

Void 941

Chapter 941 Fate [3]

In the air above, the Kun Lord's face immediately crumpled.

Elena had acted within an instant, leaving him no room to react at all, and now that she'd killed the Tyrant Lord under his nose, it wasn't just a severe loss of combat power, but also a massive slap to his face!

The Kun Lord's eyes narrowed as he watched Elena charge at him with her God Spear. He raised his fan to block as he racked his brain to think of a way out of this situation.

'Dammit! At this rate, I will run out of energy within the minute, but she still seems to have mana in droves! How is this possible?!'

Clang!

The Kun Lord pushed his fan forward and clashed against Elena's God Spear, however, he could clearly feel the fan's internal structure crumpling as it maintained contact.

Whoosh!

He summoned his wings and flapped them fiercely, narrowly dodging the swinging trajectory of the spear.

'I have to end this quick!'

Xiu! Xiu! Xiu!

Wind was classified on the same level as the foundational elements, but in reality, it was a step weaker. For this reason, most wind affinity practitioners attempted to control "air" as opposed to just wind.

The Kunpeng, on the other hand, was a beast of wind and water, one affinity usually outshining the other depending on one's racial traits. Their inherent skills and techniques never attempted to take control of the more intrinsic concepts of wind, but instead focused on harnessing the wind itself to its greatest capability.

While this was limiting in a certain sense, it also allowed the Kunpeng Clan to cultivate an extremely unique skillset that specialized in both major destructive spells and movement.

As the Kun Lord moved, his speed got faster and faster. The winds around him began to whip up a storm, and while it wasn't noticeable at the beginning, the wind was waving in a strange natural pattern uncharacteristic of the wind's usual behaviors.

Elena stood in the middle of the forming storm with a solemn gaze. She read the wind's movements and slowly understood the form the attack would take, preparing for the best moment to counterattack.

'The Kun Lord is worn down and his mentality has been affected by the Tyrant Lord's death. He should be trying to go for the kill right now, but while it's riskier for me, it also provides a great opportunity.'

The wind grew and formed phantasms that populated the air, occasionally rushing down to attack Elena and disrupt her focus.

The Kun Lord watched Elena's every movement and adjusted his own flight path in accordance.

This was an ultimate technique of the Kunpeng Clan called Breath of the Wind. It allowed one to take control of the natural winds and turn them supernatural without forcing massive amounts of mana into it.

It was a technique rarely used for its complexity, however, in a situation like this one, it was perfect.

WHOOSH!

The winds finally picked up enough speed and formed a raging tornado around Elena. Blades of wind formed in its structure, circling Elena like hungry piranhas waiting for a chance to strike. The phantasms became more defined, giving them more attack power and intelligence.

Under the combined attacks of these two factors, along with the strange pull of the wind that seemed to suck away mana and lifeforce, Elena was surrounded by countless deadly threats that she had to evade all at once.

Haa!

Elena gritted her teeth and let out a war cry. She slammed the God Spear forward, allowing it to shine in all its brilliance as she poured droves of mana into its shaft.

BOOOOOOOM!

A flash of light obscured the surrounding few kilometers. Without hesitation, Elena rocketed into the air, her trajectory perfectly on course for the now-blinded Kun Lord.

'He should be weakened after using so much stamina. I have to strike now!'

Elena brandished the God Spear and channeled her Life Mana through several different pathways in her body.

When she was a mere 10 meters away from the enemy, she thrust the spear forward with all her power, letting loose the mana coalesced within.

'Stasis!'

Xiu!

A small line of mana shot out of the spear tip, not much greater in diameter than said tip. It shot through the atmosphere like a comet and without suspense, pierced the Kun Lord's chest.

"Keuk...!" He coughed, rapidly retreating. I think you should take a look at

Unfortunately, it was too late for him.

"What is this?!" He exclaimed as he realized his inability to move.

"There's no need for a dead man to know."

Elena's face was the first thing that appeared when his vision returned. The Kun Lord's eyes widened as he once again lashed out in an attempt to move, but before he could even try...

Shing!

A sword sliced through the air.

Just like his poor brother, he also lost his little brother.

Shing!

The second sword slash came along with the pain and realization of what the first entailed.

A clean cut from his shoulder down through his heart, fatal and unrecoverable without immediate aid, but not immediately deathly.

For at least the next few seconds, the Kun Lord would be forced to face his humiliation and death.

Elena sighed to herself as she watched him fall to the ground with a mortified look on his face.

'Well, I've followed through on my promise, but...wasn't it a bit too easy?'

Elena grinned to herself as she felt her level increase, hitting that final mark before the extreme peak of 4th class, but she didn't lose track of reality.

Compared to the trouble the Kun Lord had given her during the entire battle, the way he died was just too simple.

It was almost as if...someone secretly interfered?

'Hm?'

Elena turned south, sensing a strange energy fluctuation.

'That...is the direction of the final four Territory Lords?'

Elena quirked her brow curiously.

'I was planning to take care of them now that I'm done here, but it looks like someone beat me to it. Should I go check it out?'

She flew into the air and made her way over.

Over to the central point of the congregation of golden clouds that was rapidly spreading across the world.

The situation of Beast Emperor Star, in these final moments, saw a subtle shift in trajectory that soon grew into a tsunami that enveloped the entire planet.

The Fate Clouds were returning, and along with them, hope for survival.

It was an interesting dichotomy.

On one side was the destructive atmosphere of the world, covered in toxic smoke and filled with brutal battles of death and bloodshed. No matter where in the world one was, they would witness these sights. It was impossible to run from such world-scale chaos.

While on the other side was the golden sky. The golden sky had always been the pride of Beast Emperor Star and the protective umbrella that assured the denizens of their safety and prosperity.

When the Fate Clouds vanished, the loss of this canopy drove many people to irrationality, which actually contributed further to the canopy's dispersal.

However, the situation had changed.

Even if they were small and still budding, the Fate Clouds were back.

And with them...the broken spirit of the common people showed signs of recovery.

Chapter 942 Fate [4]

The Fate Clouds were only the final ointment that healed the camel's back.

It started with Elena's efforts and the Golden Dragon Royal Family's firm will to protect, grew with Hedrick's domineering speech, and finally reached the precipice when the golden sky emerged.

Irrationality gave in to forced acceptance of reality, and with acceptance, the irrational negative sentiments clouding the atmosphere also calmed down significantly.

Hope spread.

And Astoria could feel it all from her perch within the central Fate Cloud.

All people became orbs of light, colored differently depending on the trajectory of their fate and the fates they were connected with.

It was beautiful, it was intriguing, and it made Astoria feel like she'd finally found a missing piece of herself that she'd been desperately wishing to find for so long.

The golden star between her eyebrows finished its formation. Astoria's eyes and mouth suddenly became beam weapons, projecting large pillars of light that traveled far into the atmosphere and slightly penetrated the starry sky with their light.

Her body was reconstructed by the enormous amount of fate energy around her, an amount that was rapidly increasing as the situation in the world brightened.

Due to the workings of fate, every interaction was a two-way street, including the interaction between fate itself and the people it affected.

After all, no matter what anyone said, it was still possible for one to change their fate.

Therefore, as the world provided for the Fate Clouds, the Fate Clouds showered their blessings down on the world.

From the palace to the territories to the far edges of the world where Hedrick was, the strings of fate seemed to play a melody of victory and auspiciousness, and inexplicably...

This fate backed the people fighting for the world, aiding them in their endeavors.

From outside the Fate Clouds, Damien used the All-Seeing Eyes to gauge Astoria's situation.

'Mhm, this is a classic awakening scene. She should be powering up properly this time, so I don't have to worry about her for a bit. Since there's still another minute or two before the deadline the Emperor gave, I should go make myself useful instead of waiting here.'

Damien already planned to aid the Draconic War God in his assault, but he'd been held up by the Death Lord, who, in the end, simply wasn't hostile enough to be a proper opponent.

