

Void 911

Chapter 911 Confrontation [3]

'Valkyrie Form: Activate!'

To fight an airborne enemy, one also needed to find a way to get airborne. And while all practitioners at their level could fly, achieving the aerial maneuverability of a winged creature was impossible unless one specialized in an attribute encompassing flying techniques.

Elena's light and life affinities didn't have any connection to flying, however, they had many connections to the body itself and with speed.

With Elena's call, a beautifully ornate platinum-silver armor formed around her body. A pair of angelic wings sprouted from her back, and her sword was covered in a myriad of runic patterns that intrinsically influenced its identity.

Finally, a helmet formed around her head. Two wings decorated its sides, flaring out behind Elena's head majestically. The front of the helmet was mainly uncovered, allowing her enemies to see her heroic appearance as she defeated them.

Crack!

BANG!

Elena pushed her feet against the ground and shot into the air, meeting Dalia head-on.

"Damn human, I'll kill you!" Dalia exclaimed.

In all honesty, the sentiments she held had changed severely over the course of the battle.

It was fine for Elena to be more beautiful than her, but it absolutely wasn't acceptable for the enemy to be both more beautiful and more powerful!

Dalia was a practitioner, and naturally, she held the ambitions of a practitioner.

She wanted to be the perfect woman that none could ever compare to.

And thus, whenever she saw women who might surpass her...

Crush without mercy!

Seeing the Valkyrie charging towards her, Dalia turned her massive body and slammed her tail towards the enemy.

The gargantuan wrecking ball-like tail swung through the air with speed that defied physics and reached Elena perfectly, striking her body with its full power.

BOOM!

Elena raised her sword and brought it down against Dalia's thick-scaled tail. Sparks flew as the two surfaces collided, almost making one believe two metals were scraping against each other.

Elena gritted her teeth and dragged her sword across Dalia's tail in a bid to deflect it, but this task wasn't easy facing such a massive object.

'Particle Acceleration!'

Elena's sword began to vibrate as it shone with light. The blade became thinner and thinner until it reached a specific point, a point where the particles within the sword were moving so fast that nothing could stand in its way!

However, such wasn't nearly enough to warrant the attack's grand name.

Shing!

Elena's sword cut through Dalia's tail and gouged out a large chunk of flesh.

Dalia immediately twisted her body, slamming her claws down to push Elena away, however, this only provided her the opportunity she was waiting for.

'Burst!'

Particle Acceleration, would it truly be able to hold its name if it was merely a matter of speed?

The fast-moving particles that made up Elena's sword crashed into each other one by one, and as Elena's mana maintained the sword's basic shape, it was slowly filled with the energy of atomic collapse.

While it wasn't anything near creating a speedster, Elena's particle acceleration wasn't anything to laugh about.

Dalia pushed her wings as fast as possible and retreated the instant she felt the fluctuation, but Elena didn't let her go.

She chased the dragon relentlessly, slashing her sword out every few seconds.

Along with these slashes...

BOOOOOOOOOM!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!

Fiery atomic impacts covered the area for several thousand kilometers. The environment became a nuclear minefield filled with terrifying radiation and mana fluctuations that could instantly incinerate any normal early or middle-stage 4th class in seconds.

Whoosh!

Dalia flew high into the sky, far into the atmosphere and away from the nuclear fallout.

Hoo!

She inhaled a deep breath of pure air and gritted her teeth, her eyes blazing in defiance.

The enemy was extremely powerful, powerful to the point where she was being suppressed without the ability to fight back.

The worst part was, they weren't too far away in level!

Elena's advantage lay in speed and attribute. Both of these opposed Dalia's features, making it difficult to find a proper opening to sneak an attack in.

Dalia wasn't a member of the Covert Operations Unit that Dylan came from, but she was from an adjacent unit that used similar techniques.

The problem was that to avoid the current Elena, Dalia needed to maintain dragon form, but in dragon form, Dalia only had access to instinctual techniques that wouldn't be able to compete on such a profound level.

'Dammit!' She cursed inwardly. She clearly understood that she was the one who forced herself into this position, but she simply couldn't accept that there was no way to recover.

'That's it! If I...'

"Heresy Inquisition: Judgement Chains"

Elena's voice rang out like a reaper's. Glowing white chains with beautiful golden etchings decorating their surface sprung out of thin air and wrapped around Dalia's massive body.

ROOOOAAAAAR!!

She let out a furious roar as she struggled against them. She let her mana blaze free, shooting out flurries of dragon breath and even using her pressure to try and suppress Elena directly.

However, the Judgement Chains weren't a normal skill.

This was a skill that could only be used when one had absolute certainty that their enemy couldn't escape.

'Bind.'

Elena clenched her fist, forcing the chains to tighten horrifically around Dalia's body.

Shick!

A strange sound rang out as the chains dug into her scales.

OOOOOOOH!

Dalia howled in pain, never-ending her struggle to escape.

But no matter how much she indulged in futility, her fate was set from the moment she gave Elena time to prepare.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The chains extended endlessly until they pierced the earth and took hold of it. They dragged Dalia down to the ground without any care for her situation, ripping into her body as they did so.

BANG!

When her body finally landed in the ground, Elena materialized on top of her, a smug grin decorating her face.

"How does it feel knowing that your defeat is your fault and your fault alone?" Elena asked, fully aware of the reason for her easy victory.

Dalia glared back with endless rage in her eyes.

"If it wasn't for my own mistakes, you would have never been able to capture me!" She exclaimed defiantly.

"Oh? And since when did that matter?"

Elena's eyes sharpened. She stabbed her sword down into one of the gashes on Dalia's underbelly, twisting it and worsening the wound manifold.

Ahhhh!

A screech rang out in response. Dalia immediately shut up.

She was arrogant, but she was never an idiot.

She had let her arrogance control her, and it landed her in such a miserable situation.

She wouldn't let it be the death of her as well.

"Now then," Elena muttered as she saw the subtle change in her opponent's mentality, "let's get started."

She clapped her hands together and summoned an illusory weighing scale.

"Today, you will face judgement. All lies are meaningless before the eyes of heaven, and all sin will inevitably meet retribution. Face the pride of the Valkyries and answer to your sins!"

Elena fiercely chanted the incantation, and in response, the illusory weighing scale transformed into the form of a beautiful goddess.

The moment she opened her gigantic eyes...

Dalia's consciousness was muddled into nonexistence.

Chapter 912 Confrontation [4]

The last thing Dalia heard was the angelic chanting that called forth the goddess. The last thing she saw was that authoritative gaze that immediately collapsed her ego.

Dalia felt like she was submerged in endless muddy water. Light, sound, sensation as a whole felt distant and ethereal.

Just...how did she arrive in this place?

in the outside world, Dalia's body relaxed, her large head falling to the floor. Her eyes glazed over without a hint of consciousness, however, Dalia had yet to completely pass out.

Elena watched her calmly, waiting for her to reach this state.

"First question: What is your name and rank?" She asked commandingly.

"Dalia Necron, Leader of the Black Dragon Clan's 64th Attack Team."

The response she wanted came immediately. Dalia answered with slurred words, clearly unable to consciously understand her own actions.

Elena nodded matter-of-factly.

"Good. Why did you attack me today?"

Elena immediately got to the bulk of the issue.

After all, there was no need to continue stalling.

The spell was clearly in effect.

The Judgement Chains were only a single part of a whole, a condition necessary to activate the true judgment spell that Elena had just used.

With this spell, she could coerce the truth out of her enemies without worrying about bias or trickery.

However, this skill had many conditions, the most constraining of which only allowed her to use this attack on those at the same level as or more powerful than her.

The Valkyries were a race that represented absolute justice. They were a race that viewed the world in black and white, disallowing anything that didn't fit into their classifications.

While this was a trait that inevitably contributed to their extinction, it wasn't completely negative.

For instance, the Valkyries inherently didn't have any techniques that could be used to bully the weak.

