authority], [Reality Shift Level 2], [Sea God's Descendent], [Void], [Spacetime Intent], [Samsara Intent]

Trait(s): [All-Seeing Eyes Level 8], [Dragon's Breath], [Ananta Matrix], [Storm], [Void Essence], [Void Flames], [Heal]

'Now that's an attractive sight.'

Chapter 764 Samsara [4]

Damien's status had gone through a qualitative change, and it wasn't a matter of stats.

Damien had long learned to ignore his stats as they never properly represented his power level, but every other portion of his status contained important changes that he thoroughly enjoyed seeing.

Mainly the Affinities section.

'Samsara Intent and Spacetime Intent...'

Damien now had an affinity not for Life and Death, but for the cycle of Samsara as a whole. On top of this, the affinity as well as his ever-deepening Spacetime affinity were granted their own intents.

This meant that he had a far more direct connection with their laws. He would be able to utilize them with almost the same instinctual proficiency as a beast, but this was only the base ability of these new skills.

Their main benefit was the gateway they opened. Through these intents, Damien would be able to carve his own path into the universal law, growing independent from yet connected to the existing system, becoming an existence that stood on equal terms with it.

This was a level similar to what Demigods reached.

'This is my path to Divinity.'

The introduction of Samsara into his abilities was sudden and abrupt, but it came as a tiding of fate. Comprehension of the concept flowed into Damien's mind with the same smoothness as Spacetime, almost as if telling him that he was always meant to tread this path.

'I have comprehension of Samsara, but I have yet to digest it enough to use it in combat. However, my potential has increased yet again. By the time I master this ability, will I truly become unparalleled under heaven...?'

A delusion of grandeur filled Damien's head. The thought of crushing Demigods under his feet like trash was incredibly enticing.

'But even with all this, my rebirth seems to be a gift that keeps on giving. What could this possibly be...?'

Damien's eyes went to the holographic notification floating in the air before his eyes.

[The flow is an embodiment of the Natural Law. Do not despair as you follow its trail.]

'Did this come from the system?'

That unbiased system without full sentience sent him a message like this? That was impossible.

'But this isn't manmade. That only leaves one option...'

It was a message from the universe itself.

'Amazing.'

It was the only thing Damien could say before his mind went to work.

The flow he'd been vaguely feeling for so long...felt somewhat closer than before.

'There is a faint stream of something...leading to Zara...'

It wasn't mana, nor was it any other form of energy that Damien had encountered before. When he unleashed his Void Mana into the atmosphere, even it couldn't sense the presence of that stream.

'How odd...! My Void Mana went through a qualitative change along with my body, and it seems that the introduction of Samsara allowed me to access more of its abilities. Yet, this improved Void Mana can't sense the stream?'

Damien's curiosity was immediately piqued.

His body floated through space at a seemingly leisurely pace, but he traversed countless thousands of kilometers within seconds.

He arrived at the prison realm within the Sanctuary, an isolated space solely for storing those who could be used later.

Until this point, it remained empty. Damien had a bad habit of killing everyone who crossed him, after all.

'Though, I do have a new target in mind to enjoy the treatment of this space.'

There was a certain butler who would be able to enjoy the prison realm's various facilities the second Damien caught him. But until then...

A mountainous beast stood within the otherwise desolate realm. Even though it thrashed violently and rebelled, none of the prison realm's defenses activated against it.

'Zara...'

Damien's eyes became sorrowful as he looked at her. He could feel his spiritual connection with her weakening by the second.

'She's sacrificing everything for her goals, huh...'

With his new comprehension on Samsara, Damien's understanding of Zara's situation also heightened.

When he first saved her, it was still possible for Zara to retreat. She could've expelled the Nox Mana from her aura and forfeited her gains for the sake of survival.

But instead, she chose to fight on.

'Really, someone's been teaching her terrible habits.'

Despite how close he was, Zara wasn't able to recognize his presence at all. It was almost as if Damien didn't exist.

Or rather, it was like he'd become a part of the universe.

'What are those...?'

His eyes moved across Zara's figure. On her glabella and eight other spots along her body, faint blue lights glowed like checkpoints.

'Is this related to the flow?'

The universe had just told him to confidently follow the flow. If this was also a part of that, didn't it mean it'd be something good?

Damien's body flashed and appeared atop Zara. He gently placed his hand upon a blue spot on Zara's back and closed his eyes.



He immediately felt a strange sensation roll through him.

A tornado of fragmented memories ravaged his mind.

But at the same time, a beautiful whiteish-blue light enveloped his mind and brought serenity.

'I see. Is her mental situation being worsened by something taking place in her body?'

Damien couldn't help with Zara's mental battle. Just as he had fought for endless years in his spiritual world after being struck by a Demigod's True Voice, Zara would have to repair her spiritual world on her own.

'But if I can alleviate the process even a little, I believe she can succeed on her own. I guess I have to accept that this little girl grew into a badass.'

Damien smiled wryly. In the end, Zara had become something akin to a female version of himself. He really had to wonder why she chose him as her role model when Tang Lingzi existed, but her love brought him endless emotion that he didn't know how to deal with.

'Is this what it feels like to watch a sibling grow up? Damn, it's a bit annoying.'

The introduction of this new form of affection endlessly flustered Damien, but it brought him an equal amount of warmth.

This warmth was motivation to always move forward.

Just as he'd moved ceaselessly on Apeiron for 2 years to grow in power and return to earth to save his mother, he felt infinite motivation to protect Zara and let her grow up happy.

'If the pain you experience is vital for your growth and happiness, then who am I to stop you from experiencing it? Just as I promised before, I will always stand behind you and support you with my everything.'