'There's nothing else to do here. Good luck, my cute disciple. This Master will go take care of some troubles for you, so grow and bloom into your potential without qualms or worries.'

Damien smiled, genuinely proud of his disciple's current achievements.

And in the next instant, he vanished.

Whoosh!

It was roughly 10 seconds later when a new face appeared in the vicinity.

'Hm? Isn't that...the little princess?'

Elena peered into the Fate Clouds with interest when she realized the situation.

'I guess that new master really did create a miracle.' She thought with a smile.

It seemed that with this discovery, the question she had about her easy win against the Kun Lord was answered.

However...

'Why does it feel like I missed something important?' Elena thought with furrowed brows.

'Never mind, let's focus on the current situation. The Territory Lords and their clans have all been slain, so this area is actually the safest place in the world right now...Hedrick is too far away, so I should provide my aid at the palace.'

Elena glanced up at Astoria's floating figure and sighed lightly.

Whoosh!

As she flew into the air and departed for the palace, several hundred white-clad Valhalla Souls remained in her place.

Even if this area was safe, as the little princess was currently doing something extremely important...

She couldn't be left without a guard detail, right?

BOOOOOM!

Another line of defense was blown to bits.

Screams of agony filled the air as countless soldiers were torn to shreds by a massive golden spear. Even the stronger beings were pushed back and forced to focus on defense.

Alone against the forces of the Black Dragon Clan, Hedrick used both his environment and his own connection with fate to stay alive and push forward no matter what difficulties arose.

His spear swung out again. Golden threads of fate entwined in the air and formed cords that wrapped around the strongest 6th and 7th revolution enemies and tore through them. Upon their deaths, their bodies disintegrated into golden particles that strengthened the cords as they flew from enemy to enemy to continue their slaughter.

However, even with his apparent advantage, it was still true that Hedrick was facing far too many opponents.

Shik!

"Kak...!"

Hedrick spat out a mouthful of blood as another sword joined the collection of those impaled in his body. I think you should take a look at

Combined with his gashes and open wounds, they were enough to dye him from head to toe in blood.

VOOM!

His mana raged as he thrust his spear backwards and pierced the attacker's heart. As he did so, the mana cords in front of his body maintained a defense line around him, making sure the enemies couldn't get close despite their numbers.

'I cannot last much longer.' He thought to himself with a frown.

He'd already killed several tens of thousands of troops, and he was sure that the Black Dragon Clan's main army's numbers had been reduced significantly, yet...

Why weren't the Supreme and Executioners acting?

After all, even if they didn't care about the losses incurred in battle, they still needed to consider the future.

If they wanted to rule, they needed subjects!

For them to completely ignore the slaughter from their perch was nonsensical, and despite pondering it throughout the battle, he still hadn't been able to rationalize it.

'There's no time to think about that.'

Hedrick returned his attention to the battle, continuing to expertly maneuver his mana and weapon to drag the battle for as long as possible when—

Bang!

A hole was blown in the ceiling of the facility.

"Haha, so this is where the fun was at!"

An enthusiastic voice boomed through the air. A body crashed through the roof. A sword was raised into the air.

"Worldbreaker!"

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The base exploded into a mushroom cloud of smoke and debris. The only section that remained intact was the room where the Supreme and Executioners stayed.

'So they are watching the battle.' Hedrick noted.

"Need some help?"

A voice came from behind him at the same moment.

He glanced back, noticing a face that he'd only seen in projections thus far.

"You are...the youngest's master," he muttered.

"That would be me," Damien responded with a grin.

"You are much weaker than me. How do you plan to help?"

Damien's grin shifted into a smirk.

"With the way you look, wouldn't anything count as help?"

Wap!

Damien snapped his fingers, and almost like magic, the swords in Hedrick's body vanished and reappeared on the ground with a clatter.

"You...are you trying to kill me?!" Hedrick exclaimed.

[Heal]

Damien refrained from responding and promptly cast [Heal], recovering Hedrick's wounds and stamina at a monstrous rate.

Hedrick glanced back at Damien with widened eyes.

"You..."

"No need to say anything. Right now, let's focus on the environmental conservation efforts."

"Environmental conservation...?"

"Of course! As an affiliate of this world, isn't it common courtesy to help eliminate any invasive species that try to crawl where they don't belong?"

Hedrick's lips curled into a small smile.

"I like the way you think."

He stood up and faced the scattered enemies who were just recovering from Damien's explosive entrance.

With this kind of healing ability, as well as someone to help him deal with the numbers difference...

As Damien perfectly stated, it was time to completely exterminate this invasive species.

Chapter 943 Fate [5]

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

"Haha, it's always been more fun like this!"

"Hmph, stop talking and keep fighting!"

"Tch, you're such a buzzkill!"

With Damien's arrival, the battle situation took a complete turn.

Hedrick was already a monster in his own right, but with Damien providing him infinite stamina and mana recovery, as well as supporting his back so he could focus on the strongest enemies, he became a whole different beast.

His spear was like a cannon. Each of its blows slayed several tens of troops at the 4th and 5th revolution. Whenever he clashed with those at the 6th or 7th revolution, he only needed a few moves before they were cut down like the rest.

'What is he? A really strong High Commander, or a genuine Executioner?' Damien wondered as he flew through the air, throwing his hand forward and commanding the ambient mana.

'Spacetime Waves.'

Space suddenly thickened like molasses, forcing the movements of all forces to halt or slow.

"Why are you targeting your allies?!" Hedrick roared.

"Chill, I already have it covered," Damien responded, appearing behind him and tapping him on the shoulder.

A small crest appeared on his body, and as it pulsed, Hedrick found that the surrounding spatial solidification no longer affected him.

"Hmph, I suppose you're somewhat competent."

"Sheesh, the requirements for 'competent' are high, huh. Are you a siscon or something?"

"What is that?"

"Ehm, don't worry about it."

Damien teleported away and returned to controlling his skill.

If it was a mere solidification of space, why would he name it after water?

Damien pushed his fingers through the air like he was parting water, and along with his movements, the environment shifted.

Flora grew and died, the land expanded and contracted, and as the Black Dragon Reserve Army was pushed back and separated, the landscape experienced 100 years of change and became something completely different.

New hills and valleys populated the area, giving Hedrick and Damien another tactical advantage over their enemies.

"What're you waiting for? Kill!" Damien exclaimed.

"You don't have to tell me twice!" Hedrick yelled back.

He shot forward like a golden comet and rose into the air, lifting his spear above his head and shouting:

"Divine Thrust!"

His trajectory changed. He crashed straight down with immense momentum, his spear pointed at the ground. As slammed into the earth a few meters from several different groups of separated enemies, he thrust the spear forward and dug it into the ground.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

One of the newly created hills was shattered to pieces, its rocks tearing through the bodies of several Black Dragons. The following shockwave turned the organs of many more into meatpaste and directly separated the strong from the weak.

"Nice move, but you should probably rename it!" Damien shouted as he passed by and slashed with Mirage, cutting a few 1st and 2nd revolution masters in half.

"Why?" Hedrick questioned, following his lead and killing the enemies that tried to approach them from behind.

"Because it sounds like something a cringey smut protagonist would say!" Damien responded with a grin.

"What is smut?" Hedrick asked.

"Ehm, don't worry about it."

Damien followed the script and teleported away to attack a different enemy group, but his attention wasn't quite on the battle.

'Hedrick filled me in, but it really is strange that they aren't moving. Could it be...'

Damien activated his All-Seeing Eyes and peered through the walls of the final room of the base that remained intact like a nuclear shelter.

The walls were several feet thick and made of a strange material that blurred Damien's perception, but the All-Seeing eyes had reached a level of just barely piercing reality. As long as Damien made the effort, anything could become clear.

And as his vision pierced the bunker-like room...

