

Void 811

Chapter 811 Enlist [1]

"...finally here."

A lonely voice rang out in the midst of nothingness, the owner of that voice floating alone in the endless night.

At this time, only a month had passed since Damien's meeting with his father. The deeds of the Heavenly King had yet to be made known, but the string of challenges had been completed only a single day ago.

It only took Damien a single month to locate and defeat a majority of Hidden Death Valley's Emperors and Paragons. The academy emblem was especially helpful for this task, but more than anything, the Celestial Realm provided Damien a nearly endless space to abuse his teleportation for movement.

It was an extremely refreshing experience to travel millions of kilometers unrestrained, and this experience also led him to find other challengers at an extremely rapid pace. By the time the month ended and Damien finished beating up his peers, he'd already seen everything the Celestial Realm had to offer.

'So naturally, it was time to disappear.'

Damien had no idea just what kind of stir he'd cause in Hidden Death Valley after news of his feats leaked, but it was definitely a shame that he couldn't see it.

In the 2 months before the progress examination came to its true end, he needed to establish himself in Heaven's Army and prepare for what was to come next.

'The Director owes me a few favors, so he should take care of the aftermath. But...damn, seeing Atticus' face at that time was great.'

If there was one match Damien enjoyed more than the rest, it was his battle with Atticus. As the two were friends to an extent, they fought for an entire day and night without rest, merely testing each other's skills and enjoying the battle rather than thirsting for blood.

'I didn't think anyone in Hidden Death Valley could challenge me anymore...but I guess there are hidden dragons and crouching tigers everywhere.'

Damien grinned. He couldn't help but anticipate their next meeting.

But until then...

'I'm closing in on them. If I'm not mistaken, a large portion of Heaven's Army is still in Throh's vicinity. If I head there, I should be able to find someone important enough to give me a position.'

Heaven's Army did have a central headquarters, however, it was located in Hephaestus, the Dwarven Domain.

Hephaestus was the technological hub of the universe. Only in Hephaestus could one find teleportation arrays that could connect directly to any other part of the universe.

For the sake of efficiency in the mobilization of troops and fortification of the headquarters' defense, the Dwarven Domain was the most obvious choice.

Unfortunately, Hephaestus was on the complete opposite side of the universe from Eden. If Damien wanted to get there, even with his speed it'd take at least a few months.

'Therefore, I can only go for this much stupider yet somewhat more convenient method.' Damien sighed to himself.

His body passed through the ruined remains of Eden. Everywhere he went, he saw destroyed worlds and debris from the chaotic warfare that'd been taking place in this realm for many years already.

'It's really a shame. A mere few years to destroy an entire sector, a place where countless quintillions of existences are housed. The scale of this war is outrageous.'

When Damien first heard of Eden's condition, he thought the reports were exaggerated. He assumed that along the way, he'd be able to find at least a few safe worlds or dead stars to bind.

This, however, was merely his wishful thinking. Eden was truly destroyed, only slightly better than the Elven Domain, which was turned into a complete Dead Zone.

'But compared to the rest of the sector, this place is particularly lively.'

Damien's body rematerialized in the void once more, and finally, he saw activity in front of him.

Countless starships and troops moved about through the starry sky. A plethora of temporary base camps had been formed on the remains of the surrounding planets. Among them, there were even a few celestial bodies that survived.

Sensing the familiar fluctuation of World Force, Damien smiled. He was glad that at least a few seeds could survive. As long as they existed, nothing would remain destroyed forever.

Damien maneuvered through the ordered chaos uninhibited. Since Heaven's Army was originally a coalition of forces, nobody doubted his identity. It wasn't rare to see strangers among the troops.

He eventually found his way to an open area in the starry sky.

In the distance, the debris of a wrecked planet floated like rings around a shining blue World Core.

Those were the remains of Throh.

The temptation to swallow that World Core naturally rose in Damien's heart, but for now, he suppressed it.

'I should find the highest authorities. The life fluctuations of extreme peak 4th class beings should be...yeah, that was as easy as expected.'

Damien's head turned in a certain direction, and his body moved thereafter. He teleported until he was only a few hundreds of kilometers from Throh's World Core.

Here...

Two massive auras flared in the distance. Within a second, the owners of those auras arrived in front of Damien.

"This is a restricted area. State your affiliation and your purpose." The man on the right said.

"I've come to speak with those extreme peak experts residing here."

Damien responded succinctly, but he was inwardly marveling a bit. After all, the late-stage 4th class beings before him were positioned as mere guards.

How could he not be surprised?

Nevertheless, these guards clearly didn't take well to his answer.

"Unless you have been authorized, you will not be allowed entry. State your affiliation and your authorization code." The same man coldly said, raising his spear at Damien.

Damien sighed and scratched his head. 'This is going to become an annoying interaction if I let it keep going. I have two options from here...'

Either he could cause a scene and gain the attention of those extreme peak masters, or he could turn around and join a smaller force before slowly working his way up to a prominent position.

'Unfortunately, I don't have the time or patience for that. I guess I'll have to—'

"Let him through."

"Hm?"

A distant voice echoed in the ears of the three present. The guards who were just seconds away from pouncing on Damien suddenly backed down, glaring at him intimidatingly before making way for him.

Damien quirked his head curiously, but didn't make a fuss. If his purpose was being achieved more efficiently, why would he complain?

He followed the aura fluctuation from the voice just then until he arrived at a small dead star floating amongst Throh's debris.

'This is...'

Damien's eyes widened yet again.

'Spatial expansion magic spanning an entire dead star is impressive regardless of how small the star is. I wonder what it's like inside...?'

Damien entered the star's "atmosphere." He felt a small tug as space changed its wavelength. The scenery around him changed as well, almost as if the dead star was transformed into an entirely different realm.

"Oho..."

Damien was definitely looking for an expert when he came to Throh...

But this exceeded his expectations by a landslide.

Chapter 812 Enlist [2]

A sprawling sea of green spanned an infinite distance, filled with vibrant life aura completely unlike what one would expect from a Dead Star. In the midst of that everlasting field was an ancient temple-like building.

Damien didn't walk into the temple, rather, he moved around it and found the courtyard attached to its rear.

This was the place he was to go.

The courtyard was fenced off, but Damien could clearly feel the vast aura being emitted from the being within. He stood at the door in contemplation, unknowing of whether he should enter or not.

If the existence beyond the door was hostile, he'd be in serious trouble.

"What are you hesitating for? Since you are already here, enter."

That being's voice resounded once more.

Damien sighed and pushed the door open, entering the courtyard. He scanned its interior, appreciating the calm naturalistic aesthetic of the area before his eyes finally caught the owner of the voice.

"What..." she said with a small smile, "...do I look different from what you expected?"

Damien nodded on instinct before shaking his head profusely. "Ha...haha...what could your appearance possibly matter for?"

"Oh? So that wasn't a look of bewilderment on your face earlier?"

"I would never!"

"Hmm..."

The woman smiled and shook her head, dropping the matter. It wasn't surprising for him to react like he did, after all, everyone did the first time they met her!

Despite the fact that she was an extreme peak 4th class master, she looked no older than 12 or 13 years old!

"Don't mind my current state. It is but a consequence of using power beyond my abilities. My body will return to its normal state eventually." She stated.

"Anyway, if I'm not mistaken, you must be Damien Void, the most famous genius in the universe at the moment. For what reason have you come to see me?"

Damien's eyes sharpened. "What makes you say that?"

"There is no use pretending in front of me, boy. Spatial abilities are rare enough alone, but purple eyes that signify nobility are even rarer. You are more unique than you seem to realize."

Damien frowned. He didn't know how valid her reasoning was, but it was true that he couldn't hide his identity from her.

Well, it wasn't as if he was trying to hide in the first place, merely...

"I didn't know rumors about me had spread so far." He said with a sigh.

The woman chuckled. "More than that, you are practically a hero amongst the common soldiers."

"It's a bit annoying when you put it that way."

"Haha, how interesting."

