

Void 891

Chapter 891 Golden Dragon [5]

As the night passed, the time for Damien to complete likely the most difficult task of his current mission arrived.

That was, convincing Astoria to willingly become his disciple.

Of course, he had talked it over with her father the day prior, but that agreement only went so far. With Astoria's personality, she would absolutely abhor learning from a master assigned to her by others.

If Damien even wanted the chance to teach this talent, he needed her to want to be taught.

But that didn't matter to him. Regardless, he only wanted to teach someone willing to learn from him.

After all, Astoria would be his first disciple in this life.

He didn't quite know how to approach the subject, but in the end, he decided to stop thinking about it and confront the problem head-on like he always did.

As such, he arrived in front of Astoria's quarters early the next morning, fully unprepared for what was to come.

He was let into her courtyard surprisingly easily, making it obvious that his new status had already been passed along to the palace's staff. Once he arrived in the courtyard, Damien went to a nearby stone table and sat down, enjoying the peaceful ambiance of this devil princess' abode.

There was a small creek running its length, bordered by an intricately patterned rock garden including several beautiful miniature waterfalls that heightened the peaceful feeling coming from the stream.

The entire central area of the courtyard was an open garden that was clearly well-maintained. It was surrounded on all sides by the living area, in which the devil princess currently was.

'I can't really barge into her room...am I supposed to just sit here?' He thought to himself as he wondered who took care of these plants.

However, he didn't have to do anything troublesome as he feared. Instead, Astoria soon entered the central courtyard, her eyes widening in shock when she saw him.

"Brother?!" She exclaimed.

"Who's your brother?" Damien quipped back.

"Ehhh? You didn't even tell me your name, so what else can I call you?"

"Hmm..." Damien muttered.

As Astoria approached and sat down at the table, Damien wondered how to breach the subject he'd originally come for.

"Did my father tell you to come?" Astoria suddenly asked.

Damien raised his brow in interest. "Indeed, he did. How did you guess?"

"If it wasn't for Father, would the guards have let you in the courtyard in the first place? There are only two people allowed in this courtyard, and you clearly aren't one of them!" She said matter-of-factly.

"Fair enough. Then, why do you think your father sent me?" Damien asked.

Astoria quirked her head curiously before her eyes lit up with excitement. "Did he hire you as my personal bodyguard?"

Tak!

The karate chop that landed on her forehead was a clear enough rejection, however, Damien found that this little girl had given him the perfect segue.

"Incorrect. Your father doesn't have enough money to hire me as a bodyguard. However, I have been hired for something else," he said after some thought.

He looked into Astoria's eyes and continued with utmost seriousness, deciding to be utterly blunt.

"Astoria, you have a genius spatial talent that can hardly be matched by any existence in the universe. Last night, I convinced your father to let me stay here because I wish to take you under my wing and properly bloom it, however, I do not wish to force you into learning from me."

Astoria's eyes widened at the clear meaning of Damien's words.

He wanted to be...her master?

She couldn't believe someone who didn't look even a fraction of her father's age dared to claim they could be her tutor, but she didn't immediately reject his proposition.

After all, didn't the Emperor already agree?

Aside from that...

Wouldn't this be fun?

As she listened to Damien give a quick summary of spatial abilities and concepts, of the battle usage and practical benefits of the spatial element, and of his own personal abilities, Astoria began to realize just how great her talent could become.

It wasn't a matter of battle power. Of course she wanted to protect herself better, but this wasn't the reason Damien's words tempted her.

Rather, if she mastered space, couldn't she live unhindered as she'd always wished?

Couldn't she live on her own terms, roaming the universe in search of excitement without being worried about another deadly situation taking place?

Perhaps she was overexaggerating the power of space in her mind, especially since the person telling her these things had no concept of mana capacity, but hearing that she had a supreme talent in space made her feel incredibly proud.

"...your talent is more suited for the supportive elements of space than the destructive ones, but since you are already skilled in the arts of your Golden Dragon Lineage, combat power isn't your main deficit."

"Does that mean I won't get stronger?" Astoria interrupted.

"Hah!" Damien scoffed unintentionally.

"You think you won't get stronger?" Damien said with a teasing smile.

He brought his fingers in front of Astoria's face and lightly pinched the air.

Immediately, space solidified, making it impossible for her to move.

"Go ahead, try anything," Damien proclaimed with confidence.

Astoria's eyes burned with competitive spirit.

Her immediate thought was to escape the way she usually did, but as soon as she tried to sense that feeling that she always followed to escape, she found that it was being blocked by a mysterious force.

"Haha, spatial abilities won't work in front of me, little lass. Try something more substantial."

"Hmph! Don't underestimate me!" Astoria exclaimed.

A bright golden light burst out of her body, the phantom of a golden dragon backing her. Her fists became heavier and heavier until they weighed tens of thousands of pounds.

With this amount of force in her grasp, she punched out, exploding all that power into the atmosphere!

Unfortunately, she was currently caught in Damien's trap.

"Even if you're talented, you're still at least a hundred levels below me. Your strength won't have any effect here." Damien said with pseudo-mockery, glancing down at Astoria's waist.

"Why don't you try using that? You don't have any other options, after all."

Astoria's eyes hardened.

"Don't think I'm finished yet!" She exclaimed fiercely. Her power immediately doubled. She attacked not with brute force, but using the techniques of the Golden Dragon Clan.

'Golden Dragon Fist Aura!'

A massive golden dragon materialized around her body as she struck continuously in a mysterious pattern. Once it reached saturation, the dragon flew out with extreme speed and struck against the solidified space!

Bang!

A muffled bang was all that rang out when the furious golden dragon impacted the empty air before Astoria.

Just as Damien said, the difference in level was impossible for her to overcome.

She hadn't attacked many times, but she'd seen enough battle to at least understand when an enemy was too much for her to handle.

As a last resort, she did as Damien suggested and ripped the talisman on her waist, alerting her shadow guards of the danger she was facing.

Bzzt!

The signal shot out from the talisman and...dispersed immediately.

It simply couldn't withstand the pressure of the solidified Dimensional Cage in which Damien had trapped Astoria.

He looked at the young genius with a smug smile.

"What do you think? Do you still believe you won't get stronger by learning from me?"

The Dimensional Cage began to disperse.

And Astoria...

Her eyes glowed with intrigue.

Damien grinned in satisfaction.

'The fish had bitten the hook.'

Chapter 892 Golden Dragon [6]

"Teach me!" Astoria immediately exclaimed, jumping up to Damien and tugging on his sleeve.

"Calm down, calm down," Damien urged as he shook her off.

"I'm not just planning to teach you, I'm going to accept you as a proper disciple. Do you understand what that means? My status in your life will be no less than your father's, and my words and ideals will be reflected in you in the future. You are still young and have plenty of time to decide on your path, so do not rashly make a decision because of my demonstration."

Despite his eagerness to teach her, he needed her to know what it meant to accept him as a master.

He wasn't going to say something like she could never have another master in this life, as such practices were extremely outdated, but during their time together, he definitely wouldn't take it easy.

He wouldn't treat her as a "little sister," but as a "disciple."

Astoria nodded her head in understanding.

"There's no problem with this. If you were someone not worth following, would you be so considerate about my decision? I've thought it over already, and I want to learn!"

Damien smiled lightly.

"Then, who are you calling 'you?'"

"Hehe, Master!" Astoria exclaimed with a smile.

"Tch, most masters get tea ceremonies or kowtows when they accept disciples, but all I get is a clingy brat. So sad." Damien sighed in faux disappointment

"Err..." Astoria looked away sheepishly.

She definitely didn't know how to do the tea ceremony, and even Damien had to admit that accepting a kowtow from someone without a great difference in seniority felt strange...