"Fuck, it's a trap!"

...the realization immediately hit him.

"What do you mean it's a trap?!" Hedrick roared. I think you should take a look at

"I mean it's a fucking trap! There's nobody in that damn room!"

"What?!"

Hedrick gritted his teeth in anger. Even if it was nonsensical, he couldn't doubt Damien's perception after seeing him in battle. With the way he kept such precise track of the enemy's position and strength when he separated them, it was impossible for his perception to be lacking.

If what he said was true, then...!

'They're aiming for the palace!'

Damien and Hedrick realized it instantly.

"We have to go!"

"But we can't leave until we take care of this. I can teleport us out, but if these troops start attacking the common people, the recovery of the Fate Clouds will be interrupted again."

"Then..."

"Go big or go home. Even if we destroy everything in the vicinity, I can revert it to normal afterwards."

"Good!"

Damien grinned and glanced down at the battlefield.

He could see the Black Dragons scrambling to regroup and escape. It wasn't hard to realize what Hedrick was planning from watching his actions.

"Stay here for a while." He said with a smirk.

He clenched his fist and twisted space away from the existing dimension, folding and molding it into thousands of complexly intertwined Dimensional Cages.

Even if it was a Supreme, they'd need at least half a second to break out.

And as everyone knew, for an expert, half a second was...

Hedrick stood in the air with a sun in his hands. Its golden light obscured everything for several tens of thousands of kilometers, and the sheer waves of power emanating from it caused space to rip and tear strangely.

'Hmm, it's fun, but it doesn't quite have the umph I'm looking for.' Damien thought to himself.

'I guess I should take the opportunity to try that out...?'

The 4th technique to be tested today, Damien was going to make it count.

Hel appeared in his right hand.

'Samsara Gun Art, First Apocalypse...'

Hedrick released his golden sun.

Furious waves of heat burned the atmosphere as it collided with the ground. Tens of thousands of kilometers of land were burned to the point where nothing could ever survive on its soil.

The enemy soldiers put up as many barriers and protective measures as possible, but when facing such a massive attack that used all of an Executioner's mana to carry out, it was impossible to escape unscathed...

Especially when the strongest troops here were merely on the same level as him!

Screams and painful roars rang out as the Black Dragons tried to escape, but just after the first impact...

A second wave came.

Damien shot a single bullet from Hel's barrel. It was a murky grey color uncharacteristic of both life and death.

The bullet submerged into the earth below without making much noise at all.

Until the time was right.

VOOM!

A wave of grey mana spread throughout the Dimensional Cage and slammed against its barriers.

'Extermination.'

Damien beckoned for death.

And death answered his call.

Anyone that was touched by the mana wave turned to ashes and dispersed into the wind.

Even the greatest High Commanders and Executioners fell prey to this death wave, as they had already been critically injured by Hedrick just moments before.

The entire mana reserve of an Executioner and Damien's monstrous mana capacity... was truly a heretically powerful combination.

Chapter 944 Fate [6]

'Huu...it's fun to see how that works every once in a while.' Damien thought to himself as he looked down at the destruction.

Every expert was capable of attacks like this, but firstly they rarely had the time to actually charge up such attacks in battle, and secondly using one's entire mana capacity in a single attack was never a good idea.

Unless one had an absolute advantage and was carrying out a true extermination, it was simply impractical to ever do so.

However, every practitioner wondered what it would be like if they exploded out all of their power in a single instant.

Some would even traverse the starry sky to find an empty location to test just that.

Nevertheless, as it was a rare thing to witness, both Damien and Hedrick took a moment to appreciate it.

But it wasn't more than a moment.

'Spacetime Reversal.'

Damien rapidly recovered his mana and once again fully emptied the tank.

Under his coercion, the world shifted and recovered to its past appearance, not to before the Black Dragon base was destroyed, but before it was even created.

'If only this was possible on living beings.' Damien sighed wistfully.

He could do something similar by affecting an enemy's life force, but the actual process and result were entirely different.

Nevertheless, now wasn't the time to be thinking about it.

"Hey, drop the dumb face and prepare yourself. We're going to confront a far stronger enemy right now, and considering Beast Emperor Star's current forces, you're the only one who can take on that Supreme." Damien said as he nudged Hedrick and brought him back to reality.

Though, Hedrick couldn't be blamed for losing track of the situation. What Damien had just done was truly magisterial, even for an expert at his level.

But now that he'd been brought back, he wasn't going to ignore his responsibility.

Right, as long as his eldest brother was away, he was the strongest fighting force in the world. If he didn't do his job properly and let the Black Dragons reach the Emperor, the battle would truly be impossible to win!

"Worry not. I am prepared to lay down my life to hold the Supreme back," he stated confidently.

"Well, you don't have to go that far," Damien said.

"Nonsense. I am still at the 8th revolution. I cannot fight back a Supreme."

"Hmm, we'll see about that."

Damien smiled slyly and refused to elaborate, instead grabbing Hedrick's arm tightly.

"Fair warning; the first time is always rough."

"Wha—"

Wap!

The duo immediately disappeared, traveling several tens of thousands of kilometers in an instant.

The two of them moved as fast as they could, however, it was a given that the enemy who left before them...

Arrived before them as well.

When Elena arrived at the Inner Estate, it was already in disarray.

Disorder and lawlessness ran rampant as the flames of war enveloped the entire area. Bloody battles were taking place every few tens of meters, and the beings in this area were dying at an astonishing rate.

It was an all-out melee. It seemed these dragons didn't care one bit for tactics, completely subverting the thought that dragons were creatures who craved knowledge.

Of course, dragons like that existed, but these specific dragons were belligerent.

They didn't care about strategy, only about strength.

While it was inefficient, it had one benefit: the strong didn't oppress the weak.

Those who were strong fought against others who were strong, and those who were weak were left to deal with the rest. It was a type of respect that only those who respected strength as the highest authority conveyed.

'The battlefield is being led by the royal children. The 3rd prince and 1st princess are the strongest, they should at least be High Commanders. The 2nd princess is holding her own well since she's still on the weaker side. The 4th and 5th princes, as well as the 3rd and 4th princesses are...all dead. At this rate, it'll be impossible to stop the stronger enemies from breaching the defense line.'

No, in fact, it had already happened.

It was lucky that the Imperial Guard was made up of experts who were able to rapidly deal with those who made it past.

'The best place for me to help is...there.'

'Lightspeed.'

Elena turned into a beam of light as she shot forward with impossible speed, whizzing past the 1st princess and slashing her sword. I think you should take a look at

Shing!

A group of 20 1st revolution masters were cut into tiny pieces. Elena stood on the earth and scanned the battlefield, summoning her remaining Valhalla Souls to aid the situation wherever they were needed.

"I don't know who you are, but I appreciate the help!" The 1st princess shouted out.

"My name is Elena, and don't worry about it. I'm getting paid for this!" Elena responded with a smirk.

"Haha, I like the way you think! You can call me Liza!" 1st princess laughed and responded as she cut through another enemy.

"Good! The main army will be here within the minute! We just need to hold on until then!"

"Hahahaha! That's the second good news I've heard all day!"

"And the first?"

"I heard my little sister is back!"

"How touching."

Elena smiled as she pressed forward and joined the battle. The current outlook was positive, far more positive than the situation seemed when it first erupted.

As long as it continued that way...

But of course it would never continue that way.

Even with the support of Fate, disrupting such tightly woven plans required more than just a bit of effort.

WHOOSH!

The winds whipped fiercely, throwing back the stronger beings and shredding some weaker ones into pieces.

"So this is it?"

A voice echoed through the air, freezing the atmosphere.

A young man with the dull, hazy eyes of a corpse appeared in the air, indifferently looking down at the palace.

"Y-yes sir. He should be here." The Executioner next to him stammered submissively.

"Good. I've been waiting to meet him."

