

Void 25

Chapter 25

The scenery on the 50th floor was similar to that of the floors leading up to it, but for a different reason.

Patches of lush greenery could be seen here and there, but the most jarring part of the area was the random areas of destroyed trees and land. It seems that the 50th floor was originally something akin to a small forest, but whatever lived here had torn it down.

Wood bark was strewn around, with some pieces in a half charred state, grass and plants that used to stand tall were withered and dead, and a foul stench permeated the air. In the center of all of this was a creature unlike anything Damien had witnessed before.

It had 3 heads, each of a different animal, a lion, a snake, and a goat, and a huge body that took up a good portion of the space available in the cavern. Its body was panther-like, specialized for speed, its feet were talons like a bird, and its tail was that of a scorpion. It also had a pair of massive wings.

Its 3 heads swiveled as one when it sensed Damien's presence, and without any suspense, it charged.

The chimera drew near as each of its heads charged up a separate attack. The lion let out a massive roar that shook the earth, the goat channeled energy between its horn to shoot out like a beam, and its snake head shot out poisonous breath.

However, beam attacks weren't something that would work on Damien anymore. Especially from those that were in the same class as him.

During the 3 months he spent adjusting to his body, Damien wasn't idle in his other training. His control over vectors had improved to the point where he could divert these attacks without burning himself like last time and he had created a second step for his sword art.

However, as this would be his last fight within the dungeon, Damien decided to be a little reckless. Since Zara had already moved to attack the beast, he just had to distract it. Damien opened his mouth and sucked in a large breath.

His chest expanded, his cheeks puffed, his throat constricted, and when his movement reached its apex, Damien let out an even more ferocious roar than the chimera.

With this roar came an ethereal beam of rippling energy covered in arcs of black lightning that sundered even space itself as if only it could exist.

When the beam collided with the chimera's attacks, a muted explosion rocked the entire 50th floor.

The splintered remains of trees and withered grass that was already on the verge of death were all incinerated into nothingness, and even the ground had cracked into hundreds of pieces, eliciting reactions from even the beasts on the 49th and 51st floors who could only feel the aftershocks of the clash.

While the poisonous breath of the snake and the energy beam of the goat were both obliterated in the clash, Damien's breath attack had retained a bit of its energy. It continued forward and pierced the middle head, the snake, causing it to explode into countless pieces.

The chimera roared in pain. While its 3 heads were connected to the same body, they only shared a piece of their consciousness. For the most part, they could think independently. For this reason,

rather than feeling like it had lost one of its heads, the lion and goat head had felt like they had lost a brother.

This infuriated them to no end the chimera lifted off from the ground and began flying, using its speed to try and catch Damien off guard. A rain of energy beams and fireballs rushed at Damien from every direction. Damien, however, simply abused his teleportation.

Whenever he was close to being hit, he'd vanish and reappear in the distance. Since he had decided to have fun during this fight, Damien didn't even counterattack, further enraging the chimera.

Was this bipedal beast looking down on it? When this thought crossed its mind, the chimera almost lost itself to rage. It intensified its attack further, destroying any remaining unbroken areas of the cavern.

At this time, Damien stopped dodging every attack that came at him. Every once in a while, he would stop and allow himself to stay within an attack's trajectory, gently flicking his finger to divert it. Now that he had two hands he had even more freedom to do this.

Although the hand motions weren't necessary to affect vectors in his vicinity, they were a sort of intermediary that Damien used to get more accustomed to his power. Once he had improved to a certain level, he would be able to block any attacks aimed at him without even moving.

Damien continued to wave his arms, looking like a conductor leading an orchestra, however, this was no symphony. Instead, it was a cacophony of destruction that would make anyone want to bring up a certain 'art is an explosion' reference.

With none of its attacks even slightly affecting Damien, the chimera decided to descend and use raw power, but before it could do so, it noticed its tail had been frozen stiff. In the next moment, the entire tail shattered and blood spurted out from the point where it used to connect with its body.

Next, tentacles made of shadows latched onto its wings and bound them, before another portion of shadows came together in the form of a beast. This was naturally Zara, who had used her own wings to fly beside the beast in concealment while waiting for the opportunity to strike.

Although she could have attacked much earlier, she could feel how much fun Damien was having and decided to let him play for a bit longer. However, he had already been wantonly teleporting and manipulating attack trajectories for the past 20 minutes, and she was getting bored.

Once Zara materialized, she quickly used her razor-sharp teeth to tear one of the chimera's wings off while using her claws to incapacitate the other one. As the chimera fell to the floor, Zara went for a fatal attack, before abruptly stopping and fading back into concealment.

This was naturally Damien's doing. Now that playtime was over, he decided that this beast was the best practice dummy for the second step of his sword art.

With the beast falling, Damien rushed into the air to meet it as he left after images in his wake. Then, his figure became ethereal as he danced around the beasts.

Even with its elegance, this was a dance of blood.

If the first step of his sword art was a single strike to cause critical damage, the second step was a sword dance to accumulate injuries on his opponent and bleed them out.

As his figure flashed in and out of the space surrounding the beast, chunks of its body began to disappear. They weren't mangled or sliced like a normal sword would do, rather they had been banished from existence, floating somewhere in the infinite void.

When Damien was finished, only about one-third of the beast's body remained. Damien landed on the ground, his steps not even raising dust, as behind him, the figure of the beast fell with a resounding thud.

‘Void Sword Art Second Step: Dance of the Void’

His entire sword dance that had cut a 75-meter long beast into a 25 meters long flesh bag had only lasted the amount of time it took for the beast to fall to the floor after its wings were clipped.

In the first place, the entire fight was pointless. Damien could've ended it in the first 5 minutes if he wanted to, but he had grown quite attached to the dungeon that had been his home for the past 2 years. For this reason, he decided that the best way to bid it farewell was with a grand battle.

As the experience poured in, Damien went to devour the corpse of the chimera, but before he could, it turned into particles of light before sinking into the floor.

In the space it had previously occupied stood a grand formation, which looked like a giant circle filled with mysterious patterns.

Damien could feel the spatial fluctuations emanating from the formation and wanted to study it, but he knew it wasn't the time. This dungeon had 100 floors and he had only cleared 50. He had naturally planned to come back once his business was settled and finish what he started. He could study the formation then.

Looking at the formation, Damien felt his anticipation rise along with slight anxiety. He then quickly checked his inventory to make sure he had brought everything he needed.

Within it was all the books he thought would be relevant later that he took from Kurt's subspace, his cracked sword that had accompanied him from the beginning of his journey, and the carcasses of hundreds of beasts that Zara had slain on the previous 9 floors.

Although he wanted to go further up and grab more carcasses, he only had so much space in his inventory, so he made do with what he could.

Damien then resolved himself and started walking towards his lifeline to exit the dungeon. "Zara, this is our ticket to leave. The surface I told you about on our first meeting is just past this formation."

Sensing Damien's turbulent emotions, Zara emerged from his shadow and nuzzled up to him, showing her support. Damien smiled at her little gesture. 'That's right. Everything is already planned out and we're already strong. What am I even worrying about?'

After he assured Zara that he was fine, she returned to his shadow. And without further ado, he stepped into the formation.

What greeted Damien was a blindingly bright light and the beautiful smell of nature.

After two grueling years, he had finally reached the surface.