"Whatever, let's just use a Mana Oath as a master-disciple contract of sorts." Damien sighed.

Astoria smiled and put her hand over her heart, activating her mana.

"I, Astoria Golden, hereby take Sir Damien Void as my Master for life. If I ever betray his trust, the universe may strip me of my mana and leave me crippled for eternity!"

It was a firm and direct oath without any loopholes.

Damien couldn't help but smile in return.

"Then, from this point forth, I, Damien Void, accept Astoria Golden as my disciple for life. Should I ever betray her trust, may the universe cripple me for life and strike my soul from reincarnation!"

Mana coalesced between them in the form of an illusory contract before tearing into two and entering their bodies.

Unknown to the duo themselves, this would be the start of another legend in the known universe for generations to come.

The legend of the Void Princess who ruled the concept of space, a true supreme Godbeast without rival.

After establishing the master-disciple relationship with Astoria far easier than he expected, Damien directly left her quarters for the day. He'd begin teaching her tomorrow, but for now, with him having officially accepted her, it was time for him to claim his first reward.

"Your Majesty, I hope you don't renege on our agreement," Damien said as he faced the Emperor, who was currently eyeing him strangely.

"Worry not, for I am not such a heartless person. I am merely surprised that you were able to tame Astoria in such a short period of time!" The Emperor exclaimed in genuine amazement.

How many years did he spend tirelessly trying to convince Astoria to do this and that? How was Damien able to accomplish a task as significant as becoming her master so simply?!

What he didn't know was that, while the current Damien was a man with a youthful mouth and a mature mind, he didn't used to be that way.

He used to be even worse than Astoria, genuinely thinking of himself as the Heavens and even viewing the war with the Nox as a mere playground.

Coming from such a past, Damien knew exactly how to tame young and overexcited geniuses like Astoria.

He simply needed to give her a reason to learn.

He needed to keep her entertained in the truest sense.

And when it came to elements, there weren't many as entertaining to learn as space.

Especially if one could grow to appreciate the true vastness of the concept.

Nevertheless, those things were reserved for a later date. For now, Damien had used the prospect of such things to entice Astoria into accepting their master-disciple relationship.

"It's just a little show of skill. What do you think, Emperor, aren't I a great choice of tutor?" Damien teased with a smile.

"It has only been two days yet you seem to have no thoughts of respecting my status as an Emperor and a Demigod. Very well, take your treasures and leave. Don't let me see your face unless I need to." The Emperor sighed exasperatedly.

Damien smiled and winked casually. "Don't worry, Your Majesty. Once you start seeing the results of my efforts, I'm afraid you won't be willing to let me go."

After giving final goodbye, Damien followed a nearby group of guards who escorted him to the royal treasury.

It wasn't a long walk, rather, it was a direct teleportation that landed them in front of a pair of towering golden doors with intricate draconic patterns etched on them.

From it, the true majesty of dragons could be felt. It was a suppressive aura that even made Damien's mutated bloodline feel a bit of reverence, filling him with endless surprise.

'My dragon bloodline is no longer necessarily a dragon bloodline. It is my three bloodlines merged into one and fused into the Samsara Blood flowing through my veins. For such a deeply entrenched bloodline to suddenly show activity...the origin of this door is not simple.'

If the doors alone were already so magisterial, what would the contents look like?

'Three things are not a lot now that I think about it.' Damien thought wryly.

As he did, he watched the several guards line up in formation across the golden doors and insert strange plaques into the slots present there.

The doors began to rumble, coming alit with blindingly bright light. Before Damien knew it, his spatial coordinates had been displaced.

Despite not moving or teleporting, he arrived inside the light beams, the true face of the treasury.

Damien's eyes widened into saucers.

Compared to the wealth he had procured with so much difficulty...

'It's not even worth comparing.'

This treasury was easily a hundred times the size of Damien's entire fortune.

And currently, all he could see were flashes of artifacts and currencies flying by in the golden light.

"A guest has entered the Golden Dragon Treasure Cove."

A robotic voice sang out.

"As per the regulations, three treasures will be designated to their fated owner."

Listening to its words, Damien's felt a mixture of disappointment and excitement.

It was unfortunate that he couldn't see the entire treasury splayed out before him, but it was understandable that an outsider wouldn't be able to access such things.

But...

Damien had always been a fan of these fateful encounters.

Rather than treasures he picked himself, the ones that came to him through fate were the ones who stuck with him through thick and thin, becoming true members of his arsenal.

And now, fate was going to confer him three treasures.

The anticipation was truly killing him.

Chapter 893 Treasures [1]

"As per the regulations, three treasures will be designated to their fated owner."

After the treasury spirit's voice rang out, the blinding golden light that enveloped Damien seemed to penetrate his system, attempting to read him.

However, the defense of the Void Physique, now that Damien had gained more control over it, was near passive. The golden light was immediately dissolved and circulated through Damien's system, becoming one with his mana.

"Internal scanning error. Guest's strength cannot be measured."

The treasury spirit's voice rang out again in the same robotic tone. Following its first failure, it opted for a different approach and instead coated the outside of Damien's body with its light.

Damien felt a strange ethereal tingling with no real origin as the light pricked at his skin. This time, it didn't enter his body but instead hovered around him for several instants before slightly fading.

"External scanning error. Guest's fate cannot be measured."

Once again, an error. Even within the robotic voice, a twinge of annoyance could be sensed.

It was rare to be unable to read fate, but for strong experts, hiding their fate and strength was a small matter.

However, the current guest was merely at the peak of 4th class, not even in his first revolution yet!

It was difficult to say what level of power Damien was truly at now, but it shouldn't have ever been something that this artifact spirit that could even read Demigods couldn't see.

Nevertheless, the artifact spirit could read neither his fate nor his strength, so how was it supposed to designate him treasures?

Damien sighed and slightly lowered his physical defenses to at least let the artifact spirit understand his status.

His body condition would never be readable because of the Void Physique's existence, but this much could be willingly shown.

The golden light paled slightly when Damien's defenses went down, as if the artifact spirit was offended by his actions, but it still cooperated and scanned him once more.

"Guest's strength has been partially assessed. Initiating final scan."

Damien's eyes widened as the light around him went through a severe change.

The golden color shifted into utter blackness. Damien was suddenly submerged in a realm of the artifact spirit's creation.

'It's not an illusion. The All-Seeing Eyes can't see through it.'

The All-Seeing Eyes were nearing the point of piercing reality. Just what kind of realm was he currently—

"...!"

A familiar fluctuation filled the air.

This was the scent of the Abyss that Damien became familiar with in Eien.

This deep blackness that seemed to have no life at all, yet imperceptibly contained an extremely complex and chaotic mixture of laws, this space filled with shattered stars and endless debris as far as the eye could see...

Was this the Abyss...?

"Final scan complete. Assigning Guest's treasures."

Damien's eyes snapped open.

He found himself once again surrounded by beautiful golden light.

His eyes were solemn.

'Was that a product of this treasury, or did something unexpected just happen?'

He didn't know why he suddenly saw a flash of the Abyss at this juncture, but he wasn't going to ignore it like it meant nothing.

'Is this perhaps...universal flow?'

Something was leading him to the Abyss. Evidently, it would be a destination he'd inevitably visit in the future.

Merely...

'With the Grand Assembly and the severity of the coming days, when will I have time to visit the Abyss?'

He couldn't just leave the universe behind without a plan or safety measures.

As he ruminated over the issue, the golden light began to solidify. In front of Damien's body, three small orbs like gachas materialized.

"Guest's treasures have been distributed. Access to the Golden Dragon Treasury has expired. Guest will be transported to the outside world."