The Supreme gracefully descended to the ground and walked forward. The path before him cleared naturally as his mere aura made people instinctually revere him.

"Hey, what do you think you're doing?!"

The 3rd Prince rushed to interrupt his path, raising his sword.

"Wait, Johannes, sto—!!"

The 1st Princess, Elizabeth's warning was far too late.

Bang!

The 3rd Prince's body burst apart unprovoked, showering the surrounding few meters in blood.

However, even this blood parted when the Supreme passed over it.

"Lord Garvy, you've arrived! Please lead us to victory!"

A Black Dragon Executioner knelt down before the Supreme, his actions followed by the remaining Black Dragons...

Bang!

...however, his fate was no better than the 3rd Prince.

"Pests."

The Supreme spoke a single word before continuing his calm walk through the Inner Estate.

As the Black Dragon Execurioner's blood rained down to the earth, the battlefield truly froze.

Both enemies and allies were mere pests to be crushed...?

Just...what was this ideology?

While the Golden Dragons merely saw it as a terrifying enemy exerting his power, the Black Dragons knew better.

This attitude...

Was entirely different from the usual behavior of the Supreme known as Lord Garvy!

Chapter 945 Struggle [1]

The silence was deafening.

The crunch of the Supreme's boots on the dead and withering soil rang true for kilometers on end as the world stilled.

No matter who it was, they didn't dare to move.

Elena stood next to the 1st Princess and held her, helping her hold in her grief as she observed the situation with narrowed eyes.

'This is dangerous. If he's allowed to get near the Emperor, it's over, but nobody here can stop him.'

It was evident that something strange was happening. The presence of their Supreme should have emboldened the Black Dragon Army, but their behavior was the exact opposite.

Like beings oppressed under an iron fist.

'Could it be there's some problem with the Supreme?'

Elena immediately pinpointed the problem from the looks of fear and confusion on the faces of the Black Dragons. She glanced over at the man walking with two Executioners obediently walking with their heads lowered behind him.

Although it was unknown to those present, these three were the last of the Black Dragon Clan's experts. The rest had been slain in battle with Hedrick and Damien.

However, Lord Garvy alone could sweep 99% of the world's fighters with his own strength.

As for why he hadn't acted until now...

The reason was actually quite simple. In the Black Dragon Clan's hierarchy, he wasn't at the top. He merely waited to do what he was ordered to do by his Demigod, act at the perfect moment to target the Golden Dragon Emperor.

He even had a specialized prison artifact on his body, designed to hold Demigods, for a situation where the Golden Dragon Emperor didn't act and violate the universal law.

However, "Lord Gary's" goal had changed.

"He is not here."

The cold voice rang out, making the two Executioners behind Lord Garvy freeze in fear.

"L-lord? This is the last location we could read, so he might not be here, but due to the freshness of the signature, it is certain that he is still on this planet," the female Executioner stammered.

"Hm?"

Lord Garvy made a questioning sound, however, his expression remained still.

"Then, why did you bring me here?"

"L-lord, you requested us to bring you to the last known loc—"

Splat!

The male Executioner's head exploded. His body turned into particles that were absorbed into the Supreme's body.

"Were you saying something?"

"N-not at all, Lord! I will find that person as soon as possible and bring him before you!" The female Executioner yelped in fear.

"Hmm..."

Lord Garvy turned his gaze away from the palace and turned to face the frozen battlefield.

"Ants..." he muttered.

"Do you know where 'that person' is?"

His voice wasn't loud, but it seemed to carry to the ends of the earth. All those present heard his words, however, how were they supposed to answer him if he didn't tell them who he was looking for?!

"Lord Garvy, may we see an image of the individual you are searching for?"

A young Black Dragon stood up from the crowd and looked the Supreme in his cold, dead eyes without fear.

"Oh?"

Voom!

A sudden pressure descended and crushed the boy back to his knees. Several bones cracked within his body, and blood poured out of his eyes, nose, and mouth.

Then, the pressure disappeared.

"Very well. No more can be expected from ants."

As if nothing happened, the Supreme threw a glance into the air, immediately causing the mana to swirl and form an image.

It was an image of three people. One was a large nondescript man with a gruff beard and a domineering face. One was a smaller man with vaguer features. Only his black hair and well-defined musculature were visible in the hazy image. The final one was a girl, much smaller than the previous two, with bright golden hair and equally hazy features as the second man.

'Three people?' Elena thought to herself as she glanced at the projection.

"The Supreme is searching for the man in the middle. The two on his left and right are presumed to be his acquaintances. If you have any leads, speak them now."

The female Executioner spoke up as the Supreme clearly didn't deign to speak. After hearing her explanation, those in the surroundings rapidly began drawing conclusions.

One among them was extremely popular.

'Isn't that...the little princess?' I think you should take a look at

Elena's expression didn't crack in the slightest, but inwardly, she began to rapidly weigh her options.

'If the little princess's location is outed, the entire fate of this world is doomed. Even with what's happening now, since the Supreme isn't targeting the Emperor, our loss isn't guaranteed. However, since the little princess is up there, the target in question should be...'

The little princess' new master, the only man that could've possibly been seen near her in recent days.

'I need to stop anyone from speaking.'

Elena didn't know why the tutor was being targeted, but she absolutely couldn't allow the little princess to be implicated.

"L-lord Supreme, that person on the left is—"

BANG!

Someone spoke up. A bolt of light pierced his forehead before he could finish, instantly killing him.

The Supreme's eyes darted to the distance.

"Nuisances..."

He lightly lifted his arm in the air and beckoned towards himself.

WHOOOOOOSH!

A furious wind kicked up, creating an air current on the ground that dragged the sniper out of his hiding spot.

The figure armored in white lurched to a stop in the air before the Supreme, his body flopping limply.

"Hm, a summon. Smart summoner, cutting the connection so quickly. However..."

Elena's breath halted.

Her left hand slowly crept towards her right, her fingertips brushing against her spatial ring.

Her eyes narrowed as her perception heightened to its greatest limit.

It was less than a split second. It was almost like incomprehensible how fast the following interaction took place.

Lord Garvy's eyes snapped to Elena's position.

"...!"

Elena immediately swept her hand across her spatial ring and removed a glowing white shield. She held it in front of her body and slammed her knee into the ground, letting the shield expand both upwards and downwards as...!

BOOM!

Crack!

"Something" exploded against the shield and threw Elena back almost a hundred kilometers.

A crack spread from the single impact.

"Human, you must know something."

Lord Garvy made another beckoning motion, and Elena felt the undeniable pull of a Supreme, a pull akin to the gravity of a dead star.

'Dammit!' She exclaimed inwardly, gritting her teeth.

'Aegis is strong, but I'm not strong enough to weird its true power. It can at most block 3 attacks from a Supreme, but—'

BOOOOOOOM!

'Khhh...but he's definitely not going to let me go after just 3!'

Elena was sent flying again. She could feel the blood bubbling up in her throat as the residual impact force was transferred into her body from the shield.

"How fun."

A small smile formed on the Supreme's face as he beckoned Elena towards him once more.

"This should be your final struggle, yes?"

He raised his arm once more and curled his fingers in, lightly flicking his index finger out as Elena's shield arrived in front of him.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The resulting explosion was massive, however, a mysterious force contained and compressed it around Elena, barraging her with a deathly amount of energy.

"Agh!"

Elena groaned in pain as she held back from screaming out. Aegis shattered upon impact. Due to the explosion being controlled, its shards shot back and impaled themselves into Elena's body.

The chaotic energy waves slammed into her from every direction, bent on killing her immediately.

She gritted her teeth, her eyes firming even as her skin was charred.

'I...will not die here!'

Chapter 946 Struggle [2]

'I...will not die here!'

Elena's declaration wasn't one of false hope or desperation, but of pure willpower.

Regardless of what she faced here, she absolutely refused to die.

