

Void 771

Chapter 771 Hesitation [1]

Hesitation was a strange feeling for someone with Damien's self-confidence. When it came to the battlefield, Damien never regretted a decision that he made.

To kill someone was to save himself. If anyone who antagonized him was allowed to live, he would be the one to die instead.

It had been this way since the beginning.

Even the smallest creatures in the First Dungeon has the power to rip him to shreds back then.

The past molded Damien into someone who didn't care about the potential benefits keeping someone alive could bring if it meant keeping a loose end untied.

To feel it now was strange.

'Baek Woojin...'

Damien did his research on the man after talking to Tyler. Baek Woojin was a decorated member of Heaven's Army, a part of the Hunting Dogs, and a defender of justice to the bone. Objectively speaking, he was the most upstanding citizen in the universe.

His only flaw was his black-and-white sense of morality. In a sense, he thought similarly to Damien in how he dealt with threats first and consequences later.

'Did I feel sympathy for him?'

Damien scoffed at the thought. It was impossible for him to sympathize with someone who targeted Zara.

'Then, he'll be useful in the future.'

That was the only explanation for his hesitation. Damien's instinct had grown ever since he started acting intelligently. The previous sense he possessed was unrefined and feral, but as he grew, his sense became more rational as well.

To explore other possible futures, this was the ability Damien gained.

'I've only heard about how prestigious the Hunting Dogs are but I've never actually heard anything about them. This guy is a high-level 4th class, but he's weak. Likely, he's not a very high-ranking member.'

'He might've been dropped from the squad since he's an instructor at the academy now. Ah, will the Director be pissed if I kill him?'

Damien's thoughts spun. He began to realize the number of problems he'd bring upon himself by wantonly killing a member of Heaven's Army at the moment.

'I don't have any status in the universe, and since I've been inactive on the Dimensional Leaderboard for a while, my name has pretty much been forgotten by the masses. I can't wantonly kill without justification.'

It was the exact trouble he avoided countless times in the past by finding an influence to back him. Zenith Academy, Celestial Star Palace, White Dragon Grotto, and even Shadow Garden were prime examples of this.

Hidden Death Valley was extremely respected as an academy, but it was a neutral force. Damien couldn't simply use its name to get himself out of any situation.

'What should I do with him...?'

Regardless of the risks, Damien couldn't let Baek Woojin continue what he was doing, and he couldn't allow the rumors about his squad to continue propagating.

'So...brainwashing is the way to go?'

To completely alter Baek Woojin's memories and turn him into an ally...wasn't this an amazing plan?

'Or at least, it would be if I had the means to brainwash him.'

Damien's entire being was geared towards destruction. He didn't have the ability to manipulate like certain people he knew.

Yet, even those people merely had genius minds, not specialized skills.

'I guess it's time to experiment.'

Void Mana had some kind of connection to memories, considering its ability to devour them. Damien's best bet was to try and manipulate this power consciously, altering memories instead of completely devouring them.

'It should be fine...right?'

In the worst-case scenario, he could just use Nox Mana to corrupt Baek Woojin's body and leave it somewhere on Calypto. The Saint Emperor could take the blame for his death.

'Perfect. Good thing I thought of that Nox Mana strategy after I realized that I could use this guy. It would've been bad otherwise.'

While having a minor "teehee~" moment in his head, Damien walked up to the still-stunned figure of Baek Woojin and placed his finger on the man's forehead.

'Let's hope this goes well for both of our sakes.'

Damien willed his Void Mana forward. Thin wisps of pitch-black mana permeated the air, causing the ambient temperature to drop several degrees.

The mana darted and dashed, snaked and swirled, and acted as if it was a completely sentient being with immense curiosity. And under Damien's guidance, that curious force sunk into Baek Woojin's head.

Damien sunk a strand of his awareness into the mana as he moved it. The wisps flowed through his glabella and poked around, eventually finding a way to disappear from reality.

'Found you.'

Damien sent his awareness into the tiny area the Void Mana found, and a new world was opened to him.

It was painted in multiple different shades of blue. A small spiritual continent sat to the side, calmly existing alongside the rest of the scenery.

'I didn't know a spiritual world could look so calm.'

Damien had to marvel a bit. His own spiritual world was a manifestation of chaos. There were so many different materializations inside that even Damien lost count of them sometimes.

Nevertheless, adjusting to the clutter of his own spiritual world made it immeasurably easier to maneuver through the serenity of this one.

'His memories should be over...there.'

There was a space like a river. It flowed and painted countless pictures, illustrating the life of a man who constantly fought adversity and climbed to the top.

It showed his pain, and it showed his struggle. As if he was devouring the man, Damien was able to learn an incredible amount about him.

'So it's a revenge thing and a hero complex at the same time. No wonder he was so crazed about Zara.'

As it turned out, Baek Woojin lost his entire family to the Nox, save for a single little sister who was comatose and in need of intensive treatment. The reason he joined Heaven's Army at all was to gain contribution points to treat her, but along the way, he developed an extreme sense of justice.

He didn't want anyone else to suffer the same fate he suffered, and for that, the universe needed to be cleansed of its current scourge.

'Turns out I don't really need to alter much. As long as I can erase my squad's connection with the incident and make him think the Nox Seed was taken away by the Nox before he arrived, I'll be fine.'

On paper, it was a simple task. There were only a few key memories that needed to be altered for the rest to fall in place like dominos.

'But since I've never done this before, it'll probably be a taxing task nonetheless.'

Damien sighed and readied himself. He cleared his mind and focused on his Void Mana.

'As long as I've known it, the Void has only showcased properties of devouring, but that's not all there is to it. The Void is all-consuming, but it is also all things. Erase the current misconception and bloom into your full potential!'

He willed his Void Mana, he connected with the Void itself and berated its inaction.

To Damien, the Void was everything. It wasn't just the entity that gave him the opportunity to become strong, it was the entity that birthed everything he ever knew and loved.

He was well aware that devouring was only the most basic of its abilities.

Samsara helped him realize it.

To destroy reality was easy, to alter it was difficult, and to create it was nigh-impossible.

But the Void...

The Void was something that could do all three.

Chapter 772 Hesitation [2]

A man with ashen-grey skin moved calmly through the battlefield.

Another similar in appearance to him into view, evident panic on his face.

A Seed had gone missing.

It had been stolen by a mysterious man who attacked the base.

Darkness erupted.

The scene crumpled. The edges of its frame began to burn as it disappeared from existence.

It was an excruciating process.

The scene was corrupted. Strange discrepancies began to appear within. The ashen-grey skin of the men began to morph, their words were distorted, and even the environment around them was altered significantly.

The warped scene continued to crumple and twist into oblivion. Its original form was wholly unrecognizable in its current state.

The darkness eventually dimmed down significantly.

The scene halted.

The two men stood frozen in place.

Damien's visage was covered in sweat.

'This is...much harder than expected...!'

In that instant, he almost completely destroyed the memory that he was trying to alter. He was barely able to restrain the Void Mana before it devoured the memory whole.

'Since the core of the memory is still there, I can still alter the details, so it should be fine...the problem is, do I have the ability to do that much intricate work?'

A mere touch was enough to destroy a memory, but to actually alter it perfectly would require countless precise touches.

Nevertheless, he has to try. In its current state, even a complete idiot could understand that the memory was altered.

Damien returned his mind to the process.

He slowly built the details of the scene back in.

The destroyed landscape of the Willow Continent was easiest to recreate as Damien had personally seen it before escaping to the Sanctuary. And because Damien was merely restoring the memory rather than altering it, it wasn't too difficult of a task.

The difficulty came after.

Two men stood above the destroyed ruins of the Willow Continent.