A gentle stream of warm mana flowed from Damien's palms and swirled in conjunction with the blue spot. Samsara Intent penetrated Zara's physical body and created a pathway from her head to her tail, leaving no spot unmapped.

And following the scouting expedition of the Samsara Intent, the true cavalry arrived.

Void Mana flowed into Zara's system.

The Nox Mana that polluted a majority of her body cowered in fear.

'Stop resisting and become her power.'

Damien flared his Void Mana with all his power. He activated Devour and turned the Nox Mana into pure essence, feeding it back into Zara's Mana Circuits to empower her.

This process changed the Nox Mana, removing its corrupting properties. As the essence merged with Zara's system, it formed a new deathly mana that Damien had never seen before.

A small smile formed on his face.

'Yeah, a member of the Void Family should be at least this talented.'

Damien's smiling face immediately scrunched up in disgust.

'...I'm glad I didn't say that out loud.'

While lamenting the embarrassment of his last name, he returned his focus to cleansing Zara's internals.

Meanwhile, within Zara's mind space...

Chapter 765 Hunt [1]

Meanwhile, within Zara's mind space, Damien's efforts were being reflected clearly.

Immediately upon his intervention, the sheer level of Nox Mana polluting the spiritual works drastically decreased as if there was a leak in the space. For Zara, who was fighting with everything she had to survive, this change was a welcome one.

Currently, her fading form was in the center of the memory fragment tornado. Despite the chaos around her, she sat motionless and unfazed.

Her mind was split into countless different pieces, working to concurrently control the tornado, piece together the memory fragments, and hold together the spiritual world itself.

As for the main contributor to Zara's survival...

A small spark of light flickered in the depths of her spiritual continent. It was barely present, but its light was almost blinding. The light empowers Zara immensely, clearing her mind of corruption and allowing her to properly think and sustain herself.

With its help, Zara was able to make rapid progress. She felt a connection with the spark, and a connection with the memory fragments. With both of these existing concepts as a basis, she began building a foundation for the memories to connect.

'It all begins in the Motherland.'

She didn't know its proper name, since the Nox treated the name as a forbidden yet holy script, but she knew of the location's significance. It was the place where Nox came into existence, and the main perpetrator of their skewed existence.

'The Motherland is a place of eternal rest and bliss. Once one leaves the Motherland, they are never allowed to return.'

Zara's focus followed a man with a strong build and blurred face as he went through the stages of life as a Nox being born within their civilization. He grew, he devoured, and he became powerful enough to finally develop consciousness. After this, he finally left the Motherland and set out on his own journey.

However, the results of this journey were far different than he originally expected.

The events he experienced weren't made known to Zara through the memory fragments, but she was able to view the result...

The man rebelled.

He rebelled against his own race and fled to the Grand Heavens Boundary, eventually making his way to a small world where he lived in hiding for many years.

Zara's understanding of the man's life was limited. Rather than his actions, the memories focused more on other facets.

His power, his goals, his techniques, his skills, his mana utilization methods, and other factors such as these were prioritized over history. The information constantly flowing into Zara's head gave her a deep understanding of darkness, and a deep understanding of the Nox's own brand of Mana.

These memories opened up a new path that Zara had never seen before, using a mana that was far more complex than she'd ever expected.

Zara established a relative chronology within the memories as she continuously watched them. She was able to organize them into different categories based on their usefulness and contents so that digesting them was easier.

She didn't know how long it had been, but she knew that her previous hopeless situation was no longer a problem.

Something was guiding her.

A warm hand reached out to her in the dark and showed her the way forward.

Following it felt like the most natural action in existence.

At the same time, another warm energy comforted Zara. The spark of light in her spiritual continent settled within her chest, glowing dimly. Immediately upon feeling it, she sensed the connection it formed to a location unknown.

There were multiple factors rooting her to reality, and with their help, Zara didn't have to concentrate on maintaining her existence. She put everything into offense, fully taking control of the tornado.

VOOM!

The massive chaotic tornado began to slow. Its energy flow was wildly disrupted by multiple forces, and it wasn't able to maintain its momentum.

Zara didn't waste this opportunity. Her spiritual intent meshed into the tornado and painted it in her aura. Slowly but surely, it was becoming a concept under her control.

In the outside world, Zara's feral physical body also began to calm down.

Damien walked along her back and gently untangled the strange blue spots populating Zara's back and wings. Her tails swung from side to side, becoming strangely powerful as the pain in Zara's body was alleviated.

'She's been growing new tails with time for a while now. I don't know why I didn't realize that they're a manifestation of her power.'

A nine-tailed wolf wasn't a common species. In fact, Damien had never encountered another wolf species with tails like Zara's, which resembled a fox more than a wolf.

Thinking these idle thoughts, Damien slowly made his way to Zara's head. His actions were like a relaxing massage, allowing her body to lose its aggression and calm down.

By the time he made it to her glabella, she was already laying down on the ground, somewhat unresponsive.

'I know you're awake in there. When you come back to your senses, I'll give you a little surprise.'

Damien smiled lightly. Zara had an immense affinity for darkness and anything related. It was to the extent that her mana would passively observe the properties of a strong enough darkness that it encountered, the same way it devoured and incorporated the Nox.

Then, if Damien used his new Samsara Intent to inject her Mana Stream with clean Death Mana, wouldn't she become even more powerful?

With this thought in mind, Damien placed his hand on Zara's glabella and began slowly unraveling the final knot he could see. The strange blue spots that the "flow" showed him were almost completely gone.

The glabella, however, was a gateway to the spiritual world. The damage in this area far exceeded anything else Damien had seen in Zara's body.