Even Elena somewhat mirrored this sentiment, which was why she sent the 16th Infantry to fight Dylan and his group before taking action herself.

Nevertheless, Dalia's appearance was a great lucky chance for Elena from the beginning, which was why she pushed so hard during battle without regard for the atmosphere or secrecy, aiming to take Dalia down as quickly as possible.

"My purpose for coming was..." Dalia began.

"To be the best in the universe."

"Elaborate." Elena prodded.

"I was given intel about a woman who was both powerful and beautiful. If I cannot defeat such a woman, my path will be destroyed."

Elena almost directly scoffed at the stupid and selfish thought process, but she put her personal feelings aside.

"What is the Black Dragon Clan planning?"

"The—"

Kak...!

Dalia coughed out a mouthful of blood as her eyes mildly cleared up.

Elena's face turned dignified as she pushed her mana, encasing Dalia's consciousness in a proverbial film that didn't allow it to resurface.

'Looks like they aren't completely stupid.' Elena thought to herself.

Dalia definitely hadn't returned to consciousness by herself. There was definitely some sort of restriction in place preventing her from talking.

'Luckily I stopped pushing it before it got too bad. If I question her so directly, I won't be able to obtain any information at all.'

Elena sighed. At times like these, she truly wished she could directly read memories.

Unfortunately, such a power was already outside the bounds of universal law.

"Whatever. New question: how many comrades do you have in the vicinity?"

Elena phrased the question to avoid triggering thoughts about the Black Dragon Clan in title as well as the overarching goals of the clan. As such, she was hoping the restriction wouldn't activate.

"65 million troops are on Beast Emperor Star."

This time, Dalia was able to respond properly,

Elena's eyes sharpened.

"And what is the strength distribution among them?"

"64,900,000 3rd class and below, 70,000 early and middle stage 4th class, 20,000 late-stage 4th class, 5,000 peak 4th class, 2,000 1st and 2nd revolution, 1,000 3rd and 4th revolution, 1,000 5th and 6th revolution, 10 7th and 8th revolution, 1 9th revolution."

An egregious sum of individuals, and an egregious collection of strength.

Elena finally found out the true scale of the enemy she was facing.

She finally understood just how grand the current confrontation was.

A plan that had spanned for several generations, a grudge that had been festering for an unimaginable amount of time, how could it be something simple?

Even if it was only a single part of this plan, it was something that the Black Dragon Clan put every single bit of its resources into.

But Elena had no fear.

As long as she moved smartly using the information she could acquire from her target...

She didn't believe the Black Dragon Clan could bring her down.

Elena moved swiftly through Beast Emperor Star.

Dalia had already been thoroughly used and discarded, and with her unwittingly giving Elena a considerable amount of information, the need to keep anyone alive disappeared.

Nevertheless, Elena covered up the battle scene to the best of her abilities, incinerated the corpses, and immediately set off.

Her destination?

One of three main bases on Beast Emperor Star that the Black Dragon Clan was acting out of. This was the most important piece of information Elena was able to dig out of Dalia before her brain was melted by the restriction.

'It's unfortunate that I couldn't find the second or third bases, but I don't have the power to face the enemies in those bases either...I need to move quickly.'

The base where Dalia and Dylan came from was the weakest of the three, made evident by their low strength.

Elena didn't plan to just destroy the base, she planned to use it as a stepping stone to unearth the rest of the Black Dragon Clan.

The problem was, she was racing against time.

The Festival of Fate would last 5 days, and with each passing day, the Black Dragon Clan's plans would be furthered and their hostility would rise.

Before they could push matters to a full-blown war, Elena needed to smoke them out and hit them first.

'If I want to do that, I need to destroy this base and gather information on the other two within the day. If I'm not prepared to strike by the time 24 hours pass, I'll lose.'

It was a little terrifying to think of. Elena wasn't even at the extreme peak yet, but the enemy she faced even included a Supreme, an existence who was on the very cusp of Divinity.

However...

Was it different in Eien?

Elena left the Valhalla Mystic Realm around the same time Damien left Calypto, and just as he did, she experienced more than a few time dilations.

While she didn't gain nearly the number of years Damien did, she was able to gain a considerable amount of experience.

She knew what the true universe looked like, and she had faced the most harrowing battlefields known to man, those that existed in Eien.

After all, that was a place where innumerable existences were massacred every second.

'Haha, compared to those Nox Supremes, the Black Dragon Clan almost looks like a joke.'

Elena's confidence hit an all-time high.

And within a few minutes, she arrived at her destination.

Chapter 913 Infiltration [1]

A sprawling sea spanned for as far as the eye could see, tinged in a gold hue by the sky above.

It was currently just approaching dusk, giving Elena a solid 24 hours to work with.

The base she was looking for was directly below her feet, submerged in the waves and hidden from the world.

Now that she'd arrived here, it was time to take action.

'Yggdrasil's Roots, come.'

Yggdrasil's roots, the foundation of the world tree that extended below the earth and supported its growth from the shadows, a title given to the covert operations unit among Elena's Valhalla Souls.

These souls were special in that, unlike the rest of the soldiers, these souls didn't make it to Valhalla.

These were the abandoned souls residing outside Valhalla, begging for a way to salvation.

When Elena encountered them the first time, she realized that these souls were a manifestation of the dark underside of society that even a race as upright as the Valkyries had to deal with.

And though these souls represented such ugliness, all things were equal under heaven. Elena immediately saw their use and added them to her army as a separate and specialized unit.

These black souls that were even darker than shadows, able to blend in with any environment and exist without a single hint of breath coming from their bodies, these were the best possible reconnaissance agents one could ask for.

"Go," Elena commanded.

The souls dispersed into streaks of smoke that collapsed into the ocean below. As Elena moved to a more secure position and found an underwater cave to observe from, she poured mana into her eyes and shared vision with the impure souls.

Immediately, her vision was covered in the blackness of the deep sea, a place where no natural light could reach.

All around, flora and fauna alike glowed with beautiful bioluminescence, their evolutionary mechanisms that allowed them to survive in such a luckless environment for their entire lives.

The impure souls traveled deeper and deeper until they were several hundred kilometers below sea level. At this time, they finally came in contact with the sea floor.

'Hm? It's not there?' Elena thought to herself.

She sent out around 20 impure souls, but none of their perceptions picked up any hint of a hideout in the surroundings.

'But it's impossible to lie under Judgement...then it can only be that.'

Elena ordered her souls to dig deeper into the ground, bypassing the levels of earth and molten lava until they'd dug into the planet's core by almost an entire kilometer.

Whoosh!

A slight breath of mana meandered through the area, imperceptible to all. However, the impure souls weren't normal beings.

In exchange for their sentience and a majority of their senses, they gained an extreme acuity for mana, something that one would be hard-pressed to match even if they searched the entire universe for equals.

The impure souls snapped in the direction of the mana traces, moving like a pack of predators chasing their prey until finally, they arrived before a thick wall of bedrock that seemed to prevent them from moving forward.

'This is it.' Elena thought as she looked at the wall.

It was extremely coarse and it was clearly a natural structure, but Elena could clearly sense traces of tampering in the rock itself.

'If the roots can't penetrate it, there must be some sort of preventive mechanism blocking them. Is there a way around it, or do I have to...?'

Elena would definitely prefer the quiet approach, but she was pressed for time. She had to think of what option would bring her the greatest efficiency, even if the risks were higher.

'Cracking the mechanism isn't completely out of the question. Light is particularly useful as an elemental key, however, it's unknown whether it'll set off any alarms when I try. The safest method is to wait for someone to enter and let the roots follow them, but it's also impractical to hope someone comes along at a convenient time like this...'

Then again, there were 65 million Black Dragons in Beast Emperor Star at the moment. Even if the ones present in this base were less than a third of that number, it was still a considerable number of troops.

'Assuming that they continued their activities after I stopped actively protecting the festival, the improbability is lessened considerably.'