The robotic voice rang out for a final time as Damien collected the three orbs. A fluctuation of spatial displacement covered him once more, sending him back to the treasury entrance.

Bang!

With the sound of two towering doors slamming closed, the familiar scenery outside the treasury became clear to Damien's eyes again.

"That's it...?" He muttered.

He expected a more intensive process, but it made sense that such an advanced treasury that could even analyze fate wouldn't need too long to distribute treasures.

'They're a lot smaller than I expected.' Damien thought to himself.

The orbs in his possession were no bigger than golf balls, making him wonder what kind of treasures he'd been designated, but he didn't immediately open them.

Instead, he first returned to his residence, which had been reassigned to an empty room in Astoria's courtyard, and closed himself off from the outside world.

Only after entering his personal space in the Sanctuary did he take the treasures out again.

'Hoo...just what could you have given me after saying something like that?'

As he stared at the three orbs, he tried to forget the final words of the treasury, but it was harder than expected.

'Whatever, let's just see what I got.'

For some reason, a strange sense of excitement filled his body. It wasn't excitement to receive a powerful treasure, but more like the excitement of a child who just received a mystery present.

Gacha was a drug more addicting than any drug back on earth, and Damien was no stranger to its effects.

Even now, he could feel the pain of spending bags of cash before even realizing that he'd blown through it.

It was a hobby he wasn't able to experience the pleasure of after the World Awakening, and experiencing it here, in this situation, was an extremely novel feeling.

Nevertheless, Damien capitalized on this excitement and directly crushed all three orbs, revealing the treasures within.

"This...!"

Damien exclaimed, standing up in shock.

On the table before him sat three seeds. They weren't physical objects, but rather ethereal personifications in the form of seeds.

Two of them were incredibly familiar in form. He'd seen and received one of these in the past.

'These are Realm Seeds!' Damien realized excitedly.

Realm Seeds could be used to create entire continents with specific environments that were always perfect for training.

The Storm Heavens Realm that bloomed in Theavel was perfect for body refining, and these two Realm Seeds were sure to have their own specialties as well.

As for the last seed, it was a beautiful iridescent blue color that was extremely familiar to Damien.

When he picked the seed up, he felt an immediate connection to it.

'This seed...resembles a World Core?'

His irises swirled with the activation of All-Seeing Eyes.

The more Damien peered into the seed, the more similarities he saw between it and a World Core.

'There's no way this is...'

He would have to find out personally.

But if this seed truly was what he thought it was...

The Golden Dragon Treasury's last words rang out in his head once again.

"Guest, please focus on what is important. The future is reliant on your growth."

His expression became dignified.

'The future is reliant on me, eh...?'

Looking at the three seeds, countless thoughts swam through Damien's head.

In the end, he came to one conclusion...

'I don't like that at all.'

...he absolutely abhorred the fact that such a thing was even proposed.

Chapter 894 Treasures [2]

'I'll have to stay in the Sanctuary longer than expected.' Damien thought to himself.

For a treasure that read fate to put the universe's fate in his hands meant that it didn't trust the chances of the universe's countless other residents.

To say he was its only hope meant everyone else was worthless.

Damien couldn't accept it at all.

'You want to make me do all the work? Don't make me laugh.'

If the universe's current forces were insufficient, then Damien could only raise them into something greater.

It was clear that the treasury wasn't opposed to this thought process either, considering the treasures it gave him.

'Realistically, I get no benefit from these things, only the people under me will be able to utilize them.'

But that didn't matter.

That was for the better.

Because while his people would grow, the Sanctuary would grow too.

It didn't matter if the Sanctuary didn't increase Damien's strength directly. The budding universe was his life's work, his most important masterpiece, and his greatest goal. It's expansion was exactly what he wanted to see.

'Time Dilation.'

Damien tapped the air and adjusted the Sanctuary's time flow, slowing it down to give him several weeks of time without affecting his activities in the outside world.

'With the current time difference, I have a 30 days in the Sanctuary per hour in the outside world. It's more than enough for the current task.'

Damien's body flashed, reappearing in the void of the Sanctuary, far away from the bounds of Theavel.

'First, let's test the main thing.'

Damien took out the iridescent blue seed and threw it into the void before him. In the next instant, he flicked his finger and extended a Celestial Mana Thread that pierced through the middle of the seed.

"Take as much mana as you want and bloom."

As if responding to Damien's words, the seed began to shake and expand.

Within a few seconds, Damien's entire mana capacity of 500,000 was consumed.

He burst with power, connecting to his Void Physique and replenishing his mana at a rate that was still far slower than it was being sucked.

'Damn!' Damien exclaimed inwardly.

The Sanctuary's ambient mana levels were nowhere near the true universe's. With this rate of consumption, the Sanctuary absolutely wouldn't be able to stand his consumption!

VOOM!

A terrifying wave of power spread from the seed as it expanded to the size of a skyscraper, showing no signs of stopping.

It's current form was a beautiful starry blue ball.

Damien grinned when he saw it.

'As expected, it was a World Seed!'

The seed of a World Core, an incredibly rare treasure that was likely a nigh-completely unique treasure in the universe.

Damien wasn't even able to realize the proper value of what he'd received until this moment.

'If it's like that, then I can only go all out!'

Damien's breath went through a great change. The flurrying mana fluctuations emitting from his body vanished entirely.

His body floated in the void as with no presence at all, as if he was one with the void. If it wasn't for his current position, one could mistake him for a common mortal scholar.

Internally, Damien focused on his connection with the Real Plane, the tether that kept the Sanctuary connected to the point in space where he entered from, the same mechanism that allowed him to return to the Real Plane in the same place he entered from, regardless of whether or not he was on a moving object.

He activated the Breath of All Things, feeding it through the tether. From then on, a mystical phenomenon took place.

Damien's mana...traveled through planes of existence.

It used the tether as a medium to exert its influence in the real world. The Breath of All Things allowed Damien to create this concrete connection that absolutely should not have been possible, and through it...

A second pulse of Void Mana entered the tether, containing the Breath of Nothingness.

And imperceptibly, the mana in Astoria's courtyard flowed into his room, following the connection to nourish his body.

The entire process took no more than a few seconds.

And the response time between the Real Plane and the Sanctuary was almost instant.

'Let's get started then.'

With a grin, Damien expanded his mana without reserve.

BOOM!

The air in the outside world exploded. A massive black hole formed in Damien's room and began devouring the mana for several thousand kilometers, sending shockwaves throughout the entire palace.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Within the Sanctuary, Damien finally matched the World Seed's mana consumption rate, providing it the steady stream of mana it needed to complete its blooming.

Damien eventually lost track of time as he put his full concentration into maintaining the mana connection.

Unknowingly, half a day passed in the Sanctuary. The World Seed had already bloomed to the size of a moon, the usual size of a World Core, but it had yet to stop absorbing mana.

Before Damien's eyes, strange patterns formed on the World Core's surface.

'This...'

A surreal feeling filled his body.

'Am I about to witness a world being born?'

In the outside world, the commotion caused by Damien's actions wasn't small at all.

After all, the mana for several thousand kilometers began to disappear at a rate faster than it had ever been consumed before!

It was hard to not notice the swirling waves of mana that roared through the air like New Yorkers with somewhere to be. Within a minute, a massive crowd of guards and palace staff gathered before Astoria's residence, preparing to barge in to confront whatever force was hoarding the world's mana!

However, before they could enter, a voice responded in their ears.

"Leave it be."

Those three words were a supreme commandment, and though their interest reached an all-time high, the crowd could only disperse.

As they did, a figure materialized in their place and pushed open the doors.