The woman smiled. It was a surprise seeing this man appear before her like this, but it wasn't a bad thing at all. Rather, she was quite interested in his reason for coming.

A genius like him could go anywhere in the universe with his current reputation. By all measures, he should've been taking advantage of his status to climb the Dimensional Leaderboard.

But instead, he came to the battlefield?

If his reasoning was as she thought it was...

"Boy, my name is Priscilla Adelaire. I am one of the High Commanders of this army. If you have something to say to me, then say it now."

This time, it was Damien's turn to be shocked.

'Adelaire?!'

It wasn't strange for names to be repeated in a universe of this scale. There were probably millions of different Adelaire's without any connection to each other. This Priscilla was likely a case like this, with no relation to Rose at all, but if it turned out to not be the case...

'Haha, if that happens, then my wife is destined for a free powerup.'

Damien shook off the nonsensical thought and replied to Priscilla's words. "Since you know who I am, then it makes things much simpler. I am here to fight, it's as easy as that. I want to be put in a position where I can endlessly clash with the Nox."

Priscilla's brow raised in curiosity. "And your reasoning?"

"Do I need any grand reason? I want to fight, kill, and become stronger. Isn't that the same motivation that every practitioner shares?"

Priscilla smiled.

"How interesting."

...she was extremely pleased that she noticed him before those other old ghosts could get their hands on him.

He met her expectations, and even exceeded them to an extent.

'To fight, kill, and grow stronger...indeed, this is the most simple yet most powerful motivation one could possess.'

Saying that every practitioner had this motivation wasn't a lie, but Damien downplayed it heavily.

Sure, every practitioner had the desire for strength, but not every practitioner was willing to devote themselves wholeheartedly to it.

Damien wasn't like these people. Priscilla could clearly see it in his eyes.

'He's willing to die for it.'

It was evident based on his current actions. For the sake of strength, he was willing to throw himself into war, even though he could just as well use the Dimensional Leaderboard to slowly and safely grow.

It was motivation to the extent of insanity.

Because for this type of person, death was merely a measure of their unworthiness.

They were indifferent in front of it, because if it happened, it was because they deserved it.

They simply weren't strong enough.

This type of motivation was the qualification of a genius, but also the reason that countless geniuses died before they could bloom into their strength.

Nevertheless, who was Priscilla to crush the ambitions of a rising star?

Rather, she wanted to push him forward and see how he could grow.

'After all, I'm considering him for the successor position of the Demon Sealing Pantheon. I should test his limits before making a decision...shouldn't I?'

Priscilla's lips spread into a small grin. "If you are intent on following this path, then I will not stop you. However, I do have a condition."

"I can put you at the forefront of every small scuffle and battle if that's what you wish, but you must travel with at least one companion at all times."

"And why is that?"

"Why, there are multiple reasons. Firstly, do you think I'll let a wild card like you into the field without at least an observer on you? Secondly, you need a method to stay connected to Heaven's Army. Geniuses like you tend to be lone wolves, so working with a squad will be difficult unless you have someone who can help you acclimate. Even setting these two reasons aside, there are many benefits to traveling with a companion."

"I will personally pick a companion that won't burden you. You can trust their skills."

Damien furrowed his brows in thought. He didn't know why Priscilla was being so direct about the fact that she didn't trust him and wanted to observe him, but he did appreciate her transparency.

'Also, not everything she's saying is wrong. It's true that without Zara's existence and mediation, my relationship with the Stargazer Squad probably wouldn't have improved in the slightest...'

He didn't like admitting that he was an edgy loner, but his past actions didn't let him run from the truth.

'I don't have any ulterior motives, so there's really no need to worry about an observer. As for techniques, I doubt anyone below the Demigod level will be able to properly understand them without an explanation from me, so there won't be any problems there either.'

Besides personal discomfort, there were no visible cons to having a capable companion.

"Haa...fine, I'll accept your terms. But I better get some special treatment or something for letting you attempt to steal my secrets." Damien sighed in defeat.

"My, my. If I remember correctly, you came from humble origins. It seems you got used to the "genius treatment" much faster than expected."

"Tch, who wouldn't? Everything becomes needlessly troublesome without it."

"Haha, fair enough." Priscilla conceded with a smile.

"Do not worry, you will receive treatment matching your strength. This is how Heaven's Army has always operated. However, your benefits will come later. First, let's talk about where you will be deployed..."

Priscilla trailed off with a mysterious smile as she summoned an array of holographic windows between her and Damien.

"Tell me, are you interested in seeing the edge of existence?"

Chapter 813 Enlist [3]

'What a crazy woman.'

Damien sat in a provided accommodation and sighed to himself as he thought back to the previous conversation.

He'd already finished finalizing the terms of his agreement with Priscilla, and she'd already chosen the perfect place for his deployment. Only, that woman's personality wasn't something Damien could handle.

'I should keep contact with her at a minimum.'

Damien rolled over in bed and flicked his finger through the air, summoning a holographic window.

'The edge of existence, Eien...to think such a place could exist.'

The so-called "edge of existence" was the border of the known universe. Beyond this land was the murky Abyss that no practitioner had ever survived.

What was curious about the edge of existence was that rather than a portion of space or even a collection of planets, it was a massive flat land made of unknown material.

It was essentially a solid ring that encircled the universe.

Even the width of this ring was countless millions of kilometers long, the length didn't even need to be mentioned. This massive battlefield was the true warzone against the Nox. It was the first line of defense that protected the universe from outside invasion.

The existence of Eien only made the Nox's rapid conquest of two sectors even stranger.

'Then, does it really come down to traitors?'

Damien sighed. Considering the Nox's usual methods, there were bound to be traitors everywhere. Even within places like Hidden Death Valley or Heaven's Army.

'It's been a while since I've last dealt with traitors. After coming to the Divine Realm, I haven't encountered any at all.'

In fairness, a good portion of Damien's time in the Divine Realm had been spent on Death Emperor Star, where traitors were almost non-existent, but it was still strange that he didn't meet any on Calypto.

'When we reach a scale this big, there's no way the traitors will be split into individual groups like they were in the Human Domain. There's likely a greater organization formed by traitors that manages them.'

So far, Damien had heard nothing about such an organization, but he didn't doubt its existence at all.

And if there was anywhere he'd find them, it would definitely be Eien.

After all, what were traitors good for if not sneaking their allies through enemy lines?

'That Priscilla is making me wait here while she finds a companion for me. I should use this time to deepen my comprehension of Life and Death Laws.'

After his conversation with Priscilla, Damien realized that it was impossible for him to abuse his spacetime abilities in Eien. His identity had become too well-known after Calypto's incidents, and after people found out about his previous feat of dominating the Dimensional Leaderboard, the fervor surrounding his name only became fiercer.

'I'll use Eien as a stepping stone to train my Samsara Intent to perfection.'

Damien crossed his legs and began meditating. Unknowingly, 3 days passed before a knock on his door woke him.

"Sir Damien, the Master has called for you." A maidservant said from beyond the door.

"Understood," Damien responded as he opened it. "Take me to see her."

The maidservant bowed and led him to Priscilla's courtyard. When Damien entered, he was almost suffocated by the latent aura filling the surroundings.

"This..."

"Haha, come in. Excuse the suddenness of my invitation, but the others wished to see you as well. I hope you understand."

"Yeah...sure..."

Damien slowly calmed his blood and glanced at the multitude of figures filling the room.

Right, there were over fifteen characters in the room at the moment, all of them with the strength of extreme peak 4th class.

"So...who is everyone?" Damien asked.

"Puahahaha! He's just as crass as that kid said!" An old man burst out in response.

"Kid, my name is Sterling Asterin, but you may know me better as the Fallen Star Holy Master. I've heard a lot about you from my little disciple."

Damien's eyes widened. "Atticus' master?"

"Haha, right!"

"But...isn't the Fallen Star Holy Land led by a Demigod?"

"Hm, it's a mistake many people make so I don't blame you. Our Demigod Ancestor doesn't interfere with the mundane world much, and all sect duties are relegated to me. On paper, he is the leader of the sect, but the Holy Master position belongs to me alone."