'I guess I'll also get an opportunity to practice...?' He thought hesitantly.



Samsara Intent flowed from his hands, emanating a strange and contradicting aura. Life nourished and Death decayed. Reincarnation acted as the glue between these opposing forces that allowed them to work in conjunction,

Life Mana brought power to Zara's body and healed her. Her mana flowed smoother, her bodily systems were cleared of impurity, and her mind received yet another burst of clarity.

Death Mana was the cavalry. It moved to directly attack the traces of corruption in Zara's body, clashing against the variation Death Mana as if it wanted to prove its superiority to the latter.

And finally, as these two laws worked on attack and support, the essence of reincarnation covered defense. A swirling vortex of Reincarnation Laws acted as a master of redirection, disallowing for any negative energy to gather and become lethal.

'This is good. The prison realm's atmosphere must be helping somewhat. The amount of resistance is far less than what was present in the Real Plane.'

Damien sighed in relief as he supported Zara. If things continued on this trajectory, there wouldn't be a problem with bringing her back to peak condition.

But as he was thinking, he suddenly remembered the outside world's situation.

'Aha, we've been gone for a bit now. I wonder if the reinforcement team ever arrived...?'

A majority of the situation was already cleaned up by Damien and his squad, but reinforcements couldn't hurt, right?

The only thing that worried Damien was how they'd react to his disappearance.

'I guess I should head back soon...'

There wasn't much else for him to do in the Sanctuary after healing Zara. The time to return to reality was rapidly approaching.

'Zara will need to rest for a considerable amount of time to digest her gains this time, and I...'

'I still have a mission to accomplish.'

Damien's eyes briefly turned cold.

Previously, he didn't have any personal stock in his task, however, the Nox had decided to change that.

With a new vendetta fueling his actions against them, he surely wouldn't hold back.

Calypto's end was already on the horizon.

Chapter 766 Hunt [2]

Just as Damien expected, quite a chaotic situation was taking place in the Real Plane.

1 hour officially passed from the start of the battle mere seconds after Damien teleported away, and while the reinforcements arrived near the end of the 60th minute, it was still true that they arrived perfectly on time.

A group made up of students and teachers alike appeared at the Vineyard where the original battle took place, only to be faced with a mind-boggling scene.

"The continent...is gone?"

The leading instructor, a subordinate of the commander, looked around, baffled.

It wasn't a matter of the power required to destroy the continent. Most 4th classes, especially those using large-scale attacks with immense mana behind them, possessed the capabilities to destroy a continent.

However, the Vineyard's state was past mere destruction. It was utterly annihilated, and even the waters that rushed in to occupy its former place were divided and morphed by the residual mana from the clash, disallowing the ocean from returning to its natural state.

Right, the previous Vineyard was nothing more than a sinkhole of untold proportions.

And within that harrowing atmosphere, barely any life signatures could be felt,

'There are a few weak life auras deep in the ocean, but other than that...has everyone died?'

The instructor was unable to understand the situation based on what he could see.

"Spread out and track down the source of any life auras in the vicinity. If you find allies, bring them whether dead or alive."

The instructor gave a command and the forces under him immediately complied. As they searched...

HONG!

VOOOOOOOM!

A terrifying fluctuation whooshed past them. Judging by its sheer size which was far greater than the previous Vineyard Continent, an even more catastrophic battle was taking place.

"That direction...is the Willow Continent." The instructor murmured.

"Roaring Tiger Squad, Silver Moon Squad, Dragon Elephant Squad, follow me to the Willow Continent! As for the rest of you, continue the search. If you find anything, report to base. If you encounter survivors, take them back to base and let medical deal with them!"

""Yes, sir!""

A collective affirmation followed his words. The three squads he called for appeared beside him, and without hesitation, he activated a device on his wrist.

Voom!

Spatial fluctuations spread to cover his group. In the next instant, they disappeared.

The teleportation technology was a perk allowed to instructors so they could appear at any location to assist when necessary, but they weren't given to students as they'd allow the students to bypass many difficulties they were supposed to experience on this trip.

Yet, as the instructor reappeared in reality, he had a slight feeling that this restriction didn't affect the Stargazer Squad at all.

Almost every continent had been cleared with their help, and more than that, they'd made a true impact on the war situation.

Their presence allowed the allied forces to push forward without worry, and even greater a contribution was their ability to remove Sebastian from the battlefield.

As the Saint Emperor's personal butler and closest aid, Sebastian was a unit that the currently deployed forces on Calypto couldn't deal with. The ones who had that kind of power were preoccupied in the starry sky, fighting a harrowing war against the Infected Source World's main force.

'But now, that same Sebastian is missing, and Calypto...'

'Is this really something a student can accomplish?'

The instructor had been standing in the air above the Willow Continent for many seconds without moving now. After seeing the sight below him, how could he?

The entire continent was littered with evidence of a battle that had just ended. The splattered remains of countless Nox beings submerged the continent in black slime, and a massive force of Higher Nox rushed through the air in panic, evidently perplexed by something.

"You all have worked together multiple times already, so I'm sure you already understand your roles. Go, fulfill your duties and bring glory to our universe!"

""Yes, sir!""

The three squads immediately descended onto the Willow Continent and began to scour it. Their jobs were split in three. While the Roaring Tiger and Dragon Elephant Squads covered offense and defense, the Silver Moon Squad went to work gathering information and understanding past events based on the residual mana in the air.

While the squads worked, the instructor quietly entered the continent as well.

His form shifted.

His skin turned ashen grey, and his mana took on a sticky black property it didn't usually possess.

