

Void 971

Chapter 971 Farewell [1]

The Day of the Dead came to its natural end when the moon was halfway through its journey across the sky. The people of Beast Emperor Star retreated to their homes to enjoy the peace they once took for granted, and the people of the main clan returned to the palace to begin restoration procedures to heal the world itself back to its peak.

Damien also finished his business and returned to the palace around the same time, making his way to a secluded office-like room to meet the Emperor thereafter.

"We've been having a lot of meetings these days, huh," Damien said with a smile as he sat down in the seat prepared for him.

The royal clan, including the Emperor himself, no longer cared if Damien followed the usual courtesies. After all, disregarding his achievements, his status as Astoria's teacher technically placed him equal to the Emperor in seniority!

"Indeed," the Emperor responded, passing Damien a glass and motioning for him to help himself to the few spirit liquor displayed on the table. "Though, this will be the last for a considerable period, no?"

Damien nodded. "Mm, now that I've achieved everything I set out to do, there's no point in staying. I should clear things up with the Ancient God Clan as soon as possible."

"Good. It seems you have planned your steps carefully. However, you must still be careful. There are many people after your life."

"You heard something?"

"Hmm..."

The Emperor hummed as he poured himself a glass of spirit wine. "Just a few things. There are more than a few influences trying to find your information, but you've hidden well. Most of your history is a blank slate, while a majority of the rest is being blocked by a certain influence."

Damien smiled wryly. He didn't know whether to laugh or cry at this newly unveiled truth.

First of all, wasn't the Emperor insinuating that he was also searching for Damien's information?

Putting aside that only slightly concerning fact, had he really been lowkey in any fashion? He almost wanted to check if someone altered his memories and made his life far more exciting than it actually was.

'I can't decide whether that would be better or worse, but for now, let's stop thinking about it. Even if it's a joke, with my luck, I'll probably end up the target of a few trickster Gods. Then again, maybe they'd teach me how to actually be lowkey...?'

Rather than saying he had hidden, it was more accurate to say that he killed everyone who would've wanted to sell his information in vengeance, and those who were left alive were simply too far apart for their accounts of his person to be assumed as the same person.

After all, other than Damien, who else could move halfway across the universe in a few weeks or less? Even spatial practitioners didn't have this kind of mobility, so his existence was conveniently kept unrecognized.

Though, he didn't doubt that if these people's memories were searched for his appearance, his entire "hidden genius" persona would die.

'I'll have to repay the Director someday.' He thought to himself.

The enemies who wanted his life at this stage were mostly Holy Land-level influences or Demigods. While his fame made him blush a little, he now had to consider the Human Domain again.

To someone like Immortal Blood Asura, making the connection would be a piece of cake as long as he had a single lead.

"Setting that aside for now, you will also be attending the Grand Assembly, no?" Damien said, returning his mind to reality.

The Emperor nodded. "Yes, the plan has not changed. I will be personally attending the Grand Assembly. Matters of the world will be left to Hedrick and Elizabeth."

Damien furrowed his brows. "Are you planning to bring Astoria?"

"Is there a problem?" the Emperor asked.

Damien nodded. "You should let her remain here. In fact, you shouldn't let her leave the world until it stabilizes."

The Emperor raised his brow curiously.

'I guess he doesn't know yet.'

Damien realized once again just how esoteric Fate was. Even at this stage, a Demigod like the Golden Dragon Emperor could only sense that Astoria had become proficient in utilizing Fate like a Golden Dragon.

Damien sighed in slight wonder and began explaining everything from the beginning. He explained what he knew about Fate, slightly embellishing the details with concepts of Universal Flow and Samsara to make it more digestible.

The Emperor made a variety of expressions as he listened to Damien's explanation and learned about what truly happened when Astoria restored the Fate Clouds and how Damien essentially enslaved and kidnapped the Black Dragons. I think you should take a look at

"Many events have been taking place outside of my perception. What a strange feeling," the Emperor said somewhat wryly as he took another sip of his drink.

Damien didn't speak further upon seeing the Emperor fall prey to his own thoughts.

There were many things for him to digest, after all.

As a Divinity, the Golden Dragon Emperor's mentality was far stronger than the average man, but he wasn't a brick wall. If he was, he wouldn't have sacrificed his future for the sake of his clan.

However, to learn that this sacrifice was the reason he was never able to achieve the goal he'd been striving towards ever since his ascension to the throne...was difficult to accept, to say the least.

And even more than that, his goal had chosen his daughter instead of him.

'So this was the meaning of that prophecy...' he thought to himself.

The great blessing fated for the Golden Dragons wasn't external. It wasn't some sort of treasure...

It was Astoria.

This girl who had only ever shown herself to be a mischievous devil somehow matured into someone grand before he even realized it.

Was this the shock every parent had to experience at some point in their life?

A smile formed on his face.

It truly did hurt, but since he never had a chance in the first place, wasn't this the best possible scenario?

'Astoria...you have finally found your place in the limelight...' the Emperor thought, his eyes half-closing as he sent his thoughts into the sky.

'Deytria, I hope you are watching over her from your place in the Heavens...'

He offered a silent prayer before opening his eyes and turning back to Damien.

"Thank you."

Damien's eyes widened.

"What'd I do?"

The Emperor smiled. It was a smile that contained warmth, something he'd never shown Damien.

"If it wasn't for your aid, would Astoria have been able to bloom into her potential? If left to others, it would have gone unnoticed until the day she died. How could I not thank you?"

Damien shook his head. "No, I only gave her the chance to grow. If she wasn't already a genius with a fiercely unyielding spirit, she would have gained nothing at all."

He finally poured himself a glass of dark spirit liquor and raised it in the air with a grin.

"She's bound to complain incessantly when she learns she has to stay home, so make sure to properly thank her for saving the world."

The Emperor's eyes widened slightly before he returned Damien's expression, flashing his sharp canines.

He raised his glass to meet the one extended to him.

Clink!

"Consider it done."

Chapter 972 Farewell [2]

"Master~! Why are you leaving me~?!"

Astoria's ear-rending whining resounded through the halls of the palace, making anyone who could hear her's expression wry.

Damien was included among these people. He rolled his eyes and smirked, patting her on the head to placate her.

"Relax. Why're you acting like I'm going to go die somewhere? We'll reunite eventually," he said warmly.

"But Master~, if you leave, everything will become boring again!"

"I shouldn't have expected anything else from you."

"Hm?"

"Haa, nothing. Anyway, you already have plenty to do here, so what's the point of leaving? You're still acting like this, but we both know what's in your heart."

Astoria looked away, embarrassed at how well he could read her.

Damien gave a half smile and sent her a sound transmission for only the two of them to hear.

"I have one last gift for you before I leave. Take this bead. Whenever you find yourself with some alone time, crush it. You'll get a big surprise."

Damien passed her a small blue marble, which she took and eyed curiously.

"Master, what is this thing? Why did you have to tell me through sound transmission?" She questioned.

"Haha, don't worry about that for now. All you need to know is: as long as you crush that bead, you won't get bored during this period of house arrest. I'll guarantee that on my pride as your master," Damien responded smugly.

"Oh?"

Astoria's eyes brightened as she stashed the bead in her spatial ring.

"Master, I'm not patient so I'm going to go try it now! I'll see you next time!"

She immediately ran over to the Emperor and spoke a few words before scurrying back to her room.

Damien shook his head with a half-smile on his face. 'Well, the sooner the better I guess.'