She summoned everything she had.

She started from the weakest Valhalla Souls, burning them and using their life force to constantly replenish herself, using an additional element of Light Healing to exponentially boost her regeneration speed.

The pain was excruciating. Not only did she burn, she almost collapsed internally from the violently rampaging mana.

"Haaaaa!!!"

She let out a hoarse war cry as she forced the mana to obey her orders. She combined light and life into one and purified all negative powers in her body, pushing them towards the center of her chest and gathering them into a solidifying gem of mana.

"Khhhh...!"

It was painful. Even more painful than the external injuries. Let alone the fact that she was allowing an object to crystallize within her body, just making the raging mana follow her command made her feel like her body was being torn into countless pieces.

However, she managed. She managed somehow and pushed on, digging into her own chest and digging the gem out.

It wasn't the best solution, but it was the fastest.

The gem quickly disappeared into her spatial ring, an instinctual action she took while focusing every bit of her attention on both defending against and mitigating the energy of the blast.

With the culmination of her effort, along with the shielding of several treasures that almost instantly broke one by one, Elena was able to somehow survive until the blast died down.

"A persistent one."

Lord Garvy's words didn't allow her a single moment of rest.

Right, the blow she'd just survived using her everything was just a casual flick from a Supreme.

If he decided to do more damage...

"Open her mind."

"Yes, Lord."

The female Executioner appeared behind Elena and restricted her movement.

"Be grateful. At least for now, you are able to keep your life," She transmitted into Elena's ear.

Elena smirked mockingly. "Funny way to be talking about your own lord."

The female Executioner's eyes hardened. "That...is not my Lord."

"Hm?"

Elena wanted to question the interesting thing she just heard, but before she could speak further, she felt something attach to her forehead.

'This is...!'

Elena's eyes rolled back into her head, her body suddenly convulsing.

Electric shocks tore through her nervous system, essentially attempting to fry her brain. The pain was far more intrinsic than what the explosion could produce, forcing Elena to experience a true hell.

'It will be over soon. Survive well.'

The female Executioner's silent prayer went unheard, overshadowed by the Supreme's domineering movements.

"It seems that human has the most expensive information, as she is the only one willing to take such actions to hide it. Therefore, the rest of you are no longer needed."

Lord Garvy raised his arm and flicked his hand forward.

A gust of black wind flew through the air, straight with no deviation for several thousand kilometers.

And everybody within that range died instantly.

"L-lord?! How could you?!"

"Lord Garvy, please stop!"

The Black Dragons cried in agony at his betrayal, but he didn't bat an eye.

"Girl, if you care for these people, reveal your truths."

It was horrible. The instant death and destruction was clearly displayed in Elena's eyes. Despite the torture she was undergoing, she was completely lucid and able to perceive the surroundings.

"Kh hh...I...will...ne...ver...!!!"

Elena forced her words out of her mouth with mana alone, unable to utilize her vocal cords or bodily systems.

"Still tenacious...have the younger generation grown so much?"

Bang!

Elena's left leg was blown into meatpaste.

Her eyes widened in shock, but she didn't back down.

"More."

Bang!

Her right leg exploded as well.

"Drop her."

Upon receiving the order, the female Executioner stopped supporting Elena's body, allowing her to crash to the ground several tens of meters below.

"Pathetic ant, do not disobey me any longer." "I think you should take a look at

Lord Garvy walked up to her and smashed his foot into her face, crushing her into the soil.

Poof!

Something spurted blood, but in Elena's current state, it was impossible to know where that blood came from.

Bang!

A foot came down.

"Where is your struggle?"

Bang!

A foot came down.

"Where is your hope?"

Bang!

A foot came down.

"Filthy lower existence with the gall to challenge a Supreme, where is your courage?"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Elena's head was turned into a bloody mess, but her lifeforce still weakly hung on.

Her thoughts were hazy. The only thing she could understand was that she was in pain.

And...

'I will...die...'

She was indignant that she was put down before putting up any fight at all. She was unresigned at this horrifying difference in power!

She weakly tried to move, but she was still connected to that strange device. She was still unable to control her body at all.

She didn't have legs to move with, she couldn't even access her mana to try anything.

Against a Supreme...was she truly just an ant?

'I...refuse.'

She couldn't accept it.

'I...will not...stay...weak.'

No, she wouldn't accept it.

This reality, she wouldn't allow it to bloom.

If Fate wished for her death, then she would cut down Fate. If the universe itself desired her fall, then she could only collapse the universe itself!

Voom!

"Something" appeared within Elena's soul.

A pitch-black seed wrapped in strings of white and sunny yellow, mysterious and ethereal.

A "Symbol of Union" that had hidden itself until she found herself in a situation where it was impossible for her to survive.

And along with this symbol came something that represented it far more definitively.

A "Title" manifested itself in Elena's status.

[Daughter of the Void]

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

"Who dares?!"

A sudden explosion rocked the land, pushing everyone back, but mysteriously enough, killing only one.

The Supreme glanced down and noticed that the woman under his foot was no longer present.

His gaze turned up, looking at the two men before him.

A man with long blonde hair and fierce draconic golden eyes stood with his spear ready, the body of the female Executioner impaled on its blade.

The other man had long black hair and swirling ethereal purple eyes, striking a severe contrast with the first. He stood with the woman from before in his arms, a beautiful white light covering her body.

And flanking them was the imperious Golden Dragon Army, armed with several tens of million troops, including 7th and 8th revolution masters.

Bzzt!

The device on Elena's forehead shattered. Her eyes slightly opened as she tried to assess the situation, but fatigue didn't allow her to do so.

A sense of warmth and comfort overcame her, lulling her to sleep.

Nevertheless, it didn't matter, since even when she opened her eyes, she was hallucinating.

Because, there was absolutely no way, right...? There was no way the person who saved her was actually—

"Damien Void," Lord Garvy muttered as Elena's consciousness slipped away, a strange tri-colored cocoon enveloping her body.

He gazed at the grand accompaniment that had arrived to strike him down and smiled, his attention returning to Damien.

His smile widened. His eyes narrowed eerily as he opened his mouth and said:

"I've been waiting so long to meet you."

Chapter 947 Lord [1]

"I've been waiting so long to meet you."

Lord Garvy's face twisted into a disgusting smile as he spoke, making Damien shiver.

"Have we met before?" He asked warily.

Whoosh!

Lord Garvy was only a few inches away from him before he realized it. He looked Damien up and down before taking a sharp inhale.

"Haa...this is the scent. You are indeed the one who killed him."

Damien's eyes narrowed.

"Who are you talking about?"

"Hm? How am I supposed to know his name? He was...a present that I had yet to open. However, you ruined him for me."

Lord Garvy tilted his head in an oddly feminine motion, his eyes curving into crescents.

"So, I was curious to meet the little genius who had the gall."

"Attack!"

Damien immediately roared as he teleported away and sent Elena's unconscious body to the Sanctuary.

He definitely hadn't yet comprehended the identity of who he'd just saved. Though, it wasn't as if he had the free time to do so.

4 Executioners from the Golden Dragon Army followed Hedrick's lead and charged at Lord Garvy with their weapons raised.

"Hmph. Do not get in my way."

Lord Garvy swept his hand through the air, producing a furious gale that pushed all 5 opponents away and penetrated their bodies.

However, before he could use his strength advantage, a strange formless sensation covered the 5 Golden Dragons, stabilizing them.

Their bodies were strengthened and their mana was elevated to another level. They could even vaguely feel gaps in their comprehension filling themselves with peak efficiency.

"This..."

"Don't question it and just fight!"

Damien's booming sound transmission entered Hedrick's ears, making him grin.

'So this was your secret card.'

"Come! With the strength we've gained, let us slay the enemy!"

Hedrick roared and charged again, utilizing his new strength to its greatest limits and swinging out his spear.