Elena's eyes sharpened. 'Then that's that.'

She was already in over her head. There was no need for her to recklessly get herself in trouble when other options existed.

'If nobody comes within half an hour, I'll break through myself.'

It was the absolute safest option within the restrictions of the current situation.

As such, Elena waited.

And waited.

And waited.

Half an hour passed without suspense, and despite her somewhat small hopes, not a single soul passed through the depths.

'I have no choice but to be violent.' She sighed to herself as she stood up and prepared to act.

However, as if waiting for that moment...

A presence appeared in the ocean, traveling rapidly through the water and penetrating the world's surface, eventually making his way near the slab of bedrock where the impure souls were.

'Disperse!'

Elena immediately ordered the souls to vanish, and they faded into nothingness immediately.

In the next second, that man appeared, drawing a strange set of patterns on the bedrock and activating the teleportation formation present on its surface.

Unbeknownst to him, several shadows had attached themselves to his body.

And when he arrived on the other side of the teleportation formation, a majority of them quietly slipped into the surrounding darkness and spread through the facility they'd arrived in.

One soul, however, decided to stay with the man, following him until he arrived before a specific room.

Bang!

He slammed the door open with force, his eyes filled with burning rage.

He stormed into the room and faced those gathered within, slamming his hand down on the table furiously.

"Delia is dead. How do you plan to explain this away?!" He growled, panning his gaze over those few individuals.

They all had extremely powerful auras, far surpassing the man himself. Yet, he showed no fear.

Elena watched with bated breaths as the relative of the woman she killed was enveloped by the desire for revenge.

She watched him roar at the influential figures before him with gusto, creating a scene with his power and even threatening them more than a few times.

However, their response...?

"You will receive proper compensation for your loss after the plan reaches completion."

A single cold-hearted sentence.

The man's eyes frosted over.

"You actually dare say that? After all that bullshit about family and camaraderie, about how we're fighting for the fate of our clan, you don't even have the ability to sympathize with the deaths of the clan's members?" He sneered.

"Watch your mouth, Darrius!" A nearby woman commanded.

The man at the head of the table waved his hand dismissively. "Don't bother. Darrius, if you cannot understand my sentiments and the sentiments of those above at the moment, then you are nothing more than a hazard to this mission. Tell me one more time, will you accept proper compensation when the mission ends, or will you remain confined in the Cube until the mission ends?"

Darrius grit his teeth in frustration. "Damnit! Fuck your mission! Why should I care about the clan when my only family no longer exists in this world?!"

He stormed out of the room, prepared to leave Beast Emperor Star. But would he be given such luxuries?

"I see you've made your decision," the man spoke indifferently.

"Then, do not blame me for what happens next."

Wap!

A blue holographic cube abruptly sprung out from the ground below Darrius and expanded until it enveloped him inside.

His eyes widened in shock.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?!" He yelled, banging against the sides of the cube.

Unfortunately, his strength was useless.

"Since you have decided to abandon the cause, slumber until we have achieved victory. When we return to Necros, you will receive a proper punishment."

"No! You can't do this to me! Let me out, dammit!"

The man looked away, paying no more mind to Darrius.

And with him unable to resist at all, the cube compressed into a miniature prison that was placed on a nearby shelf.

That was the end of Darrius' involvement in Beast Emperor Star's affairs.

Or at least, that's what his captors assumed.

Chapter 914 Infiltration [2]

'I can use this.'

Elena grinned widely in her concealed underwater cave, far away from the hidden base.

What she'd just witnessed was definitely surprising, and though she gained no information at all, she certainly did gain something great.

She found a way in.

'Forming an alliance with that man is impossible.'

After all, she was the very murderer he hated with such passion.

'However, using him is a different story.'

It felt a bit morally ambiguous to use a man with an evident understanding of right and wrong, but at the same time...

'If he came with the Black Dragon Clan on this mission, how can he be innocent?'

All people committed sin for the sake of survival in this gruesome universe.

Punishing such sin for the sake of it was wrong. This was a point that the prior age of Valkyries and Elena heavily disagreed on.

There was no sense of morality in a war between denizens. The winner was right, and the loser was dirt.

Since everyone was committing sin equally, was there a need to specifically inquisition against it?

Nevertheless, Elena made her decision rapidly. As she did so, she constantly received feedback from her remaining impure souls, giving her a relatively complete map of the facility.

'This facility's infrastructure is too simple. It's clear that the third hidden base is only used to store cannon fodder.'

The strongest beings in this base were 1st and 2nd revolution masters, and on top of that, they were mostly clustered within the base's center, the place where Darrius just got himself captured.

As long as Elena could avoid that area, it was likely that she could evade their perception as well.

'I can't bank on that. Despite Delia's carelessness, the Black Dragon Clan as a whole is taking its current operations extremely seriously. The lower level members are only told that the fate of the clan is at stake without any details on why, but they're all ready to lay down their lives with just this much motivation.'

It was a terrifying level of cohesion that would've seemed like mind control if an outlier like Darrius didn't exist.

'It's too unrealistic to believe I can make Darrius betray the clan...'

If so, she needed to get more creative.

Dealing with smart people was always the most difficult, yet, from another perspective, wasn't it always fun to receive a challenge?

Elena submerged her consciousness into the impure soul that was attached to Darrius. Naturally, it was taken into the prison with him as it was latched to his body.

Elena became one with this soul, taking control of its body and slowly materializing as wisps of smoke around Darrius.

His eyes, closed in meditation, immediately snapped open.

"Who?!" He roared vigilantly before remembering his current situation.

Of course, there was nobody who could penetrate the Black Dragon Clan's special item, the Cube. It was a mobile prison with the integrity of an obsidian fortress.

"Do you seek revenge?"

Impossibly, a voice joined him in the prison space. It was dark, grimy, and filled with an aura of evil and death.

"Who are you?!" Darrius yelled, spreading his awareness and heightening his senses.

"Do you seek revenge?"

The same words rang out again.

Darrius' eyes hardened.

An entity that he couldn't sense or perceive in any sense...

Was offering him an opportunity?

This could either be an extreme blessing or a mistake greater than any other.

However, for the current Darrius...

His sister had just been slaughtered.

He wanted to see her killer dead.

No, he wanted to see her killer tortured until their soul collapsed and then desecrated and fed to dogs.

His eyes turned red in murderous intent.

He stopped thinking.

"Yes, I want revenge."

Delia was the only family he had left in this world. Not just his direct family, but his entire family line has been massacred more than 50 years ago, leaving just him and his little sister to fend for themselves.

The Black Dragon Clan was too massive for them to offer support to each and every member of the clan.

As such, the siblings were forced through a great deal of harrowing suffering before they finally received aid and were adopted by an elder of the clan.

However, just what did fate have against them?

Even that elder was slaughtered on a mission 20 years ago.

Grown adults at that point, the siblings received no more aid at all, relegated to their combat divisions and indoctrinated into the army as common soldiers.

Compared to the rage in his soul right now, his feelings for the Black Dragon Clan were negligible.

Elena grinned to herself.

Consent was key.

Now that she'd received it.

'Take it.'

She gave the order, and the impure soul immediately wrapped around Darrius' body and pierced his spiritual world.

Thereafter, it turned into a black crystalline structure that took root on his spiritual continent.

Darrius' eyes widened.

He felt an unknown power flowing through his body.

It was murky, impure, and evil, but it wasn't anything like the diametrically vile mana of the Nox.

'With this...' Darrius thought to himself.

With the aid of this strange power that had been granted to him...

Crack!

The Cube began to crack.

And within seconds, it shattered entirely.

Bang!

Space imploded as the compressed space rapidly expanded back to its original size and spat Darrius out.

"What...?!" The woman from earlier exclaimed, shooting to her feet.

"Darrius, how did you escape?!" She roared commandingly.

However, the current Darrius was in no state to listen to her words.

Grrrr...!

He let out a low growl, puffs of black mana smoke rising from his body.