The Golden Dragon Emperor's domineering form barely fit through Astoria's doorway, but he made his way into the courtyard, his eyes focused on Damien's room.

'He is not there.'

Damien was not in the room, and there was no trace of him at all.

However, the black hole intaking the roaring mana stream was hard to ignore.

'That man...'

The Golden Dragon Emperor's eyes narrowed.

Despite his strength, he couldn't explain the current phenomenon at all.

'Just who did I allow into my palace?'

The Emperor didn't know whether to regret or feel anticipated, but he knew that Damien was someone far more mysterious than he'd originally expected.

'For now, I will allow you to do as you please. When the time comes, I hope you repay my grace properly.'

The Golden Dragon Emperor flared his sleeve, causing a transparent golden barrier to cover the entire palace and several thousand kilometers outside of it, essentially turning the patch of land into an isolated dimension.

'Taking the atmospheric mana is fine, but if you attempt to touch the fate clouds again...'

"Hmph."

The Emperor snorted lightly and vanished, returning to his own residence.

From behind a nearby door, a pair of eyes peeked through.

Astoria began observing the situation the moment she first felt it, but as it continued getting bigger and bigger, Astoria felt strange pull coming from Damien's room.

Something was calling to her, something deep within her soul.

And now that the Emperor had left...

Who was stopping her from answering that call?

Chapter 895 World [1]

The formation of a world.

It was a phenomenon Damien had actually seen multiple times in visions, whether it be at the very beginning of his journey or in recent days.

However, each time he was able to view such a scene, it was done through the eyes or memories of someone else, limiting the amount of benefits Damien could actually receive.

This time was different.

This time, a world was being born naturally before Damien.

And more than that, it was being born from his mana.

He was intrinsically linked to this world in the same way he was linked to Calypto. As the mysterious patterns of universal law etched themselves onto the forming World Core's surface, Damien could clearly feel their intents and definitions.

'In the end, I am the universal law of the Sanctuary.'

The Sanctuary was Damien's creation and the sole place where Damien could truly exert the god-like power that the Void Physique had the potential to provide him.

Here, if he said go left, not even the smallest atom would dare go right.

As such, the universal law patterns all mirrored Damien's specifications for the Sanctuary, while also mimicking the true universe's laws to fill in the gaps in Damien's interpretation.

This not only allowed the Sanctuary to maintain a state of perfection, but it also allowed Damien to gain a direct understanding of universal law that was impossible to receive in the Real Plane.

Knowledge entered his mind in droves, knowledge that he was forced to internalize and compartmentalize in his spiritual world while maintaining the mana flow to the World Core.

It was a difficult process, but with everything Damien had been through...

World Creation was surprisingly easy.

Under the eyes of no living being, an entire month passed with Damien remaining unmoving like a Buddhist monk. He became a part of a circuit, completely mending with the universe as his subconscious began operating the simultaneous processes he'd been undertaking for the past 30 days.

And as an hour passed in the Real Plane, Astoria found that she could no longer hold back her curiosity.

The ethereal tug that she originally felt was almost like a forceful pull at this point. Refusing to follow her instinct was starting to cause her physical pain, making her realize that resistance was impossible.

In the first place, she only held out for an hour in fear of her father returning to check on the situation again. Now that it looked like such a thing wasn't going to happen, there was no reason for her to continue suppressing herself.

Sneakily as a rat, she peeked her head out of her room and scanned the area, making sure she was alone.

And in an instant, she rushed across the courtyard and arrived before Damien's room, flinging the door open and quickly making her way in,

By the time the breeze caused by her speed rushes through the courtyard, she had already transferred rooms.

The guards had no idea she'd even moved.

Astoria raised her eyes and looked at the swirling black hole populating the room, approaching it cautiously,

'This is it. This is the thing that's calling to me!'

Something beyond that black hole was beckoning her soul.

If she just walked through it...

'But it could be dangerous...!'

Her inner angel tried to lead her onto a safer path, but by the time it was able to voice its opinion, Astoria was already touching the black hole.

In the next instant, her body disappeared, swept into its suction.

Astoria closed her eyes tightly as she felt the chaotic spatial fluctuations envelop her. From all around, she could only hear roaring winds and hear the whipping of terrifying force against her body.

For a second, she thought she would die within the tunnel.

She thought she would die to her own curiosity.

That was her last conscious thought before she passed out, allowing the fluctuations to carry her.

Luckily for her, the journey wasn't long.

Within a few seconds, Astoria's tattered form was thrown into the Sanctuary.

Directly next to where Damien was currently seated.

He opened his eyes in shock when he felt her presence.

'What?!' He exclaimed inwardly.

Astoria was unconscious, almost naked, and bleeding from every place where her skin was showing. It looked like she'd just been mauled by something horrific.

'No way she...'

Damien could only think of one method for Astoria to enter the Sanctuary, and it was both impossible and incredibly stupid.

After all, was it possible to enter the Sanctuary through the black hole in the outside world?

Absolutely not!

In the first place, the black hole was created by the Breath of Nothingness and supported by the Breath of All Things. These two forces turned the black hole into a space where someone of Astoria's level should've been instantly reduced to nothingness.

Even if a Demigod like the Golden Dragon Emperor tried to take this path, he'd only find himself stranded in the chaotic void, forced to find his way back to the Real Plane through brute force alone.

For Astoria to somehow force her way into the Sanctuary...

'It definitely has something to do with this.' Damien thought as he glanced at the forming world.

Perhaps the universal laws were fragile at the moment, or perhaps the World Seed had some sort of connection with Astoria, which wouldn't be strange considering how it was acquired from the Golden Dragon Treasury.

Regardless...

'It's good that she survived. Even though her wounds look terrible, her draconic physique isn't for show. Her most fatal injuries should heal on their own in a few days.'

The main problem was that Astoria's Mana Veins had been damaged. This wasn't something regular regeneration could take care of.

'I can't divert energy right now, so it'll have to wait until I'm done. As long as she doesn't die, it's fine.'

With that thought, Damien closed his eyes again and returned focus to the process.

Now that his injured disciple was by his side, he couldn't be so leisurely and passive anymore.

He needed to get this done as soon as possible.

As such, he immediately took control of the mana flow and used his connection with the World Core to inject it with the Breath of All Things, heavily hastening the formation process.

Within 3 days of Astoria's entrance, layers of earth began to form around the World Core.

At this time, Astoria's major wounds healed as well.

Her eyes fluttered open weakly.

"M...master...?" She voiced vaguely as she tried to understand her situation.

"Don't speak," Damien responded without turning to look at her, "pay attention to what's going on right now. This is probably something you'll never get to experience again in your lifetime."

Astoria turned her head with great difficulty towards the bright light that was illuminating half of her face.

Immediately, her eyes widened into saucers.

"Master, what's going on?!" She exclaimed.

What she saw was truly incomprehensible to her. Even if she could guess the base concept of what was happening, her mind wasn't able to process and retain that understanding due to her nonexistent understanding of space.

Damien grinned when he saw her fascination.

At the same time, he understood why Astoria had been dragged into the Sanctuary.

"This is a World Creation Event," Damien said slowly, finally turning to look at his disciple. "And this..."

"This is one of your greatest affinities within the Laws of Space."

Chapter 896 World [2]

While the Golden Dragon Palace experienced such commotion, it remained silent to the outside world.

However, the outside world was subjected to its own commotions.

With the passing of days, more and more people were arriving on Beast Emperor Star for the coming tournament. Most of these people took up residence in nearby cities to wait, but not everyone was the same.

One person decided that staying in the city wasn't enough.

Besides, she had a small connection to the Golden Dragon Royal Family.

With such thought in mind, she made her way to the palace and stood before the gates.