Their features were nondescript, and the words flowing from their mouth had no form.

"Did...arrive?! Seed...stolen...enemy! Fi—"

Words began to form through radio static.

"Did...you...arrive?! Seed...acquired...escaped! Find...reinforc—"

They slowly took shape.

"Did you just arrive?! The Seed has been acquired, but the enemy escaped! We must kill the enemy of the Blight Emperor before his reinforcements arrive!"

A man's face slowly became visible. His words were finally clear to the second man in the scene, allowing him to respond.

"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.

The scene began to change. The instructor realized the terror that a new Seed could bring, he realized how dangerous it was that the Nox had acquired it, and he realized the importance of the only factor that held the Nox back as they took it.

'The Stargazer Squad...'

He needed to learn more about them. If they truly lived up to their name, they could be valuable allies in the war.

The scene began to change.

The scene continued to change.

Waves formed, crashing about and colliding with each other. The seas rumbled with chaos, becoming turbulent in an instant.

Damien's wisp of awareness shrunk back. Baek Woojin's spiritual world suddenly turned violent and raging.

Those violent waves that crashed about caused great damage, almost completely destroying the spiritual world in an instant.

A wisp of pure white mana appeared instantly. Damien responded without hesitation, using his new Life Laws to heal the damage in the spiritual world.

The calm aura of Life Laws calmed the seas and dried the lands. The cracks formed by the commotion were patched, and the spiritual world once again regained peace.

'Phew...' Damien sighed in relief. If he'd been just a second late, Baek Woojin would've died right then and there.

'It's dangerous. That was only the first memory, but it already caused such a reaction.'

Changing the events themselves wasn't hard, but changing Baek Woojin's thought process to naturally veer in a different direction was extremely taxing, and evidently, it put a burden on his mind to process this drastic change in thoughts.

'Luckily, I was able to get through that entire interaction before the damage became too bad. His first impression of the squad has been shifted into a positive light.'

Now, all that was left was to continuously repeat the process until Baek Woojin's entire past week was different from the original.

'It'll be hard. I can't repeat this process for everyone he interacted with.'

Damien didn't want fanatic loyalty from Baek Woojin, he wanted realism. For that reason, he couldn't outright remove the hostility the instructor had for the squad, nor could he alter the conversations he had too much.

'But that wasn't the goal in the first place. I can get him as an ally without the help of altered memories.'

If that was the case, then not much needed to be changed outside of Baek Woojin's internal monologue.

'Yet, that's the hardest part. I guess I'll need a constant stream of Life Laws and countless hours to get this done.'

Damien sighed to himself. This was why he didn't like leaving people alive. It complicated things far too much.

But at the same time, it allowed him to learn and grow like he hadn't before. If it wasn't for his sudden desire to keep Baek Woojin alive, how long would it have taken him to realize the intricate usages of Void Mana?

Comprehending the Void was his main goal at all times, and if his decisions allowed him to do so with greater efficiency...

'...they might have to start calling me Saint Damien soon enough.'

The world was dark, but that darkness was hidden beneath an array of shining lights.

Starships lit up the sky with their splendor, creating a grandiose scene for those watching from below.

It was a truly beautiful scene.

Or at least, it would've been.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Countless smaller ships raced through the air in fierce combat with each other. Dazzling bursts of mana lit up the night sky like fireworks and rainbows, but at the end of each rainbow was a dead man.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Heavy artillery fired from the sky above, rocking the ground with force greater than any earthquake. Shockwaves spread through the world, incinerating those they passed through. The land itself was cracked and sundered beyond repair, almost razed down to the mantle.

The scenes of terror were numerous, and they didn't just exist on this one planet.

This planet only signified a smaller battlefield within the large-scale warzone that was formed in the area. At least ten different planets of the same size were experiencing similar scenes.

But the main battlefield was elsewhere, on a world of equal size to Calypto.

Yet this world was already in pieces. The entire world had been destroyed at some point, leaving only a murky black ball of ink that substituted its World Core.

Two sides stood against each other and fought with ferocious brutality. It was a scene where not a single soul was safe from the clutches of death.

It was the battlefield of Throh, where Heaven's Army was making a stand to reclaim the universe's lost land and drive back the invading scourge.

Chapter 773 Throh [1]

"What's the current situation?! Someone report!"

Deep within Throh, a squad of elites stood stranded and unable to contact their peers.

They had been part of a strike team sent out to assassinate a few important members of the Nox's home base on Throh, but before they could even reach the base, they were met with a terrifying ambush.

A woman clutched a radio device and screamed into it, hoping for a response from her squad members, but she was only met with silence.

Her eyes sharpened as she lifted her injured body off the rocks. She held a large gun in her hand, evidently possessing plenty of firepower on her own.

She ran through the desolation of Throh. This deep into the planet, there was nothing but endless desert and cracked dirt. The heat was almost unbearable, especially in the armor that these Heaven's Army soldiers were wearing.

"Reporting to base, we've been ambushed! I repeat, we've been ambushed! Send reinforcements as fast as possible!"

The woman yelled into her radio one more time before raising her gun and cautiously making her way out of the imploded area where she was stuck.

After climbing out of the wreckage, she found a new landscape in front of her.

Underneath Throh's surface was something terrifying.

Something that Heaven's Army wasn't prepared to face.

The woman was quiet.

She didn't even dare let a single breath leak from her mouth.

That thing was right in front of her.

The imploded ground created an opening in its quarters.

If she moved even a little...

"This...this is base reporting! Unit 67, are you still there?"

"I repeat, unit 67 this is base! Do you copy?"

Despite her own personal desires, the woman was unable to reach for her radio.

After all...

"Something" appeared before her.

It was present yet not present at all, alive yet showing no signs of life...

It was a contradictory existence that should not be allowed to exist in this world.

And that existence...was facing the woman head-on at the moment.

"Base...I think you just got me killed."

The woman spoke with a wry smile.

And that was the last expression to ever surface on her face,

"Something" whipped out at her, and her existence was erased in a single instant. The only remaining proof of her presence was the final message she sent to the base.

A control operator panicked. Just now, the only reporting member of Unit 67 had declared her own death.

Considering the mission that Unit 67 was sent on, it could only be imagined what this total wipeout implied.

"Commander! Urgent news!"

An assistant made their way towards the commander's office immediately. They informed him of Unit 67's situation in as much detail as they got from the control operator who was connected to them.

The commander frowned.

"There is something...within the planet?"

It wasn't as surprising as it was unexpected. It was a variable that Heaven's Army wasn't quite equipped to deal with, considering how one of their elite squads was torn to shreds by that entity without even a hint of resistance.

"Contact the Council and fill them in on the situation. In the meantime, Units 34, 27, and 66 should be summoned to my office, and Units 22, 15, and 53 should be sent to General Streuss for further instruction."

The commander's assistant moved instantly. It only took a little over a minute for everyone to gather where they were supposed to be.

"Attention! Our 3000 Lightning Palace will gain infinite prestige in this war! We have just found an entity of unknown proportions and power beneath the planet. Before we can message the association and inform them of its existence, protect the planet from its wrath and keep it contained! Do you understand?!"

"Yes, Sir!"

The three squads he summoned to his office shouted in unison. While they were busy containing the entity, the three squads under General Streuss would lead a second expedition into the cave to capture footage of that entity so it could be analyzed.

"You may die on this mission, but you will die with honor! You will die as protectors of this universe, people who allowed it to persevere during these terrible times! Are you prepared to make this sacrifice?!"

"YES, SIR!"

An enthusiastic response followed his words, carrying enough momentum to shake the world.

The commander smiled.