Astoria's behavior wasn't a facade, but she was far more complex than she was before she met Damien.

She now had a sense of responsibility and understanding towards her position and power.

Damien's smile was not a wry one caused by her mischief, but a content one, because he knew that his disciple was doing everything she could to grow stronger as efficiently and stably as possible.

And she trusted their relationship enough to know that the gift Damien gave her would be the best first step for her to take.

How could he not feel pride after seeing her determination?

He wished he could help her more, but her path was never space.

From the beginning, her spatial abilities were supportive.

Only, her main strength was not the techniques of the Golden Dragons, but instead those of another being entirely.

'I wonder how it'll look when those two meet...I guess I'll hear it directly from Astoria later.'

Damien turned his attention a few feet away, where Elena and the Emperor were having a conversation that'd basically been going in circles for the past few minutes.

"...your contributions. Without you, this planet would have fallen."

"It's nothing, your Majesty. I was only acting for material benefit, so I cannot accept your thanks.

"For material benefit only? However, any normal contractee would not put in half the effort you did. I believe in your sense of justice, and I believe it should be commended. There is no need to reject our sincerity."

"I..."

"She'll take it!"

Damien appeared between the duo and swiped the box in the Emperor's hand, wrapping his arm around Elena and flashing a grin at the duo.

"Guys, courtesy is fun, but isn't this a bit too excessive?" He said teasingly.

Elena frowned. "I really didn't do anything worthy of rewarding though, so I don't want to accept anything precious."

"Unfortunately for you, wifey, your husband is shameless and greedy, so we'll be taking this anyway."

"Emperor, any objections?"

"None," the Emperor responded with a smile.

Elena looked at Damien, then the Emperor, then back at Damien one more time before finally letting out a defeated sigh. I think you should take a look at

"Haa, fine. But I still won't take it for free. If the Golden Dragon Clan ever needs my help in the future, I'll lend it without question."

The Emperor nodded contentedly. "That goes without saying. Our Golden Dragon Clan shared your sentiment and will aid you with the same fervor if the need ever arises. As allies, it is only right that we support each other."

The duo expressed their appreciation, and after a few more minutes of conversation, the time of departure truly came.

Damien and Elena left the palace hand in hand, the Emperor and Golden Dragon Clan's words of well wishes following them out.

Damien looked over at the lovely woman beside him with a smile.

"You ready? We have a lot of explaining to do before the fun stuff starts."

Elena leaned into his shoulder with the same warm expression on her face. "Please go easy on the teleportation this time. I'm not ready to die yet."

"Hey, aren't we supposed to be having a romantic moment as we ride off into the sunset right now?"

"Why would you want to do something so unbelievably cringe?"

"I hate that you know Earth humor."

"Yes, and I love you too."

"Tch."

Damien clicked his tongue, trying his best to pretend like he wasn't grinning like a fool on the inside.

It had been so long that he didn't realize how much he missed the feeling of having a beauty by his side, particularly a beauty he had feelings for.

It wasn't bad.

It wasn't bad at all.

'...but I should still get a little revenge for that last bit, no?'

Elena shivered as she sensed Damien's evil grin.

"Wait, don't even think about—!"

"Too late."

Flash!

The duo disappeared from the world, off to start their next journey and leaving behind a world that shone in gold.

In every corner of the Fate Star, beautiful manifestations covered the sky as if to celebrate the existence of the couple.

Astoria watched the fading spatial fluctuations with an unreadable expression on her face, tightening her grip on the bead in her hand.

'Next time, I'll be strong enough to stand by them.'

Her sentiment drifted into reality and merged with those of many others, and Astoria herself...

...vanished into the air along with the spatial fluctuations.

Major changes were going to take place in the universe soon enough, and while those involved didn't know it quite yet, the calamity of Beast Emperor Star marked the start of a new era.

It was an era of war and death, an era of total uncertainty...

Yet, it was only this type of era that could birth ultimate geniuses,

And it was only in this type of era that they could draw out every last bit of their potential.

The stage was set for their debut.

All that was left...was for those stars to shine.

The trip to the Ancient God Clan was simple and smooth, at least for Damien. While Elena had something of a shaky ride, it wasn't too bad for her either.

The couple entered the Ancient God Clan's hidden world and met Di within seconds of their arrival. Now that there were mere days remaining before the biggest gathering of the century took place, there was no time to dally and talk about meaningless things.

First of all, the Genesis Bead needed to be recovered. Otherwise, the Ancient God Clan couldn't confront other larger influences with confidence.

However, when Damien and Elena actually got around to explaining what happened...

"You did...WHAT?!"

...the reaction was just as bad as they expected it to be.

Chapter 973 Grand [1]

The Ancient God Clan once had three treasures.

One was destroyed while the other only dealt with internal clan matters, leaving only the Genesis Bead with the ability to aid them against outside threats.

Unfortunately, the bead was lost as well.

It wasn't a matter of the Ancient God Clan being negligent. In fact, after the Alteron Star Cruiser's destruction, they guarded the Genesis Bead to the best of their capabilities.

How could they predict its theft? And after its theft, how could they retrieve it when it was passed around several times with no true owner for too long?

By the time the bead landed in the Golden Dragon Emperor's hands, the Ancient God Clan's situation had deteriorated, making it incredibly inconvenient for them to retrieve it.

Damien's existence was a slap to the clan's face, but Di and Ran, its leaders, understood how significant he was to their clan's fate.

Let alone revival, if he could reach the level of the Ancestor who originally created the Ancient God Clan, he could take them to higher heights than they'd ever imagined,

Therefore, both in convenience and to test him, they sent him to the Beast Domain to reclaim their lost treasure.

Did they doubt he could do it?

Not at all. No master of the Ancient God Clan could be so weak.

However, did they expect him to do it so fast?

And more than that—

"You did...WHAT?!"

Ran's voice was practically like the screech of an eagle as she stood up and slammed her hands down on the table.

Seated around it were Di, Damien, Elena, Xinyue, and Ran herself. They had only just reunited and begun their conversation, but she already felt like her head was going to explode.

"We sent you to retrieve our clan's artifact, yet you came back only to tell us that we cannot reclaim it at all?! What is this blasphemy?!"

Ran's roars weren't too big of an overreaction, all things considered.

Compared to her, Di was far more composed. Still, his usually unmoving face was currently crinkled in a complicated expression.

Of the three, only Xinyue showed no reaction at all. She merely looked between Damien and Elena, seemingly quietly assessing the situation.

Damien sighed and explained the entire story, starting from meeting Astoria and ending finally when he enslaved the Black Dragons.

The further the story went, the more the expressions of the three Ancient God Clansmen changed.

From intrigue to shock, from disgust to admiration, they absorbed the tales of the Great War of Beast Emperor Star and everything that came about as a result of it.

Including Elena's binding of the Genesis Bead.

At the end of the explanation, Elena directly stood up and bowed to the two clan leaders, expressing her apology.

"I still have no clue how or why the Genesis Bead bonded itself with me, but I had no intention of plundering your treasures. If there is anything I can do to compensate, I will try my best to do it," she said sincerely.

Ran ground her teeth, flashing Elena a glare that could burn a hole through the world itself, but she didn't speak.

Di glanced at Elena and shook his head softly. "The situation is different from what we originally assumed. Rather than binding the Genesis Bead, you were chosen by it. This is not something we can hold a grudge for."

The Genesis Bead, as a supreme treasure, had a rudimentary consciousness, which meant that while it couldn't communicate or articulate itself, it could choose its owner.