"I would like to request an audience with the Emperor," she stated to the guards,

However, she was met with immediate rejection.

"The palace is currently restricted for all our side personnel. You will be able to attain an audience with the Emperor when it comes time for the competition." The guard stated firmly.

The woman's eyes narrowed. She wanted to find a way into the palace to gain clues into the situation, especially since she was a woman whose victory wouldn't be valid even if she dominated the tournament.

After all, neither she nor Astoria swung that way!

Nevertheless, she wasn't too inclined to meet the Emperor.

She decided to give one more attempt before leaving it alone.

She took out an ancient emblem that she'd received from the Mystic Realm in the past and tossed it to the guard.

"Please show this emblem to your Emperor. If he still rejects my presence, I will leave peacefully."

Along with her words, she tossed a spatial ring filled with currency cards at the guards, immediately grabbing their attention.

"For such a courteous guest, we can at least do this much. However, if His Majesty still rejects, you must not cause a commotion," the guard warned as he withdrew a communication talisman and sent a recording of the emblem pattern to the main palace.

Within seconds, a response came back.

"You may enter," the guard proclaimed with widened eyes, handing her emblem back to her.

The gates were opened swiftly, and the woman was allowed into the palace.

She immediately felt the chaotic flow of mana, but since those escorting her didn't mention it, she also decided to ignore it.

Eventually, she made her way to the throne hall, standing before the Golden Dragon Emperor.

"Where did you receive that emblem?" The Emperor immediately demanded, his gaze solemn.

The woman bowed her head and cupped her hands in greeting.

"Responding to His Majesty, this one's name is Elena Pierce. I am a descendant of the Valkyries, and have been lucky enough to inherit their final will."

Her deep blue eyes shone in the golden splendor of the palace.

As the Golden Dragon Emperor looked her up and down, he truly couldn't see any qualities of a Valkyrie in her, however, the emblem she showed wasn't a lie.

The status of a Valkyrie could never be mimicked or imitated, and treasures of the Valkyries could only ever be used by Valkyries. This was an ancient law that had never been broken in the history of the universe.

"To think there would still be Valkyries remaining in this era..." the Golden Dragon Emperor muttered in reminiscence.

In the olden days, the Valkyrie Clan and Golden Dragon Clan, as two of the universe's greatest forces of justice and purity, had an inexplicably close relationship.

It was even said that the past generation's Valkyrie Queen and the Golden Dragon Emperor had a slight meeting of love in the past, but it was never known whether or not this story was true.

Nevertheless, seeing a descendent of the Valkyries enter his palace, the Emperor couldn't turn her down.

"I am assuming you have come for the Genesis Bead?" The Emperor mentioned.

Elena nodded her head. "Indeed. It is a peak treasure of Life that will be extremely beneficial for my path as a Valkyrie. However, I am aware that the current situation is incredibly chaotic. I will not ask for the Genesis Bead for free. First, I promise to aid the Golden Dragon Royal Clan in solving its current circumstances."

The Golden Dragon Emperor hesitated for a moment.

He'd already signed a Mana Oath with his daughter's tutor which promised him the Genesis Bead. Though a Mana Oath was something the Emperor could break without many personal consequences, it would heavily impact the fate of the Golden Dragon Clan, making it impossible for him to go back on his word.

However, he couldn't turn away a descendant of their sworn sister clan.

'Haa, how troublesome.'

"Currently, there are some issues and I cannot agree to your request. For now, I invite you to take residence within our palace. You may utilize the training areas and resources as you please to grow until the time comes when we can discuss the issue again."

Elena's eyes narrowed suspiciously, but she nodded regardless.

"Very well. I shall accept the Emperor's courtesy."

With another bow, Elena exited the throne room and followed a separate escort to her living chambers.

She entered the residence alone and collapsed on the bed, sighing to herself.

It had been a long time since she saw someone she knew.

'I wonder how they're all doing?' She thought as she reminisced on the old days

Her two sisters, the man she fell in love with, and all those in the Human Domain...

How were they doing right now?

She got into this mood often, thinking about the past.

After living several lonely years on her own, and spending even longer experiencing the lonely years of her predecessors, she felt that she was ready to try again with love.

Back then she left in a flurry of jealousy and misplaced compassion that, in reality, nobody asked for. With her current experience, she realized that walking the path she was currently walking, the path that Damien chose to walk, was incredibly lonesome.

It was hard to keep a sane mind in these circumstances even with people beside her.

Only that island of warmth that existed in the Human Domain could cleanse this loneliness.

But that island...

Elena shook her head, clearing her thoughts.

"Just how long will it be until I see your master again?" Elena spoke with an exasperated sigh.

"I only serve one master, and it is not the man you are referring to. However, I reckon it will not be too long before your wish is granted."

A feminine voice coalesced from the shadows nearby, soon followed by a figure.

This person was none other than Latia, Lucius' maid who Damien had assigned to protect Elena when she left all those years ago.

Her presence was both discovered and explained long ago, and ever since then, she'd been serving as Elena's attendant.

Even though she still took Lucius as her one and only master in this life, Elena's orders were only below his in her heart.

However, unlike Elena, Latia had lived in the Sanctuary for many years.

She remembered its scent well.

Nevertheless, in the current instance, she didn't say a word.

She didn't dare do such a thing without getting that terrifying man's permission first.

As she waited on the side, Elena rolled over into her stomach and buried her face in the bed.

For some reason, her reminiscent feelings were at an all-time high today.

Was it because of the upcoming Grand Assembly? Or maybe, now that she was finally away from Eien's terrifying battle atmosphere and the endless training of Valhalla's Mystic Realm, the feelings she'd been suppressing for so long were bursting forth.

"Haa..."

Elena sighed.

At this point, even the bed she was on started to smell like Damien.

'I must be going crazy.' She thought to herself as she tried to shake off the feeling.

However, just how would she react if she found out that her feeling wasn't just her imagination, but the true reality of the situation?

How would she feel if she realized that Damien had been staying in this room only a day prior, and the scent she was smelling was his residual aura?

Perhaps even the indifferent mind Elena had cultivated over all these years would collapse

Whether or not she'd ever make this realization, though...?

Only time could tell.

Chapter 897 World [3]

Night turned to day in the outside world, and in that same period of time, a little over 6 months passed in the Sanctuary.

1

In this time, neither Damien nor Astoria had moved much at all.

In these 6 months, both geniuses were utterly focused on the World Creation Event, watching with front-row seats as the World Core bloomed earth and an atmosphere and eventually gained all the necessary components to be a true world that could house life.

Oceans formed, mountains rose and fell, and eventually, when the tectonic plates completed their first shift, the world settled in place and was born.

It wasn't a fanciful phenomenon that was announced all over the universe. If so, wouldn't the universe be crowded with such obnoxious phenomena?

Instead, the world was covered in a barely visible blue light film that faded soon after, though its presence could still be clearly felt.

"M-master..." Astoria voiced, her words echoing through the empty void.

Damien turned to Astoria with a smile, lightly stretching his body.

"How was it? Did you manage to understand anything?" He asked in return.

Astoria hesitated for a moment but shook her head. "Master, I thought I understood something, but when I tried to think of it, it all became blurry. I don't know what happened!"

Damien nodded in understanding. "That's normal. At your level, having a full recollection of such a profound event would only burn your brain. However, now that you've witnessed it, your path forward will be far, far smoother."

Damien wasn't just pulling the words out of his ass. He'd personally experienced something similar as a young genius.

Back then, when he visited the Space-Time River, he lost all awareness of its existence for a period of time, only remembering its name.

Even to this day, Damien couldn't recover the entirety of his memory in that strange space.

However, chasing the Space-Time River contributed greatly to Damien's current strength. As he grew, he always used the Space-Time River as a foundation for his practice, allowing him to excel.