"Revenge...will be...mine!"

Bang!

He slammed his foot against the ground and rapidly pushed forward, rushing out of the room and several hundred meters down the corridor within a second.

"Stop him! Do not let him leave the base!" The man in charge roared.

Alarms blared throughout the base, and a multitude of troops responded at once.

Darrius was immediately surrounded from all sides.

"Darrius, don't make us do this!" the man at the head of the group exclaimed.

Darrius glanced over indifferently.

"Peter..." he muttered with a brief instance of lucidity.

Yet, even with a clear ability to understand his actions, he didn't make a different choice.

"I must avenge my sister, even if it costs me my life!"

His body burst with eerie black mana.

And without suspense, a deadly melee began.

Flash!

A flash of light enveloped a nondescript figure and transported her to her destination.

Elena spread her awareness and cautiously moved forward, carefully avoiding the route Darrius was taking to the exit.

'The distraction is working properly, but the roots don't have a lot of personal power. Once he runs through the energy supply, he'll collapse entirely.'

That was the terrifying thing about impure souls. Not only could they corrupt one's spiritual world, but they would also take back the power they lent by sucking the host's body until they were satisfied.

In most cases, as the host used every ounce of provided power to achieve their desires, they were never able to resist having every ounce of their mana and vitality sucked away.

'When that happens, the facility will go into high alert, and it'll be almost impossible for me to escape.'

Elena judged that she had roughly 15 minutes before Darrius ran out of steam.

But for her current task...

'15 minutes is more than enough.'

Elena grinned as she stuck a strange device to a nearby wall. She turned it clockwise 90 degrees, and when she let go, it melded into the wall and disappeared.

'One down, ninety-nine to go.'

Destroying the base was a task she could easily accomplish within the given time limit.

What she now needed to place her focus on was finding someone to provide her with information about the other two bases.

'Hmm, then, am I going to have to target some extreme peak masters?'

The thought was absurd.

But what was the harm in entertaining it?

Elena was sure excited to try, that much was certain.

Chapter 915 Infiltration [3]

Whoosh!

Elena's body was like a wisp of flowing wind as she moved swiftly through the Black Dragon Clan facility.

In terms of layout, as she'd noticed before, this facility wasn't complicated at all. It was merely a collection of corridors and areas that followed a very basic rectangular structure. As long as Elena knew where she came from, it wouldn't be difficult to get back.

The only strange part of the architecture was the size of the rooms that stood between those corridors. They were irregular and some even dipped several hundred meters below the average level of the base.

And naturally, the sheer size of a facility made to house several million troops couldn't be small.

Darrius was currently causing a commotion due southeast of where Elena currently was, and as she moved deeper into the base, placing a number of devices across the walls, she got closer and closer to said commotion.

'He's holding up quite well.' She thought to herself.

She genuinely didn't think Darrius would be able to hold on for so long under the siege of so many troops, but it became evident that they were hesitant to subdue and oppress him, likely due to his talent or status.

'If I place these here...'

Elena stood in a specific corridor and scanned the area intensely, her eyes darting around in search of something.

'Nice.'

It didn't take her long to find the perfect positioning.

She immediately took out four more devices, much different in appearance than the previous group, and attached them to four different spots on the wall.

Elena grinned to herself as she vanished from the area, heading deeper into the base and concealing herself as best as possible.

'Now then, it's time to stir up some trouble.'

She dashed through the corridors, and in no time at all, she was practically parallel with Darrius and the congregation of troops around him.

And this...

This was her cue to act.

She hid herself in a nearby room, covered herself in a thick film of mana, and finally...

She pressed the red button.

"Darrius, don't make us use force!"

The man named Peter headed the unit suppressing Darrius in place, roaring his pleas to solve this problem peacefully.

Not only was Darrius a good brother of his, but he was also a valuable asset to the Black Dragon Clan, a talented younger generation who had the potential to become a High Elder one day.

Ruining a genius like this, despite the nature of the situation, wasn't something Peter wanted to do, nor was it something the higher-ups desired.

After all, there was a reason they imprisoned him instead of directly killing him for insubordination.

Nevertheless, Darrius was of no mind to listen. He held a pair of axes in his hands and stood ready for battle. Smoke curled out of his nostrils as he deeply exhaled, making him appear more beastly than ever before.

Peter gritted his teeth.

If it was like this...!

"Fuck! Restrain him! Try not to injure him, but do what is necessary if the situation calls for it!"

He immediately gave the order despite his internal hesitation.

The troops around him charged, engaging Darrius in a furious melee.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The sound of metal clashing mixed with the sound of spraying blood and echoed through the corridor. Contrary to anyone's expectations, Darrius held his ground even while being sieged by several soldiers near his strength level.

He swung his axes with ferocity, oozing black mana into the surroundings that disturbed his opponents' mental states and made it difficult for them to react properly. Using this semi-instinctual tactic, Darrius was slowly pushing through the crowd, ignoring his accumulated injuries as his focus remained solely on reaching the exit.

"Dammit!" Peter roared.

He slammed his large foot down on the ground, causing cracks to spread throughout the hallway.

He didn't have to step in, but for the sake of the Black Dragon Clan, he...!

RUMBLE!

"Hm?"

Peter's gaze snapped to the side. He suddenly felt a strange rumbling shockwave spreading from that direction.

'What could that be? The base is definitely—'

BANG!

The door leading to a nearby corridor burst off its hinges and slammed into the crowd of troops, directly crushing a few of their bones into powder.

Peter's eyes widened.

This pressure was...!

"Everyone, run!"

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The tsunami of flames entered the room before Peter's words could properly land. The flames engulfed all things, spreading further and further through the base until the entire structure was enveloped in flames!

"AHHHHH!"

"SOMEONE HELP!"

"IT HURTS! IT HURTS!"

The wails of those beings under 4th class sounded like evil spirits howling. They burned without any ability to resist, slowly being suffocated to death as their flesh and bones were melted down into liquid that soon evaporated in the heat of the flames.

'Shit! What's happening?!' Peter panicked inwardly as he burst through a nearby corridor and rushed deeper into the base.

'Where are the commanders at a time like this?!'

As he sifted through every possible scenario in his head, Peter's ears caught wind of a recurrence of the first rumbling he heard.

Why did it sound like...

Even more explosions were going off?

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The cascading explosions got closer and closer, and the roaring fire that swallowed the base only got hotter.

Soon enough, entry-level 4th class beings were also falling to its claws.

Clang!

Two axes dropped to the floor. A man stood with widened eyes as he observed the incomprehensible scene around him.

He suddenly understood.

He had...lost the gamble.

With the raging flames and chaos surrounding him, he felt an odd moment of peace.

The crystalline black structure in his spiritual world turned into a fog that endlessly devoured his mana and life force.

But he felt a strange sense of peace.

'Father, mother, uncle, sis...' he thought as he stared into the facility's burning ceiling.

'I'm finally coming to meet you.'

Nobody noticed it in the current situation, but slowly, that man's body turned into an empty husk.

And without any support, it soon burned into cinders.

A black shadow imperceptibly snuck out of that burning body and made its way through the halls of the facility, finally reaching its destination.

"You did well."

The praise it craved, the validation from its savior...

It was absolutely delighted to hear these last words as it returned to Valhalla.

Elena swept her hand through the air and collected the final impure soul remaining in the base. As she observed the surrounding damages, she nodded in satisfaction.

Now, there was only a single step left.

And her targets...were currently making their way towards her at their fastest speeds.

'Is it ironic that this will probably be the easiest part of the operation?' Elena thought wryly.

She stuck to a nearby wall and used Light Laws to conceal herself, laying in wait.

Not even 30 seconds later, three figures could be seen flitting down in her direction.

"Sir, headquarters will definitely ask for an explanation. We need to find a method to survive." The woman from earlier pressed with a solemn look.

"I know. I already have a plan. As long as we can—"

The three people, a familiar group of two men and one woman, took a collective step.