"I see..." Damien nodded in understanding. It made sense if an illustrious Demigod didn't want to deal with menial tasks. They likely had a long road of comprehension to embark on, so they focused on training more often than not.

'According to Reavus' memory, Blood Asura Holy Land is led personally by the Immortal Blood Asura. I guess it's different based on the Demigod's personality.'

Damien concluded his thoughts and listened to the introductions of the rest of the present experts. As expected, each and every one of them held a position with at least the power of a Holy Land High Elder.

These were Heaven's Army's High Commanders. It was a position that couldn't just be achieved through extreme peak 4th class strength, but also required dignity, wisdom, and leadership that was acknowledged by the common soldiers and higher-ups alike.

And for some reason, they all lined up just to meet Damien.

Damien awkwardly returned their greetings and participated in their sophistries for a period of time, inwardly lamenting the fact that he decided to come.

It was only many hours later when the experts left Damien alone with Priscilla once more.

"Haa..." Damien let out a tired sigh and plopped down on a nearby sofa.

"Acting so relaxed around me, boy? Don't you have respect for your seniors?"

"Should I have respect for a senior who forced me to entertain that bullshit?! Haa, I feel like dying and I haven't even left for the battlefield yet."

"Mm, mm, you need the battlefield to feel alive."

"Don't make it sound so edgy."

Damien rolled his eyes before turning to look at Priscilla.

"So have you found a companion yet? If you're saying that much yourself, you should be well aware of the depth of my desire."

Priscilla smiled mysteriously. "Worry not. I have already found a perfect companion for you. We are merely waiting for them to reach this place so I can send you to Eien together."

Damien sighed in relief. "If you're saying they're reliable, I'll trust you for now, but this itchy feeling is really pissing me off. I can already tell that you pulled some bullshit."

Damien didn't know much about Priscilla, but Reavus did. More accurately, Reavus had a vague memory of the Demon Sealing Pantheon that Priscilla belonged to.

It was a mysterious influence of which nobody knew the location or members. Only a single Demon Sealing Pantheon member would come to light in every generation, leading the universe in the war effort with their techniques made specially to restrict and kill the Nox.

Even if Priscilla herself was a fox, her position meant that she'd at least follow through when she needed to.

"Then? Did you only summon me for that pseudo-banquet?"

"Pseudo-banquet is a bit too posh of a description, but indeed. That and to tell you that your companion is en route. Since both matters have already been covered, I have nothing left to say."

"Then I'll be taking my leave," Damien said as he stood up.

"Leaving so early?"

"I don't want to spend a single extra minute around someone as conniving as you."

"How rude."

Priscilla smiled, but didn't stop him from leaving. She had plenty of time to play with Damien before determining his worth. She didn't have to rush at all.

"Fuwah! Those old geezers...it's good that they kept their word, but it won't last for long." Priscilla flopped onto a nearby couch and sighed out loud.

Before Damien arrived, she'd made a bet with the other High Commanders. If she won, they wouldn't try to poach Damien from her for 3 months, but if she lost, they could do as they pleased and she couldn't interfere.

Naturally, she won the bet.

And quite simple at that.

"Hahahaha!"

She couldn't help but laugh when she thought about it.

It was a simple prompt, yet not even a single High Commander could accomplish it.

All they had to do was successfully probe Damien. If they could determine his level through this probe, they would win.

But as Priscilla found only a few days earlier...

Such a feat was impossible even for an extreme peak 4th class being, regardless of how many revolutions they'd completed.

Priscilla smiled to herself.

"This kid only becomes more interesting the more I interact with him."

Chapter 814 Enlist [4]

'Today is finally the day.'

Damien stood up from meditative posture and stretched his body. An entire week passed since he started staying in this strange Dead Star realm, and his companion had finally arrived.

'I'll have to assess them myself before we leave.'

Damien cracked his knuckles and prepared for a fight as he headed back to Priscilla's courtyard.

He knew for certain that finding a companion that could match his age and accomplishments was impossible, so he was curious about the type of person Priscilla recruited.

'Is it some old monster? I hope they have an amicable personality.'

The walk to Priscilla's courtyard was practically ingrained in Damien's mind at this point, so he was able to reach it without a hitch. When he entered...

"Fuck this."

...he was disappointed by the lack of companion in the room.

"What's this about?" He questioned with a frown.

"Hahaha, calm down. No need to be so hostile. Your companion is here, they just went to pay respects to the other High Commanders before you arrived. Why don't you stay here and wait for them?"

Priscilla motioned towards a chair across from her at the table she sat at. On the table was a go board which seemed to be actively in play, though Priscilla didn't have any company.

"It was a game that never got to finish. How about scrapping it and playing a match against me?" Priscilla asked.

Damien shrugged and walked over. He played a little bit of Go on Earth, but not enough to be considered good.

Go was a game that emphasized push and pull. To take initiative and hand it over intentionally, Damien was never intelligent enough to make these calls.

But it wasn't like the aggressive approach never worked.

He sat down with Priscilla and started the game, placing his first piece.

"Have you played much Go before?" Priscilla asked.

"Not much, but I understand the principle."

"Mm, then I guess I'll go easy on you."

Damien and Priscilla took turns making moves, blocking each other while also trying to gain the advantage.

However, as Damien already stated, he was never good at games like this one.

He focused too much on his own side, and before he even realized it, Priscilla had created a complex web that left him with no choice but defeat.

"I don't know why I decided to play when I suck, but I'll accept the loss." He said with a sigh.

"Oh? Accepting it so easily is fine in this situation, but can you do so forever?" Priscilla responded mysteriously.

"And by that you mean..."

"I'm sure you already know. Even if you pretend to be brutish, I can see the intelligence behind your eyes."

"You must be hallucinating."

"Maybe so."

Priscilla shrugged and moved the pieces off the board, starting a new game.

"Go is very interesting to play as a High Commander on the battlefield. In a situation where all routes are cut off, what options are left? More than any of the strategies I've learned from this game, this is the question that's bothered me."

Priscilla placed her piece with a wry smile. "In Go, the situation changes based on the player. Some will admit defeat the moment they sense their loss, refusing to continue the game. Some will try to find a way to win even knowing their impending loss, but still give up in the end. Some will beg for a rematch without fail, acting like starved dogs. The smallest number of people choose to fight until the end even while knowing their fate."

Her eyes raised and met Damien's. "It's good to know that you are this type of person, however, this type of person is always the first to die. Without considering other options, they fight until they can no longer fight."

Her expression turned solemn. "You are a spatial expert. Your skill in fleeing is unparalleled under the Demigod level. Even if it means you must abandon your companions..."

"You must survive. For the sake of the universe's continued existence, you must survive at all costs."

Damien silently returned her moves, refusing to comment on her words.

His actions...would depend on the situation.

He couldn't promise anything.

Nor could he shoulder the weight of the universe.

'I'll move how I wish to move. If anyone inhibits that...'

Before Damien could think further, a knock resounded from the courtyard door.

"It looks like your companion has finally arrived," Priscilla said.

With her invitation, the person beyond the door stepped into the courtyard.

Their form was revealed.

'This...'

The woman was around 5 feet 6 inches in height. Her hair was medium-length and so dark it almost looked black, but the way it glinted with deep blue in the sunlight made it evident that it barely wasn't. She had green eyes that reminded Damien of the endless abundance of life, and her overall stature was so composed that she almost blended in with nature.

"Greetings, Senior. I have come as ordered."

The woman bowed to Priscilla as she spoke, refusing to move from the doorway.

"Mm, come sit. This is Damien, the man you'll be accompanying for the foreseeable future."

The woman walked over to the table and bowed towards Damien.

"Ximen Wuhen greets Young Master Damien."

"Mm, well met," Damien muttered off-handedly.

'Her level is...'

"Boy, don't focus too much on Wuhen's level. If you do, you're sure to regret it." Priscilla interrupted him before he could come to any conclusions.