For Astoria, who was more talented in supportive spatial abilities, witnessing a World Creation Event was a mind-bendingly precious opportunity.

However, Astoria wasn't satisfied with this. As Damien slowly explained it to her, her expression crumpled further and further.

"I don't believe I can't understand it!" She exclaimed defiantly. "Master, please teach me! I won't disappoint you!"

"Oh? And if you can't produce results? How are you going to compensate me for wasting my time?" Damien retorted.

"I...I...I'll give you...anything," Astoria stammered, blushing slightly and pushing her body forward.

Damien's eyes narrowed.

Tak!

A flick landed firmly on Astoria's forehead, turning it red and pushing her away from him.

"Who taught you to be so mischievous? Did you think I, your Master, would fall for such an obvious trap?"

Damien scoffed while flicking his finger, sending a small beam of light into Astoria's stomach and disrupting the mana flow of the treasure she hid there.

If Damien had to guess, it was some sort of restraining treasure that Astoria was going to try to use for unknown reasons.

After all, she was known as a devil emperor. There was no way she'd submit to someone so easily.

Unfortunately for her, Damien wasn't someone she could easily mess with.

An evil grin spread on his face.

"Aha, so my young disciple loves to tie people up. Then, let's see how you like it done to you!"

Damien immediately controlled the laws of the Sanctuary and restricted Astoria's movements entirely.

Walking up to her as she struggled futilely in hopes of escape, Damien's grin widened.

"Didn't you want to hear the specifics about World Creation? Hmph, I, your gracious master, shall educate you!"

Damien stood in front of Astoria, made sure there were 0 distractions in the surroundings she could use as respite, and then...

"World creation starts with a few very basic conditions. Firstly, a large congregation of mana, secondly, the approval of the universal law, and third, a World Seed, a heavenly material that is born in accordance with the universal law to populate the starry sky.

"By the time you entered the Sanctuary, the World Core's base structure was already formed. This is the easiest part, as it's just a matter of accumulating mana to such a density and intensity that it creates the shape of a material World Core.

"What comes after is the most important step. The universal law will baptize the false World Core and turn it true. Through this baptism, the World Core gains a connection to the universe and the capability to form its own World Laws, which in turn allows the world to form an atmosphere and house life.

"There are several important universal laws involved in this process, including but not limited to..."

From that point on, Damien talked and talked and talked. He talked until his disciple was practically begging him to shut up and let her go, apologizing profusely for playing.

But would he stop?

Hell no!

Even though he was punishing Astoria by not entertaining the severe ADHD that she seemed to have, he was also teaching her important facts. Through the knowledge she gained from him today, she could interpolate much more when she finally got a grasp on how the Laws of Space functioned.

Nevertheless, Damien let Astoria go after his speech ended, and she immediately collapsed in the void like she'd just been tortured to death.

"Masterrr~ I won't...play...anymore~" she muttered to herself.

Damien glanced at her wryly. Evidently, she was unconscious. It was a little humorous that the previous lesson had scarred her enough to appear in her dreams.

'Rest well.' Damien thought with a smile. 'From this point on, it'll only get worse.'

He smiled so brightly that one would mistake his teeth for the sun. He was truly a benevolent saint of the people.

With that thought in mind, Damien hauled Astoria over his shoulder again and entered the atmosphere of the newly formed world.

'I should check on this place before she regains consciousness. The World Seed had an inexplicable connection with Astoria, so this world might be the ideal training environment for her. Whether or not it can hold her power, though...is another story altogether.'

Damien sighed to himself. Observing the atmosphere, he immediately knew it was impossible for this world to hold 4th class beings without becoming structurally unstable.

It was a newborn world that was even younger than Earth in its awakening. It was still covered by the universe's beginner world protection measures, and the dungeons forming on the world barely had 1st class beasts.

'No problem. It's just a matter of force.'

In any other situation, it was impossible, but with Damien in full control of both the world and the universe it resided in's laws, there was no problem at all.

He took the two Realm Seeds out of his inventory and threw them in opposite directions, allowing them to fly to two completely different portions of the world several tens of thousands of kilometers apart.

When they arrived in position, Damien only needed to speak a single word.

"Bloom."

And instantly, the entire world began to quake furiously, cracking into two equal halves.

Just like that, the newly formed world was destroyed.

Chapter 898 World [4]

'Hold on, that's not right.'

1

Damien took control of the universal laws and wrapped the budding world in a cocoon of energy, forcing it together and disallowing it from shattering entirely.

However, he didn't heal the cracks in the world. He allowed the world to break apart within the sphere of influence he allowed.

After all, it was an important step in the process.

As the world broke apart, the two Realm Seeds latched onto the world's several sections and even its World Core, rooting themselves in the world's surface.

Afterward, it was merely a matter of blooming.

As the Realm Seeds bloomed, they would create specialized training areas, but they'd also force the world to adapt to their presence. The current broken pieces would be melded together and destroyed several times to facilitate this adaptation and strengthen the world.

The method of strengthening was extremely similar to human body reconstruction.

Nevertheless...

'It'll take several days for the Realm Seeds to integrate into the world and finish strengthening it. While that happens, I should fix the most immediate problem.'

Damien snapped his fingers and changed the time dilation once again, making it much, much tamer.

The previous time dilation that turned a month into a mere hour on the outside world was incredibly useful, but couldn't be maintained for long with the Sanctuary's current structural integrity.

The ability would only be strengthened once Damien added more worlds to the space.

For now, though, changing the time difference so an hour on the outside world was a day inside the Sanctuary still provided a decent amount of time without damaging the environment.

'Though, it's good that I've reached this level already. If not, I can't imagine how annoying it would be to set aside 6 months to birth this world in the current circumstance.'

Damien gently set Astoria down on the ground next to him and changed her clothes. He couldn't allow her to continue the mostly ripped fabric that she arrived in that revealed almost her whole body.

He almost wanted to slap her for having to sense of shame, but he couldn't blame her since he also forgot about her situation while teaching her.

'Let's repair her Mana Veins first.'

Damien diverted a portion of his attention and cast [Heal] on Astoria, enveloping her in beautiful white light that made her feel endlessly comfortable.

While that was going on, Damien used his remaining mental strength to submerge his senses into the world and observe the ongoing processes.

'It's insane. Everything is happening so smoothly because of the laws already in place, but it's actually an extremely complex and intrinsic process currently taking place. If this was attempted without the universal law facilitating, I can't imagine how many centuries of trial and error would be necessary to succeed.'

The universal law was the most complete set of rules in existence. Under its structure, any and all phenomena could take place. If it was taken away...

Damien simply couldn't fathom the chaos that would ensue.

Shaking his head, Damien cleared his thoughts and returned his focus to the task at hand.

For the next few months, this would be his last opportunity to train properly. After this, there was far too much to be done for him to take time for himself.

'My Void Intent has grown to...well, using it in battle seems viable now.'

Using the Void directly was difficult, not because it was too complicated and restricted, but specifically because it was too free.

Taking Void Mana as an example, it became clear to its user that the Void could transform into anything.

Damien could use his existing spatial skills with Void Mana as a replacement for his usual Spatial Mana, and not much would change.

However, his attacks would gain a special devouring property, and he'd gain a level of control that almost defied the laws of the universe.

'I should take this time to get acclimated with using my mana pathways properly with Void Mana. I can't let it rebel against me during battle ever again.'

The semi-sentient entity that was his mana had been awfully quiet recently, but Damien wasn't going to risk it.

As such, he began training with fervor

And many days passed.

Finally, Astoria woke up for the second time.

"Sheesh, what a disciple. I didn't expect you to faint every time something became too much for you."