"Good! Then, I wish you all good luck, and don't make me write home to your families! I owe you all drinks when you get back!"

The deployed squads smiled wryly. The commander's method of cheering them up wasn't the best, but his intent made them smile every time.

Without hesitation, they teleported from the starship and landed on Throh.

The commander sighed from above.

'Just how many of you will I have to send off before this war ends...?'

He lamented their fates, but he could do nothing to stop them. He wasn't lying about the importance of their sacrifices.

'Now that we've discovered something so horrendous, we can only hope everything else works out in our favor. If the Infected Source World's forces appear...'

The last information he heard about the Infected Source World was that a group of cadets was going to take charge of it.

Of course, the instructors above them and even some Heaven's Army troops were overseeing them, but it still remained that the main operations on Calypto were being handled by inexperienced kids.

'If they can hold those pests off until we finish up here, I'll swear my loyalty to them as a whole. I'll even become a dog if it means containing the situation that's already out of our control.'

The commander sighed once more. Unfortunately, he didn't have the freedom nor the jurisdiction to know the overall situation with constantly updating details.

He could only hope that fate would be on their side.

In another starship far away from any ongoing battlefield, countless individuals swarmed about as they carried out their individual tasks.

This starship was the main control center, the starship that linked every part of the battlefield together.

And here, they were able to receive information from all across the universe.

"Most of Calypto's forces have been wiped out by the Stargazer Squad! I repeat, only the Blight Emperor and his closest aides remain!"

A shocking announcement came through not long ago and was transmitted everywhere, an announcement specifically naming a squad of students and praising their contribution to the war.

According to the operator, this squad essentially swept Calypto's surface single-handedly.

"Single-handedly?"

"Single-handedly."

A man raised his brows in appreciation when he heard the news. "What's the current situation of this squad?"

"Two are crucially injured, one is still recovering after Elixir treatment, and two are missing."

That alone was enough to shock the man, but when he learned of why they were in such a predicament...

"My gods! Who knew we still had such courageous youths entering our ranks!"

He let out a shout of anticipation. He couldn't wait until these brave students joined him on the true battlefield.

Only people like them were worthy of becoming Hunting Dogs.

"Speaking of, isn't little Jinjin over there? How's he doing?"

"Instructor Baek Woojin is currently investigating the Stargazer Squad for unknown reasons. The cadets have speculated that he suspects them of fabricating their feats."

"Haa...that boy was always too stubborn to recognize others. I hope it doesn't end too poorly for him."

"Indeed, however, sir, this is not the time to be thinking about that. Your troops await your command."

"Right, then shall we get going?"

The man smiled and stood up from his throne. An ornate blue robe signified his high status, and the scholarly aura emanating from him made even the most belligerent fool feel tranquility.

He stood on a balcony overlooking 100,000 troops, all lined up in undeniably perfect formation.

"Men!" The man shouted with all his power.

"Tonight, we feast on the blood of our enemies!"

"Tonight...we kill until we're killed!"

RAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

The response was beautifully glorious. The soldiers chanted as one unified mind, with no doubts in their minds about the success of their mission.

Throh was a battlefield where countless different squads and sects fought together while simultaneously competing. It was an environment of brutal war no matter how many thousands of kilometers away one went.

And in this environment, the only way to survive was to contribute.

As contribution points stacked up, the guarantee of safety would increase as well.

For these fighters from smaller sects, and even those from major influences, who came to the battlefield for glory...

Each and every battle was one of fierce survival and competition.

Chapter 774 Throh [2]

The Stargazer Squad's contribution to the battle on Throh wasn't to be underestimated.

Even without the discovery of the entity beneath the surface, Heaven's Army was still stretching its forces in this battle. It was one where most troops would die for the sake of the greater good, so the participation rate of the soldiers was incredibly low already.

Only a few tens of millions came to support Heaven's Army for this battle, and while this number itself was massive, when compared to the size of the warzone, it was truly nothing.

These forces were at wit's end trying to deal with the endless stream of Nox that seemed to be present on Throh. It wasn't just the mindless 3rd class Nox, but also droves upon droves of intelligent 4th class Nox.

The potential introduction of reinforcements from countless thousands of 4th class Nox led by a Mox Avatar was incredibly harrowing. The mental exhaustion caused by forcefully bearing the knowledge that the enemy might have reinforcements even with their already massive size was disheartening, to say the least.

Now, with the announcement from the control center that the forces of Calypto were successfully stalled, the various squads participating in the battle could focus wholly on what was in front of them.

The enemies they saw were all the enemies they'd have to face.

The true impact of this knowledge wasn't something that could be understood unless one was present.

There was only a single group who couldn't celebrate.

The squads chosen to enter the planet's surface and dig deeper were displaying utmost caution as they traveled, their weapons drawn even though there were no threats in the surroundings.

Their eyes darted around as if they were surrounded by terrifying auras. As they walked, the silence gave prominence to the crunching of their footsteps, forcing them to focus on the fact that that was all they could hear.

"Squad 22, report."

The team leader of squad 53 spoke into his radio.

"Squad 22, reporting. We haven't run into anything special quite yet, but the atmosphere itself is extremely ominous. I can't help but get the feeling that we're waking into a trap."

"Safety is more important than anything else, Squad Leader. Remember to evacuate if things look too difficult. We can regroup at the entrance and explore together later."

"Understood. We will proceed with caution."

Squad 53's leader cut his radio and refocused on the surroundings. His squad was currently within the depths of an underground cavern. Their surroundings were a beautiful array of stalactites and stalagmites, but from another perspective, they looked like the teeth of a massive beast.

'Our mission as me paranoid.' The Squad 53 Leader sighed. He checked the area with his awareness and found no signs of life from the cavern.

"Let's move forward. This thing is supposed to be a monster. Never drop your guard."

Squad 53 moved through the cavern and made their way deeper into the connected cave system. With every step, the atmosphere seemed to get hotter and hotter until even their armor couldn't protect them anymore.

"Halt."

The Squad 53 leader shot his awareness forward. Beyond the wall adjacent to him was a large empty area filled with molten lava. He could feel countless life signatures from within the lava of creatures waiting to attack them.

If it was his decision, he'd avoid this area with everything he had. However...

'This is the only path.'

Behind every other wall were waterfalls of lava that disallowed any sort of intrusion into their streams.

"Attention! The next section will be incredibly difficult, so be prepared!"

Only after making the announcement did the leader finally begin destroying the wall.

The squad walked into the empty spaces. The heated breaths of the lava below brushed against their skin and burned them with every touch.

"Watch out for the beings below! Let's go!"

The leader immediately hopped onto a nearby protrusion of rock and began hopping his way across the large expanse of lava.

Any free land was a valid landing point. Squad 53's members gradually followed their leader's footsteps and made their way across the lava sea:

However....

"AHHHHH! SAVE ME—!"

Not everyone could remain standing in the tiny rock protrusions.

The one scream led to a cacophony. Out of Squad 66's hundreds of members, at least a few tens of them died.

"Squad 22, do you copy? Squad 15, are there any changes on the outside?"

"Squad 22 reporting in, we haven't come across any changes. We just crossed a lava sea and are making our way deeper into the tunnel system."

"Squad 15 reporting in, there are no major changes on the surface. Nox forces have passed through the area, but none have been allowed close to the site."

"Understood. Squad 15, be sure to constantly watch our footage in real-time so you can support us when the time comes, I have a feeling that we'll run into the entity soon enough."

"Roger!"

The radio conversation ended and the squads began moving once more.

They moved so much that they almost doubted the original report about the entity.

At least, until they ran into it personally.

'It turned dark in an instant.' Squad 53's leader realized.

Even their scrunching footsteps could no longer be heard.