Bang!

Lord Garvy held his finger in the air and casually blocked the spear tip, however...

Crunch!

The ground crunched as he took a step backwards.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

4 attacks struck him from different directions at the same time, compounding on top of the impact of Hedrick's strike to form an even stronger blow.

Five 8th revolution Executioners had nowhere near enough force to kill a Supreme, but what about five peak 8th revolution masters with strength just under the Supreme level?

Then...wouldn't the scales be tipped?

As Hedrick led the four soldiers under him to barrage and suppress Lord Garvy so he had no chance to attack on his own, Damien watched from the distance.

"Young Master, have you been well?"

A feminine voice came from his side.

Damien smiled. "Mm, and you?"

"Likewise. Your hidden world is quite the place."

"Isn't it? I was wondering why you hadn't asked me to let you out yet. It seems you fully integrated with those inside, eh?"

"Please don't joke with me, Young Master. I am nowhere near qualified enough to live amongst those pioneering a new civilization."

"That Pricilla really raised you to be too submissive. Since you're with me now, you should show some more pride. We're an arrogant bunch on this side, you know?"

"I will keep that in mind, Young Master." "I think you should take a look at

"Hmm..."

Damien looked up and down the woman at his side, marveling over just how much she'd changed in the past few years.

At least in terms of appearance, recognizing this woman as Ximen Wuhen was almost impossible!

Ximen Wuhen had been living in the Sanctuary ever since Damien sent her there when he was still in Eien. During that time, she'd gotten well acquainted with the citizens of Theavel and had even provided several contributions to their societal growth.

Ximen Wuhen was very clear about her role in Damien's mind. She was a weapon that he could use when he needed her, but otherwise, he didn't really care about what she did.

Therefore, her mysterious power had gone unused for a considerable period.

At times like this, though, her aid was perfect.

'I didn't even think about bringing her out when I was facing Arthur. I need to take better stock of Theavel's strength when I have time.'

He also needed to populate the new second world that still remained unnamed, but that was a matter for even further in the future.

For now, he kept his attention on the battle.

'It's creepy. Why is he still looking at me?'

It was almost impossible to see what was happening inside the cloud of mana that enshrouded the ongoing battle, but it wasn't a problem for Damien.

He could see clearly through the fog, he could see how Lord Garvy's eyes remained focused on his position even as he faced the onslaught of several experts.

'He has no care for his own physical condition. He's almost treating it like it isn't his own...don't tell me...'

The Black Dragon Clan clearly didn't recognize their Supreme anymore.

Rather than focusing on the overall situation, Lord Garvy only focused his attention on Damien, who had never met him before.

'I killed someone he cares about...?'

If it was recently, then the only important person he'd killed was Arthur Bloodlock, but did the Bloodlock Clan and Black Dragon Clan have relations?

As far as Damien knew, the two clans didn't even come in contact.

'Wait...!'

He suddenly remembered an important fact.

Something Tiamat had told him during their conversation in his spiritual world.

'Arthur Bloodlock had a trace of Nox mana in his body, and not just any mana, but the mana of a Demigod. What are the chances that it connects back to the Nox again?'

"...!"

Damien's senses suddenly became alert. His gaze shot back to the battlefield just in time to see Lord Garvy's heinous grin and...

The wisps of inky black mana that were emitted from his gaze for less than a single instant.

Damien's eyes widened.

'That was on purpose.'

His original suspicion became truth in that instant, making Damien sigh to himself.

'Dammit, I really can't get a break.'

'Let's think. If it's a Nox Demigod, it definitely isn't someone at the Emperor level. They wouldn't be so covert in showing themselves. If it's a Lord, then the one who would gain the most from Arthur Bloodlock would be...the Marionette Lord?'

Damien gritted his teeth and cursed his luck. As he grew stronger, the broken memories of all the Nox he devoured also slowly organized themselves under his guidance. When it came to the power structure of the current Nox, Damien had a rough understanding of the most important characters.

The Marionette Lord was one of the Lords he had sworn to avoid for as long as possible.

Because this person—

'—is like the Saint Emperor but crazier.'

It really was a coincidence among coincidences that their paths happened to intersect.

The Marionette Lord was a follower of the Inhuman Emperor, so they weren't aware of the true importance of Damien's existence quite yet.

However, it just so happened that Damien's existence forced a figure with great influence in the inner universe to visit Eien, granting the Nox a prime opportunity for infiltration.

It was just unfortunate for them that Damien was well-prepared for their confrontation and ended up winning.

Yet, despite the victory that his actions evoked, he still found himself stuck in deep, deep shit!

Chapter 948 Lord [2]

'This is a unique circumstance. It can't be handled as if we're still fighting a war.'

The Marionette Lord had personally killed the Black Dragons' most powerful forces, ridding them of any hope of succeeding in their invasion.

Along with that, the revival of the Fate Clouds was proceeding extremely smoothly, and the golden canopy had almost returned to its previous beauty.

'It's funny since those two things are probably related.'

Damien didn't believe in coincidences, nor did he believe in unavoidable fate, however, a phenomenon like this was still within the bounds of reality.

It was a slight guiding force that provoked people to make decisions or partake in events that would promote their fate.

It was...almost like universal flow.

Nevertheless, if Fate brought the Nox Demigod to Beast Emperor Star, then there was absolutely something deeper going on than just a convenient circumstance where the Black Dragons lost their fighting power.

'Haa, in the end, I have to confront another person who can kill me with a single slap. When am I going to learn how to stay within my pay grade?'

Damien complained inwardly as he flashed away, leaving Ximen Wuhen with the Theavel Emperors to guard her.

He reappeared only a few meters from the obscuring mana cloud.

He walked through the air, space and time warping around him and offering him easy entry into the chaotic storm.

And within, he was able to see a terrible collision of forces so great in power that, if it wasn't for the mana storm, it likely would've torn half the planet to shreds.

'It's being controlled by that one.' Damien thought to himself as he glanced at the Golden Dragon in the corner of the area with his hands together in a strange formation.

Damien's question about the origin of the strange phenomenon was solved instantly, and he was able to focus on Hedrick's true power.

It was magisterial.

His spear was like a cannon with the piercing power of a tank round and the weight and recoil of a common pistol.

With his maneuverability and raw strength, when he added his Golden Dragon Aura into his attacks and controlled Fate to boost himself more than what Ximen Wuhen already provided, he was an unparalleled monster.

It almost made Damien wish he'd found a spear instead of twin swords when he was in the First Dungeon.

Nevertheless, his heroic display had to come to an end.

"Hedrick, fall back!" Damien yelled out, attracting the man's attention.

"What do you mean 'fall back?!'" Hedrick roared back.

"This isn't a matter related to Beast Emperor Star anymore! That person isn't the Black Dragon Supreme, Garvy, but a Nox Demigod possessing his body!"

"W-what?!"

Hedrick held his spear shaft horizontally as a punch crashed into it. Using the force, he allowed himself to be propelled backwards until he was out of close combat range.

He stood warily with his spear ready, but despite his and the other Golden Dragons' retreat, Lord Garvy didn't move.

"Finally decided to come meet me?" He said, throwing a glance at Damien.

"If you'd told me what was going on from the start, would things have been so difficult?" Damien quipped back.

"Ohoho, as expected of you, boy. I don't know how long it's been since someone questioned me."

"Congratulations, I guess, but if you could kindly stay as far away from me as possible, I'd appreciate it."

"Boy, do you know who I am?"

"What do you think?"

"As I thought, you are interesting!"

Lord Garvy once again appeared in front of Damien before he could react.

"This body is lacking in every department. It's a miracle that this man was even able to make it to the cusp of Divinity. Let us continue this conversation elsewhere."

Lord Garvy's eyes abruptly rolled back into his head as he fell from the sky limply.

Whoosh!

His dead body was snatched by a black shadow mid-fall, never to be seen again.