A step that they shouldn't have ever taken.

Immediately, four shining devices lit up on the walls to their sides.

"Watch—!"

The leader tried to warn his comrades and dodge, but the mechanism wasn't so slow as to allow such actions.

Within an instant, a solid cube of iridescent blue energy formed and trapped the three individuals.

And in the next instant, it shrunk to the size of a Rubik's cube.

Elena walked up and took the Rubik's cube into her hand.

Her mission had been accomplished.

The time taken?

Roughly 2 hours.

Left with 22 hours, Elena rushed out of the burning facility.

And as soon as she made her exit...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The entire base was blown to oblivion.

Chapter 916 Infiltration [4]

"You...you did what?!"

A surprised exclamation echoed through the throne room of the Golden Dragon Imperial Palace.

The Golden Dragon Emperor slammed his hand down on his armrest in surprise, looking at the small cube in his hands.

Elena grinned as she responded to him. "Overall, the process was pretty simple. This is Valkyrie trapping technology, made so that even extreme peak masters can't escape. I was lucky enough to get my hands on it a while back, which is why I had complete confidence in this operation."

Right, despite the fact that Elena was currently in the late-stages of 4th class, she wasn't an incomprehensible genius who could easily take down extreme peak masters, regardless of how weak they were.

However, Elena wasn't someone who used the head-on approach so wantonly like a certain someone. If she could solve a problem with wits, she naturally preferred it that way.

For this reason, Elena was always equipped with several artifacts with various different purposes, artifacts that could help her survive even the most difficult scenarios.

"I'm sure there isn't long before the Black Dragon Clan catches wind of what happened. I suggest you find a way to pry information out of those three before that happens, so we can preemptively strike them at their hearts." Elena suggested.

The Golden Dragon Emperor nodded in agreement. "Worry not. I have already summoned experts to do this very job. I shall inform you when we are preparing to move out."

He was more than just a little pleased with Elena's contribution. After all, she'd just provided him the key to enacting many plans he already had in motion!

He spoke with confidence oozing from his words, as if gaining the necessary information was something in the past.

And Elena didn't argue. She also trusted in the capabilities of the Golden Dragon Clan's specialists.

She decided to instead return to her room to rest and recuperate, as well as train with the Genesis Bead while she could.

She could feel her Life Laws on the verge of another breakthrough, and until she reached it, she didn't plan to exit seclusion.

How long would it take?

While Elena had no way to measure such things, she was confident that she could finish before the raid started.

And at that time, she would join with her peak strength, making her a completely different monster than she already was.

As Elena sat down in meditative posture and withdrew the Genesis Bead, the countdown began.

6 hours.

At most, there was this much time before the beginning of war.

Somewhere in the starry abyss between worlds, the deep space of Grand Heavens Boundary, two figures meandered without proper destination or speed, as if tourists enjoying the sights of the universe.

"Master, why are we moving so slow?" The woman among them asked.

She was just a little girl when they left for training, but as they were returning, she'd already become a grown woman.

As for the handsome young man next to her, he gazed at the universe with eyes that seemed weathered by time, indifferent due to the commonality of all things they viewed.

"There's no rush. You're a spatial expert now, so interact with space a little bit," he said with a light smile.

"But Master, the Festival of Fate already started! We're going to be late!" The woman, Astoria, exclaimed in a disgruntled voice.

Damien looked off into the distance, his eyes glazing over slightly as he spoke. "Well, I don't think we're missing much."

The Golden Dragon Clan was definitely in a precarious situation at the moment with the Black Dragon Clan and its allies on the verge of striking, but Damien didn't quite want to arrive on the scene yet.

After all, he wanted to see what those fate clouds could do.

'Fate has always been so esoteric. If I can use this chance to grasp a bit of its workings, my comprehension on universal flow will see a major boost.'

Universal flow didn't have any sort of presence in reality. Damien might've been comprehending it, but he felt that he'd never be able to actively utilize this flow.

Rather, the ability to read it was already an unimaginable skill.

'Worst case scenario, I can just devour a few fate clouds, but if I want to do that, I need to first solve the Golden Dragon Clan's troubles...'

At the moment, what Damien wanted to see was how the fate clouds boosted the Golden Dragon Clan.

There wasn't much power left in those clouds, but he wanted to see what this little bit of suspicious fate could accomplish.

'It's unfortunate that I can't go to Beast Emperor Star and just observe directly.' He sighed inwardly.

With Astoria present, there was no way he could covertly arrive at Beast Emperor Star and spend time reading it rather than directly entering it and getting involved with his troubles.

As such, he was forced to remain at this boundary, not far away from the Beast Domain but not too close either.

From here, Damien could somewhat understand what was happening in Beast Emperor Star through a combination of awareness and universal flow.

To read this was also a form of training, which was as why Damien tried to urge Astoria to stay for longer to experience the starry sky, but she wasn't having it at all.

Currently, she hung off his back like a monkey, her arms around his neck to support her as she swung around and bothered him.

"Master, I'm bored~!"

"Haa..."

Damien sighed, out loud this time.

"Are you going to keep acting like this until I agree?"

"Yup!"

"You're quite the annoying disciple."

"Ehhh~? Don't be mean, Master. I know you love me!"

"Tch. Get off already."

"Are we going now? Are we?"

"We'll go, we'll go, just quiet down already."

"Hehe~"

Astoria formed a V with her fingers and flashed it at Damien victoriously, making him endlessly roll his eyes.

But either way, it was obvious that he wouldn't be allowed to concentrate on what he was doing as long as this disciple of his was around.

In the end, he could only shrug it off. It was his fault for letting her act so willful, but what could he do?

He didn't want to see this overenthusiastic disciple of his lose her spark.

'I guess I'll observe the fate clouds later. It won't be too late as long as there's still conflict ongoing.'

With Astoria still on his back, Damien began teleporting once more, making his way back to Beast Emperor Star using shorter jumps to help fortify Astoria's body.

And was it a coincidence?

A certain Bloodlock clansman was making his way to the same destination at almost the same pace, his arrival time aligning with Damien's.

In reality, he should've arrived far earlier.

But was it truly a coincidence?

It seemed like the universe itself was doing its best to hold him back, throwing endless perils in his path to block him.

If it wasn't for that, how could he have taken so long to make this journey when he was already within the Beast Domain many days ago?

Strange coincidences...was that the only one?

Weren't there so many people already moving like they were pieces on a chess board?

Strange coincidences...

Wasn't it better to call this...fate?

Chapter 917 Clash [1]

A meeting was taking place in the Black Dragon Clan's main headquarters on Beast Emperor Star.

This meeting was one of many that took place over the past few days, and many more that were slated to take place as long as the plan was ongoing.

The Black Dragon Clan absolutely could not tolerate failures during this time, and as such, they were always moving to make sure they were a step ahead of their enemies.

"Progress has been relatively according to plan. Minor chaos has been caused among the common people, and the Golden Dragon Clan's response has been slow enough to cause a slight shift in public sentiment, however, it isn't nearly enough." A man reported.

"We must hasten our progress. We cannot continue with our originally planned trajectory with the amount of backlash we've been facing," a nearby woman continued.

"The mysterious summoner has gone quiet for almost a day. It is not a welcome sign."

Elena's interference and subsequent withdrawal from battle with the clan was taken into account long ago, and multiple groups of assassins had already been sent out to deal with her, each assassin at the late stages of 4th class.

"Have the investigation results for the disappearances of the previous teams come back?"

"Negative. We have yet to find traces of their mana or bodies, however, there is a large patch of abandoned land containing clear scars of battles. It is likely that they were lured to and killed there."

"The current teams?"

"They have yet to find traces of the summoner. They are either in hiding or at the royal palace, though the latter seems more likely."

"Indeed..."

"There is no need to worry about the summoner. Once they leave the royal palace, they will immediately be dealt with by the teams we sent out. More than that, we should be concerned about the royal children!"