The instructor appeared in front of a Higher Nox being in his new form.

"What's happening?! What is this panic?" He shouted in apparent confusion and anger.

"Did you just arrive? A precious seed has been stolen by the enemy! We must find it and convert it before the enemy reinforcements arrive!"

The Higher Nox spilled information without concern for its recipient. In his current form, the instructor was identical to the Nox.

"I see, so something like that happened."

"Quickly help us sea—!"

The instructor's hand shot out. The Higher Nox was bisected and killed in an instant.

"I guess that's all he could provide. Shall I find someone of higher status?"

The instructor spread his awareness over the continent.

From this first target, he already heard multiple concerning words and phrases.

'The Nox have a variety of different 'seeds' with different connotations. I have to find out which one they lost...'

Even the safety of the illustrious Stargazer Squad wasn't as important as finding the existence of a 'seed.'

'Of the multitude of seeds, the Dark God's Seed is the highest, the Yin-Yang Heaven Seed is second, and the Empyrean God Seed is third. The Empyrean God Seed is the Saint King, but the other two have yet to show themselves.'



Among the Nox Seeds, these two were particularly special, not for their rankings, but the connotations behind their abilities. From what Heaven's Army had gathered thus far, if the Nox found those two seeds, they'd acquire enough force to decimate the universe without opposition.

'Even if he was a low-rank Nox, he should've still known about the seed rankings. For that level of panic...'

The seed they were searching for was at least part of the five greater seeds.

'I must find that seed and end its existence before it can bloom.'

The instructor's eyes turned cold.

'The Stargazer Squad...'

According to that Nox, the Seed was stolen by the Stargazer Squad's leader. From what the instructor knew, that boy was sent by a higher-up for some important mission.

'I should learn more about him. If he is hostile, then I will have to eliminate him as well.'

At that time, the instructor received a transmission from his academy emblem.

"Sir, we have found survivors! They look to be members of the Stargazer Squad, but they're barely alive! How should we proceed?"

The instructor's eyes lit up. "Save them by any means necessary! Use Elixirs if need be!"

Those lower squad members likely weren't as powerful as their leader, and if they could be used to gather information...

The mysterious spatial expert who'd been causing a storm on Calypto recently would become far less mysterious.

'I should finish my business here while they heal.'

The instructor's ashen-grey form moved forward, his awareness already locked on a new target.

While Damien knew the situation in the Real Plane was bad, could he have ever predicted it...?

The fact that a member of the Heaven's Army's Hunting Dogs, one of its most illustrious squadrons, had just caught a whiff of his scent...

...and wasn't willing to let it go.

#### Chapter 767 Hunt [3]

Within a starship hidden in Calypto's atmosphere was a collection of rooms filled with people. This particular starship didn't have much attack capability, as it was built for an entirely different purpose,

Pure white light without a hint of variation shone down from the ceiling, painting the room an extremely boring yet sterile color.

The room itself was lined with a number of cots, men and women in matching attire running between them to care for those who were transferred to this facility.

"Mmgh..."

A pair of eyes fluttered open, but were immediately blinded by the light. The owner of those eyes attempted to lift his arm to cover them, but soon found that they were restrained by unknown material.

'Where...is this...?'

A thought flashed through the man's head. He instantly became wary. Was he captured by the enemy? Was he going to be interrogated?

But...didn't he die?

The last thing he remembered was a gaping hole being torn open in his body. After that experience, the sheer pain overwhelmed him and forced him unconscious.

His eyes eventually adjusted to the light, allowing him to open them.

He was met with a bland ceiling the same color as the light, and the sounds of clattering metal and incomprehensible chatter.

'My head...'

It took almost an entire minute for him to finally exit his confused state.

"...seems to be responsive. Move on to the next stage of treatment."

Those were the first words he heard. His eyes widened, his gaze moving unceasingly to try and catch a peek at the voice's owner.

"Mmgh...!"

The man began to struggle. The chains cuffing him to the cot rattled and seemed on the verge of collapsing, but at that moment, a nurse walked over to his bedside.

"Patient Tyler Heathrow, please calm down. You are safe."

The nurse's soothing voice flowed into his ears, and her pleasing appearance appeared in his field of view.

Tyler immediately calmed down.

'She's human.'

If she was human, he was either in a Nox research facility or he was rescued by allies, and considering the fact that he was still conscious enough to think, he was sure it was the latter.

"Wha— heuk!"

"Please don't speak, sir. Your body was damaged heavily, and we still must proceed with treatment. For now, you have been stabilized, but it would be best to not aggravate your situation."

Tyler unwillingly nodded. He looked at the nurse with pleading eyes, dying to know what actually happened.

The nurse smiled. "Sir, you were found along with two others in the depths of the ocean with fatal injuries. Luckily, an instructor spoke up on your behalf and allowed you to receive premium treatment."

Tyler's brows furrowed.

'So I should have died...'

He sighed at the realization. He was so close to death, yet in that moment as he collapsed into the ocean, his thoughts weren't those of a dying man.

Instead, he had been smiling at the fact that his plan was executed successfully.

'Premium treatment...does that mean they're using Elixirs?'

Tyler didn't understand why anyone would waste Elixirs on common soldiers like them, but he figured it had something to do with the captain.

'That crazy bastard must've done something crazy again.'

Even as he thought, Tyler used his eyes to urge the nurse to continue speaking. More than anything else, he needed to know...

"The two people who were found alongside you have been accepted for treatment. While their condition is critical, there is hope of saving them, so do not worry."

'...hope?'

Tyler suddenly felt a sinking sensation in his sto— his nonexistent stomach.