In terms of intelligence, it was barely lower than Mirage.

Nevertheless, the Genesis Bead never bound itself to an Ancient God Clan member no matter how much time passed. It only ever allowed them to use its base capabilities, which still boosted their overall strength tremendously.

For it to bind with Elena meant it was ready to show its true form and true worth. I think you should take a look at

"It is both a blessing for the individual and a terrible omen for the state of the universe. I am beginning to worry about what will happen during this Grand Assembly," Di muttered.

Looking at Damien and Elena, he continued, "This matter cannot be solved simply, but we can at least put aside the more detailed conversations until the current hurdle is crossed. Until then, Miss Elena, please do not underestimate the Genesis Bead. Since it has chosen you, you must not allow it to wallow in mediocrity."

Elena nodded firmly in acknowledgment, silently sensing the bead that resided in her body.

Meanwhile, Damien continued the conversation, steering it away from his and Elena's blunder now that the air had been slightly cleared up.

"What's the plan?" He asked.

"We are already prepared to set out. We were only awaiting your arrival. Now that you are here, we can leave at any time."

Damien nodded. "The Grand Assembly is only 3 days away, right? Can your starship make it in time?"

"Naturally it would be difficult for a starship to make such a trip, but is that not where you come in?"

"Aha, so the plan was always to abuse my power."

"This is not abuse in any sense. This is merely you doing your duty for your subordinates. Isn't that right, 'Lord Damien.'"

Di's voice was laced with just a hint of sarcasm that made Damien's expression wry.

'Weren't you supposed to accept me after I— oh wait, I totally failed the task they gave me, didn't I...'

'Oh well, it is what it is.'

Damien shrugged.

"5 days to get to the Divine Realm...how big is the starship?"

"Not large. It is just enough to contain 4 of us, as well as one more genius from the Clan."

"I see, so Ran is staying?"

"Don't speak my name so casually! But yes, I will not be attending. This time, each influence can only bring 5 geniuses and 5 elders. You should be thankful that two of those spots are being granted to you," Ran interrupted haughtily.

"Ah, actually, I don't need one. You can use mine for another genius."

"Wha-?! You...!"

"I dropped down a lot in the time I spent away, but I'm still top 50 on the Dimensional Leaderboard. I already have an entry quota." Damien said nonchalantly.

"H-huh?"

Ran's eyes widened slightly, making it clear that she had no foreknowledge of this fact.

Damien glanced at Di, who shook his head in defeat.

Even he couldn't control her behavior. Since she disregarded Damien from the beginning, she didn't bother doing any research on him.

Damien sighed to himself. "You probably need time to choose a third genius, so let's set out tomorrow. Until then, me and Elena will go elsewhere to prepare."

Damien glanced at Elena, who nodded back at him with a smile. Taking her hand, he vanished from the Ancient God Clan, entering the Sanctuary for a period of last-minute adjustment.

After all, no matter how big of an event the Grand Assembly was to the universe as a whole, it was even bigger to Damien.

Because this event...

This event was the place where he would finally reunite with everyone from the Human Domain.

His anticipation was practically explosive.

Chapter 974 Grand [2]

The Grand Assembly.

To this day, many words had been spoken of it, but not much had been said to describe what the event actually was.

In fact, this wasn't without reason. The Grand Assembly's importance was obvious, and those involved in arranging it were extremely cautious about containing information.

However, now that the day was approaching, those invited parties finally received some information.

First off, the location.

The Grand Assembly was set to take place in what could be considered the safest place in the entire universe; Sky Castle Luxurion.

It was the very center of the Divine Realm, which also happened to be the widely regarded center of the universe.

Currently, several hundred forces made their way through the Divine Realm, using teleportation arrays and starships to rapidly move through the starry sky.

Of course, without special means, it was impossible for those further from the Divine Realm, such as the Ancient God Clan, to reach Luxurion in time, but that was to be expected.

The Grand Assembly would begin soon enough, but it would continue for at least two months.

The true conference to decide the fate of Grand Heavens Boundary would only take place after all forces were present, but there were many other events that would lead up to that conference, aimed to promote camaraderie and rivalry among peers from every corner of the universe.

Naturally, most of these events were meant for younger geniuses, but there was plenty for the older experts to do as well.

After all, at a time like this, it was best to make as many allies and acquaintances as possible.

Especially those with little influence like the Ancient God Clan, who operated mainly in Eien and had far more acclaim than their numbers suggested.

A starship drifted through the starry sky. It was deep black with maroon emblems painting its surface, depicting it as a vessel belonging to the Royal Demon Clan.

Rulers of the Infernal Realm, helmed by the Supreme, Lucifer, the Royal Demon Clan was likely one of the most influential clans in Grand Heavens Boundary, with their numerous Demigod Ancestors outstripping the number of extreme peak masters most regular influences had.

They, along with the Heavenly Clan of the Divine Realm, were the strongest singular influences in Grand Heavens Boundary, clans with status that made them utterly untouchable for all.

However, surprisingly enough, this ship was not home to only demons.

Among those on the vessel were many humans, and even a single angel.

"Lucifer, when will we arrive?" The angel asked as he gazed out a nearby window.

Lucifer smiled slightly as he responded: "What, have you missed the comfort of Luxurion so much? I thought you were better than the rest of those fools, Parsiel."

The angel, Parsiel, sneered. "If I was like them, you'd have killed me already. Stop joking around and answer me."

"We should arrive on the first or second day of the assembly. Why must you worry when we've already been traveling for so long? You knew where the assembly would be held months ago, no?"

"That's true, yet..."

Parsiel frowned to himself. It had been several years since he left the Divine Realm on a mission to find talent, and now that he was returning, he couldn't get rid of the wriggling discomfort in his chest.

What was this feeling?

Fear? Foreboding?

Or maybe it was just anticipation?

He didn't know, but whatever it was, it made him feel jittery and uncomfortable.

"How do you think they will be received when we arrive?" He suddenly said.

"Do you even need to ask?" Lucifer responded immediately.

"It'll be utterly humiliating..." I think you should take a look at

"...at least, until they get a chance to prove themselves."

The smile on his face became somewhat imperceptible, but Parsiel knew exactly what he meant.

Those people...

Well, it was best to say that their existence finally convinced Parsiel that rumors of the Human Domain weren't embellished in the slightest.

Perhaps they were even a little too mild to describe those monsters!

"To think someone can not only pass their Baptism and enter 4th class, but traverse the entire thing and land in the late stages in the span of what, 2 years? 3 years? If I didn't see it myself, I wouldn't believe a single word of it," he muttered, still shaking his head in wonder at this fact he'd known for a long time now.

"And it isn't just one, but four. Chaotic eras truly do produce many heroes," Lucifer added.

"Mm, and the 5th is..."

"Even I can't understand what that Void Old Immortal is thinking. Since he's a Demigod, I'm sure he has his own considerations."

The two's conversation fell into a lull.

For this event, they had taken the great risk of backing an unknown variable, the Human Domain's forces.

Depending on their performance, it would either be a blessing or a catastrophe for many people, not just those directly involved.

'The Human Domain's status has fallen to an all-time low in the 10,000 years they've been disconnected from the universe. If those young geniuses excel, they will immediately regain their grand status. However, if they end up failing...'

If the Human Domain was secluded from the universe not just physically but emotionally, what would happen to them?

Rather, if they lost their value and the influences that controlled Grand Heavens Boundary decided to forsake Sector 3 entirely, how would its citizens survive when the Nox eventually invaded?