Damien teasing words were the first to enter her mind.

She jumped up in fright and stood at attention. "I apologize, Master! I'll never do— eh? Master? Did you change me?"

Astoria looked down at the new robes on her body and furiously blushed.

Damien shrugged in response. "You were nearly naked before. Are you going to blame me for your own lacking situational awareness?"

"U-uhm..."

Astoria looked away while fidgeting.

Regardless of what he said, he was still the first man to ever see her naked.

Even for the devil princess, didn't such status have some sort of mean—

Tak!

"Stop thinking useless thoughts and follow me. It's time to start your training."

Astoria rubbed her forehead and followed Damien, watching his back carefully.

Suddenly, she realized something.

'He's not much older than me, but he's still my Master.'

It wasn't that Astoria hadn't accepted Damien in her heart, but that the barely existent age difference and the fact that Damien was the most handsome young man she'd ever seen was hard to ignore.

However, he was her Master.

As he'd told her before, he held the same status as her father, and evidently, he viewed her from this position.

She was nothing more than a little girl in his eyes.

It was a slightly empty feeling for unknown reasons, but more than anything, it was extremely relieving.

"Trust" was built on instances like this.

And today, Astoria felt her first inking of that feeling.

The feeling that, no matter what happened, she could trust her Master to be by her side.

However, what accompanied this feeling...

...was a training hell.

"Astoria, in this space, we have plenty of time before the tournament begins. Using this time, I promise I'll turn you into an expert who can stand on your own with confidence in this vast universe."

Damien turned around with eyes like crescents.

"And I...am not a man who breaks promises."

Astoria felt a shiver go down her spine.

For some reason...

Damien's current sunny expression was extremely ominous.

1

Several months passed since that fateful day.

Every day that passed during those months, the Sanctuary's void learned about until it was far too late.

was populated with the sounds of shrieking, crying, explosions, and many more exciting things.

It got to the point where a certain rumor spread between the people of Heaven.

A rumor that the Lord had reached an unexplainable level, and for some reason, had decided to kill chickens and pigs in space.

Inexplicably, Damien earned another nickname that he wouldn't learn about until it was far too late.

To the people of Theavel who saw a star light up in their sky for the first time before this strange phenomenon took place...

Damien became the Immortal Rancher: a man who could even raise stars with his genius farming ability!

Wasn't it glamorous?

Chapter 899 Training [1]

There existed a space.

1

It spanned several tens of thousands of kilometers and had an environment similar to a moon. For the most part, nothing about the space seemed off, however, that was only to the untrained eye.

If one had the ability, one would be able to see the strange and chaotic distribution of the spatial layers, the unnatural movements they made, and the sheer number of spatial cracks littering the air.

This area existed on the previously budding world that had just been born. After it and its sister-seed bloomed, they latched onto the world and immediately raised its existence level to the point where it could support them.

Now, this world was no different than a middle world in many factors.

BOOM!

An explosion rang through the empty space. In a specific portion of the Mystic Realm, space imploded and collapsed inward, forming a terrifying black hole whose suction force could instantly raze 3rd class soldiers into nonexistence.

In the middle of this black hole was a girl protected by a translucent film of mana.

"I already told you, controlling space is not a forceful process. You've been instinctually connecting with space for many years already, you don't need to change that process much at all. You just need to gain conscious control over what you've been doing subconsciously this entire time."

Damien's stern voice echoed as he waved his hand and suppressed the black hole, bringing Astoria back into the Sanctuary.

"Now, try again. All you need to do is compress the space."

Astoria's eyes hardened as she focused on the task at hand. She repeated the several lessons Damien had taught her in her head, remembering the various insights she'd gained on space in the past few months.

She slowly pushed her hands together as if she was holding an invisible basketball, trying to connect her will to the space around her.

'Focus.'

She honed in on that feeling, the feeling of teleportation that she'd essentially mastered in the past months.

It was different passing through the spatial layers. To do so, she needed to manipulate her own body more than the spatial layers around her.

Compressing space, though still a foundational level skill, was far more direct than teleportation, emphasizing control over space.

However, controlling space was a contradictory concept. To exert the greatest control, one had to loosen the reigns as much as possible and let space act as it pleased.

After all, the relationship between spatial practitioners and space itself was extremely deep, far deeper than most other affinities and their wielders.

Astoria's hands slowly came together. She visualized a massive phantom forming behind her,

grabbing space itself and mimicking her movements, crushing it into a ball.

She carefully moved the mana in her body, and gently spread it into the surroundings, however, she didn't attempt to forcefully clamp her mana onto space to mold it as she'd been trying to do thus far.

The visualization in her head was transmitted into space through her mana, and as the two forces interacted, Astoria could feel her control over the spatial layers subtly growing.

Without hesitation, she increased her speed and incrementally increased the amount of mana she was using, and eventually...

Kacha!

The space before Astoria compressed past the point it could handle, shattering into pieces and forming a large spatial crack almost the size of her body.

"I...I did it!" Astoria exclaimed, jumping into the air in excitement.

"Indeed, you did..." Damien nodded while dispelling the spatial crack.

Astoria's face lit up. It was so incredibly rare to hear a compliment from Damien that she was ecstatic receiving one now.

"...now, do it without taking ten million years to nail the proper form," Damien continued.

Astoria's face immediately fell.

"Master~! Can I please take a break now~?" Astoria begged, flashing Damien her best pitiful expression.

Damien raised his brow. "How many breaks have you already taken in the past 6 months?"

"E-ehhh~? J-just a few..." Astoria responded while averting her gaze suspiciously.

"Just a few, eh?" Damien responded with a smile.

"We've been training for 6 months, and of those, you've spent 2 on 'breaks.' Compared to that, you've spent 4 months learning only how to teleport and maneuver through space, completely ignoring the other foundational elements. Now, tell me, why should I give you a break?"

"U-um...because I'm tired..."

"It looks like the previous punishments weren't effective. I'll be sure to get more creative next ti—"

"Master, wait! I'll practice, I'll practice! You can just rest your mind and watch as your genius disciple achieves the impossible!"

Damien glanced at her sideways. "Okay then, my 'genius disciple,' when I was 17, I took 2 months to completely consolidate the foundation of my spatial element. How about you try to surpass me?"

"Eh? 17? That isn't much younger than me! Master, I thought you were a young man...don't tell me you're actually an old monster in disguise...!"

Astoria backed away in faux horror as she spoke, causing Damien's eyebrows to twitch endlessly.

"You brat, I'm only 30! A young 30!" He exclaimed, whacking her over the head.

"A-ah...haha...I-I see...heh...a-a young...heh heh...t-thirty...pfft!" Astoria stammered before completely failing to hold back her laughter.

"Hahahaha! Master, I didn't expect that you were actually an old man! I thought you were closer to my age! No wonder yo—"

"I understand. Let's have fun with today's punishment."

Damien picked Astoria up by the back of her shirt as if she was a kitten.

"I'm still perfecting this little power of mine, so bear with it if it gets a bit extreme."

Astoria's face paled.

"Wait, Master, you're young! You're young and handsome! You definitely don't look a day over 20, no, 18! C-calm down, we can talk this ooouuuuu—!"

Before Astoria could finish her words, Damien opened a portal nearby and tossed her in. Her voice eventually faded into the void as she was sent to a punishment realm Damien specifically created for her.

Left by himself, he was forced to shake his head wryly.

'Why did I have to accept such an unruly disciple...?' He sighed to himself in exasperation.

In the past 6 months, he'd taught Astoria many things, mostly supportive spatial skills such as teleportation, subspace creation, and other similar techniques.