"Correct. As we know, all of the emperor's children have heaven-defying combat potential. Only the little princess is a target that can be taken easily..."

The conversation continued as every possible variable was discussed and countermeasures were formed to combat them.

At that time, a man suddenly barged into the room.

"Bad news! The tertiary base camp has gone up in flames! We have lost contact with all forces stationed at the base, and it is almost impossible to enter its premises without being swallowed by waves of flames!"

The man immediately gave his report without waiting for anyone to be surprised by his presence. The officials in the room snapped their attention to him, some of them even standing up in shock.

"When did this happen?!" The man named Pretus questioned in a commanding voice.

"Three hours ago, sir! The base's destruction was not noticed immediately due to an unrelated spatial phenomenon that disrupted our transmission waves."

"Understood. You may leave."

Pretus gritted his teeth and glanced at those in the room with him.

"This is an extreme oversight! While we were sitting here planning, the enemy took the opportunity to strike us first!"

"How could they have found the base location?"

"That's obvious. The missing teams should be the answer."

"Dammit! They made it around the restriction?! We must immediately—"

"Enough!"

Pretus roared, silencing the meeting room.

His cold gaze immediately forced any voices of objection to entertain this silence.

"We do not know how, but the enemy has a way to evade our information restriction. There is only one thing that could mean..."

"...they will be coming here for war as soon as possible!"

Pretus sighed to himself as he spoke. Thinking further, even this small change was able to force them into a corner due to the precarious nature of their plan.

There was no other choice but to take drastic measures to readjust their path forward.

"We need to begin the third phase immediately," he said with determination.

"T-the third phase? But sir...!"

"I know what you want to say, but save it! Have you forgotten our reason for doing all of this in the first place?!"

The room went silent again. Everyone was clearly aware of the gruesome trajectory that the Black Dragon Clan's fate was currently on.

It wasn't just one or two unwilling sighs that echoed through the room, but nobody spoke up in objection.

Indeed, if they wanted to gain the upper hand against the Golden Dragon Clan here, if they wanted to preserve their chance at victory...

"Pass down the order! Activate phase 3! All units remain on standby until further notice!"

The command was sent down the chain, and multiple moving parts came together to form the activation process of the plan.

In a certain area devoid of anything but the sound of furious typing, technological experts readied the mechanisms necessary to execute such a large-scale plan.

Throughout the Golden Dragon Estate, hidden members of the Black Dragon Clan buried strange canisters in the ground and hid them within the buildings before vanishing entirely.

A different group of teams spread through the seas and skies, planting their own strange devices in specific locations determined by the logistics division.

And while all these clansmen moved as a cohesive unit, the activation of Phase 3 became imminent.

"All systems go. Phase 3 will begin in 15 minutes!"

A report came back from the logistics division. All soldiers remained in wait, hoping that these 15 minutes could pass in an instant.

But the universe was never so forgiving.

With such an important moment on the horizon, another report spread through the base like wildfire:

The enemy had arrived at their doorstep!

It was amazing the wonders that power could bring.

The Golden Dragon Clan's army appeared within an instant, several tens of millions of forces standing in the air or on the ground, facing the direction of the Black Dragon Clan's main hidden base with a dense aura of killing intent surrounding them.

They were led by a domineering man with bright golden hair and eyes, donning armor shining in the same hue. He was none other than the Golden Dragon Emperor's 2nd son, known as the Draconic War God.

Several hundred thousand kilometers away, the common people were still eagerly enjoying their festival, however, the visiting experts could sense gunpowder clouding the air.

The distant and terrifying fluctuations...

They had to find the source!

A small and hidden crowd began to gather as an army stood alone, awaiting its partner on the battlefield.

And from the Imperial Palace, the Golden Dragon Emperor watched the proceedings carefully.

As a Demigod himself, he was unable to directly take part in the confrontation, but that didn't mean he would just leave it to others.

A projection of his figure floated in the sky above the armor, this mere fragment of his presence spreading fear and awe among the onlookers.

And finally, among the rapidly boiling atmosphere...

The Black Dragon Clan took the stage, matching the Golden Dragons in both numbers and force.

Pretus stood at the head of the Black Dragons donning a menacing battle armor that made him look like a demon god.

He held his massive greatsword in the air, gathering mana towards his body.

15 minutes.

Until this time passed, the Golden Dragon Army needed to be held here.

And after that time passed...

He was excited to see the way they panicked and struggled to save themselves.

Chapter 918 Clash [2]

The golden fate clouds surrounding Beast Emperor Star were truly magisterial, especially when viewed from space.

Wap!

The folds of space twisted as two figures appeared to marvel at this very view.

But of course, one of them was far too used to it to feel any sort of grandiosity.

"Master, let's go, let's go! I don't want to be late!"

Astoria tugged on Damien's hand and pulled him towards Beast Emperor Star with fervor.

Ever since she'd gained some strength, she'd been dying to come back to Beast Emperor Star.

While she never truly explained her reasoning, nor did she outwardly display any strange behavior, Damien was more than aware of her struggles.

From long ago, Astoria had been viewed as the weakling. She was the easily bullyable little princess who'd always choose running away over fighting back, a target that even regular geniuses without matching status could pick on, since she would never report the bullying to her father.

Of course, Astoria was also the little devil emperor that all people feared. Her mischievous nature and "interesting" way of playing pranks earned her several enemies, and though they'd never try to harm her for it, they surely ruined her name and refused to offer aid in even the direst of situations.

Astoria was always surrounded by hate, envy, and negativity.

Even since the very first day of her training, when she first began to see the benefits of capitalizing on her spatial affinity, Astoria had been dreaming of the day she returned.

For Damien, as her master, how could he be unaware of her ambitions?

Merely, he kept his mouth shut so as to allow her to maintain that drive, that independence that would lead to her growth in the future.

"Let's go. I'm sure your father still thinks he'd handed you over to a scammer," Damien commented with a smile as he began to move forward.

Astoria smiled happily, following after him.

"Master, when we get back, there's so much I want to show you! Beast Emperor Star is the best world in the universe."

"Yes, yes. Once you win that silly marriage tournament and earn your freedom, I'll take you out to play for an entire month if you truly wish for it."

"Really, Master?! You can't go back on your—"

Damien's eyes sharpened. He pulled Astoria's arm and rapidly set up a defense before...!

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

It happened in an instant.

A massive cloud of hostile mana enveloped Damien and Astoria, burning the space around them and causing the fabric of reality to tremble.

Damien's defenses cracked immediately. The chaotic mana fluctuations tore through his own mana and even impacted his body.

He shielded Astoria to the best of his ability, allowing his skin and muscles to be shredded as he maneuvered his mana internally and summoned the golden palace from the Sanctuary.

BANG!

Damien and Astoria disappeared into the palace, and the horror-inducing mana that assaulted them fell against the palace walls, causing dull thuds as it lost its momentum against the protective formations.

"HAHAHAHAHA!! SO IT WAS YOU ALL ALONG!"

A mad cackle boomed through space and penetrated the castle walls.

Damien put Astoria down and summoned the castle's surveillance systems to catch sight of his enemy.

Immediately, his face fell.

Those signature piercing bloody red eyes, he couldn't mistake them anywhere.

This was a Bloodlock clan member.

'He's finally here!' Damien realized.

The pursuer he'd been waiting for this whole time, the one he'd provoked all those years ago when he was just leaving Death Emperor Star...

This man was Arthur Bloodlock, Reavus Bloodlock's father!

"Master, what's happening?!" Astoria exclaimed from the side.

"Nothing, don't worry about it. This is your master's personal issue," Damien responded calmly.

"But Master...!"

"No need to say anymore. You'll have to stay with your auntie Elvira and the rest for a little bit, alright?"

"Master!" Astoria yelled again.

She didn't need to say any other words to convey her feelings.

The force of that attack...

It wasn't something just anyone could create, especially so suddenly that it could be used as a sneak attack!