"Where is it...?" He wondered.

Out of curiosity, he raised his gun and fired a burst of mana bullets into the air.

Skreee!

A mild sound of pain reverberated through the room.

'So that's how it is...' the Squad 53 leader smiled wryly and raised his gun once more.

"Boys, we've already been swallowed! Let's go out with a fucking bang!"

HOO! HAH!

Squad 53 let out a spirited and unified bellow as they raised their weapons.

A section of the tunnel system was lit up with various colors of mana.

Squad 53 was already in trouble, yet they hadn't even met the main body of the enemy yet.

There were only five squads working together for this operation. To either destroy everything or get as much information as possible was far too hard.

But this was the exact type of challenge that they joined for.

If they couldn't even get past this much, how were they supposed to thrive in the universe?

Heaven's Army was full of opportunists, and the reward system made it infinitely easier to connect them.

When so many people desperately waited for their opportunities, the intensely competitive environment was always maintained.

Squad 53, Squad 22, and Squad 15 all fought with their everything and recorded footage of the being they faced.

But despite their immense advantage in technology and firepower, Squad 22 was wiped out in an instant.

They didn't even live long enough to send apologies to their loved ones.

The last thing visible in the choppy footage was a single eye, an eye bigger than even some smaller beginner worlds.

The existence of an unknown planetary being was confirmed at that moment.

The command center was lit aflame with solemnity as those within tried to find a way to take the entity down.

However, as someone who was facing it directly, the Squad 53 leader understood just how idiotic the idea was. His body roughly slumped against a nearby wall.

'We really are fighting...an unwinnable war.'

Chapter 775 Throh [3]

It was far away from Throh, but not far enough.

"Something" levitated in the starry sky, its gait enough to eclipse an entire world.

It was the most terrifying thing a Heaven's Army soldier could see, a starship of untold proportions equipped with weaponry and innovation enough to match its size.

This destroyer starship was currently inactive, but it had the potential to be activated at any time, becoming an integral part of the Nox's plans to destroy the universe.

However, not everyone showed fear in front of the destroyer.

A woman far too beautiful for the bloody battlefield entered the destroyer ship like a shadow. Her pale green skin reflected off of its metallic outer shell as she made her way into the guts of the ship.

The team she brought entered with her.

They spread out immediately upon entry without a single word, as if every step had been planned from long ago. Their bodies turned into illusive blurs as they began moving to complete their task.

Small seeds around the size of a marble were distributed to every corner of the starship. They had various colors and patterns decorating their surfaces, outlining the variety in their effects.

The beautiful plant-race woman closed her eyes as she stood in the center of the starship, feeling for each and every seed that had been distributed.

'Aaliyah, remember your origins. Do not allow that disease to continue spreading. I can only help you this much. I hope you know what to do.'

She remembered the message she received from a little fairy many months ago. That fairy was carrying a bag of these seeds, and even though Aliyah had never seen them before, she had a vague guess about what they were.

'Holy Mother...'

Aaliyah shook her head in denial. As far as she knew, the Holy Mother was dead. She'd died protecting the plant races long ago during the ancient eras, and only vestiges of her will remained.

But...wasn't it okay to hope.

Aaliyah could feel the beautiful complexity within the seeds. Just the fact that they were all seemingly tailored to be handled by her was astonishing enough. When their intended effects were taken into account...

'Luckily, the Nox have not decided to use the starship yet. If it was active, we would have far too many issues to deal with to cleanly deal with the situation.'

Unfortunately, the concept of "jinxing" didn't exist among the plant races.

Aaliyah couldn't have known any better.

PSHHHHH!

The sound of a pressurized room depressurizing was so loud that it resonated throughout the massive starship.

The plant race beings who invaded the ship froze.

Their bodies were concealed and hidden within the crevices of the ship, areas that would never be checked.

Their leader, however...

Aaliyah's eyes widened when she heard the door opening. However, she couldn't move. In order to spread her awareness evenly and control all the seeds that had been planted, she needed to be in the middle.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The sound of footsteps slowly got closer. It wasn't just one pair, but instead enough footsteps to form a small rumbling sound as the group walked.

PSSSHHHHH!

A door depressurized.

A group of people entered the central control room.

"I absolutely deplore the scent of Plant Race experts. I can't believe their blood aura has become so thick that it even permeated through Leviathan." A woman sneered.

"Ahaha, and why is that? The plant races might be strange, but they taste quite good. Hmm, how should I say this? They have a bit more sweetness that those who diverge from nature don't possess." A man responded with a smile as he sat down in one of the nearby seats.

Each seat was linked to another control module, with each operator working in tandem to control the entirety of the ship. For a ship on the planetary scale like this one, single-handed control was nearly impossible. Only a Demigod had the mental strength to actually pull off such a feat.

The current group of 6 Higher Nox beings who chatted casually as they took their places amongst these seats didn't look like professional starship operators. In fact, they didn't look like they deserved to be in the war zone at all.

Their skin was smooth and beautiful, their faces were perfectly proportioned, and even their bodies looked sculpted from the finest clay by a master craftsman.

Compared to the majority of Nox beings, they were on another level.

But at the same time, they were extremely young.

Aaliyah watched from her concealed spot within the roof of the central control room.

The most she could do was hide herself quickly before the group entered, so it was a miracle she was even able to get this far.

She didn't dare to use her mana for fear of being discovered, but she knew that the second the starship was activated...

'We'll be found in an instant.'

Aaliyah's eyes hardened.

'Let's wait it out for now.'

The group that arrived was clearly filled with experts, judging by their ability to play with the starship's controls so freely, but none had taken the helm yet.

These six merely sat at subsidiary stations, taking their rightful places and waiting for the one who would lead them.

It didn't take him long to appear.

Light footsteps that almost disappeared into the void preceded his entrance into the room.

He was lithe and almost womanly, his appearance possessing such a powerful feminine charm that even men around him were forced to look away with red faces.

His movements were graceful and filled with poise, unmatched by 90% of existences in the universe.

"Are you all ready?" He asked slowly.

"Ready!"

"Let's rev it up, Captain!"

"We've been waiting for this moment for years already."

The team responded enthusiastically to his words, causing the captain to smile.

He walked to the helm and took his seat. He stared out the massive holographic window of the starship that reflected the starry sky outside.

'I will surpass you, Father.'

The womanly man sharpened his gaze.

Aaliyah's heart skipped a beat.

'That is...'

She knew this man's identity. While she'd never seen him in person, she'd seen countless pictures of a face that almost perfectly resembled him.

Even the most basic inference abilities could comprehend his identity.

'He is the Plaguelord's only son, Thaddeus Church.'

A chill ran through Aaliyah's body.

The feeling of immense opportunity as well as immense disaster flowed through her at once.

'There aren't many of them, but with the ship's systems, the 6 of them possess the fighting force of an entire army both internally and externally.

Even within the ship's interior, there were countless weapons to deal with intruders. It would be instant death for the guerrilla squad if they were caught.

Aaliyah took a shaky breath as she watched Thaddeus Church turn on the starship's various systems.

With every click, every whir, and every ding of confirmation, her heart skipped a beat.

The timing was off.

She had a single chance.

If Thaddeus Church didn't deign to inspect the ship before launching, the guerilla squad would be able to accomplish a feat far surpassing their original intention.

But if he performed the inspection as he was supposed to...

'Cherry Blossom Squad, prepare to fall.'

As their name suggested, they would become one with death, and use their deaths to spread desolation to their enemies.

Chapter 776 Throh [4]

Every second was excruciatingly slow.

The thrusters and engines turned on.

The internal operating systems revved to lights, and all the lights and facilities on the inside of the starship became functional.