"If you want to talk about raw power, Wuhen definitely can't match you, but in terms of combat effectiveness..."

"Show him."

Ximen Wuhen nodded and faced Damien. "Please excuse my rudeness."

She formed a set of seals with her hand, and immediately, the laws of Heaven and Earth shifted.

'Oho...' Damien whistled inwardly, impressed.

Surrounding him currently was a powerful array that Damien didn't know the identity of. From what he could tell, it both restrained the enemy and sapped their mana to slowly weaken and kill them.

"This array isn't bad. It can be deployed instantly, and it has enough power to affect anyone under late-stage 4th class. If it's a large-scale battle, this ability could completely reverse the situation." Damien commented.

"However, is this it?"

Ximen Wuhen was near the peak of mid-stage 4th class, so her having this level of ability wasn't surprising. Of course, she definitely proved that she would be useful.

Only, Damien didn't need someone who could only show their use in specific situations.

He was a bit disappointed in what she'd shown so far.

"I apologize, Young Master. I will not hold back any longer." Ximen Wuhen said without a change of expression.

Her hand seals changed, and the laws of Heaven and Earth changed along with them.

The nature of the array completely reversed.

Damien felt an unknown strength filling his body. His mana became denser, and he even felt an improvement in his comprehension ability.

His entire being had been elevated as if he'd jumped 20 or 30 levels in an instant.

Priscilla smiled at his bewilderment.

"Along with being an extremely accomplished formation master who can support you in battle, she is also one of the rarest types of supporters in existence, a being with the ability to buff others."

Damien's eyes sharpened. Even the greatest supporters couldn't strengthen other people's abilities to an extent that actually mattered. It was simply impossible to maneuver mana in a way that empowered someone else without consciously controlling it, but at that point, the technique would be no different than puppeteering.

Buff-type supporters were rare to the point where they weren't even highly sought after because rarely anyone knew of their existence.

Now that one was standing before Damien...

'I can't be mad at all.' He thought while hiding his satisfaction.

Damien didn't need help in combat. He didn't need a defensive type either since his body was the greatest possible defense. All-in-all, Damien was a one-man army that couldn't be interfered with.

But if the other party wasn't interfering, but was rather enhancing his abilities...

Indeed, Priscilla wasn't lying when she said she found a supporter that perfectly suited Damien.

With said supporter in tow, Damien could finally set off for Eien.

It was time to start a new journey, a new adventure that'd spread his name far and wide.

Damien had been on the cusp of adventure so many times that he thought this feeling would've numbed by now.

But he couldn't even pay attention to Priscilla's words.

The anticipation was killing him.

The itch in his body to utterly destroy and conquer all things...

He couldn't wait to fulfill it.

Chapter 815 Enlist [5]

After conversing with Priscilla for a bit longer, Damien immediately left for Eien with Ximen Wuhen in tow.

The Dead Star itself was only a temporary base, mostly held together by the magic and skills of those residing on it, so there wasn't a direct teleportation station to Eien nearby, however, there were more than a few in Soul World, a sector whose border was mere days away from Throh.

Overall, the travel time wouldn't be too long. Damien would reach Eien within a week, but a week was enough time for plenty to happen.

Damien mainly used this week to learn more about Ximen Wuhen and Eien.

For the first matter, rather than Ximen Wuhen herself, Damien was naturally more interested in her ability.

As someone immensely familiar with the natural law, he held an immense curiosity towards her ability which seemed to break it.

However, the reality of her power was different from what Damien expected.

The nature of her mana itself was different.

When Damien observed her body, he noticed that the ambient mana she absorbed would go through some sort of change the instant it entered her body, becoming wholly different from its original property.

Of course, a normal practitioner could also change the nature of mana to match their elements, but this was actually a completely different process.

Regardless of their similarities, the fact that one happened consciously while the other happened naturally was a major differentiator.

On top of that, Ximen Wuhen's mana didn't align with any of the Laws Damien knew of. Even when he asked her what Law she practiced, she couldn't answer him.

To her, law comprehension came as naturally as breathing. While she practiced and refined her formation art, her mana continued to mature subconsciously.

'A true genius.'

It was the only way to describe her.

As someone who also held this title, Damien did his best to uncover the secrets behind her mysterious identity, but of course, a week wasn't nearly enough time to solve a mystery that stumped even High Commanders like Priscilla.

Luckily, this week allowed Damien to get acclimated to Eien's power structure.

Eien was also a prime piece of land, and it wasn't a small number of sects trying to capture it. The Nox were a threat to the universe as a whole, which was the only reason these forces didn't fiercely clash for hegemony.

'If they truly decided to clash, though, the destruction they'd cause would be disastrous.'

The most important fact that Damien found out was the power level of Eien, rather than its structure.

The term "extreme peak 4th class" didn't matter at all in Eien.

After all, there were an uncountable number of extreme peak experts present there.

After seeing the absurd numbers in the information Priscilla provided, Damien personally went to ask Ximen Wuhen about its validity.

In that moment, Damien's worldview was unexpectedly widened once again.

'I was too naive.' He thought to himself.

Damien thought he already understood the true vastness of the universe, but his opinion was skewed by what he'd seen.

A majority of the universe's forces were in Eien.

As Priscilla said, Eien was the true battlefield.

When the sparks of war were just barely lighting up the starry sky, a vast portion of the universe's experts were deployed to Eden to act as a first, and hopefully last, line of defense.

If it wasn't for these experts, the universe might've fallen before Damien could even enter the Divine Realm.

The experts that would've been considered at the very peak of the universe...

...were present in Eien in the billions.

'Granted, Eien is, ironically, the largest celestial body in the universe with its length. But still, the fact that they had to define an entirely different power system to classify them because of the sheer number is insane.'

Naturally, not all extreme peak 4th class beings were the same.

The extreme peak of 4th class was merely what every single being who reached level 399 was called. The next step was a step onto the path of Godhood, and depending on how close one was to taking this step, one's power would be drastically different.

The new stages of extreme peak 4th class were titled as "revolutions" because completing each one felt like another revolution through life, an entirely new journey from level 1 to 399.

High Commanders like Priscilla were at the 6th of nine revolutions. Above them were only Executioners at the 7th or 8th revolution and Supremes at the 9th revolution.

Below the High Commanders were normal Commanders with strength ranging from the 3rd to 5th revolution, and below even them were Millennium Generals from the 1st and 2nd revolutions.

Practitioners who'd yet to reach the extreme peak stage were delegated as regular soldiers, and just as the Nox did, Heaven's Army would assign roles based on the situation.

'But most people travel with their sects and organizations. It's hard for the governing body of Heaven's Army to separate these people or even move them without offering benefits.'

This was why the carrot and stick reward system implemented for the war was perfect. Achievements became tangible as rewards accompanied them, and these prideful sect disciples and practitioners became dogs with their tails wagging at the prospect.

'Would it be best to join a sect for ease of information gathering and movement...?'

Just as all of Damien's prior affiliations had done, a new one would provide him a canopy to use in case of emergencies.

However, in Eien, there likely wasn't a situation where he could earn the right to move freely.

'I can move with Ximen Wuhen alone, but I do need a base camp to return to in case anything happens. Even if it isn't a sect, it seems I'll have to become acquainted with some influence.'

Damien sighed. Interacting with people was much harder than slaughtering Nox, but doing it properly made life far easier.

Nevertheless, the week passed rapidly with Damien busying himself with information gathering and training.

Many millions of kilometers of travel and three long-distance teleportation arrays later, the destination was finally in sight.

As Priscilla described it, it truly was the end of existence.

The glimmering specks of light decorating the starry sky were nonexistent on the other side of Eien. The sky was pitch-black, and moving too far into enemy territory meant entering the Abyss.

It was a place with a desolate atmosphere that could be felt from afar, and a bloodthirst with the same effect.

'This is a warzone.'

Damien's eyes hardened. Realization about where he'd taken himself set in.

This was a place where survival and benefits mattered more than all else. In the warzone that protected humanity, the concept of humanity was entirely lacking.