These stakes naturally weren't just known by Lucifer and Parsiel, but by the Human Domain geniuses as well.

Despite their comparative youth, they were beings who understood their worth and their duty.

And none of them planned to fail.

There were 9 rooms in the starship occupied by Human Domain forces.

5 of them contained Demigod elders such as the Void Old Immortal Tian Yang, while the other four contained 5 geniuses.

Unlike their peers, two of the geniuses decided to share a room, using the time they spent on the starship to train together and improve.

Between them, there were no unfamiliar faces.

A beautiful woman with light, almost pastel pink hair who had an aura of mystery and intrigue around her like a strange cross between a trickster and a goddess, and a woman with white hair that matched her ethereal appearance, who almost appeared like a lone moon in the sky, or maybe even a goddess of death.

They had been training with their eyes set on the Grand Assembly for a very long time, and they didn't plan to relax even now.

They remained with their eyes closed and legs crossed, seated facing each other with their mana intermingling and strengthening in the space between them.

Unlike the rest, they had two goals in this expedition.

The first was naturally to secure the fate of the Human Domain and gain allies for the coming outbreak of all-out war...

...and the second was to look for a person.

His whereabouts were a mystery and had been a mystery since he first disappeared, but they had a hunch.

That man who somehow managed to get himself involved in every major event that he had the ability to interfere in...

...he would definitely be there.

Chapter 975 Grand [3]

Wap!

The starry sky warped strangely as a starship catapulted through its folds and arrived several hundred million kilometers away from its starting position.

The stars and planets that decorated space were beautiful, and though it would seem like a dreary and unchanging scenery, every celestial body had its own unique life signature, which, for those who could see them, painted the starry sky in a myriad of colors and visions.

The Divine Realm's outer space was far different from the Beast Domain. If there was one main factor that defined the two, it was the atmosphere.

The Divine Realm was still and calm, while the Beast Domain was far more belligerent.

It sounded like a qualitative effect, but it was actually directly related to the qualities of the sectors' mana itself. This mana was influenced by its users and influenced them in return, which established these qualities over a long period of time.

But, even without this mana, the Divine Realm stood out from the rest; solely due to the existence of Luxurion.

The Ancient God Clan's starship traveled without pause, and those on board were almost collapsing from the constant spatial travel, but by sacrificing themselves, they made it to the Divine Realm in an incredibly short period of time, leaving themselves an entire day before the Grand Assembly's official start.

Damien stood in the control center of the ship and stared out the windows, his eyes set on Luxurion's light, visible from every corner of the Divine Realm.

'I didn't really comprehend it back when I first arrived, but just how big is Luxurion? For its light to shine so fiercely for hundreds of millions of kilometers...'

He didn't continue the train of thought for long, as after a few more long-distance teleportations, the castle's figure became clear in his eyes.

Massive was an understatement.

Damien just came from the Golden Dragon Palace which was almost like a moon in size, but Luxurion?

Luxurion was larger than suns, an entire gigantic world in the shape of a shining white and gold castle, a color scheme expected of angels.

Hiss!

Damien deeply inhaled as he observed it. Compared to the castle, the starship looked like an ant.

No, with the thousands of starships making their way towards the location, the castle was like the ant hill to their colony.

It was a silly analogy, but it also served to illustrate the humbling feeling that standing in front of such a structure provoked.

The time and effort it took to build this castle and detail it so intricately, the power and finesse it took to fortify it and make it a true divine sanctuary that symbolized safety, everything that went into bringing this place into existence, and even its existence itself, made one understand just how far they were from the peak of everything.

It was exhilarating and grounding at the same time, especially for younger geniuses like Damien who were still filled with the motivation to grow and improve.

As Damien entertained his anticipation, Di took over control of the starship and maneuvered it into the line that had formed outside Luxurion.

In total, the number of those who arrived a day early was only in the few thousands, most of these being affiliated forces of larger influences who could only participate in the festivities but were barred from the actual conference.

Those not included in these were geniuses who wanted to scout the competition beforehand.

Some of these geniuses were people with high status in the universe who hid themselves and traveled separately from their backing for the sake of a more natural experience.

Among them, there were several familiar faces from Hidden Death Valley, including the one and only Atticus Flamesworth.

Atticus was one of the first in the wider universe to recognize Damien's talents, and though the man himself disappeared for almost a year, he didn't fade from Atticus' mind.

No, the scars of defeat he still held from their battle in the Celestial Realm were a daily reminder of that monstrous being who could only be viewed as a goal to surpass.

Atticus had worked extremely hard these past months and securely stepped foot into level 399, just barely missing the extreme peak.

As he went through the many verification procedures to enter Luxurion, his spirit burned brighter. He was confident that Damien would appear at the Grand Assembly, and he was confident that Damien, who was still in the mid-ranges of 4th class when they last met, wouldn't be able to match his progress.

And in a sense, he wasn't wrong. If Damien only had 9 months to train, he likely wouldn't have reached his current extreme power level. I think you should take a look at

However, Damien didn't have 9 months, but around 5 years and 9 months after the Void Corridor and Astoria's training.

If Atticus came to know this, just how would he feel?

It was almost certain he'd cough blood and kneel in seconds.

But...that was a story for a different time.

Damien and his group weren't too far behind Atticus in line. Around 20 minutes after he entered Luxurion, Damien's group arrived and began undergoing security procedures as well.

Atticus was definitely understating the security procedures because of his status as Fallen Star Holy Land's Young Master. It wasn't just strict and tedious, but absolutely airtight to prevent any sort of mishap.

Confirming identity was easy, but after identity confirmation came an extremely in-depth and almost uncomfortable search, which was followed by stations that recorded one's mana fluctuations, blood, power level, soul fluctuation, and much more.

Essentially, the procedures were less about confirming that those who entered wouldn't be a threat during the assembly, it was to ensure that they could be monitored and, if needed, controlled after the assembly ended.

Damien passed the procedures without a hitch, calmly obeying every command he was given, though...

'Kekekeke, let's see how you try to leash me with falsified information. You'll never be able to tell it's fake until it's too late because you'll never understand the Void! Kekekeke...'

...his inner thoughts were quite devious indeed.

It would be a lie to say the grandiosity of this event wasn't making him giddy. After operating so seriously for so long, this opportunity to take two months off while waiting for the main conference was welcomed with open arms.

Damien turned back and watched as Elena finished her own business and flew over to where he was waiting.

"Should we go now?" she asked, glancing at the Ancient God Clan members, who had to go through a much more thorough questioning since they were an influence rather than individuals.

'From the original explanation, I thought it would be more difficult to get in, but it seems like they're letting anyone in right now. I guess the invite-only part that everyone was worrying about was just the conference itself.'

"Let's just go. For now, I don't think Ran and Xinyue appreciate our presence in the slightest," he said out loud after thinking it over.

Elena nodded in agreement. "I don't know the full story, but it should be a matter of time. Don't you just have to show up and show out like always so they feel no doubts about the 'Lord' they follow?"

Damien smiled wryly and responded, "Don't say it like that. I really wanted to just relax this time."

"Hahaha!" Elena laughed brightly. "Since when was that an option?"

"I hate how accurate that is."

"And I love you too."

"We're doing this again?"

"It just felt appropriate."

"Fair enough."

The two laughed together as they truly entered Luxurion.

'Show up and show out, huh...'

Damien's face twitched as he tried to stop the wolf grin trying to form on his face.