Countless systems whirred to life one by one. The endlessly long starship was slowly lit in an array of colors, a deep growl emitting from its engines.

And finally, when all other systems were functioning properly...

The weapons systems activated.

Thousands upon thousands of weapons spanning countless kilometers of the area came to life. Diagnostics were run immediately after, showcasing the perfect condition that the weapons were in.

Thaddeus Church manned the ship's helm not as a young master who wanted to prove himself, but as a trained soldier carrying out orders.

The starship came to life.

There was only one final step left before launch, but it was optional.

It was something of a customary measure to scan the internals of the ship before launching, specifically to avoid any rats sneaking on board where they weren't supposed to be.

'How pathetic. No mere lower being from this universe has the courage to stand against Father. Even without an inspection, nothing will happen.' Thaddeus scoffed.

He truly had so much pride in his father. Even if he didn't run a final inspection, he was confident in his ability to succeed.

But at the same time...

'If I am not thorough, he will not acknowledge me.'

Thaddeus moved. He entered a command into the ship, and as the scanning wave of mana spread through the ship...

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Aaliyah's heart dropped to her stomach. Countless loud explosions rang out from various points in the ship. When Thaddeus checked the ship's security system, he found tens of intruders hidden in unreachable crevices and hidden areas within the ship.

"So this is why Father said to constantly maintain awareness. Rats have far more courage than they can handle."

Thaddeus indifferently clicked a few buttons on a holographic touchpad nearby, activating the internal security system.

"If you truly wish to die, then do it usefully by becoming my sustenance. Don't detonate that precious life force so easily."

The ship's intent was changed from "kill" to "capture." Binding spells and formations, along with physical binds made from mana-suppressing material, shot through the ship's interior.

But they couldn't get to everyone.

Aaliyah controlled her breathing as best as she could, but her hyperventilating was barely calmed.

Every time a distant explosion went off, another one of her comrades died.

Every time the inspection light shot out and the defense system activated, another one of her allies was captured as a torture subject.

But Aaliyah couldn't move.

She forcefully held back the tears in her eyes so they wouldn't cloud her vision. She forcefully calmed her breaths so they wouldn't attract attention.

She closed her eyes and focused, focused on the inconspicuous seeds that were scattered around the starship, seeds that weren't detected by the inspection light because they had no life within them at all.

'I won't allow your sacrifices to be in vain.'

Aaliyah gritted her teeth. Every explosion led the inspection light further away from her. Every time one of her squad members died, they did so to protect Aaliyah.

As long as Aaliyah survived, the mission could still be accomplished. The squad understood her intent perfectly, and they'd been ready to die for her cause from the beginning.

A man ran through the starship's hallways without fear. Lasers and beams of light chased him everywhere he went and countless trap formations tried to capture him from the front, but he always managed to slink his way out of any situation like a conniving rat.

HAHAHAHAHAHA!

He ran like a wild man, his laughter echoing through the ship's halls like roaring seas or dragons. Even with the entirety of the ship's defense system against him, he had no fear.

"GO GET 'EM, CAPTAIN! I'LL BE CHEERING YOU ON FROM HELL!"

He burst through the door in his path and arrived in a room filled with large machines. Without a single second of hesitation, he gathered all the mana in his body to his chest and detonated his lifeforce.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

Flames raged through the machines, burning and damaging them. Immediately, a few red alerts appeared on Thaddeus' screen.

"Dammit! They took the navigation! Why doesn't this ship's system work faster?!"

He slammed his fist against the arm of his chair in annoyance.

"I refuse to be defeated before I even begin my advent. Focus all defense systems on the bugs in the ship and eliminate them. Take power away from unnecessary systems if need be. We won't leave until we've exterminated these pests."

Thaddeus' cold orders were followed immediately. The lights in the ship shut off, and many of the recreational facilities closed down as well. All the power directed towards maintaining them was put into defense.

And the change was obvious.

The Cherry Blossom Squad didn't have the power to resist such a terrifying onslaught. Especially after Thaddeus abandoned any thoughts of keeping them alive, how could they subvert the defense systems of a ship with Demigod-level power?

No screams of agony rang out, only cries of pride and honor echoed through the starship.

But each cry meant another death.

Aaliyah clenched her fists and bit her lip until it bled.

Sacrifices were a part of war that she could never accept, but they were a part of war that she was forced to cope with.

Even with the current plan, there would be countless more sacrifices needed in order to destroy this starship once and for all.

But Aaliyah would have to bear it. For the sake of her people and for the sake of the universe, she would have to bear it.

The explosions died down after a few minutes.

The few tens of squad members were all killed, not a single body left behind to bury.

Thaddeus released his deathly grip on his chair and leaned back.

"Mm, they are finally gone. Turn off that annoying inspection light and redirect power where it's supposed to be. Find out which systems are damaged and send the automated repair machines to work on them. We won't have navigation for some time, but I can operate just fine without it. Is everyone prepared for launch?"

"All systems go!"

"We've been ready since the beginning."

"Let's just go kill some fools already!"

With the lively responses of his comrades boosting him, Thaddeus took control of the ship.

The massive starship began to shift its position.

Its movement was slow, but every second it moved allowed it to change position and angle by multiple thousands of kilometers.

Throh wasn't that far away. At most, it was a few hundred thousand of kilometers to the east.

With the starship's capabilities, crossing that would only take a few minutes.

'After that, a massacre will begin.'

Aaliyah mentally prepared herself. At the same time, her awareness formed bonds between the countless seeds spread through the starship's interior.

Even if her squad mates were dead, vestiges of their existence remained in the universe.

They would forever be remembered as the saviors of countless quintillions of existences, the beings who destroyed the destroyer of worlds.

She wouldn't let their hard work or their sacrifices go to waste.

'The gift of the Holy Mother and my comrades...I'll be sure to deliver it in full!'

With zealous determination in her eyes, Aaliyah quietly hid and patiently waited.

When her one opportunity came, she would grab onto it with everything she had.

The battle for Throh would go down in history as a monumental victory for the universe's denizens.

Everyone affiliated with Heaven's Army was doing everything they could to make sure of it.

Chapter 777 Throh [5]

Considering every battle taking place on Throh and in its vicinity, not many could trump Aaliyah's position in importance.

However, there was still one final battlefield with this honor.

Yet, that battlefield was the most peaceful of them all.

Millions of kilometers away from Throh, a man sat quietly in the void, his eyes were closed and his form was at ease. His environment, however, didn't reflect his calmness.

Swoosh!

Spatial winds whipped through the starry sky as a multitude of auras converged on the man's position. Despite his nonaggression, those around him wouldn't allow him to sit casually.

"The prospect of Infinity, was it a lie? From humans, it is expected."

He spoke in oddly worded sentences, almost as if he was moments away from an epiphany that he could never reach.

His eyes remained closed at all times. It was rumored that any place his gaze touched would be overruled by desolation.

Tens of beings surrounded him. Even the weakest of them had just reached extreme peak 4th class. Among them were a few familiar faces, including the little girl who originally proposed the plan they'd used to lure the Plaguelord so far away from Throh.

"Infinity is not something we can reach in this realm. As someone who reached the unattainable already, you should be aware of this. Still, you decided to answer our provocation?"

The little girl spoke as the group's representative, speaking to the enemy as an equal.

However, the enemy wasn't an equal.

The enemy...was a true Demigod.

"Reached...unattainable? I answered provocation, for prospect of Infinity. Prospect of Infinity...is it not here?"

A terrifying gaze landed on the little girl, sending a shiver down her spine. The Plaguelord's head sharply turned to face her, and although his eyes weren't open, it was like his gaze was piercing through reality to reach her.