Damien steeled himself.

The days ahead would mirror this atmosphere.

He closed his eyes and calmed his boiling emotions, reopening them with indifference oozing from his pupils.

"Let's go."

He declared it without leaving room for arguments.

He grabbed onto Ximen Wuhen's army and flashed away.

In the next moment, the duo appeared in the sky above the cracked reddish-purple desert that was Eien.

Damien deeply breathed in the blood-soaked air...

And a spark of reddish-black mana flashed across his pupils.

Chapter 816 Enlist [6]

Of the influences making up Heaven's Armies forces in Eien, there were a few powerful options that Damien could join for his plans.

There were two types of influences at the Edge of Existence.

The first was more traditional. These influences were tight-knit and loyal groups who stuck together regardless of the cost. The disciples of these influences tended to have a great deal of pride in their affiliations and would do anything they could for said affiliation's survival.

The second type was far more unorthodox. These influences were massive in scale, having operations spanning the entire universal road that made up the edge of existence. On such a scale, it was impossible to mimic the traditions and bonds of orthodox sects.

These influences took a more mercenary-like approach with their disciples, but maintained a base level of tradition that made it hard to classify them as mercenary organizations.

Of these, Damien would of course rather join the latter. Even if his freedom would still be restricted, he'd be able to act independently with much more ease within a looser power structure.

Considering this, along with distance and time constraints, Damien narrowed his options down to three organizations with branches nearby where he and Ximen Wuhen arrived: Iron Fortress, Hope Organization, and Sanctuary.

'I have to say, I'm a bit partial towards the last one due to the name, but I still have to figure out which one matches my ideals best before making a decision.'

As he'd learned before, regardless of their loose structure, these influences had their own doctrines. Their tendencies were partially reflected in their names, but that wasn't enough to judge them, otherwise, Damien would've long taken the "Hope Organization" off his list.

'They're all in different directions, which is inconvenient, but at least I can observe the general atmosphere of this place while I travel.'

With Eien's gargantuan size, every few hundred million kilometers signified a different domain with a different atmosphere. Since Damien entered from Soul World, he was in a section of Eien called the Blood-Drenched Wilderness.

'This area is well-known for its beast population. It's said that millions of corrupted beasts and Lesser Nox roam these lands. Hopefully, the number of Higher Nox doesn't disappoint either.'

Damien and Ximen Wuhen moved with efficiency since the latter didn't complain about spatial travel at all. Within a few minutes, they'd made it to the Hope Organization branch, the closest of the three to their location.

'Yeah, I should've just crossed it off at the beginning.'

It wasn't bad when he first walked in. The building was structured similarly to the adventurer's guild branches on Apeiron, so Damien actually had high hopes.

But...

'Show mercy to your enemies is one of their golden rules? Hah!'

This rule only applied to non-Nox and/or Nox-affiliated enemies, but Damien couldn't accept it regardless.

'Even a single act of mercy can come back to bite you later. The only reason they can enforce a policy like that is because they're supported by a High Commander.'

Damien shook his head. Of Iron Fortress and Sanctuary, neither immediately made Damien want to reject. His partiality to Sanctuary definitely came into play when he went to make a decision on where to go next, however...

Rumble!

The ground quaked.

Damien's eyes narrowed.

'It's coming from over there.'

Damien grabbed Ximen Wuhen and teleported to the source of the tremors, hiding their bodies with One With Dimension once they arrived.

'As expected, it's a battle.'

Damien spread his awareness and watched the battle in great detail. From what he could see, there was a multitude of forces present. Among them, the three, or rather, two, he was contemplating joining.

'I should stay back for now and observe them. The results of this battle can help me make my decision.'

The enemy was a Nox force consisting of many thousands of Higher Nox and an exponentially larger number of minions.

The number of 3rd class and below fighters on the battlefield was low, but the number of 4th classes made it negligible. A portion of the allied force's troops was delegated specifically to hold off the horde and barrage it with wide-range attacks.

'Interesting. The Iron Fortress members are fighting much more individualistically than the Sanctuary members. The former looks like an unorganized collection of mercenaries while the latter looks like cooperation between a few different skilled squads.'

As Damien observed, he was able to pick apart the strengths and weaknesses of both parties.

Iron Fortress was far better in terms of raw power, but their lack of cohesiveness brought their efficiency down by many points. In terms of moral character, the Sanctuary members seemed more willing to aid their allies than Iron Fortress members, though Damien didn't know whether this was a good or a bad thing.

'Even then, it becomes a deciding factor when comparing the two. It's the daddy issues driving me, isn't it.' Damien joked inwardly.

After meeting his father, he could finally accept the immense longing for family and belonging hidden deep in his heart. It always subconsciously influenced his decisions, but now that he was conscious of it, he didn't know how to feel.

'Whatever, everything is temporary anyway, but it's better to make friends. Who knows what kind of benefits I can reap from connections later on.'

Joining Celestial Star Palace allowed Damien to meet Tian Yang and somehow earn the protection of a Demigod. Even if all other examples were ignored, this alone was enough to justify Damien's desire to form bonds.

But at the same time...

'I'll have to visit their guild branch before making a concrete decision. I really hope our interests align, but if they don't...'

'...our interests perfectly align.'

Damien sighed and smiled wryly when he read through Sanctuary's code. Other than basic human decency-type rules, they didn't actually have many restrictions,

'A sanctuary for all, formed to create a sanctuary for all, huh.'

It was a pretty convincing slogan, especially considering that it even had the ability to reel Damien in.

He left the battlefield after observing for a few minutes and went straight to Sanctuary, expecting nothing but disappointment.

What he received was the complete opposite.

Despite the fact that they advised their members to form squads, they didn't force it. People who wanted to travel solo were also welcome, but they had to sign a different contract since their safety wasn't nearly as guaranteed.

'It's just a matter of resources. According to the contract, 40% of the resources I gather will be taken by the guild, but I'll be compensated with achievement points to use on Heaven's Army rewards. It isn't a bad trade, especially because I don't need resources for myself.'

There was no need for hesitation.

Damien and Ximen Wuhen walked to the front desk of the Sanctuary branch and immediately joined the guild, signing the mana contract that bound them to it.

"Great!" The receptionist lady said. "Now that you've become official guild members, there are a few protocols you need to remember. After you've memorized them, you can go to the mission board and pick out some quests to take."

"As stated in the contract, you will be able to move at your own discretion, however, if the guild issues a summons, participation is mandatory. Failure to comply will break the contract terms, thus crippling you through the restriction..."

Chapter 817 First Move [1]

The receptionist rambled off a spiel of common information that every guild member should know as she handed over the duo's guild identification plaques.

According to her, while Eien was a warzone, it wasn't a completely militarized region in the sense that not all battles that took place were ordered and properly befitting of the term "war."

While these battles happened often as well, it wasn't strange to see small scuffles everywhere and even areas where the environment resembled a lawless zone more than a battlefield.

For newbies who've just arrived at the Edge of Existence, it was recommended to slowly acclimate by taking on smaller extermination missions with a full squad before moving onto large-scale operations with more people.

Of course, Damien paid no mind to this advice.

'I can kill as I please, but if I follow the receptionist's advice, I'll be stuck as a common soldier who can't participate in anything extraordinary. If I want the experience I came here for, I need to be forward in my approach.'

Damien grinned as he looked at the mission list. The lowest level missions were essentially training missions, merely consisting of tasks on the level of defeating a group of 10 Lesser Nox. Moving up from there, the number and strength of the Nox to be killed increased slowly, until at the very extreme, there were even missions to assassinate Nox Avatars.

'Blade Lord, Poison Lord, Insect Lord...there are over fifteen Nox Avatars on this list. Do the Nox truly possess such a terrifying number of Demigods?'

Damien frowned as he scrolled to a more suitable portion of the list.

His frown soon turned back into a grin.

'Nice! It looks like they've scouted out a couple of strongholds but haven't been able to take them down yet. This is the perfect opportunity for me.'