'When you say it like that, how can I even refuse?'

Chapter 976 Grand [4]

The inside of Luxurion was just as luxurious as its exterior, perhaps even more.

After all, with a castle the size of a planet, how would one fill the space?

Naturally, the entire structure had high ceilings that could easily accommodate Giants in their full size or beasts with huge forms, but that was still only enough to fill a bit more space.

Luxurion was like a world specifically created for training and events. It was armed with countless facilities which could house hundreds of thousands of practitioners easily that contained state-of-the-art mana technology to train various facets of one's strength, as well as a plethora of arenas and ballrooms and other facilities of similar nature.

Damien and Elena entered through the main entrance of the palace, which was on the North side. This entrance was used for public events where outsiders would enter Luxurion, as its other facilities were largely reserved for the Angel Race alone.

It was their treasure, after all. Regardless of its universal importance, the Angel Race made the final decision on how it was utilized.

Nevertheless, for the Grand Assembly, many areas of Luxurion that had originally been closed to the public were opened.

"At this point, everything is basically free game. We can do whatever we want until someone tries to stop us," Damien muttered as he glanced around.

There were many people already in the halls, but they were spread sparsely in comparison to the size of the hall itself.

Many younger practitioners were leaving the main entrance hall one by one to explore Luxurion, which gave Damien the idea to do the same.

"Luxurion's facilities are famous throughout the universe, but those outside of the Angel Race could only ever dream about them in envy. Now that we have the chance to experience that dream, why not do it right?" Elena commented in agreement.

The two left the Ancient God Clan behind as they'd agreed prior and explored the castle.

'Xinyue's attitude had completely changed since she found out about my position. I don't know if it's grievance or something else, but it's not fun to see...'

Damien didn't have any particular feelings for Xinyue, but she was an acquaintance that he'd spent some time with. He didn't like that she now looked at him like an enemy targeting her clan.

'Nothing can be done about it. If I was in her position, I'd probably be the same.'

Damien shrugged it off and focused on the scenic walk he was taking instead.

As Elena said, what the Ancient God Clan needed was time to accept their fate.

'If they want to view themselves as slaves, I should leave them with the Black Dragons and show them how those who were forcefully submitted are actually treated. Maybe their views will change.'

The Black Dragons under his command were currently experiencing hell in the name of disciplining, but that wasn't a story that needed to be told.

'Putting aside useless thoughts, these facilities are truly amazing. They're only a step better than what was available in Hidden Death Valley, but a step at that height is a thousand steps in regular terms.'

If he wanted to benefit from training right now, these facilities would be a perfect tool. Unfortunately, his goal was elsewhere.

'For 2 months, I have to entertain myself without causing too much trouble and getting a target placed on my back. To start, I should scout the level that the average genius is at so I can make a plan to move forward.'

The end goal was to thoroughly crush the competition, but doing so this early would be idiotic.

As the saying went, the first to show their cards would always lose.

Damien explained his reasoning to Elena, who had the same thought but for different reasons, and the duo made their way to the castle's battleground, a place where tens of arenas existed as one to create the greatest conjoined tournament venues in the universe.

The arenas were already in use, with several tens of geniuses waiting to fight and even more sitting in the stands.

As Damien had no interest in weaker fights, he went to the arena emanating the strongest mana fluctuations, which was also coincidentally the smallest one.

The stands could only hold a hundred or so people at most, and the ring was only a few tens of meters large.

Two men stood on opposing sides of the arena. Their eyes were closed and their postures suggested they were meditating, but to the trained eye, a fearsome battle was taking place. I think you should take a look at

Silently and imperceptibly, leaving behind only the furious fluctuations of their existence, laws clashed in the air between the two geniuses.

They battled purely using the concepts they were learning without mobilizing these concepts as attacks.

Damien's brow raised when he saw it.

'Smart. They can still show off, but they can conceal a majority of their power by fighting this way. After all, no matter the strength of one's comprehension, it's useless without techniques to properly utilize it.'

Even more so, law concepts could go through a myriad of changes as one found methods to militarize them.

"They're not matching each other, but doing their best to force the other to attack through suppression. It makes me want to try," Elena said through sound transmission.

Damien nodded in agreement, releasing his All-Seeing Eyes to get a more tangible view of the fight.

As time went on and multiple battles started and ended, he became more certain.

'Their comprehension is impressive, but it isn't anything special. At most, they're average among Eien's forces and slightly above average in Hidden Death Valley. If these people were placed on the Dimensional Leaderboard, they wouldn't even make the top 5,000.'

A frown formed on his lips.

'If they represent the average state of geniuses in the universe, it's not just a matter of this assembly being boring anymore. The universe will genuinely suffer if it can only rely on a small number of heroes.'

He fell into thought about how he could influence this situation for the better, only to be jerked back to reality by a hand that firmly landed on his shoulder.

"Damien, you're really here!"

A man's voice came from behind, making Damien sigh.

'I guess I'll think about it later.'

He turned around with a somewhat forced smile to greet the man.

"Atticus, I didn't expect to see you here," he said, brushing the man's hand off his shoulder.

Atticus clicked his tongue. "If you were surprised, I wouldn't be standing here so relaxed."

He sat down beside Damien, greeted Elena as "sister-in-law," and began a conversation with the duo as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

Damien's expression turned wry.

He truly did appreciate Atticus and would forever be thankful for his recommendation that gave Damien access to a prime training location like Hidden Death Valley, but...

Atticus had become a bit strange after their last fight.

Damien only experienced it for a few minutes before running away to fight the next genius, but he had a foreboding premonition.

In his head, he sent a silent prayer.

'Atticus, for the love of god, I beg you not to make me everyone's target on day one.'

Was it a prayer or a jinx?

Fortunately for Damien, he wouldn't have to wait long at all to find out.

Chapter 977 Day One [1]

With Atticus' arrival, the air became far livelier, and many eyes that previously had no interest in Damien's existence turned to scrutinize him.

Atticus was quite a well-known figure in the universe. Those in the know were very clear on his appearance and aura, and now seeing him act so jovially with a mystery genius, how could they not be curious?

Atticus himself, on the other hand, ignored these gazes as if they never existed in the first place. He dragged Damien into a conversation about what he'd been doing since he left the academy, why he left so suddenly, and other topics that basically put his life on display for those listening.

Damien sighed wryly. He couldn't shut this man up, or he would just end up causing more trouble. The most he could do was lie a relatively bland story about his whereabouts and actions, eventually causing those eyes to lose interest.

'Haa, even though they are outwardly disregarding us, they're still paying close attention. Atticus' status is too high for him to associate with anyone average...'

Did he perhaps make them even more curious with his actions?

Regardless, the conversation continued on its natural course until it reached the event Damien was dreading most.

"Now that I've improved, you won't beat me like last time! Let's fight!"

Atticus' eyes shone with brilliant fighting spirit as he grabbed Damien's hand and dragged him to the arena floor, throwing out the two geniuses who were already competing.

"When did I agree to fight you?" Damien spat in annoyance.

"Hahaha, consent isn't important! If you don't agree, I'll just attack you until you fight me!" Atticus responded brightly.

"That was genuinely an insane thing to say."

Damien slapped away Atticus' grasp and backed out of the ring.

"Consent is key, Atticus. I'm not fighting you right now," he said as he walked back to the stands.

Atticus' eyes narrowed.

"Didn't I say it already? That doesn't matter. Today, I will defeat you!"