The little girl's eyes sharpened as well.

"Plaguelord...you must be a part of the Inhuman Emperor's forces. He is still locked away in his dog cage, isn't he? What gives you the courage to act so wantonly?"

"Master is not sealed, he is merely waiting."

"Waiting for?"

"Dead men, tell no tales."

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ!

Plaguelord's eyes opened. A swarm of locusts flew out of his sockets and clouded the air, millions upon millions appearing all at once.

That number slowly grew into the billions. Even though they existed immediately next to Plaguelord as he formed his attack, Heaven's Army's forces couldn't do anything.

Because just as Demigods couldn't attack them, they couldn't allow themselves to get attacked by Demigods.

If any of them was hit, the Demigods would be forced into the Ancient Battlefield, which would cut off one of the universe's most powerful trump cards.

Eventually, the billions of locusts condensed and merged into a single being. A humanoid figure formed and shrunk down to the size of an average person.

"This form is more adequate."

Plaguelord smiled. He grinned with teeth of locusts.

"You shall become sustenance for my Master. Be honored."

"Everyone, attack!"

The little girl's command came immediately. Plaguelord's newly formed Avatar was trapped in an array of barriers and bombarded with high-damage skills and attacks for many seconds on end.

But within the flurry, no pain could be heard.

When the attacks finally died down, the Plaguelord's undamaged figure was once again revealed.

"This body...is not so weak."

He spread his arms into the sky and laughed. Countless locusts split off of his body and swarmed into the surroundings. The starry sky was plagued by their existence, and the plague they carried spread like wildfire.

The Plaguelord specialized in disease. He was a person who mastered a craft that was unreachable to most.

To control disease and plague wasn't simple. To create a mana-based disease that couldn't be healed through magic or skills was even more impossible.

But Plaguelord did it.

These locusts weren't normal at all, and the spreading plague...

...was even enough to affect 4th class beings.

"My power may be limited by this Avatar, but is their power the same? Enjoy my concoctions, and have a good rest. When you awaken, you will become one with a greater being."

Drowsiness overtook many of the surrounding combatants immediately after Plaguelord's words dropped. They felt like their systems were slowed and their reactions didn't match their perception at all.

The little girl gritted her teeth in anger.

"What a shitty loophole. You know, universe? Sometimes, you're a little too unbiased."

She immediately took action. She brought her hands up to her chest in a praying position, moving her fingers incessantly to create numerous patterns in the air.

Her eyes glowed with infinitely blue light. A hexagonal diagram formed behind her.

It was filled with countless patterns, with 5 stars forming a pentagon inside. The rest of the space was filled with unknown text, as well as numerous interlocking rings of various sizes.

It was a strangely populated symbol, as if it had weathered the rivers of time for eons and been changed multiple times.

The little girl spread her arms out and chanted.

Strange words flowed from her mouth. They didn't have true form, but their inflection as they rolled off her tongue seemed to make the fabric of reality tremble.

Her words slowly came together, and the various patterns that formed from her fingers merged into the diagram behind her back. And finally...

"Demon Sealing Act One: Severence From Heaven."

Every sound in the vicinity came together to voice the words.

An illusory blue sword hovered in the starry sky for a brief moment before shooting out like a comet. Its blazing trail obliterated any locusts it came across, and the Plaguelord's venom seemed to lose effect as well.

The holy light of the sword was unstoppable, and within mere sparks of an instant, it reached the Plaguelord's Avatar body.

"This...!"

Shing!

The sword pierced through. The swarm of locusts that formed the body was frozen, and even the expression on his face was unable to move.

The avatar was sealed in that moment, and the plague it spread was wiped from existence. The Plaguelord's main body shook.

"You are...a Successor."

"It took you long enough to notice."

The little girl stood proudly among her comrades, flicking her finger and bringing the strange diagram back into her body.

Gazing indifferently at the Plaguelord, she finally stated the identity that made his attitude change immediately.

"My name is Priscilla Adelaire, 245th Generation Head of the Demon Sealing Pantheon. Stop your resistance before I'm forced to take drastic measures."

"The Demon Sealing Pantheon...always a hassle."

Plaguelord frowned as memories of the past resurfaced in his mind.

The Demon Sealing Pagoda wasn't just a faction that had existed for over 10,000 years to experience the past war...

It was a faction that continued its existence from the distant past, having records that even spoke of the Forgotten War from 100,000 years in the past.

Plaguelord frowned as he realized the type of influence the Demon Sealing Pantheon was. They were formed for the sole purpose of exterminating Nox, and all of their techniques were specifically targeted to restrict the Nox completely during battle.

"I understand. I will not, interfere in this battle." He finally stated.

Fighting here would only result in breaking the universal law and being sent to the Ancient Battlefield.

And that wasn't allowed to happen.

After all, the Emperors still had plans in this universe.

Chapter 778 Throh [6]

BOOOOOOOOOM!

It was a harrowing sight.

A single beam of light, a beam so massive in scale that it looked like a second sun approaching, shot through the bounds of the starry sky and made impact with its target.

All matter was eliminated. Whether it was life or ecosystem, it all turned to dust under the power of this beam.

Millions died in a single attack.

A massive starship hung in the air above a planet, slowly moving away as it recharged its weapons.

The planet below was once called Dreyll, however, it was now nothing more than a desolate wasteland. Both the Nox and Heaven's Army forces had been wiped out without mercy.

"Gahahaha! This is so fun! Thad, you didn't tell us you had something so fun!" A man celebrated as he looked back at the damage,

Of the six, he was the most vocal. His name was Theo, and while he had a seemingly charismatic and happy-go-lucky personality, he was an insane individual who took almost sexual pleasure in the deaths of others.

The rest were two women and three more men. The women were mostly silent, but Aaliyah already knew all the men's names and their general habits.

If she had to put it in one word...

'Scum.'

There was no better way to describe them. Aaliyah had the feeling that the only reason these two women remained unviolated by them was because they were too strong.

The strangest part was the fact that this group of lustful and disgusting degenerates was friends with Thaddeus Church.

From what Aaliyah could see, Thaddeus was different. He was calm and calculating, and even when he showed emotion, it looked like he calculated it beforehand. Thaddeus gave off a strangely artificial feeling that Aaliyah couldn't quite put her finger on, but it disgusted her all the same.

When the first shot went off, Aaliyah was almost tempted to immediately act to take down the starship, but she had to hold herself back.

Her position was extremely sensitive, and any extraneous movement would expose her. Though a single shot caused a genocide, Aaliyah was still forced to wait.

The time wasn't right yet.

Judging by the starship's trajectory, it would arrive there soon enough.

'Please wait...just a little longer.'

The starship made it to its next target.

Instead of a singular beam, thousands of smaller weapons appeared, bombarding the targeted planet until it collapsed in on itself.

Just a bit longer...

Aaliyah didn't know how many times the sentence went through her head as she watched the ongoing massacre.

News spread rapidly through the battlefields. Heaven's Army's information network was one of the best in the universe,

A star destroyer joined the war. A massive ship with the combat power of a Demigod was now terrorizing the battlefield.

"Did Aaliyah fail...?" A green-skinned woman wondered to herself.

"No, if she died, I would have felt something. Since she's still alive..."

"She's waiting for an opportunity to strike." A man nearby finished her sentence.

The woman nodded. "If the plan went downhill, the best place for an opportunity to reverse the scale would be...."

Her eyes went to a nearby map, scanning it in detail.

"Here." She pointed out a spot. It was the most obvious location on the map, yet one of the most improbable.

"If she wants to turn the situation around and gain ground for our troops, her best bet would be to make her move in the ruins of Throh."