Nox Strongholds were present in droves on Eien. Their level varied and some even had Nox Avatars residing within, but it seemed like the strongholds in the Blood-Drenched Wilderness weren't this developed quite yet.'

'The strongest beings in all of these strongholds are late-stage 4th class Nox, but the surrounding guilds haven't been able to conquer them for multiple reasons.'

Logistically, the only valid reason for their hesitation was the number of late-stage 4th class beings, but this problem could be solved with just a bit of planning.

The true reason for their lack of action was just as always.

Politics and sophistry.

Nox Strongholds were extremely useful strategic points that every guild wanted for themselves. These strongholds usually had a large number of resources stored within, and their positioning allowed Heaven's Army to use them to claim more land on Eien.

This momentum was incredibly important for the war effort, so not only would the majority benefit, the conquerors of the stronghold would gain control over the resources found there.

Everybody won, that is, if they could agree on who conquered the stronghold.

Every guild wanted to hoard the resources, which led to a stalemate where nobody touched the strongholds for fear of forming enmity with the other forces in the vicinity.

'In this situation, it only takes a single misplaced brick to topple the whole structure...or I guess in this situation, it's two.'

Damien smiled mischievously. He didn't accept the mission, but as he already saw the coordinates of the strongholds, he had no need to.

He didn't come to Eien for Sanctuary or Heaven's Army's rewards.

He came for blood.

His body flashed several hundred thousand kilometers away from the guild branch with Ximen Wuhen in tow. Within a few hours, they arrived at the first stronghold.

Damien spread his awareness and activated his All-Seeing Eyes.

'The numbers are mostly as expected. The number of early and mid-stage 4th class beings is more than what was estimated, but it should be doable. As for the late-stage 4th classes...'

Damien glanced at Ximen Wuhen. If it came down to it, he could use this as an opportunity to test her power.

"Stay here and observe for now. If you see a moment where it looks like I need support, provide it at your discretion." Damien told her.

Ximen Wuhen nodded with a slight bow, backing away and standing in the air on her own.

Damien turned his attention back to the stronghold.

It was big.

Really big.

'There are at least a few million Lesser Nox in there, not to mention the thousands of Higher Nox...'

It was like the battle on Calypto all over again.

But this time...

'I'm not so weak anymore.'

Damien flicked his hand into the air and pointed his finger at the stronghold.

Celestial Mana gathered in the air.

'Starfall: Cosmic Manifestation.'

VOOm!

A wave of power spread from Damien's body.

The sky went black.

The weather didn't change, a sun remained in the sky, but the sky went dark regardless.

Something gargantuan appeared there, casting a shadow over the Heavens.

Several tens of thousands of kilometers in diameter was the celestial body that manifested in the air.

It hovered there for a moment.

The Nox below began to notice it.

As their gazes turned upward...

Ximen Wuhen's eyes widened.

'Fall.'

The planetary body fell through the sky with speed not matching its size. An extreme gravity acted upon its surface, causing it to burn as it resisted the repelling force preventing it from slamming into Eien.

But no repelling force could match the weight of a planet.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The fortress collapsed, the Earth collapsed, the sky collapsed. The rumbling impact of the massive construct resounded for several tens of thousands of miles. The shockwaves that spread incinerated countless Lesser Nox, and injured a large number of Higher Nox as well.

It was a beautiful scene of destruction that deserved further description, but Damien didn't wait long enough to admire the blooming chaotic aftermath of his attack.

He charged.

His body disappeared and reappeared among the chaos. Pure white mana coated his body, and murky black mana swirled around his arms and legs.

'Let's feast.'

Damien bared his fangs.

Bang!

The air exploded under the weight of his acceleration. With pure speed alone, he arrived in front of the nearest Higher Nox and directly sliced him in half.

The Nox's body dissolved into ink, but before it could slink away to rejoin with its peers, a deathly spike pierced its body and melted it into nothingness.

Damien's eyes turned. His gaze was followed by proverbial lightning as he scouted a group of ten targets not too far away from each other.

A panther? A cheetah? No, the speed at which he moved had already entered the realm of legends, mirroring the mythical Kun Peng!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The impact of his fists was silent. The claws and sickles of death wordlessly encroached upon these unfortunate Nox and reaped their lives. However, each step he took caused space to tremble and shatter.

The sound preceded his movements, yet the Nox couldn't avoid him.

It was a terrifying prospect.

A fury of blood overtook the crumbling fortress. As the Cosmic Manifestation faded out of existence, the total number of survivors finally became countable.

Millions of Lesser Nox? It didn't matter their number, anyone under 4th class was instantly incinerated by the impact and following shockwaves.

Of the Higher Nox, most of the early-stage beings were heavily injured, the mid-stage beings weren't as injured, but they didn't have nearly enough power to compete with Damien, and the high-stage beings...

Damien tore through the remaining early and mid-stage Nox as fast as he could. The tide of death that he spread continued to grow, and as it did, the residue of his murky black mana layered together and formed a mist that followed Damien's movements.

The second the mist covered the entirety of the stronghold's area...

'Reap their lives.'

Damien dictated his enemy's fate.

Chapter 818 First Move [2]

Heads flew.

Sickles made from the surrounding mist appeared on the neck of every living Nox present in the area. Before they could even react, their heads had been separated from their bodies.

'Don't let them escape.'

The mist pressed down against the Earth, swallowing up the inky remains of the Nox and disallowing them from being reborn.

The Nox didn't deserve rebirth, whether it was through their own convoluted method or the true Cycle of Samsara.

'I'll sentence the lot of you to purgatory.'

Damien's attention turned outward. There were still 10 left alive.

10 Higher Nox for him to kill.

'It's only 10 here, but it's in the hundreds in some of the other fortresses. I need the power to dominate them alone.'

Right now...

Kill.

Eat.

Evolve.

...his old slogan came back to prominence.

A savage grin spread across Damien's face.

"Hahahaha! Come! Show me why you should be feared!"

He recklessly threw his body forward and confronted the late-stage 4th class Nox.

"A gentleman's challenge is single combat!" Damien yelled raucously as he formed a set of seals with his hands.

'Dimensional Cage Variation One: Suppression of All Things.'

Countless separated dimensions clouded Eien's space. These Dimensional Cages were infinitely stacked on top of each other, forming Russian nesting dolls with thousands of layers!

On top of that, the attack itself was supported by the Breath of All Things.

It was specifically designed to control all things material.'

"This...!"

"You fiend...!"

"Release me!"

A number of exclamations rang out when the 9 trapped late-stage 4th class Nox understood their situations, yet before they could even try to escape, Damien was long gone.

"You're the first," Damien stated to the last untrapped Nox.

Contrary to what the others believed, Damien never disappeared. Rather, he dragged his first target into an alternate dimension so deeply woven into the fabric of space that it couldn't be recognized by anyone other than another expert.

He and the last Nox were still very much in the vicinity of the rest.

"You are a strong human, but you are not strong enough to defeat me!" The Higher Nox said.

Damien smirked. "Don't talk, act."

He flashed forward and slashed out, using his hand as a blade aimed to decapitate the enemy.

The Higher Nox quickly dodged to the side before he was hit, but just as he turned to regain his balance...

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Black mana bullets exploded all around his body, scattering Death Energy that tried to enter his system and corrode him.

"Ha! You cannot beat me with my own trick!" The Higher Nox exclaimed mockingly. He mobilized his own corrosive mana, quickly dissolving Damien's.

"Who said I was going to use your trick?"

Damien's voice sounded from behind the Higher Nox.

He felt cold metal on his head.

"Bang."

Bang!

A bullet fired, filled with pure white light that contrasted the previous black bullets. The bullet submerged into the Higher Nox's head like a powerless light ball and disappeared.

The Higher Nox immediately flared his aura and got away from Damien, warily raising his defense.

"Strong human, do not underestimate me!"

The Nox began dancing.

His form was ferocious and war-like, completely belligerent unlike the usual graceful dance postures one expected to see. His every move summoned a tide of mana, a tide that only became exponentially greater with every step he took.