His aura flared and his law concepts formlessly presented themselves, shooting through the air and slamming towards Damien.

In fact, while Atticus didn't show it outwardly, his defeat in the Celestial Realm weighed on him heavily, even affecting his training and blocking him from realizing the truths of the extreme peak.

He understood that Damien had certain plans for this time from his behavior, but frankly, he couldn't care less right now.

With his own path to power impeded by this roadblock, he needed to do everything he could to overcome it, and as soon as possible.

From the moment he found and approached Damien, his intent had been to drag him to the arena and fight him.

Now that the chance was in front of him, he wasn't going to let it go.

Haa...

A sigh echoed through the surroundings.

Voom!

A wall of invisible force appeared at Damien's back and swallowed Atticus' attack completely.

"You really don't plan to give up?" He asked, turning his head back slightly.

"I..."

Atticus hesitated for a second when his eyes met Damien's.

Those weren't the eyes of a friend, but a predator.

Yet, Atticus didn't allow himself to be controlled by this hesitation.

'I've already grown so much. There's no way I won't win!'

"I will not give up until you fight me!" He said out loud, firmly and with determination.

"Tsk."

Damien clicked his tongue.

He was annoyed almost to the point of anger.

He didn't care about his "plans" being ruined, since there wasn't really a plan in the first place. Damien wanted to try being lowkey so he wouldn't have to deal with as much troublesome nonsense, but he knew from the beginning that this entire Grand Assembly would be filled with trouble.

Essentially, he tried for the sake of saying he tried.

He, of course, didn't expect his attempt to be thwarted within minutes, but there was nothing he could do about it.

Even Universal Flow was bent on making him the center of everything.

What annoyed and angered Damien was the fact that Atticus was trying to use him.

He could have earnestly asked for help and Damien wouldn't have rejected. I think you should take a look at

With his perception, how could he not notice Atticus' problem? He was already at a higher state of existence than the man, after all.

To instead publically make this kind of fuss...

'The minds of Holy Land geniuses are fucked.'

Other people became tools in their eyes when they needed to increase their power. Even worse, it happened at such a subconscious level that they didn't even realize what they were doing.

Damien understood that it could only be one's environment that could breed this kind of mentality, but still...

"Fine," he uttered, turning around to face his opponent. "I'll give you three moves."

"You...what?" Atticus stammered.

"Didn't I say it clearly? I'll give you three free moves where I won't make any attempts to dodge. If you can't bring me down in three moves, I'll end you with one."

Atticus' eyes widened in shock.

"Are you...being serious right now?"

Damien showed no reaction.

Atticus almost couldn't comprehend it.

To be looked down on was one thing, but to be completely disregarded by someone one saw as a peer was completely and utterly humiliating!

Atticus gritted his teeth. He summoned his mana and focused inwardly to gather his Laws before snapping his eyes opening and roaring:

"DON'T YOU DARE LOOK DOWN ON ME!"

The atmosphere was dyed in bright yellow and black hues, a testament to the strength of Atticus' manifested Laws.

Though they were formless, their influence on the world was too strong for them to remain hidden.

VOOM!

The colored hues rushed through the air, clouding everything between Atticus and Damien in its color as it struck fiercely!

CLASH!

Sparks fluttered through the air when the Law concepts were mere centimeters away from Damien. The yellow and black hue was forcefully dispersed starting from the collision point, and was completely vanquished a second later.

Damien looked up with boredom written on his face.

"Was that it?"

Atticus didn't respond, instead raising his mana for another attack.

Atticus' main affinity was lightning, and the core of his strength was powered by the combination of numerous Lightning Seeds he'd taken into his body.

In the first strike, he used the power of the two seeds he had when he first met Damien, just to test how far he'd come.

However, it wasn't supposed to be deflected so easily.

This time, Atticus gathered the power of 6 Lightning Seeds, each more powerful than the next. He combined the law comprehension they granted him into a single overarching web, which he then flung at Damien.

The spectacle it made as it arced through the air, painting the world in a variety of colors, made its power all the more palpable...

CLASH!

...until it met its opposition.

It suddenly became pointless to describe the complexity of laws or the beauty of the attack.

Because none of those things mattered when the attack was swallowed in the same way as its predecessors:

Without a single hint of struggle.

Atticus' face paled.

'This...what is going on?!'

Atticus inwardly fumbled as he tried to make sense of what was happening. He simply couldn't believe that this chain of events was actually taking place.

And it was good for him to be submerged in his thoughts at this time, because Damien...

Damien yawned.

"You've got one more. Make it count."

Chapter 978 Day One [2]

"You've got one more. Make it count."

When these words entered his ears, Atticus almost snapped.

He didn't waste any more time thinking about "why" Damien was able to stop him. He merely needed to let out a law concept so powerful that the "why" became irrelevant.

And so, he did exactly that.

He used his full power, gathering 9 Lightning Seeds as one and using their concepts to enhance and empower each other, not just forming a web, but a massive interconnected network that far outstripped a mere web.

It was formless in the sense that it was given no form, but it had form nonetheless. At this level, it didn't just color the atmosphere, the law fluctuations created their own manifestations and existed in reality with their sheer intensity as support pillars.

A lightning god formed in front of Atticus, its eyes looking down on Damien as if it was sentient.

It raised its arms into the air and created a gargantuan spear out of ambient mana, forcing Lightning Laws into it until its properties changed.

'Oho? Now that's interesting.' Damien commented inwardly.

He'd never tried something like this himself, so he'd never actually seen if his Laws could create such manifestations.

His fingers twitched with the urge to try on the spot, but his rationality held him back.

'There's a difference between overpowering Atticus and letting my Law Manifestation out. If the Void decides to pull something funny, it'll be too late to laugh.'

While shelving the idea for a more secluded location, he watched the lightning god stab its spear at him with a ferociousness that tore the atmosphere apart.

"Hmph."

He snorted lightly and crossed his arms.

Unlike before, he didn't use his Laws to consume Atticus' attack.

He just stood still and allowed the spear to pierce his body and impale him against the arena wall.

Rampant law fluctuations raged through his body, but they couldn't do any damage.

The Void Physique didn't have to take action at all. Damien's bodily defenses were already at a level where 3rd and 4th revolution masters wouldn't be able to easily harm him.

For Atticus who wasn't even in the extreme peak yet...?

Damien didn't feel an ounce of pain. It felt like tiny static shocks were snaking through his skin for a few moments before they died down.

And that was it.

The lightning god projection faded, the law fluctuations calmed, and all that was left in the arena was an uninjured Damien and a devastated Atticus.

"This...why...? I...after so long...!"

Atticus collapsed to his knees. His words came out fragmented as he tried to piece together his sanity.

Damien sighed in disappointment.

He walked up to Atticus and placed his hand on the man's shoulder.

"The answer was always the simplest. You just needed...to let go."

He muttered those words so only the two could hear them, and in the next second...

Voom!

A pulse of mana spread through Atticus' body.

"Keuk...!"

He coughed a mouthful of blood that was filled with chunks of organs.

Damien didn't stay to watch what happened.

And Atticus didn't try to stop him from leaving.

He sat collapsed on the ground, unmoving as blood leaked from his lips and eyes.

Just as Damien promised, he ended it in a single move.

In a single move, Atticus realized the insurmountable gap that had opened up between them. I think you should take a look at

The man he once saw as a promising genius who could aid him in the future had grown into someone far more powerful than him before he could even blink.

'The answer...to let go...'