"The only remaining piece of land is the World Core, which cannot be damaged through ordinary means. Other than that, the space is largely populated by Nox and common foot soldiers. In terms of losses to the army, this is where we'll take the softest hit. However, Aaliyah..."

Aaliyah wasn't the type of person to sacrifice anyone, let alone so many troops. If she was truly aiming for Throh itself...

"She's planning to die with them."

The woman's eyes hardened. "That cannot be allowed. Aaliyah is one of our Plant Races' final geniuses. Her fate determined the fate of our people."

"Assemble multiple teams! We're moving towards Throh for an emergency mission!"

The woman nodded at the man beside her, and he sighed wryly in response. It wasn't like he could stop her, nor was her decision wrong.

Within minutes, thousands of troops had assembled at the woman's command. They entered a smaller starship built for speed and rushed towards Throh,

Meanwhile, the starship made its way in the same direction.

'Father always emphasized the importance of World Cores, but why? Why must we harvest them with such vigor?'

Thaddeus was a curious person from birth.

World Cores were always prioritized by Plaguelord, and even the Emperors would show favor to those who presented World Cores as gifts. The value of the item seemed immense in Nox society, but was barely ever mentioned in the universe.

Thaddeus wanted to know why, and there happened to be a World Core at the center of the battlefield.

'I can investigate the object to clear my suspicions, and those fools can continue their mindless slaughter games. If I must entertain them, then I will do so in the least bothersome way.'

6 useless sacks of flesh were needed to get this starship operational, and these sacks were the least useless of the ones Thaddeus knew.

'Their personalities are vile. Our race...is truly disgusting.'

Thaddeus' indifferent eyes remained on the starry sky as he operated the starship.

'Humans, Angels, Demons, Nox...everyone dies the same. We fool ourselves with the illusion of rebirth, but in reality, we are merely being swallowed by a greater ego. Is that the proper way a life should end?'

Thaddeus despised Nox culture. Cannibalism was the path to strength, and being cannibalized was the only path after death.

'Humans are the most interesting. How were they able to build such a complex society without inborn affinities for mana? Unfortunately, they are too weak.'

The weak didn't deserve to live, this was the truth of the world that Thaddeus knew.

If only he could meet an adequate human, he'd finally be able to build some understanding towards the race.

But for now...

'Father has given me this task, and I must not fail him. If that happens...'

Thaddeus shook off the thought and returned his attention to the starry sky.

From within the ceiling, Aaliyah watched his every move.

His expressions were strange, almost as if even he was aware of how disgusting his company was.

But this was merely a curious fact.

Aaliyah didn't care at all about what Thaddeus could possibly be thinking.

She knew that there were only a few minutes until she needed to flip the switch, and at the same time, there were only a few minutes left of her life.

Multiple forces converged near Throh as if they were waiting for this moment. Both Nox and Heaven's Army alike gathered.

A final large-scale battle to end this chapter of the war once and for all was brewing.

And far, far away, almost half a Sector away from Throh, another world-shattering battle was taking place as well.

Except in this one...

The presiding Emperor wasn't so friendly.

Chapter 779 Explosion [1]

"FIRE NOW! DO NOT HESITATE!"

A furious roar echoed through the starship. The speaker's vigor was mirrored by his troops, as within a second, thunderous booms were being emitted from the ship's weaponry.

Tens of brilliant light beams shot through the starry sky, impaling countless smaller starships and even landing a hit on the large enemy command ship behind them.

The ship suddenly veered to the left, narrowly dodging a light beam that almost pierced its hull.

XIU! XIU! XIU! XIU!

The whipping sound of energy attacks flying past was the only thing that populated the ears of those who fought on it.

Small fighter ships whizzed through the starry sky and created an array of dogfights within the space between the larger starships. A few thousand kilometers away, individual troops fought the Nox with their bare bodies exposed to the terrors of deep space.

The chaotic spatial essence in the starry sky swayed as if it was alive, threatening to collapse under the stress of the combined attacks.

Currently, the situation wasn't looking optimistic for the Allied forces.

The Blight Emperor was far too powerful and cunning. The way he moved his troops was extremely unconventional, almost as if he was playing games with the Allied forces.

Sadly, even if he was playing a game, there was nothing that could be done about it.

There were barely any among the current soldiers who could face off against an extreme peak 4th class Nox Avatar. In the first place, this was supposed to be a diversion mission, not an elimination one.

The Blight Emperor's sudden decision to stage a full-force offensive was a great surprise, and one that forced the currently limited forces to face off against the powerhouses of the Infected Source World,

'The Blight Emperor is a cunning man who will attack when we least expect it. We've already lost a third of our troops to his mere few thousand. If the situation continues like this, we will not make it out alive, nor will we accomplish our mission objective. Something needs to be done.'

The commander of the operation, the same man who accompanied Damien and the rest to Calypto, stood with a stern look on his face.

From his vantage point, he could view a majority of the battlefield, and rarely did he see the allied forces pushing forward properly.

'Their numbers are too great for these forces. We need elite squads here to deal with the present Nox completely. It's at least a positive that the situation on the surface has calmed down.'

The commander severely regretted his lack of action during the Stargazer Squad's crisis, but there was truly nothing he could do at the time besides wait and watch.

Bzzt!

A holographic screen appeared before the commander as he was stuck in thought.

"Commander, Instructor Baek Woojin reporting!"

The figure of a stalwart man with tan skin appeared before the commander. He had bags under his eyes as if he hadn't slept for many days, but overall, he didn't look in bad condition.

"Report."

"Yes, sir. The situation on the surface has completely resolved itself, and I have cleared any suspicion of the Stargazer Squad fabricating their achievements. However, there is bad news as well."

"The Nox were able to acquire another Seed. The Seed's current growth is unknown, however, it is sure that they will deploy it on the battlefield within the next few years."

The commander frowned and rubbed his temples. He didn't need this kind of pessimistic information at the moment. The inclusion of a new Seed into the already perilous situation...

He didn't want to think about it.

"Commander, there is one more thing I must report."

Luckily, Baek Woojin didn't plan to let him.

"The situation...may change very soon."

"Hm, what do you—"

RUMBLE!

A shiver ran through the commander's body as a terrifyingly loud rumble spread through the starry sky.

"Don't tell me..."

Calypto itself was shaking.

A few minutes ago.

"I see, so that's how the situation is playing out."

Damien's voice rang out solemnly. Currently, he was in conversation with Baek Woojin about the battle for Throh.

"Indeed. My squad is also participating in that battle, so I am able to get real-time updates on how the situation is progressing."

"It's concerning. With the battle reaching a pinnacle soon, the troops will need something to boost their morality, both those in Throh and those fighting the Blight Emperor here."

Damien knew about the importance of morale in a battle with so many troops. If anyone was able to strike a major blow against the Nox in this moment, the zealousness of all troops would skyrocket, and their fortified minds would allow them to fight without fatigue.

'If we can...'

Damien's mind spun as he thought of ways to change the overly pessimistic situation.

'Ah...'

It didn't take long for a lightbulb to go off in his head.

'It may not have been possible before, but...I've been reborn.'

"Instructor Baek, contact the commander and fill him in on Throh's situation. Also, tell him to prepare himself. I'm about to do something major."

Baek Woojin's eyes narrowed. "I don't quite understand your intent, but I will convey it to the Commander. I will watch over your actions. They will be an adequate measure to see whether or not you can hold up your end of our deal."

Damien grinned. "Don't worry. I'll put on a good show."

He teleported away immediately after saying his goodbyes. Within the spatial layers, he sighed to himself.