"We will begin Elixir treatment now."

The nurse left Tyler's field of vision after speaking, leaving him to his own thoughts. He could feel a variety of tubes connect to his body, and he could feel the strange and comforting liquid flowing through his veins.

'My stomach is actually closing...Elixir is truly magical.'

Elixir was a potion with unknown origins to this day. Common Elixirs that could heal 2nd class and below practitioners could be created by alchemists, and even Elixirs for 3rd class beings could be created by extremely skilled alchemists, but Elixirs for those who passed their Baptism couldn't be created with human hands.

To this day, every Elixir was a precious treasure, even though they were somewhat common. Each and every one of those Elixirs was found in a secret realm or rewarded by the Dimensional Leaderboard, after all.

'But even with that, there's merely "hope" of saving Synth and Ash...?'

Tyler's sinking feeling only grew. Synth took a majority of the damage from the final attack that took them down, and Ash had been accumulating damage for a long period of time before receiving a fatal injury, so her state could only be imagined.

Of the three, Tyler's body was the most intact due to the curious properties of his fifth summon. The armor form that linked him with Ash allowed him to survive with lighter injuries after returning to human form.

Though, without context, Tyler's injuries were truly harrowing.

Aside from the gaping hole in his stomach, his legs had been blown to bits, and even his Mana Circuit was mildly crippled.

He would need multiple months in bed to regain his previous strength even with the Elixir helping him heal.

As the minutes slowly passed, Tyler regained bits and pieces of control over his body. Eventually, it reached a point where the only thing keeping him off his feet was the chains holding him down.



It was at that time when another presence entered the area where Tyler was located.

A slight wave of mana passed over his body.

Tyler's eyes shot to the side, revealing to him the figure of a stalwart man with dead eyes.

"Who..."

"I am Instructor Baek, the man who allowed you to receive this treatment." Instructor Baek said as he observed Tyler's body.

"The damage was truly as bad as they described. Even with Elixir, your body is still so convoluted."

"Can you speak?" Instructor Baek asked without allowing Tyler to acknowledge his previous statement.

"Mm, I can speak," Tyler replied. It still felt like his throat was being stabbed through when he spoke, but he could feel the importance of the conversation that was about to take place.

He didn't want to miss out on information because of a little pain.

'All I have to do is endure it. If the captain can do it, I can too.'

"The Stargazer Squad has achieved many feats and accumulated many merit points on this expedition. It is a little surprising considering the level of your squad. None of you have the strength to accomplish the feats listed under your names."

Tyler's gaze sharpened. 'He's prodding.'

"Instructor, our squad may not have had the strength to accomplish these feats when we first arrived on Calypto, however, we have grown immensely through continued combat and reached a level that allowed us to thrive. There is nothing strange about the results."

Tyler's response was succinct and unquestionable. After all, growing through battle was the most basic rule of the universe. Denying it was foolery.

"Mm, however, the final battle that your squad fought was entirely impossible to survive with your strength, even if I consider your rise through this war. Is your leader truly skilled enough to fight back one of the Blight Emperor's closest aides?"

"Blight Emperor?"

"Ah, that is the name of the Nox in control of this Infected Source World. He is battling the main army in the starry sky as we speak."

'Does this instructor not know about the Saint Emperor?'

Though Damien didn't share the exact details of his encounter with the Saint Emperor, Tyler and the others at least knew that the Nox Avatar at the head of Calypto was the Saint Emperor's vessel.

'I should retain this information until I learn more.'

Tyler looked back at Instructor Baek with widened eyes.

"We...we fought such a monster?!"

Since this instructor thought of him as a mere pawn, he would play the part of one perfectly.

And through that, he would gain the information he sought.

Tyler had been submerging himself in battle for so long that he almost forgot how fun it was to use his brain.

But this haughty instructor who viewed him as an ant even while trying to get information from him...really brought out Tyler's manipulative instinct.

Chapter 768 Hunt [4]

"We...we fought such a monster?!"

Instructor Baek, Baek Woojin, frowned at the terrified expression of the ant before him.

'No, it should be like this. He is someone who got this far by latching onto someone else's coattails, so his mentality will naturally be weak.'

Baek Woojin was an instructor who dealt with cadets every day. He already understood how weak these soldiers-to-be were. He was an avid supporter of sending them into war for this exact purpose.

"Your leader must be extremely strong to deal with such a foe. I heard he was able to force the Higher Nox Sebastian to flee with his tail between his legs."

"Really?! Captain is so strong, but I guess the Nox are strong too...it's a shame that Captain couldn't kill him, though."

'Fool, your captain could never be powerful enough to kill such a being.'

"Haha, it is indeed a shame. What's more of a shame, though, is the disappearance of your captain."

"Disappearance?!"

"Right, he seems to be in danger. He completely disappeared from our radar, and even the last known location of his academy emblem is a desolate wasteland now."

"C-can you save the captain?! He must've been extremely injured during the battle or else he'd never get caught. I don't know if you know, but Captain is a God of Space!"

"Oho? Calling him a God is a bit of a stretch, no?"

"Of course, not! Captain can teleport hundreds of kilometers with ease! He's a true god!"

'Hundreds of kilometers? Did I overestimate the strength of that boy?'

Baek Woojin frowned to himself, unsure of how to proceed. Looking at this pure reverence in the cadet's eyes, it was clear he wasn't lying.

'Nevertheless, I should dig deeper. It is still a fact that the child is in possession of a Seed.'

As he decided, he continued to press Tyler about Damien. From the utterly delusional man's words, Damien was a god unlike anything that had been seen by the world before.