Meanwhile, Damien closed his eyes and entered the Sanctuary, separating himself from existence before anything drastic happened. I think you should take a look at

His consciousness materialized as an Avatar in his spiritual world.

When he arrived, a scene was already created; a damp cave with a large stone bed at its end.

On the bed lay an...individual of indiscernible gender.

Their face was largely feminine and a pair of breasts decorated their chest, however, the bottom half of their naked figure was more...manly.

"You're unpleasant," Damien spat as he conjured some clothing on their body.

"Why? Can you not appreciate the natural beauty of my body?"

"Unfortunately for you, I don't have a preference for dragons."

"Hmm, then you'd like it better this way...?"

The Marionette Lord's form changed, becoming the opposite of their previous appearance. Their upper body and head became masculine, but a crotch now decorated the space between their thighs.

"How is it? I even made it wet for you." The Marionette Lord smirked.

"Is this how you get off or something?" Damien responded with a deadpan expression.

"You're no fun. Usually, men have the most entertaining reactions to tricks like this."

"I apologize for not being in the mood to entertain the enemy."

"How cruel!"

The Marionette Lord stood up with a smile, walking over to Damien with a sultry sway in their step.

"It doesn't have to be a combination, you know. If you want...I can take the form of anyone you wish."

An air of seduction filled Damien's spiritual world. He could feel his mind and body becoming hotter with every passing second.

However, he wasn't some easy target.

Void Mana rolled through his body and cleared the seductive effects in an instant. As for his mind, was it even possible for seduction to penetrate it?

While Damien was much calmer now, it was still true that coercive seduction used to be one of the things Damien abhorred most in the world.

"What's your goal here?" He asked coldly as he forcefully shattered the air filling his mind.

"Hm? Isn't that obvious?"

The Marionette Lord hopped up to him with a sunny grin on their face.

"Since you broke my toy, shouldn't you take his place?"

Damien frowned. "Do you think I'm someone easy to control?"

"Of course not!" The Marionette Lord answered instantly. "But...isn't that what makes it fun?"

"Tch. Try your hardest. Even if you're a Demigod, I don't believe you can overpower me with a sliver of consciousness."

"Hmm, that's a bet I like! Very well, since I'm a fair and benevolent Lord, I shall reward you if you are able to resist my control until the end."

Two pairs of eyes met. One was filled with cold determination, while the other was playful and carefree.

Somehow, Damien found himself confronting yet another Demigod. He almost wondered if he had some kind of attractive field around him that lured dangerous and crazy personalities towards him.

But there was no point complaining. Let alone waiting on the doorstep, the trouble had already barged into the house and made itself comfortable.

Therefore, there was only one path forward.

Damien needed to defeat this strange Demigod and get them out of his spiritual world as soon as possible.

It had been a very long time since the last time his mentality was tested.

So, despite the danger of the situation, excitement filled Damien's body.

Ah, the fate of a battle maniac.

No matter how much time passed, no matter how much they grew, they never truly changed, did they?

Chapter 949 Lord [3]

The Marionette Lord's first test was "Seduction," a test Damien passed flawlessly.

However, there was a reason it was merely their first step to overwriting a soul. Those who fell to seduction were those who would never have a chance to enter Divinity in their lives, thus they were merely disposable pawns to the Marionette Lord.

The real hells came after.

Damien's spiritual world blurred and disappeared. His Avatar was dropped into a dark space filled with nothingness.

'My body feels real.' He immediately noticed.

He felt sensations that weren't possible through an Avatar. Even his All-Seeing Eye couldn't find a flaw in his senses, making it clear just how thorough the illusion was.

'What is this? Am I going to experience solitude?'

Damien was correct. The 2nd step after "Seduction" was "Solitude."

Even if a man couldn't be broken by a woman, could he survive his own thoughts?

Solitude wasn't something often experienced in the universe by those who didn't follow the absorption method of slow leveling. Most of the time, these people were together with their influences or battling their enemies to grow stronger, making true solitude a strange and unwelcome feeling.

And when that solitude lasted for decades, centuries, and even millennia, just what would happen to one's mind?

No, if the concept of time disappeared, if every moment felt like an eternity, the incongruity of feeling would make one extremely susceptible to emotion, breaking them even faster.

This was the last level of the Marionette Lord's game most 4th class beings experienced.

The solitude drove them mad and opened a hole in their mental defenses that the Marionette Lord could use to pollute their souls.

However, when it came to solitude, Damien didn't have many issues.

While he spent several years traveling the universe alone, true solitude was to be alone with one's thoughts in the void; without the starry sky as a backdrop, and without the aura of vibrant life of the universe.

Damien sat down and crossed his legs, closing his eyes and focusing inwardly.

'This is good.' He thought to himself.

Let alone the fact that void environments actually felt comfortable for Damien, he was currently in need of time to himself.

Developing techniques and comprehending laws took time, a great deal of it. Damien could always set up time dilations to grant himself extra time, but there were several universal restrictions on the usage of time, which made it difficult for Damien to use this strategy consistently.

Aside from that, he currently didn't have any room in his schedule for calm contemplation.

Since the Golden Dragon Clan's issue was almost solved, Damien would soon have to rush back to the Ancient God Clan so he could accompany them to the Grand Assembly.

Now, logically speaking, it was impossible to comprehend laws in a place void of them, but unfortunately for the Marionette Lord, Damien wasn't a being explainable with logic alone.

Traces of incorporeal pitch-black mana exhaled from Damien's pores and returned, converted into the law energy of Space, Time, Life, and Death.

Damien focused his mind solemnly as the energies entered his body. He immediately controlled them with his spiritual intent and reigned them in, separating them into their own sections and separately comprehending them.

He couldn't imagine what kind of catastrophe it'd cause if so many powerful and volatile laws collided.

'But, couldn't they mesh as well?'

It was always his first thought after absorption, but he'd never had the courage to experiment due to circumstance and safety.

'But right now, my body is an illusion.'

Damien was still a Spiritual Avatar, so while any comprehension he received would still be stored in his spiritual world, he wouldn't be able to directly affect his body at all.

Therefore, he could finally go all out without worry!

'Combine!'

He let go of his spiritual intent and let the elements flow as they wished.

Life and Death moved towards each other, as did Space and Time, and oddly enough...

The two groups slowly started to approach each other like wary dogs meeting their long-lost siblings.

Damien watched the process intently, losing track of his surroundings in the process.

'They're forming...a staircase?'

It was strange. As the elements approached each other, space and time grew larger while the inverse happened to Life and Death, layering them almost like steps in an ascending path.

Bzzt!

A connection formed,I think you should take a look at

The energies finally connected, and in that moment, Damien's mind exploded with light.

It materialized before him, that staircase. He stood on the step of Spacetime, the energy of Samsara pushing him from behind.

He covered his eyes with his hand to block the winds and gazed below.

There was no ground, however, Damien could tell that "something" was supposed to exist below Life and Death.

'Aha...'

The memory struck him abruptly. He'd remembered those same words many times in the past, but it felt different this time.

The 5 elements.

Life and Death.

Space and Time.

Creation and Destruction.

And finally, the unknown that existed before the elements of existence were born.

These were the utmost foundational pillars of universal order, the elements that allowed the universe to function as flawlessly as it did.

'I want to go further.' Damien thought to himself.

He tried to take a step, but he was blocked by an invisible wall.

There was a wall signifying the nonexistence of the proceeding step, a barrier that Damien couldn't break no matter how much power he put into it.

'I want to see the top, but I can't even see the path forward...'

Damien's eyes narrowed.

'I have to work harder.'

When the system gave Damien that advice all those years ago, it stopped its explanation after proposing the existence of "Nihilism."

However, Damien was unresigned to this.

He could feel it instinctually.

There was something beyond that wall, something that hadn't even been theorized by the universe itself yet!