The enemy was definitely a peak expert, and even if it was Damien...

Astoria wasn't allowed to complete her thought before Damien sent her into the Sanctuary.

For this battle that was both extremely sudden and expected at the same time, Damien didn't need to involve anyone else.

After all, this trouble was directly brought by him, purposefully at that.

"Arthur Bloodlock, you've finally found me. Isn't it funny? You're an exalted Supreme, yet you couldn't even find a little growing genius like me for months on end! Hahahaha!"

Damien used the golden palace's mechanisms to project his voice into space, immediately choosing to provoke the enemy.

As expected, Arthur's face turned black.

"Boy, you killed my son and now dare to mock me; do you not put the Bloodlock Clan in your eyes?!" He roared, his mana flaring into the surroundings.

Kacha!

Space shattered once again, transforming several thousand kilometers around Arthur into a chaotic void.

Damien's heart beat so fast that it almost leapt out of his chest.

He truly didn't expect the enemy to be a Supreme, but he'd sensed it upon their first collision.

This challenge...was he truly up for it?

As someone who hadn't even properly entered the extreme peak yet, could he truly face a Supreme?

'No, facing him isn't enough. I need to kill him and make sure he can't cause more problems in the future!'

What Damien needed was a stepping stone, not a cockroach.

But even with the golden palace, he could only resist the attacks of a Supreme, he couldn't fight back.

"Boy, if you do not come out and obediently receive your punishment, I will drag you out with force!" Arthur roared, ending the tirade he'd been going on while Damien thought about his options.

Damien found himself smirking.

Even if they were supreme experts, they were still prey to their own egos.

That was something that could easily be used to his advantage.

'Shit, I can't take it anymore. Let's just fight!'

Damien clapped his hands together and summoned the palace formations. A massive golden halo formed in the starry sky around the palace, and a beautifully ornate ancient formation backed it domineeringly.

"Old bastard, did you see it?" Damien asked with a smile.

Arthur's eyes sharpened as he watched the palace rev into action.

"Boy, what nonsense are you speaking now?" He said icily.

Damien's smile widened into a condescending grin.

"Oh, nothing. I was just asking if you were able to see how I mutilated your son. The video feed was a little interrupted on the way back, you see."

"BOY, YOU DARE?!"

Arthur immediately flew into a rage.

To be taunted by his son's killer, especially when the target himself was so much weaker...

He couldn't stand it!

Arthur immediately let loose his mana. He coalesced a suit of bloody armor around his body and shot out.

He arrived in front of the palace before Damien could even register his movements.

His fist punched out powerfully.

And another explosion rocked the starry sky.

A second battle was beginning above Beast Emperor Star, and on the surface below, an even more gruesome collision was following the same path.

The fate clouds in the atmosphere swirled, countless worried sentiments clouded the air.

It wasn't expected, but today...

Today, a final battle set for the future was going to begin far earlier than it should have.

Chapter 919 Clash [3]

What was a Supreme?

It was easy to say that they were beings on the verge of Divinity. It was easy to say that they were the strongest existences that could maneuver freely under the universal law.

But what did that mean?

To answer such a question, one must first understand what it meant to enter the 9 revolutions at the extreme peak of 4th class.

If the 3rd class was a journey to familiarize oneself with the elements, and the 4th class was a journey to comprehend the Laws that lay above those elements, the 9 revolutions were the process of ingraining those Laws into oneself and forming one's Divinity.

After all, Divinity was something built, not something granted.

Cosmic Rebirth, the higher form of Universe Baptism, was the process of validating one's Divinity and gaining the approval of the universe.

Then...

Demigods were titled Demigods because there was a realm of Gods above their existence, but in all actuality, Demigods were already set in Godhood.

If one took the definition of the term literally...

Weren't extreme peak masters the true Demigods?

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

It was terrifying to see, even from the protection of the golden palace.

Arthur Bloodlock's attacks didn't have any true shape, nor did they take on the form of techniques in the slightest. To the outside observer, it was almost like he was wantonly throwing mana about like a common 1st class warrior.

However, this absolutely was not the case.

The golden palace's defenses shook endlessly as they withstood the mountainous impacts of those lackluster mana blasts. Vine-like bloody patterns crept across the palace walls, spreading their color far and wide.

Damien could feel it. Though he wasn't quite at that level yet, his perception could almost touch it.

Arthur Bloodlock's each and every attack contained complexly intertwined Law fluctuations, interwoven concepts that formed their own mysterious effects even without Arthur's direct prodding.

'Is this what it means to internalize Laws?' Damien wondered as he watched the assault.

Arthur was showing no signs of effort or exhaustion. He continued to attack the palace with world-shaking blows as if they were regular manaless punches, even making Damien fear if the defenses could hold up.

'That Nox Supreme wasn't like this. I think I finally understand why the Void Corridor plan went so smoothly.'

The Nox Supreme had been injured by the backlash of his own attack, an extremely lucky chance that was actually an inevitable fact if the golden palace's power was considered.

Watching the three-way collision that took place later truly made Damien underestimate the power of Supremes.

And more than anything, it made him severely underestimate the power of the Cloud Giant Leader, Galantis.

'Didn't I find myself a real cheat?' Damien realized with a smile.

A fallback, he'd found one.

It meant that regardless of how he took things from this point forward, he had a way out.

And if that was so...

"Old Bloodbitch, can you hear me?!" Damien yelled, projecting his voice through the palace formations.

Arthur's brow twitched slightly, but he didn't respond, continuing his assault on the palace.

Damien sighed in annoyance. "Hey, stupid fucker, you should know by now that you can't break through those walls. Why don't I give you an opportunity?"

Arthur's eyes darted over, a slight pause appearing in his movements.

"Haha, fine. If you want to be childish then just listen while you waste your time," Damien continued upon seeing his reaction.

"I will come out of the palace and fight you directly."

Those words managed to do what their predecessors couldn't.

Arthur stopped and backed away, glaring suspiciously at the palace.

"Speak."

Damien smirked. "I'll come out and fight you in single combat, but on one condition..."

"...lower your strength to match mine."

"You are truly an arrogant prick," Arthur growled coldly.

"Then are you rejecting my offer?" Damien asked.

"Hmph. How can you be sure I will follow your terms?" Arthur countered.

Damien shrugged lightly. "That's simple. We'll sign a Mana Oath."

Arthur furrowed his brows in thought.

While this situation seemed like something that'd give Damien a path forward, a chance to avoid total destruction...

That wasn't true at all.

Arthur grinned to himself.

Someone who hadn't entered the 9 revolutions would never understand what it truly meant to stand on the extreme peak of existence.

Even if his strength was lowered...

"I will accept your deal," Arthur said with a condescending smile on his face.

"Good!" Damien exclaimed, his eyes shining.

He immediately said his part of the oath, allowing Arthur to be perfectly clear about his sincerity before he left the palace.

And as if to mock him, Arthur followed dutifully.

Within an instant, a Mana Oath was formed between the two parties.

Arthur was to lower his strength to match Damien's level. If he ever increased his strength past that point while the battle was ongoing, he would be penalized by the universe.

And with that layer of protection in place, Damien no longer had any need to hide like a coward.

His body materialized in the starry sky. The golden palace vanished, returned to the Sanctuary.

"Boy, why did you do it?" Arthur asked coldly, finally seeing Damien face to face.

He'd only sensed it from the distance, that familiar mana fluctuations that resonated in the projection of Reavus' final moments.

By the time he attacked, Damien was already in the golden palace.

The valiant figure of this man, the calm and even slightly anticipatory expression on his face as he stood parallel to a Supreme...

It irked him greatly.

Damien glanced over nonchalantly, as if aware of exactly what to do to infuriate Arthur.

"Does something like that matter at this point?" He asked mockingly.

"You killed my son. Boy, if you do not give me an explanation, do not expect an easy death!"

The mocking sneer forming on Damien's face only became more pronounced.

If they were to fight at the same level...