Yet, the feats described were only enough to put him on the same level as a slightly above-average Heaven's Army soldier.

'It is undeniable that he possesses immense talent, but his actual power level...what could provoke a higher-up to send someone like him to the war?'

There were only a few things that could justify the extreme speed and efficiency of the Stargazer Squad.

Firstly, they were getting help from an outside force, likely an extremely powerful artifact.

Secondly, the Seed in Damien's possession. If there was a Seed aiding the squad, it wouldn't be surprising if they achieved twice the results they did.

'I cannot underestimate the boy due to my own bias. In the end, regardless of his methods, he was still able to gain the favor of those stubborn geezers and fight off Sebastian.'

Baek Woojin did everything he could to make Damien's strength comprehensible, but every question only led to more questions.

For instance, if Damien was busy fighting Sebastian, who took care of the thousands of Higher Nox that were deployed along with him?

'It doesn't make any sense.'

Looking at Baek Woojin's perplexed expression, Tyler inconspicuously smiled.

'Right, question yourself more.'

Baek Woojin's current state wasn't of his own creation, nor was it due to the information he received. Rather, Tyler's performance forced him to doubt his own senses.

Baek Woojin was smart enough to understand that Damien was strong. Even if he had a bias holding him back, his rationality would've allowed him to understand the truth eventually.

But Tyler acted like a devoted follower of Damien, someone who deified and worshipped him. The words of someone like him would exaggerate their god's strength, not bring them down.

Tyler's existence contradicted everything Baek Woojin assumed he knew, and because Tyler was giving a first-person recount as a key player in the situation, it was impossible for the instructor to ignore his words.

'It'll be annoying if he goes to Ash and Synth to interrogate them. I need to find a way to share the story with them.'

If there was one thing Tyler was sure of, it was that Baek Woojin was hostile.

He didn't need to be a genius to figure it out. The man's natural disposition already showed hostility to the weak, and on top of that, his line of questioning only focused on Damien's power, ignoring any and all else.

'Did the Captain get himself into something troublesome? Or...'

A chill passed through Tyler's body as he fully remembered the situation before he passed out.

'Vice Captain was possessed or something similar. She was also using Nox Mana near the end...'

'The Vice Captain is a good person, and she listens to everything Captain says without hesitation. There's no way she'd betray us.'

If so, then the Vice Captain's situation was extremely complicated, and something nobody could find out about.

'But we know.'

It finally dawned on Tyler. The pieces clicked together in his mind, allowing him to fully grasp the complex situation that was taking place.



'Dammit...that bastard Captain is going to owe us infinite drinks if we can save his ass here.'

Tyler continued his conversation with Baek Woojin, and whenever he could, he used slight behavioral and body cues to lead the instructor's thoughts in the direction he wanted.

What he was doing was a capital crime. Withholding vital information from higher authorities wouldn't just end in death. If he was caught, he'd go through unbearable torture without ever being allowed to die.

But...

'Captain is just too damn charismatic.'

Tyler didn't even know when he began to refer to Damien as "Captain" in his mind. He had thoroughly accepted the man's leadership and was thoroughly convinced by his charisma.

The undying bond of a squad wasn't something that could be formed easily. Tyler, Synth, and Ash took countless years to finally reach a point where they were willing to do anything for each other.

Yet, here he was, risking death for the sake of a leader he'd only known for a few months.

Minutes passed slowly. Eventually, Baek Woojin gave up on getting information out of Tyler.

"Rest well and heal. Your contribution to the army is incredibly important, and we are eagerly awaiting your return to the field."

Those bland words were the last the instructor spoke before leaving the room.

'That child is too far gone.'

Baek Woojin sighed to himself. Instead of gaining anything, he actually ended up more confused than ever before. His mental image of Damien was largely skewed away from rationality, complicating his thought process.

'I want to cross-check his words with the other two from the Stargazer Squad, but those two...'

It was safe to say that they wouldn't be in any condition to speak for a very long time.

'It's a waste of Elixir to treat them all.'

In reality, the expensive Elixir treatment was only offered to the squad member who woke up first, and this happened to be Tyler.

As for the other two...

They were being treated, but not nearly as thoroughly.

They were hanging onto life by a thread, and the medical staff only worked to make sure this thread never snapped.

As for the actual recovery, that would come with time...a very, very considerable amount of time.

'If they die, they die.' Baek Woojin coldly thought as he walked through the medical facility.

'Wasting turn on ants is pointless. I'll cross-check that boy's information with the academy itself.'

Baek Woojin's eyes turned cold.

Regardless of anyone else's opinion, he would eliminate the Seed and anything related to it.

Even if that meant ridding the universe of one of its potential heroes.

Chapter 769 Hunt [5]

The day passed as Baek Woojin's quest continued, however, the actual results of his investigation were nil.

Aside from Tyler, the only people who'd truly seen Damien in action were Synth and Ash. The Hell Hole geniuses were too secluded from the rest of Hidden Death Valley to even know about Damien's feats and his Heaven's List ranking, otherwise, Synth wouldn't have been so put off when they first met.

'The academy database is acting strange today. Is someone interfering with my access?'

Baek Woojin frowned as he attempted to find Damien in the academy's books. It wasn't his first or second attempt today, but every time he tried, he was locked out by some mysterious force.

'Is there someone altering the system to aid him...? Do they not understand that they are committing a crime?'

It didn't matter what level of favoritism a student received. Even if the Gods themselves were interested in a genius, tampering with their profile in the academy database was a heinous crime that wouldn't be tolerated.

Of course, protecting information wasn't prohibited, but Damien's information wasn't just protected, it was wholly inaccessible and borderline missing.