'Baek Woojin's mind seems stable, and he doesn't seem to notice any anomalies in his memory. As long as I can follow through on my promise, I'll gain an important ally. Still, while the allied forces in Calypto are still in the dark about Zara's identity, the Nox are not. I still haven't completely escaped danger.'

At this point, it was impossible for the Saint Emperor to be unaware of both his and Zara's identities.

It wasn't possible to kill the Saint Emperor or alter his memories, especially when the version of him present was only an Avatar, but Damien had another solution.

'Bring as much heat onto myself as possible to move their attention away from Zara, and...'

Damien made his way to the very center of Calypto. He floated over a body of water and flicked his fingers, erecting Dimensional Walls and splitting the seas.

He descended to the newly revealed ocean floor and placed his hand down.

He closed his eyes and connected to the most prominent yet concealed force in his body.

Ever since he unlocked Samsara Intent, something changed in his connection with the Void. Concepts that used to be blurry and vague became clearer, and it was almost like the comprehension he was being fed increased in grade.

'The Void is above everything, and to understand it, I must first understand all things. However, while all things must exist, they can just as easily fade into nonexistence. The Void is a manifestation of this concept, and before I can return all creation to nothingness, I must first understand the relationships between those concepts already in existence.'

His eyes opened slowly. His swirling purple irises were colored pitch-black.

Wisps of mana matching his eyes converged around his hands. And on his command...

[Spike]

They turned into jagged spikes thousands of kilometers wide that impaled the earth.

The entire world rumbled on impact.

Chapter 780 Explosion [2]

RUMBLE!

The world rumbled on impact.

Starting from Damien's hand position, an array of spikes shot into the earth and formed a line many hundreds of kilometers long.

The spikes stopped spreading soon enough, but they never stopped growing. They grew in length, their jagged edges tearing through the rock of Calypto's surface and digging into its core.

'Concentrate. Control. Execute.'

Damien controlled each spike with utmost precision. It was far harder than controlling any normal attack.

After all, these spikes were made of pure Void Mana.

The Void tore into Calypto and consumed it. The planet rumbled endlessly as its surface was continuously penetrated until finally...

BANG!

The first spike penetrated into the World Core Space.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The rest of the spikes made their way into the same cavern soon enough. The spikes suddenly lost shape at their tips, becoming like snakes that slithered through the cavern and surrounded the inky black World Core.

'Devouring this much mana would be impossible, but converting it...'

Converting it was entirely possible, especially with the Void helping Damien manipulate reality at its base.

'Deconstruct the mana, reorganize its structure, and purify it. Revert the World Core to its Origin...'

'Reality Alteration: Purification.'

VOOOM!

The Void Mana snakes shot into the corrupted World Core and began their feast. Their appetites were insatiable, as no matter how much of the Corrupted World Core's mana they devoured, they were always desperate for more.

An immense amount of mana flowed through the Void Mana and circulated in Damien's system.

This was planned on his part.

After forming a closed circuit between himself and the World Core, fundamentally purifying its mana would be much easier.

Iridescent blue was a beautiful color, a color made even more beautiful when it appeared in specks amongst a sea of inky, corrupted black.

The appearance of this pure mana was incredibly slow, but it was a change nonetheless. And as the Void Mana snakes continued their devouring, the process only became faster.

Damien could feel it in his body, the presence of mana above anything he could personally wield.

This mana used him as a transfer point before returning to its rightful place, and as though the World itself was rewarding Damien, the mana left bits and pieces of comprehension in his head that he never would've expected beforehand.

His power as a Celestial was enhanced immensely, and at the same time, he was able to achieve the unimaginable.

'If I can revert this World Core and bind it...'

This new method to strike blows against the Nox would become integral in his future endeavors.

'I must focus and continue. I cannot move from this spot until the entire World Core is purified, otherwise, my efforts will go to waste.'

Damien was taking on an immense job, but he needed to complete it as fast as possible.

After all, despite the fact that the process only just started...

The Saint Emperor had likely already caught wind of what he was doing.

"Hahahaha! HAHAAHAHAHA!"

Bellowing laughter boomed through the starship, contradicting the heavy atmosphere shared by its other residents.

The Saint Emperor sat on his seat at the helm of his starship and laughed uproariously.

He almost couldn't believe it was true.

'That kid is bold! To think he would directly attack me like this! Is he looking out for the troops who are forced to stand against me?'

The Saint Emperor found the whole situation just as comedic as it was serious.

Unlike what anyone would've expected, a young and growing genius was actually trying to interfere in a battle concerning a Demigod.

However, what that boy was actually doing was concerning, to say the least.

'To purify my World Core...who gave you the audacity? Did you not learn last time?'

The Saint Emperor smiled lightly and closed his eyes, projecting his consciousness into the World Core.

He immediately felt the specks of purity corrupting his form, disgusting him.

"Boy, what made you decide to take my kindness for granted? If you keep acting like this, I'll have to kill you."

"And what makes you think I give a fuck?" Damien responded with a grin. "Kill me if you can, pussy."

The Saint Emperor frowned. "Do not test my patience."

A wave of terrifying fluctuations spread from the World Core.

But Damien wouldn't allow a repeat of what happened last time.

He waved his arm on the surface, and the spikes under his control morphed into a sturdy defense that absorbed the impact of those shockwaves.

He didn't even send an Avatar into the World Core Space this time, so the Saint Emperor wouldn't be able to touch him at all.

"I came prepared this time, bitch."

Damien dug his claws even deeper into the World Core. The small Void Mana snakes trembled and bloated, turning into dragons in an instant.

Roar!

Roar!

Roar!

A cacophony of roars sounded as the dragons began devouring the World Core. The amount of iridescent blue within the corrupted World Core slowly began to increase.

The Saint Emperor frowned. 'That was undoubtedly the Dark God's mana...the World Core will not be able to emit enough power to shatter its veil.'

Damien's mana contained the most powerful devouring force in the universe. Even against a concept like a World Core, the mana would hold its ground.

Only an immense difference in usable strength would be able to break through Damien's mana.

'I must go down myself.'

There were few things that matched the importance of a World Core in the eyes of the Nox.

Even if all of Throh's forces were eliminated, as long as Calypto's World Core could be saved, there wouldn't be any repercussions to the Saint Emperor's units for leaving their allies to die.

The Saint Emperor sighed, but it was a strangely happy sigh.

'This is quite fun. The Human Race's hero of this generation...will he grow into a worthy opponent?'

The Saint Emperor's Avatar disappeared from the starship he occupied without a word.

He moved towards Calypto at untold speeds.

His movements were extremely concealed, and even though countless forces were observing him with extreme precision, they couldn't sense his movements.

Only a single person on the battlefield witnessed his exit.

'Something grand is about to happen.'

The Commander immediately connected the dots between the strange set of events he'd experienced. Without hesitation, he stepped down from his commanding position and established a new chain of command for the Allied forces so they could function properly without him.

After this was finished, he immediately left the starship in chase.

He needed to see what was going on.

And if someone or something on the surface was truly doing something that could even distract the Saint Emperor himself...

That person needed to be protected at all costs.

News of the Saint Emperor fleeing the battlefield spread amongst the allied forces like wildfire.

The battle situation changed immediately.

Without the threat of the Saint Emperor keeping them wary, what could the rest of these Nox do?

As long as the allied forces could match their power, nothing else would be a problem.

An all-out offensive began.

Without the Saint Emperor's active instruction, the complexity of the Nox army's strategies lessened considerably.

They weren't moving like savages, but their movements were at least readable.

The two opposing forces were finally on the same playing field.

And the Allied forces had no plan to miss this opportunity.

All forces got into formation, from the smallest ground troops to the largest of the allied force's starships.

And at that final moment...

All hell broke loose.