"Face my wrath!"

The Higher Nox's roar was the key. The attack he'd been building was released, forming a massive saucer of disgusting black mana that swirled in the air.

"Come! Kill this fool for me!"

Upon the Nox's command, the saucer spun even faster and blobs of inky black mana dropped from its surface, landing on the floor and deforming into strange creatures.

KREEE!

Their cries were cacophonous, almost breaking Damien's ears as he retreated.

'Is this Demonic Providence?'

The strange creatures weren't Nox, nor were they mere mana constructs. Damien had no idea their identity, but he could confirm that they were true independent life forms that unhesitantly obeyed the Higher Nox's commands.

'Let's test this out a bit.'

Damien charged into the fray once more. With Hel in one hand and Freya in the other, one representing Death and the other Life, he was judge, jury, and executioner on the battlefield.

He was the true adjudicator of fate.

Using the Twin Moons as well as his close combat skills, Damien went into battle with the strange creatures. As he did so, he carefully observed their patterns and strength.

'How fun. These are like game mobs with set patterns and sequences, but their power isn't a joke. If I get hit by their attacks, my body will definitely be broken.'

Crack!

'Oops.' Damien smiled wryly as his ribs shattered. A frog-like creature slammed its head into him, but instead of being fleshy like a toad, it was like a cement gargoyle slammed into Damien's body!

Damien shook slightly as his healing factor kicked in. Without hesitation, he charged back into the field.

'Against a group, this Providence would be incredibly useful. Not only are there tank types like that frog, there are even long-ranged damage dealers and even attackers with specialized skills. It's like a miniature army of gremlins.'

Damien smiled as he became more interested in the strange ability.

At that moment...

"Did you forget about me?!"

"Not if you announce your presence like that."

Bang!

Crack!

Damien turned around and slammed his fist upward, directly shattering the Higher Nox's ribs.

As the man went flying across the space, Damien flashed and appeared above him.

'Let's increase the gravity a bit.'

BOOOOOM!

Space shattered.

Damien descended with the weight of a meteor, picking up speed until his feet collided with the Higher Nox's flying body and slammed the man into the ground below.

BOOOOM!

Two consecutive explosions and the multitude of cracking and squelching sounds that came from the Higher Nox's body were enough to understand the damage that'd been done.

"I do want to play with you for a bit longer, but your friends will escape if I delay too much. Unfortunately, you'll have to go."

This first Higher Nox had solid skill, but was completely unsuited for fighting Damien. His army was powerful, but how could they do any lasting damage to someone who could heal nearly instantaneously?

'Now that I think about it, aren't extreme peak 4th class masters the only ones who can kill me?'

Damien smiled slightly. It was an ironic situation where his strength was only enough to compete with late-stage beings, but his vitality could put him among the experts.

'I shouldn't get too careless. Regardless of how heaven-defying Transcendent Regeneration is, it isn't omnipotent. It's failed before, and it can fail again.'

Damien reaffirmed his cautiousness as he slammed his foot down on the Higher Nox's head.

A dark cloud of Void Mana consumed the body thereafter.

Damien frowned as he felt the changes in his body.

'It's a shame. It doesn't look like I can inherit Demonic Providences. It might also be a situation where I just need to devour more before it happens.'

The only way to find out was to fight.

Damien snapped his finger and summoned the next Higher Nox into the separate dimension. It was possible since the dimension itself was connected to the Dimensional Cages he made prior.

The grin alighting his face was wider than ever.

"Now then, show me what you can do."

Chapter 819 First Move [3]

The second Higher Nox's Demonic Providence gave his mana the property of lightning.

The third Higher Nox gained the ability to add vibration to his mana and increase its penetrative power.

The fourth could use flames of hell, black and corrosive, inextinguishable by most means.

Each Demonic Providence was different, and the skill with which each Higher Nox handled their Providence also differed.

Unlike the first Higher Nox who couldn't properly show the power of his summon army, each consecutive opponent showed Damien more skill and more technique, completely different from the Nox he'd fought before.

However, no matter what they did, their power could never match Sebastian's.

'That butler's fist skills were probably a Demonic Providence. If it wasn't for the circumstances and my sudden enlightenment on Life and Death, I would've been pummeled to death from the beginning.'

Damien got extremely lucky in his battle with Sebastian and won in the end, but luck wasn't a skill.

Luck wasn't something that could be controlled.

So why would Damien bank on luck?

He'd rather increase his skill so the same situation never took place again.

"You're the last one." He said through heavy breaths.

9 late-stage Higher Nox had been defeated so far, and Damien's level had seen a solid increase. Now that he was facing his final opponent, it would be a lie to say he wasn't somewhat exhausted.

'Using only Samsara Intent is difficult. I can't fight with the same mobility and firepower I have using Spacetime yet since I haven't refined my skills in practical combat. I need to push myself harder.'

Since there weren't any observers around, Damien cheated slightly by using his spatial advantages to compensate for his weaknesses, but that could be done no more.

Improvement wouldn't happen without struggle.

"Come." He said coldly.

The Higher Nox didn't move, however, and continued to observe Damien instead.

"You are a strange human. Despite acting against us, you smell the same as us. Kekeke, you are no different from us, are you?" The Higher Nox stated with a strange smile.

"What're you rambling about?" Damien scoffed. "If you don't come at me, I'll come to you."

Bang!

His body shot forward and arrived before the Higher Nox in a mere instant. He swung his fists at his opponent with all of his strength, pouring Death Mana into his every attack.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Higher Nox swiftly weaved through the storm of punches, slightly moving his arms to block and redirect the force elsewhere. Every movement of his body was skilled and planned, leaving Damien no room to land a hit.

"You are skilled, but not skilled enough!" The Nox shouted.

Bang!

His fist roared through the air and collided with Damien's. The impact force of the two fists sent a shockwave several kilometers into the distance.

"Khh!" Damien gritted his teeth and pushed the muscles in his arm to their maximum output. His fist clashed against the Nox's, fighting a fierce game of tug of war to determine the final winner.

At that moment...

BANG!

A gunshot boomed through space.

The Higher Nox's body went flying. A pure white light penetrated his skin and entered his circuits.

Damien grinned.

It was the same trick he'd used on the first Nox, and every opponent that came after him.

It was Damien's secret to success.

"Come at me!"

He threw himself forward with a grin on his face, following the Nox's flight path.

The Nox stabilized himself immediately and glared at Damien with cold eyes.

"I do not know what you did, but it's useless!"

His body suddenly jerked. A gold and black light surrounded him, and a strange holy demonic aura radiated from his every movement.

"Have a taste of my Heavenly Demonic Body!"

The Higher Nox punched out before Damien could even reach his vicinity.

BANG!

Space shattered. The foundation of Damien's isolated dimension shook under the force of the punch.

Damien's body flew backwards, blood pooling in his mouth.

'I didn't even get hit!' He exclaimed inwardly.

Whether it was the initial impact or the following shockwave, neither touched Damien's body.

Yet, he was still injured?

'Does this guy's Demonic Providence have a similar property to Horizon Break?'

To ignore the restraints of space and attack and exponentially increase one's base power, this Demonic Providence was clearly on a different level from those prior.

"Aha, I see how it is. So you're the big boss!"

Damien hit his fist against his palm in realization.

"You must be a pretty big guy, right? So, if I kill you, wouldn't it cause problems?"

The Higher Nox grinned evilly.

"That's right. I am Jared, the Heavenly Demon General! If you manage to kill me, you'll invite calamity onto your race! Hahaha, how does it feel to know you'll lose no matter what?" He asked mockingly.

Damien raised his brow. "Lose? But...I don't really count that as a loss, though?"

Damien's current expression was far eviler than Jared's, causing a shiver to run down the latter's spine.

'This human...'

His brow twitched. The enemy was not only powerful, but also insane. In that case...

"Death is your only option!"

"Hahaha! Let's see if death can truly claim me!"

Damien arrived before the Higher Nox in an instant and punched out.

"Fuck your Heavenly Demon Body, Jared is a stupid name!"