'I must contact the Director.'

Baek Woojin had immense respect for the Academy Director. The old Demigod was impartial and dedicated to the universe more than anyone else. He sacrificed his own life to remain in Hidden Death Valley and foster future generations, so how could any sane military man not respect him?

If there was justice in need of serving, the Director would do so without hesitation, regardless of the other party's identity.

Baek Woojin immediately went to the main control center to open a line with the academy. With the Director's status, contacting him through a personal line was impossible.

Bzzt!

The line buzzed as the connection was accepted. A holographic panel opened in the air, revealing the Director's stern appearance.

"Report."

"Yes, Sir! This is Instructor Baek Woojin reporting. I have found a flaw in the student database. It is evident that someone is tampering with it."

"Oh?"

The Director's face turned even colder than it naturally was.

"Indeed, this is a proper reason to contact me. Elaborate on the situation."

"Yes, sir. Recently, a Higher Nox revealed that one of our deployed students has made contact with a Nox Seed..."

Baek Woojin began reporting everything he knew about Damien's situation beginning from his deployment and ending with his disappearance.

Despite his demeanor, Baek Woojin wasn't a selfish person. He had no plans of killing the Seed himself to boost his own reputation or status.!

He simply wanted to kill it because it was a threat.

Therefore, telling the Director everything he knew was par for course. He wasn't going to disobey military law for the sake of this ambition.

As he continued to speak, the Director's face rarely changed. Besides the occasional raised eyebrow or mutter, he didn't show a hint of emotion.

However, inwardly, he was smiling happily.

'So that little lass was a Nox Seed? And that kid has formed such an unshakeable bond with her...I wonder how far they'll go together...'

Naturally, the Director wasn't the least bit worried about the altering of Damien's information. He was the one who did it, after all!

The Director being Damien's backer was something only known to the Twelve Zodiacs and a few select individuals. He'd intentionally hidden his support for the young genius so it wouldn't affect his experience in the field.

Now, however, it'd come back to him in the most unexpected way.

'Should we see how he handles this situation?'

"Tell me more about that child. You say he's an unparalleled genius?"

"I am not certain, sir. The reports of those in his squadron testify to his power, and his feats alone are undeniable, but I cannot be certain if these feats are fabricated with the help of outside forces. I do not believe a cadet can be so strong."

"I understand. I will deal with this matter personally and cleanse the academy of any scourge present. Continue your investigation on the field in the meantime."

"Yes, sir!"

The Director ended the conversation with those words. The holographic screen disappeared from Baek Woojin's sight immediately.

'As expected of the Director. His efficiency is unparalleled.'

It only took learning about the situation for him to move into action. Though his apparent disinterest in the situation was offputting, Baek Woojin was confident that this was merely the Director's facade.

'Then...should I return to questioning some Nox?'

Baek Woojin continued on his quest with gusto, unaware of the fact that the entire world was against him.

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Days passed until almost a full week went by after Damien's disappearance. Aside from Baek Woojin, nobody else raised much of a fuss about it.



The loss of a genius was a regular occasion in war, and even if Damien was a heaven-defying genius, he was still someone who could die in a single moment of carelessness.

Rather than expecting him to be alive and missing, most simply assumed he got overconfident and died at the hands of a powerful Nox being.

Not everyone gave up hope, though.

Tyler sat at the edge of a hospital bed with his head down.

Two people were in this room, both in critical condition.

The wounds on their bodies had yet to close after so long, but luckily, they were still alive.

'How long are you going to let them treat us like this?' Tyler lamented inwardly.

He'd only been discharged yesterday, and he immediately went to find Ash and Synth, only to learn that the duo didn't get the same treatment that he did.

'They're being fed Elixir, but at this rate, it'll take months for them to heal. The damages to their Mana Circuits will only fester in that time, and they might even end up crippled...'

There was nothing he could do alone. Tyler was powerless, and the entirety of the cadet force believed him to be someone who rose by riding Damien's coattails.

He wouldn't care in a normal situation, but it was different now. The envy of others was causing his comrades to suffer.

'Captain, only you can fix things now.'

Terrifying strength, a domineering oppression that shut everyone and everything up, these were the things that described Damien.

"If you could just take care of that Baek Woojin bastard, I can handle the rest."

"Okay, but who's Baek Woojin?"

A voice responded from behind.

Tyler's heart skipped a beat.

When he turned around, the visage of a certain purple-eyed genius entered his sight.

"Captain!" Tyler blurted out in surprise.

"What, did you miss me that much?" Damien replied with a smile.

He glanced over at the two bedridden women in the room and frowned.

"Let's talk later. First, I'll deal with this situation."

Pure white essence leaked from his fingertips and coagulated into drops of milky fluid that dripped onto Ash and Synth's bodies.

The fluid glowed with a dim and mysterious light as it permeated, covering the two in the same light.

And immediately, they began to heal.

Their organs regrew, their bones reconnected, and even their Mana Circuits were fortified.

Against the effects of pure Life Laws backed by the Wheel of Samsara itself, how could Elixir even compare?

Chapter 770 Hunt [6]

'So that's how it happened...'

Damien and Tyler sat together in the hospital room in silence. Many minutes had passed since Damien's arrival, and he'd been completely informed of the situation in that time.

"So that Baek Woojin guy is the main one investigating me and Zara and the rest are just following his command, the lot of you have been isolated and shunned because of your connection with me and because they think you're all freeloaders with no power, and the overall situation on Calypto has been in a stalemate for the past week. Did I miss anything?"

Tyler shook his head. "That's the summary. There have been rumors about the Saint Emperor terrorizing the main force in the starry sky, but they're unconfirmed. Nobody in our cadet division is allowed to get near the main battlefield."