He wanted to climb up and find the truth behind his feeling, breaking through the watershed impeding him and—

Whoosh!

Damien's eyes shot open.

'It's over already?'

Around him was no longer a void, but a landscape dyed in red.

From the rocky and desolate ground below to the sun and smh above, the entire realm was dyed in a bleak red hue.

Damien calmly stood up and surveyed the surroundings.

'The survivability difference between Seduction and Solitude was marginal, but there's no way a Demigod would waste time increasing the difficulty level so lightly. They're trying to steal my body, not test me.'

Likely, it was his own fortitude that allowed him to pass Solitude so easily.

What happened from this point forward would only be worse.

Damien took a confident step forward, walking with his back straight as a sword.

He walked for an unknown period of time through the bleak landscape before he finally understood the identity of the test.

It was "Insecurity."

'The Marionette Lord's methods are far more methodical than their personality. After shaking the target's mental stability, they immediately attack the greatest insecurities that the target has. Unless one survives the previous attack without any damage, they wouldn't be able to help being shaken by something like this.'

Before Damien was depicted a scene so tangible he was almost sucked into it.

It was a scene of tragedy.

The tragedy that was Damien's final remaining insecurity.

Chapter 950 Lord [4]

Was it back in the 3000 Beast Mountain Range when he finally overcame the mental barriers that held his progression back so much?

It had been so long that the memories were starting to feel distant.

Back then, Damien was still young. He was still struggling with his past, the terrible traumas he'd incurred over years of suffering in silence.

When those traumas were confronted and resolved, Damien was essentially reborn into a new person.

However, while the wounds themselves healed, they left behind scars.

More specifically, a single, extremely deep scar.

Damien looked at the images presented to him with indifference in his eyes.

Shik!

Shik!

Shik!

A sword repetitively stabbed into a corpse on the ground. Its wielder showed no emotion as he cut off the last remaining hope of life for the blue-haired woman below him.

That woman was none other than Elena.

Surrounding her were several mutilated corpses. Yet, despite their unrecognizable states, Damien could perfectly tell who they were.

Ruyue, Rose, Zara, Tian Yang, Long Chen, Astoria, and everyone else Damien had ever had a strong relationship with...

...including his own mother, Claire Watson.

Damien looked the killer in his eyes.

And the killer stared back.

Crash!

Damien shattered the mirror, his eyes never changing.

The same force that allowed him to live as he lived and even allowed him to overcome the current danger as easily as he currently could was the same force he feared the most.

'My own indifference.'

Damien was always a person who attached extreme importance to his sense of identity. He always made sure he understood himself better than his enemies ever could, so they could never use his weaknesses against him.

As such, he was painfully aware of how dangerous his indifference was.

If he ever encountered a situation in the future where he was forced to drop his morals, if that situation caused him to loosen the tight grip he kept on the relationships he had with those people who managed to enter his dead heart...

Would he also become like Immortal Blood Asura who could easily sacrifice his children and family for the sake of power?

The Marionette Lord's next attack came faster than expected.

Ironically, the very insecurity Damien faced in the 4th attack allowed him to bypass it easily, sending him into the 4th test.

"Fear."

The fears represented were two branching concepts that formed a single whole.

The first was connected to Damien's insecurity. It was a fear of his own desire for power.

From the beginning, Damien's driving force to grow stronger was simply so he could grow stronger.

The main motivator that pushed him forward was his dream to look down on existence from the peak of everything.

When his core desire for strength wasn't rooted in those he cared for, the likelihood of the aforementioned tragedy coming to life was high.

Therefore, Damien always slightly feared and kept a leash on this desire, finding new small goals to tie it to so he could always remain grounded, never reaching a state where he would commit the unthinkable for its sake.

As for the second fear...

Damien stood at the top. He had achieved that unknown realm that even the universe didn't know about and looked down on all existence from below.

Yet, he stood alone.

Where would he go from here?

There was nothing above him, and all things below him gazed at him in fear and reverence.

The people he loved and cared about stayed by his side, but they were never able to reach that untold height, stopping at the universe's final bounds of power.

No matter how close they were, they felt millions of kilometers in the distance.

As someone at the finish line, Damien could clearly understand how impossible it was for that gap to close.

So...then what?

When he finally achieved his goal, what was he to do?

The greatest fear at the very core of his being was this very situation.

An unattainable peak being reached once could be chalked up to heavenly luck and skill, but multiple times? For everyone related to the first individual? I think you should take a look at

It was unrealistic to even hope for it.

To sit on this peak alone was something Damien couldn't stand the thought of, and to stand on this peak and not see greater horizons in the distance was just as terrifying.

Even now, facing this situation firsthand, Damien could feel the emptiness in his soul that made him want to give up and abandon his dream.

Yet...

'I don't even understand Divinity yet, how can I guess about the peak of existence? Whatever happens will be solved by the me that exists in that time. Isn't that right?'

Damien smiled. He felt a warm force cover his body, bringing him out of that bleak and desolate future.

'These past two illusions have shown me things I needed to see. A situation like that can only end in tragedy if one doesn't prepare for it beforehand. Since I've been made painfully aware of the possibilities, I just have to make sure they don't ever get realized. Easy enough, right?'

Damien stepped forward and entered the next illusion with a smile on his face.

Really, when he exited this prison, he had to offer the Marionette Lord his sincerest thanks for their gracious gift.

After all, to an extreme peak master, defining their sense of self and furthering their understanding of Laws was the most imperative task.

And wasn't that exactly what the Marionette Lord was allowing him to do?

Seriously, just as they'd stated themselves, they were truly a kind and benevolent Lord!

"Hohohoho...huhuhuhuhu!"

The Marionette Lord's strange laughter echoed through the void.

In the Real Plane, in their residence in the void, the Marionette Lord watched Damien's progress through their soul wisp's eyes.

"Look at this! This is great! I knew the Saint Emperor couldn't be interested in someone normal, but to think it'd be like this!"

The Marionette Lord happily clapped their hands as their eyes turned to crescents.

"Flaffy, isn't this interesting?" They asked with a beaming smile.

"Keeurrgh...gaakhhogb..."

A ball of mush nearby let out a string of incoherent sounds in response.

"Hm? Spare you? But I'm busy right now. Wait until later and I'll think about it."

The ball of mush trembled at her words.

"Huuugggh...haaaaaaaaggggh..."

The Marionette Lord's eyes immediately shot over to the mush.

"Trash, disobey me again and see what happens." They uttered coldly.

"...guuuu..."

The mush shivered fiercely and tried to back away before remembering its current form.

A mush ball named Flaffy, not the exalted Nox Demigod, the Flame Lord.

"Wow, seriously wow! He crushed Seduction before it could even start, used Solitude to attain comprehension of a mysterious law that I don't know, breezed through Insecurity and Fear with a straight face, what comes next?!" The Marionette Lord exclaimed as they stroked their chin in intrigue.

"Not to mention, his insecurities and fears are so surprising. Everything he doubts is internal. It's as if he truly believes that there is no greater threat to him in this universe than himself..."

Not only that, he truly believed without a sliver of doubt that it was inevitable for him to eventually reach the unknown peak.

It was arrogant beyond arrogance.

He was facing a death sentence from a Demigod, yet he viewed it as a training ground to refine his mental fortitude.

Not only did he not place the illusions in his eyes, he looked down upon the caster himself as well!

"I like it!... I don't like it!... I hate it!...no, I love it! What is this feeling?! Was there ever something like this?!"

"Guu—"

"Flaffy, I'm so happy right now!"

The Marionette Lord hopped over and picked up the mush ball like a puppy, holding it up in the air.

They brought it to their chest in a tight hug.

Bang!

"Flaffy~!"

The mush ball exploded into a rain of black ink that drenched the Marionette Lord.

They smiled happier than ever as they licked the ink off their lips.

"This one...I want him!"