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Damien immediately entered close combat with the enemy. His fists struck out like lightning, aiming at his opponent's every weak spot. However, he was currently facing someone who outstripped him in physical strength.

CRACK!

The shattering of Damien's wrists and hand bones was so loud and visceral that both fighters cringed, but neither stopped their movements.

Damien's arm moved rapidly to block Jared's punch, shattering in the process. In the time it took for that movement to be executed, Damien was already swinging his shattered fist again.

And by the time the fist reached Jared's body, it was already healed.

BOOM!

A Death Mana-laced blow invaded Jared's defense and shot him into the distance. The latent mana of the blow invaded his system and began corrupting his mana system.

"Hmph! This puny corrosion!"

Jared moved his own mana to repel Damien's invading mana, but the moment he checked his internals, his ashen grey face turned pale white.

"T-this...w-what..."

Damien grinned. "Is it already starting to take effect?"

"What did you do to me?!" Jared roared.

Damien's grin widened. Unexpectedly, the process worked faster than it did on any of the previous Nox.

"Hey, Jared, does your Heavenly Demon Body perhaps draw out vitality in exchange for power?" He asked.

The Higher Nox backed away. "Spouting nonsense! The nuances of my techniques cannot be comprehended by a mere human!"

"Aha, so it really was like that. In that case, aren't you just killing yourself?"

Perhaps in a normal situation, this not-so-intimidating man named Jared could use other means to supplement his lost vitality so it didn't affect his battle capacity.

But what if...

What if something within him was actively sucking away his vitality?

What if he was fighting against an opponent who comprehended the Laws of Life and Death?

Wasn't using a skill that doubled the rate at which his vitality drained just asking for death?

Chapter 820 First Move [4]

The battle lost its excitement after Damien's plan was set into motion.

The vitality-sucking Life Bullet put Jared in a situation where, as long as the battle was prolonged, his defeat was inevitable.

And what was Damien if not an infinite killing machine?

His mana endlessly replenished from the ambient mana in the surroundings, at a rate far faster than any normal 4th class could achieve. This mana supplemented his recovery and allowed his body to heal nigh-instantly.

Infinite body and infinite mana, the concepts that Damien was partially embodying were both terrifying.

If he could truly raise himself to that level, and bring his mind to the same level...

'I might become unparalleled.'

Damien threw his fist out and summoned Hel and Freya. The two guns blasted without pause, filling the entire isolated dimension with deathly mana.

Explosions of Death Mana caused withering, and concentrated bursts of it caused corrosion. These two concepts together made it impossible for Jared's body to remain unaffected.

Especially since every hit he took accelerated the rate at which his vitality was sucked.

This was the true trap Damien laid with Life and Death Mana. It was the temporary solution he'd envisioned to fight until he could use his techniques more intricately.

In short, he drained the enemy until they were dry, regardless of how long it took.

Eventually, even Jared's Heavenly Demon Body couldn't hold on. The black and gold light weakened and fizzled out, and the effect of Damien's attacks on Jared's body heightened to an extreme degree.

"Ha!"

Damien threw another punch, but something was different about this one.

The Death Mana around his fist swirled like a cyclone. In the midst of the strange wind cannon shape was a chaotic ball of Life Mana that seemed ready to burst at any moment.

'Purgatory Cannon'

A variation of Seven Stars Encircling The Moon using Samsara Intent.

The Life Mana in the center of the cyclone was a bomb. The second it came in contact with the repelling force of Death Mana and the natural flow that it created...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

White and black light blinded all vision. The isolated dimension shook and started collapsing. As for Jared...

Half of the Higher Nox's body had been blown away by the attack.

"Haa...haa..."

The man stood clutching the half of his chest he had left. Beads of sweat dripped down his brow, mixing with the blood staining his body to create a visceral picture.

"You...cannot...kill me!" Jared roared.

His eyes turned red. His body began to transform, mutating into something terrifying.

Shing!

"Yeah, how about no."

A sword pierced the Higher Nox's forehead.

The transformation fell apart before it could finish.

'Devour.'

Damien swallowed his enemy's body with no other thought in mind.

'Transformation skills are really a double-edged sword.'

Even the Demon Dragon Form was impossible to use in real combat nowadays unless it was activated beforehand.

The time needed to transform might've only been a few milliseconds, but too much could happen in this timeframe when 4th class beings were concerned.

For instance, death.

Jared's memories flowed into Damien's head, broken into incoherent fragments that mirrored the falling spatial fragments formed by the collapsing isolated dimension.

Damien flashed away, reappearing in reality.

'It was easier than expected, but it definitely wasn't easy.'

If he was alone, it would've been impossible.

Damien appeared next to Ximen Wuhen and nodded his head. "Good work."

"It was my pleasure. I, unfortunately, could not aid the young master in battle, so I had to make myself useful otherwise."

Damien smiled wryly. He tried to get her to stop calling him young master, but she refused.

But it was true that her innovative thinking helped Damien win this battle.

It took roughly 3 hours to kill the Higher Nox one at a time, and the only reason he was able to properly separate them was because of Ximen Wuhen's help.

If she didn't use her ability to enhance the strength of Damien's Dimensional Cages, even with the enhancements he made to the ability, he couldn't trap 10 late-stage 4th classes and still have the peace of mind to battle for 3 hours straight.

'As expected, bringing her along was a good idea.'

"It's time for us to go. Things should get spicier in the coming days, so for now, let's sit back and wait for the results." He said out loud.

Taking Ximen Wuhen along, he returned to the Sanctuary guild branch.

In his wake was only a destroyed fortress.

The destruction spanned tens of thousands of miles, and the only reason it wasn't worse was because Damien took the battle into an isolated dimension before fighting the strongest enemies.

Nevertheless, the scene couldn't stay isolated for long.

The routine patrols around the surrounding Nox Strongholds noticed the complete disappearance of one relatively soon.

On the same day it was destroyed, a punitive force was sent from Iron Fortress, Hope Organization, and Sanctuary to investigate the scene.

The atmosphere was intense as the branch managers of the three guilds sat across from each other at a table.

"We have been holding off on stronghold subjugation due to an unspoken agreement between our forces, but I never expected someone would be brazen enough to destroy a stronghold entirely! This is a slap to our faces!" A man growled.

He had light blonde hair and a body optimized for combat. He wore thick knight armor and carried a double-edged sword on his waist, signifying his occupation.

This man was the Branch Manager of Hope Organization's Blood-Drenched Wilderness Branch, Jean Brightmond.

Sitting opposed to him was a large man and an icy beauty. The man was truly an Iron Fortress in human form, named Geralt. As for the woman, she was mysterious and didn't speak much, but her identity as the Sanctuary Guild's Branch Manager couldn't be doubted.

Her name was Rilia Sterhaven. The minimum requirement to become a Branch Manager was to be a Millennium General, but it was speculated that her power was even above this realm.

"There is nothing to say. Our Sanctuary was not involved in this case, and will contribute to the search for the perpetrator."

"Iron Fortress as well. We will not let those who slight us live!"

The two voiced their agreement with Jean, however, the man himself wasn't happy.

He gritted his teeth in frustration. 'There is nobody other than the three of us who can waste a stronghold thoroughly and quietly. It certainly wasn't me, so it must be one of them!'

This wasn't a train of thought unique to him. In fact, the other two branch managers were thinking the exact same thing.

While they remained amicable on the surface, a storm was brewing between them.

Someone destroyed a stronghold. Not just conquering, but total annihilation.

This meant that the resources and strategic advantages gained by capturing the stronghold were both ruined!

This was nothing but a loss from the guilds' perspectives!

However, regardless of who did it, the fact that it was done still stood.

There were two more Nox Strongholds in the vicinity of the three guilds.

Before these strongholds could be destroyed or captured by the force who decided to move...

The others needed to move first.

Proverbial sparks flew through the air.

The war that had been stalled for so long due to personal interests...

...was finally getting back on track.

All because of the actions of a man who hadn't even been in Eien for an entire day yet.