"Mm, and what about Calypto itself? What're the Nox forces here like?"

"After Vice Captain's outburst, most of the Higher Nox on Calypto have either left in search of her or holed themselves up in hiding. For the most part, Calypto itself is secure."

"I see..."

The situation was, for the most part, as Damien expected.

Originally, the plan was to send Zara into the Sanctuary and return to the Real Plane to handle the aftermath, but because of his sudden body metamorphosis, he was unable to follow through on this.

He already predicted that Zara's status would be outed, and he already predicted that everything he was trying to prevent would go wrong.

This was why his first move after returning to the Real Plane was to find Tyler and the rest. He wanted to at least make sure his squad was saved by the reinforcements that he'd requested.

Luckily, things didn't spiral into mayhem, and the squad members were relatively safe.

'This Baek Woojin is a lone wolf type. He has underlings helping him investigate, but according to Tyler, they aren't aware of the Seed or even Zara's existence.'

The underlings Baek Woojin used were only aware that Damien did something wrong, and because of their envy, they immediately assumed that he cheated the system and faked his feats.

Rumors spread thereafter, incriminating Tyler and the rest and leading to their current poor treatment.

'But that works out better for me.'

Since it was like this...

'Only one has to die.'

Damien's gaze sharpened.

Anyone who targeted him or his comrades would die.

Their affiliation didn't matter, their intent didn't matter, their pleas didn't matter.

Only their deaths would assuage Damien's wariness.

Damien stood up from his spot.

"Those two should be fine now that I've healed them. If they don't wake up by the end of the day, contact me and I'll give them a second round of treatment."

"Where are you going?" Tyler asked.

He already knew the answer, but he wanted to hear it anyway.

And who was Damien to reject him? Tyler held down the fort while he was away and fully proved his loyalty. Even under the threat of death, he comfortably protected Damien without batting an eye.

With a wide grin on his face, Damien turned around.

"Some trash dared to mess with my squad members. Isn't it my duty as the Captain to take it out?"

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Baek Woojin.

A high-level 4th class being and a stalwart member of the army, he was someone who would do anything for the safety of the universe.

But this mentality got him in trouble often.

He viewed the weak as ants, useless against the Nox. He only respected superiors he deemed worthy of respect, disregarding orders from those he didn't.

The reason he found himself in Hidden Death Valley was because Heaven's Army didn't want him anymore.

Since the Director was someone he respected, the army put Baek Woojin in the academy to tame him.

But that was a mistake.

The Director was an equally unconventional person, and instead of taming Baek Woojin, he gave the man a position in the Hell Hole and allowed him to train future cadets.

Was it by design that he ended up in this situation?

Was it his fate?

Darkness surrounded Baek Woojin's body. It was a murky darkness like Nox Mana, but at the same time, it was far less corrupt.

'I'm being ambushed.'

It wasn't hard to realize the situation. One moment, he was walking down the halls of a starship, and the next, he was here.



'I must escape this darkness first and identify the enemy.'

"Are you thinking about finding out who I am?"

A voice came from the darkness, taunting and hostile.

"You've been trying to find me for a while now. I'm surprised you didn't recognize me from the start."

The aggressor didn't seem to care about hiding their identity at all.

And as if to taunt Baek Woojin further, they stepped into the light and revealed themselves.

"I heard you were looking for me so I came to find you. Nice to meet you, Instructor Baek Woojin."

Damien's malicious smile was harrowing in the current atmosphere, but Baek Woojin didn't allow himself to be affected.

"So you are that genius. Hand over the Nox Seed and I will turn a blind eye to your dishonesty. Otherwise, I will kill you where you stand."

"Oho? Do you think you have the ability?"

"I'm more than capable of dealing with a sprout who relies on outside help by myself."

"Hahahaha!"

Damien couldn't help but laugh.

"Even at this stage, you're keeping up that delusion? Allow me to fill you in on something..."

His body disappeared.

Baek Woojin suddenly felt a force envelop his face.

A hand had grabbed him at an unknown time.

"Just because you can't comprehend something doesn't mean it's fabricated."

BAM!

The world turned horizontal.

The ground slammed against Baek Woojin's back.

"Ack...!"

The Instructor let out a sound of pain. He began revolving his mana in preparation for attack when...

"Ah, ah, ah. We can't have that now, can we?"

Those light-hearted words dispersed his mana in heartbeat.

"You're in my domain right now. What gives you the confidence to move?"

"I will...never succumb to evil!"

Baek Woojin burst out with strength and used sheer physical force and dexterity to escape Damien's clutches. He flipped onto his feet and took a fighting stance, planning to do anything he could to survive.

"My cause is the safety of this universe. Anything that gets in the way of that cause...should be destroyed! Damien Void, do not let your mind be corrupted by Nox Spawn! Hand over the Seed!"

"Haa..."

Watching Baek Woojin yell like a madman in a situation where he could die any second, Damien sighed.

'It's a shame killing someone who's so dedicated to the cause, but it must be done.'

Damien moved his finger through the air in a beautiful line.

There wasn't any fanciful technique behind the finger, nor was there an abundance of overflowing mana.

The mysteries behind his intent were hidden deeply.

A strange sensation overcame Baek Woojin.

The joys of life, the sorrows of death, and the desolation that lay in between. All of these combined into a single feeling that impacted Baek Woojin's mind and forced him into a state of confusion and collapse.

Damien only needed to walk up to him and kill him.

The instructor wouldn't be able to resist.

However, for what felt like the first time in his life...

Damien hesitated.