Atticus finally understood.

His obsessions were only holding him back. His desire to "do" first and "think" later was making him overlook the most obvious truths.

And because of that, he almost completely disregarded his friendship with the very monster that defeated him.

"Haa..."

He sighed in disappointment, a similar sigh to what Damien let out moments ago.

'I really messed up this time.'

Damien and Elena quickly left the battleground after the incident, but they couldn't stop rumors of his existence from spreading.

In the end, it only took half an hour for almost everyone in Luxurion to know about the mystery genius who thoroughly crushed the Fallen Star Holy Land Young Master in a duel.

Meanwhile, the man himself found a quiet corner of the castle with a view of the starry sky beyond and took some time for himself.

He didn't expect his mood to be ruined so quickly, but after seeing Atticus' behavior, it couldn't be helped.

He'd been traveling alone or with little company almost his whole life, so while he understood the base truths of the universe, experiencing them still hit him harder.

Today, he was reminded how far people would go for the sake of power.

Atticus' case wasn't too extreme, but with Damien's immense perceptive ability and the All-Seeing Eyes' partial ability to see through reality itself, he could almost be considered an empath in his ability to read other people's emotions if he so desired.

The deep-seated desire within Atticus that clouded his every other feeling, it was the same desire Damien felt within himself.

Seeing that Atticus had the potential to fall prey to such desire reminded him that he was just as much at risk.

And more than that—

'It's guaranteed that a majority of those coming to Luxurion in the next few months will have already succumbed to that desire. Those older experts have a hard time resisting the temptation of power after facing the ultimate limits of their potential. Not only does this suggest that the number of traitors in the universe is probably higher than expected, but it also means this Grand Assembly will be turned into a stage for them to strut their egos in front of each other.'

To others, it could seem like Damien was making wild guesses and acting as if they were truths. On such small scales, however, a "guess" from Damien was no different from truth.

His understanding of Universal Flow made it easy for him to read the flow of people.

'The original plan was to show up and show out. That was fine, but at most it would get me recognized as a monstrous genius...'

'...but "monstrous genius" isn't enough anymore.'

His eyes hardened.

'I have to utterly dominate and ruin this event.'

The flickering flame of a nearby candle danced in his eyes, casting a shadow over his face that made him look quite villainous.

The plan was set.

Damien just needed to remove the ability to focus on personal interests.

And to do so, he needed to play the villain role.

'I'll beat up your geniuses and I'll beat up your elders. When you try to catch me, you'll learn that it really is possible to get so mad you cough blood.'

When that time came, what choice would these forces have but to band together to deal with him?

Not only would this force them into cooperative relationships, which he could figure out how to make sustainable later, it would be great fun for him.

'I've never really had a hero arc, but a villain arc sounds like a great way to release stress...well, let's call it a mini-arc. I don't want to go full villain, after all.'

He smiled to himself, and even more so, he smiled at the universe beyond.

'Just trust me. I refuse to let you die under my watch.'

Chapter 979 Meeting [1]

As Damien chose to avoid interacting with others after the incident with Atticus, the rest of the day passed smoothly.

And soon enough, the true first day of the Grand Assembly began.

The forces located within the reaches of the Divine Realm had all arrived, including those of Hidden Death Valley and even Azure Rain Star. It was estimated that the next week or two would be the prime time when most forces would arrive, which meant today was still a relatively relaxed day without many organized activities.

Aside from the training areas and other rooms connected by the corridors of Luxurion, there were three halls open to entertain newly welcomed guests. These halls could each hold over 25,000 people and became the main area for building relationships and networking.

It was a scene equal to a banquet of massive proportions, however, this naturally couldn't go on for months until the main conference.

Damien wondered just how they were going to make it worth these experts' time to stay for the entire duration of the event as he and Elena made their way to the nearest of the halls.

Originally, Damien wanted to take it easy today and let the talk about him die down a bit before showing his face again, but he quickly realized there was no point in hiding.

Unlike other times, the Grand Assembly was filled with only experts. Whether it be the young geniuses who would spread rumors to the ends of the earth or the elders who could see through the truths of the world and verify their words, both would eventually find a way to focus on him.

Especially when his disguise techniques couldn't yet fool Demigods.

'The most I can do is falsify specific parts of my being for a short amount of time like I did for the entry verification, but I'm sure it'll get better with practice.'

Damien juggled his thoughts and entertained idle conversation with Elena as the duo approached the first main hall.

Ceilings nearly a kilometer high, incredibly grand and ornate decoration, and people of such number that they formed a sea; it was exactly what Damien was expecting.

"Let's go see if anyone we know is here. If not, we'll try the other ones," he said.

Elena nodded in acknowledgement and followed him into the hall.

She was also a relatively prominent figure in certain parts of the universe, and she had her own connections, some that reached the level of the Director from Hidden Death Valley.

The two traversed the hall while ignoring the various eyes that turned to them, whether due to their appearances or reputations, until their heads both snapped in the same direction.

"Director!""Commander!"

The duo's voices interlapped, causing them to turn to each other in surprise as the two they called for also turned their heads.

"Damien?"

"Elena?"

Two old men voiced their surprise together. One was stronger and more well-built, with a physique like a bodybuilder despite his aged appearance. The other was shorter and chubbier, but his wild mane-like hair and beard as well as the fierce look in his eyes made it difficult to underestimate him.

They were none other than Alucard, the Director of Hidden Death Valley, and one of Elena's greatest mentors, Commander Huo Xuan of Eien's Divine Graveyard zone.

The two duos met each other and introduced themselves, immediately producing a jovial atmosphere around them.

"You know, I was just bragging to this old fart about the promising seed I found, and he said he had an even better one! Who would've thought we'd encounter the two of you together so soon!" The Director said with a bright smile.

Damien returned his expression and responded, "More than that, Director, I didn't know you had such a contact in Eien."

"Brat, are you worried I'll find out about what you were up to after disappearing?"

"That..."

Damien averted his gaze and greeted Commander Huo in an attempt to change the topic. I think you should take a look at

"Commander, thank you for everything you've done for Elena. If it wasn't for your help, perhaps I wouldn't have been able to see her again."

He lowered his head sincerely. There were no lies in his statement.

When Elena first arrived in Eien, she coincidentally landed in the most dangerous zone after No Return Pass, the Divine Graveyard.

This was a place where High Commanders were common and Supremes fought on the frontlines constantly to fight off the unbelievable number of powerful Nox who tried to invade through this point.

Divine Graveyard was on the opposite end of Eien from the Blood-Drenched Wilderness, accessible from Hephaestus, the Dwarven Domain. Due to this location, Divine Graveyard was one of the Nox's main focuses, as breaching it meant reaching the main operation center of Heaven's Army.

Here, a lone Elena went through terrible struggles, almost dying several times before she landed on the doorstep of a human camp, bloodied and nigh-lifeless.

Commander Huo, who led that camp, could've left Elena to die there. It wouldn't have benefited him in the slightest to take in someone as weak as her, and it would even be a waste of resources to heal her from such grievous wounds.

However, the Commander still made the decision to save her; out of nothing but the goodness of his heart.

Under this just and powerful Commander, Elena was able to steadily grow into her strength as a 4th class and gain a deeper understanding of her Laws through combat. He turned the Graveyard of Gods into a training ground for a young elite, which was exactly the thing Elena needed most at that time.