Did anyone in the universe stand a chance against him?

"Old bitch, I killed your son because I didn't like the way he looked at me. Oh, also, I needed a new grindstone, and you seemed like the perfect candidate!"

"You dare?!"

"I do!"

Damien vanished, reappearing behind Arthur with his fist outstretched.

'Seven Stars Encircling The Moon'

Three Death Stars and three Life Stars surrounded a moon made of Spacetime.

VOOOOOOOM!

A monstrous fluctuation burst from Damien's fist before the attack was even executed.

He pushed his fist out in a split second, slamming it towards Arthur's face as the volatile forces around his fist collided.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The fabric of reality trembled, spacetime bent in on itself as an infinite cycle of samsara swallowed all life within the surrounding tens of thousands of kilometers.

Damien immediately teleported hundreds of meters away, not waiting to see the results of his attack.

Mirage appeared in his right and Freya joined it in his left. Damien's eyes swirled as the All-Seeing Eyes passively activated, and finally...

Breaths of pitch-black mana danced around his body.

Whoosh!

He jerked his head to the side rapidly, using the momentum to flick his body backwards and put force into his legs.

Bang!

Arthur's figure, which had just surfaced only a few inches away from Damien, was instantly assaulted by a mana-charged kick that blasted him back into space.

Damien immediately followed his path, brandishing Freya and firing a barrage of pure white bullets into Arthur's repelling body.

"Hmph!"

Arthur swept his hand through space, creating a bloody tide that crashed into the bullets and burst them.

He stabilized his body in the void and smirked.

"Boy, you truly have talent! It's a shame you must die here!"

He clapped his hands together, summoning his mana.

And before Damien could react, a towering manifestation had formed behind him.

Chapter 920 Clash [4]

A master at the end of his 9 revolutions.

What sort of strength had such a person attained?

Damien had seen those Demigods who could crush half a planet with a casual swipe of the hand, but how far away were those monstrous existences from those on the cusp of reaching that level?

It was unfortunate that one would never know unless they asked a Demigod to convey their experience. After all, Demigods were only allowed to engage in combat with other Demigods.

It was incredibly rare to see them battle.

Nevertheless, the integration of Laws and the defining of one's self were two of the key points of the 9 revolutions.

And when one had done so to such a complete level that they were titled a Supreme...

Something like a level couldn't limit their power by much.

The intricacies of their laws were far beyond what a mere level could represent.

Behind Arthur, a towering phantom image of a bloody red emperor manifested itself. Several hundred thousand kilometers around the two fighters were suddenly dyed red. An oddly viscous atmosphere was formed as Arthur raised his arm.

Damien's eyes sharpened.

'I have to dodge!'

Arthur brought his hand down with force. The projection behind him followed his movements, slamming its continent-sized hand down on Damien's position.

"...!"

Damien's eyes widened in shock at the rapid expansion of the phantom. With the speed of that palm, even his instant teleportation would be too slow to avoid it!

'One With Dimension.'

Damien closed his eyes and melded with the folds of the universe.

The palm crashed down onto his position in the exact same instant.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Space shattered and time became chaotic. The sheer physical power of the palm ruptured the dimension itself, causing gruesome tears to spread for millions of kilometers on end.

"Keuk...!" Damien coughed in pain as his body was shot out of the dimensional layers. When his hiding place was directly collapsed, how could he be fine?

The chaotic twisting of the dimension ruptured several of his organs before it spat him out, but he wasn't too worried about the injury.

Instead, he needed to figure out how to move forward!

Arthur was far more powerful than expected, but it wasn't out of the scope that Damien could handle.

Damien firmed his gaze and teleported. Mirage swung through the air as he moved, cutting through all things before he even left the spatial layers.

'Void Sword Art Fifth Form: Dimensional Severance'

The thin black line cut through space and time, forming an all-consuming void as it arrived before Arthur within a spark of a second.

Arthur's eyes widened when he sensed the dangerous fluctuations coming from the attack.

He raised his arms and crossed them, pouring mana into them and forming a pair of blood-red gauntlets on his fist.

Skreeeee!

The sound of metal screeching against metal rang out as the attack struck Arthur's defenses.

Shing!

The mana gauntlets were cut away with the dimension in an instant. The slash continued on its way until...!

Clang!

The sound of impact wasn't what Damien expected at all.

'Right, he's a fucking Supreme.'

Damien clicked his tongue in realization.

Even if his level was lowered...would his physical defense be constrained?

Damien was more aware than anyone else of how unreliable stats were. Even if his defense stat itself was lowered to a common level 399 who hadn't entered the next phase, his true defense definitely exceeded a 2nd revolution master!

'I need to take this more seriously.' Damien thought to himself.

He was fighting a Supreme, so he had to be cautious regardless of the restrictions.

But if he kept hiding his cards, this battle would drag on for an eternity.

And though in normal circumstances this was an advantage for Damien...

He sensed it from the corner of his perception.

It started less than a minute ago.

The Fate Clouds that dutifully obscured Beast Emperor Star within their embrace...

...were thinning.

It didn't take much for a war to start.

Benefits, if even one side could sense them, it was inevitable that conflict would occur.

And when such conflict occurred, there was no need for something like words.

The Gold and Black Dragon Clans had been enemies for centuries, millennia, it was a relationship that couldn't be corrected regardless of how much time passed.

When the two sides met during these troubled times, blood was bound to be shed.

The current war was no different.

Tens of millions of troops met each other in the air and on the ground. The combined effect of their clashes shook the world itself, spreading a wave of panic through the common people.

However, regardless of what damages they caused, the world would not fall.

After all, there was a Demigod focusing on holding it together.

With the strength of the Golden Dragon Clan, fighting the Black Dragon Clan was relatively even. Both sides were being slaughtered at essentially the same rate, and it didn't look like this war would come to a satisfying end.

Elena watched it from the sidelines, disinterested in participating in a clash like this.

She was sure of it.

The Black Dragon Clan had greater numbers yet were moving as if to match their enemies.

They were stalling.

She became sure of this conclusion after observing for many minutes, and almost instinctively, she deployed her Valhalla Souls to investigate.

At this time...

15 minutes had passed.

"Phase 3 has begun! I repeat, Phase 3 has begun!"

A report resounded in the ears of every Black Dragon, living or dead,

And as if planned from the start, each and every one of them palmed their chests, activating a secret mechanism that directly teleported them away from the battlefield.

'This...' Elena thought as a sinking feeling enveloped her.

Rumble!

The earth shook.

But this time, there was no battle to provoke it.

All around Beast Emperor Star, unbeknownst to anyone, canisters and devices activated as one.

Rain...began to pour from the sky.

It was a beautiful golden rain, a shower of auspicious blessings.

It was a rain pouring down from the Fate Clouds.

But...

It was odd.

Why was there a trace of eerie black within that rain?

RUMBLE!

The earth rumbled again, this time with intensity great enough to knock 4th class soldiers off their feet.

Elena's face paled as her awareness picked up a fluctuation.

Rather, countless fluctuations filled her perception from every angle.

Beasts...were gathering.

Red-eyed, frenzied beasts that didn't look anything like the civilized beast population that resided on this star.

Elena's eyes suddenly darted to the ground below.

Those Golden Dragon Clan members with weaker strength...

Their eyes turned red. Their mana flared into the surroundings as one, but their killing intent clashed intensely.

Under the horrified gazes of the middle-stage or higher masters present.,.

A frenzied melee began.

"Stop them immediately!" Elena roared, reacting instantly.

She pushed her mana and rapidly propelled herself to the ground, slamming down with immense force.

Her hands came together in a praying motion. The World Tree Yggdrasil revealed its fangs behind her.

A holy white light blanketed several tens of thousands of kilometers as Elena opened her eyes.

"Goddess' Blessing."

The miraculous effects of her mana were obvious to see.

With Elena's aid, the small patch of land where the Golden Dragon Army was located...

Became one of the only havens on Beast Emperor Star.