When it came to these areas, Astoria truly excelled. She was like a fish in water, swimming downstream at her fastest speed.

It was almost terrifying how fast she absorbed knowledge.

However...

'She can't even seem to comprehend an ounce of any destruction-focused skill. Can there be such a skewed representation of talent?'

It was possible that Astoria simply wouldn't be able to cast destructive magic with her spatial affinity. Even when it came to compressing space, it took her far too much concentration to accomplish.

Even a normal beginner would be able to do it at a fourth of her speed.

'I might have to change my approach.'

Thus far, Damien had been trying to lay a stable foundation for Astoria before teaching her specialized magic, since it would be far easier for her to understand the nuances of the techniques, but it didn't seem like this would be the proper path for Astoria.

Rather than having her focus on fundamentals that'll merely halt her progress in the grand scheme, it might've been better to specialize her focus from the beginning and thoroughly raise her into an expert in that area.

'With the current trajectory, we have around three and a half years...it's more than enough.'

Damien immediately submerged himself in thought, structuring a new training plan for his disciple.

As for Astoria herself...

Needless to say, she was currently submerged in a hell where she was stuck in the body of a proper noble lady, unable to do anything but watch as the body's owner took care of managerial tasks day in and day out for days on end!

It was truly a torture unlike any other.

Chapter 900 Training [2]

1

The days became uncountable as Damien enacted his newly formed training plan for Astoria.

1

He completely disregarded all fundamental skills related to destruction and purely taught Astoria the method to interfere with space in a supportive manner.

In this sense, Astoria's talent truly bloomed. No matter what Damien taught her, she was able to absorb it without a single issue.

For instance, Dimensional Magic.

Dimensional Magic was something Damien only acquired upon becoming a Celestial, but Astoria was able to use it from the beginning.

Dimensional Cage, Phase Shift, Material Shift, and even Vector Control became skills that Astoria excelled in.

And through Vector Control, she was able to create an attack method without truly having any destructive power of her own.

Time passed.

Astoria's talent for Vector Control began to bloom in full.

As she was already a 4th class being, she wasn't able to receive the benefits of ranking up with space as her main pathway, but with Damien in her corner assisting her, she was able to gain something far better.

After all, Damien was the possessor of the Void Physique.

With the Breath of All Things, Damien could alter the physical conditions of the world to whatever could suit Astoria's needs best.

With the Breath of Nothingness, he could pass his own memories of endless practice to Astoria so she could digest her gains faster and have a guideline to follow if she ever struggled with those fundamentals that she didn't personally learn.

Astoria was easily able to surpass Damien's 2 months' progress as she'd claimed, and after those two months ended, Astoria's attitude towards the hell training she was undergoing started to experience a subtle shift.

She was enjoying it.

Once she came back from that particularly cruel punishment, the way her master approached her training took a complete 180.

The curriculum she began to study from that point on was extremely joyful, and everything she learned was internalized almost instantly.

She felt that instinctual connection she had with space strengthening over time, and she felt that as long as she was interfering in a gentle manner like her current abilities provoked, she had the potential to grow endlessly.

"At some point, the instruction I can provide you will be limited. Unlike the other elements, space is largely neglected in the universe and the infinite paths within the Laws are still hidden from us practitioners," Damien lectured.

"When it comes to supportive abilities, I've already taught you everything I know, after all, I am a destructive practitioner. From this point on, your training will become far more independent. I will watch over you and accompany you so as to ensure your safety, but I will not intervene in your training unless it's truly necessary."

Astoria's eyes widened. "Master, does that mean..."

Damien nodded. "It's likely as you've guessed. Today, we are leaving the Sanctuary."

Damien had been training Astoria in the Sanctuary for a year and a half now. It was only with this much time that Astoria was able to master Vector Control and Dimensional Magic to her current level.

It should've been around a month in the outside world since their training started, which meant that in another two months, the grand tournament would begin.

With this much time...

'It should be fine. I can still create localized time pockets when necessary, even though the effect in the Real Plane won't be nearly as exaggerated as it is in here. Besides...'

Damien's pupils swirled as he activated the All-Seeing Eyes.

[Status]

[Astoria Golden]

Golden Dragon

Female - Age 19

Level 274 - [Royal Golden Dragon]

Experience value: 124,779/411,000

Title(s): [Void Disciple]

Affinities: Fate, Space

Physique: Imperial Golden Dragon Body

Magic Power: 250000

DEF: 1300

STR: 1100

AGI: 1000

DEF: 1300

INT: 1000

DEX: 1350

Skills: [Dimensional Magic Level 4], [Vector Control Level 7]...

Damien smiled. With these skills, he didn't think Astoria would have a problem surviving in the wilderness.

'This Void Disciple title is extremely convenient.'

It had been a very long time since Damien saw the birth of a new title, but it seemed this one was influenced by his own titles and physique.

The Void Disciple title seemingly appeared when Damien and Astoria first made their contract, but Damien didn't notice it until he tried to read Astoria's status around half a year into their training.

Damien didn't know what effects the title had on Astoria herself, but it provided him some benefits as well.

For instance, he could see a majority of Astoria's status.

Most of her skills and her traits were hidden, but essentially anything Damien had influenced and could influence was shown to him, allowing him to better plan Astoria's training.

Now that she's reached her current level, what she needed more than anything else was practical experience.

'I wanted to take her to the Wild Continent, but I haven't properly integrated it into the Sanctuary yet. Before I can find a World Core for the chunk of land, it'll be difficult for it to become a functioning part of this universe.'

The Wild Continent was essentially stuffed in its own corner of the Sanctuary at the moment. Damien was forced to create a separate space for it since the existing world laws couldn't support its existence.

Nevertheless, for now, the Wild Continent was still a useless piece of land.

'I can use this expedition to find a World Core for the Wild Continent too.'

"Prepare yourself. We'll be leaving in two days." He said out loud.

Astoria nodded her head excitedly. The past year and a half of harsh training had smoothed out her personality a great deal, but that mischievousness in her soul never left.

Now that she was getting the opportunity to leave this place and explore the universe, how could she not be excited?

Astoria immediately stood up to return to Theavel where her temporary residence was.

"Then, Master, I'll see you in two days!"

"Ah, go see your aunt and them while you're there. They've prepared gifts for you."

Astoria's already alit face suddenly burned as brightly as a flame in joy.

"Yes!"

She immediately set off, rushing back to Theavel at her fastest speed.

'Sheesh, Elvira and them are spoiling her too much. Is it that strange for me to accept a disciple?'

When he originally told the five leaders of the Sanctuary about Astoria, their reactions weren't small at all.

In simple terms, they said:

"Your broody self actually made a meaningful connection to someone else willingly?"

"Hahahahaha! This kid is actually taking care of a kid now! Hahahaha! Him of all people!"

"This is truly unexpected."

And so on.

Needless to say, it was quite embarrassing for Damien, as the subject of their teasing.

However, those five truly treated Astoria as their Young Miss, a status that completely enabled her gremlin behavior.

A behavior that was even starting to affect Xue'er.

'Haa, raising kids is hard.'

Damien sighed to himself and smiled wryly.

It was his first time accepting a disciple, and while teaching was far more fun than he expected, raising his disciple into a decent human being was a far more difficult task than he expected.

But...wasn't the challenge riveting in its own way?

Seeing Astoria grow not only in power but as a person brought Damien endless satisfaction that he couldn't quite put into words.

All he knew was that he had extremely high hopes for her potential and wanted to see her grow even more than ever before.

And for that...

'Haha, how will she feel when she finds out we aren't going to be training in the Beast Domain at all...?'

Warp was a great skill.

A great skill that his good disciple would soon get to experience for the first time.

Truly, he couldn't wait to see the look on her face.