She didn't stay in his care for more than 6 months before she was sucked into a hidden realm with a severe time dilation, where she remained in solitude for almost a year training her mental strength, but his influence defined her future travels in the Divine Realm, and his name allowed her to escape many troublesome situations later on.

If there was one person who essentially guaranteed Elena's survival until she met Damien, it was Commander Huo.

The Commander looked Damien up and down, even scanning him a few times with his awareness.

And this time, unlike anything he'd done before, Damien allowed the scan to read most of his being.

"You are her husband?" Commander Huo asked, seemingly disregarding Damien's words of thanks.

"Yes, sir," Damien admitted firmly.

"Hmm..."

The Commander glanced between Elena and Damien a few times, his brows furrowing deeper every time before finally, they loosened.

"Good!"

A smile formed on his face.

"This lass, with the way she acted so cold to everyone, I thought she would be alone for the rest of her life. Now that I know it was because she had already given her heart to someone like you, how could I be any more contented?"

Commander Huo let out a boisterous laugh as he half-waddled over to Damien and patted him on the shoulder with ease that didn't match his height.

"Boy, since Alucard approves of you, there's nothing more for me to say. As for me taking care of your little wife, just think of it as sponsoring a genius. That shouldn't be too hard to accept, right?"

Damien gazed into the man's eyes. They were clear and full of light, the eyes of a true hero.

"I can't accept that." He said.

He turned his attention inward and looked through the Sanctuary a bit before nodding and pulling an object out of the air.

"Senior, please accept this gift of gratitude from me in exchange for what you've done for us."

Chapter 980 Meeting [2]

Flash!

A set of three booklets appeared in Damien's hand, which he held out to Commander Huo.

The Commander's eyes immediately widened into saucers. No, they practically fell out of their sockets.

"You...! This...!" He stammered, reaching a trembling hand out to touch the booklets.

"Take them. They are of no use to me, but it's different for you, right?" Damien said with a fox-like smile.

Commander Huo gently ran his fingers along the worn seams of the booklets for a few more seconds before calming his astonishment and sighing.

"Boy, I thought I understood your genius from the beginning, but who would have thought I was still underestimating you!"

Damien's smile widened.

As expected, these books were treasures the Commander couldn't refuse.

The three books were titled as such:

[Wrath of Odin - Skill Manual]

[Ultimate Force - Trait Manual]

[Worldbearing Tyrant Technique]

They were three techniques owned by the Cloud Giants, who happily handed them over to Damien.

As anyone could guess, the three were special techniques of the Giant Race, completely useless to all others.

And while Commander Huo disguised himself well, he couldn't hide from Damien.

"H-how did you obtain these?" Commander Huo asked, ignoring the fact that his facade had been exposed.

The group was surrounded by multiple isolation barriers set by Damien, Alucard, and Commander Huo himself, so this key detail about his true strength was guaranteed to stay within their circle.

Damien took a second to think before answering Commander Huo's question.

"Hmm, I guess you could say it was given to me by a good friend."

Unlike their current state, the original Cloud Giants were also part of the main Giant Race. When they landed themselves in the Wild Continent, they took many core racial techniques with them.

Now that countless millennia had passed, those core techniques were legendary lost ancient scripts that could immensely benefit the entire Giant Race.

"To say you were gifted such valuable objects, I can only say I wish I had a friend like that."

Commander Huo's eyes showed a hint of hesitation and worry. He clearly wanted to put up some resistance in courtesy, but he couldn't stop his hands from grabbing the ancient booklets out of Damien's grasp.

"Hahahahaha!"

The Director's laugh filled the space.

"Brother Xuan, what did I tell you? This kid knows nothing but creating miracles."

Commander Huo didn't respond. He deeply looked at Damien before hiding the booklets away in his spatial storage.

He didn't say anything because he simply couldn't. Damien might've taken them out casually, but these booklets would help the Giant Race rise to a completely new level. Not only would they regain their connection to their ancestral heritage, but they'd also finally be able to understand the methods of the ancestors, which would allow them to chase after the domineering physiques of their even further removed Titan ancestors.

A grand service to the universe, that was what Damien did with a single flick of his hand.

Commander Huo was sure Damien understood what he was doing, and since he didn't say anything, the Commander would do the same. I think you should take a look at

No words needed to be said for both of them to understand that they would be brothers and allies of life and death for the rest of time.

The barriers around their group dispersed not long after the booklets were put away, and the serious atmosphere around them also melted like snow. They returned to jovial conversation, Damien and Elena getting acquainted with their other halves' mentors and Alucard and Huo Xuan doing the same with their proteges, and soon enough, many hours passed.

"Ah, right, are the two of you planning on participating in the hunt?" the Director suddenly said.

""Hunt?"" Damien and Elena echoed together.

"I see. Even Angels will show partiality, eh? The hunt is tomorrow's event, the first event of this Assembly. It will last for a month, and participants will be allowed to join at any time within that period, so those who arrive later still have the chance to participate."

"I see," Damien muttered. "So what is this so-called hunt about?"

"I'll explain this part," Commander Huo butted in.

"The hunt is honestly a competition organized with as little structure as possible. The Angels have decided to open their Holy Light Realm to the young geniuses of the universe for a single month. During this time, you can fight other geniuses, enter trial sites to compete for rewards, or even just simply explore if you so desire."

"Hm? Is there any point in that?" Elena asked. "If it's a secret realm the Angels are willing to share, the common rewards can't be anything good."

"That may be true in normal times, but the current situation has forced many to make concessions. While it's true that the Holy Light Realm's true benefits have already been claimed, the current realm is filled with treasures offered by the universe's finest. I can guarantee there will be at least one good treasure in there." Commander Huo responded with a smirk.

"Haa, really, those stingy Angels didn't go easy on us at all. No treasures under Chaos rank were considered acceptable, and I'm sure at least a few of us Demigods forked up a God-ranked treasure of two. It'll definitely satisfy you young brats." The Director chimed in despondently.

"Interesting..."

Damien was genuinely intrigued by the nature of the event. By the looks of it, the sole purpose of opening the Holy Light Realm with such conditions was to comprehensively raise the strength of the younger geniuses.

'Conversely, depending on the behavior of the geniuses themselves, it might turn into a situation where a small number of elites benefit and the rest face humiliation. The question is...which is better?'

Damien and Elena wrapped up their conversation with the two old experts by affirming their participation in the hunt before returning to their room.

"What's the plan?" Elena asked once they had some privacy.

"Plan?" Damien repeated.

"Mhm. You probably have some things you want to accomplish in that secret realm, right? Let me in on it."

"You say that like I wouldn't have done that to begin with. Anyway, as of now, I don't have a plan. I want to observe the situation before I decide what to do."

"I see..." Elena muttered.

"You have some ideas?" Damien asked.

From childhood, Elena was the smarter of the two. No matter how much he thought he knew, he could guarantee she'd show him a different perspective.

And of course, she wasn't about to let him down.

"If we put everything on the table," she started, "this hunt is going to continue for a month without stopping, so the number of participants will rise to at least twenty to twenty-five thousand. We aren't allowed to kill, but if a genius sustains a fatal wound, they'll be ejected from the secret realm and disqualified."

She tapped her chin as she thought of the best way to phrase her thoughts.

"I'm sure you're thinking about whether to support a small number of elites or allow all of the geniuses a chance to rise, but that's just extraneous. There's no need to think so much."

She turned her eyes to Damien, a slight smile curving on her lips.

With the moonlight illuminating her from behind, she looked especially enchanting as she continued:

"Alright, I got it. Here's the plan..."