

# The Walker Of Voids

## Chapter 41: Battle Royal [5] - 99.99% [2]

[Commandment: 99.99% - Half-Step First Commandment]

\*BOOM\*

Instantly, a shockwave shot out, pushing Lloyd a few meters back while throwing the lightning-shrouded figure several dozen meters back.

Losing his upper body and waist, Lloyd's iron-clad grip caught the wrist of someone carrying a blade with the wind element.

Looking into the eyes of the girl who attacked him, Lloyd didn't show an ounce of sympathy as he immediately crushed her wrist, causing her to let out an ear-piercing screech that made most of the boys look at Lloyd with killing intent.

"Oh, come on. Don't look at me like that." Lloyd sneered as he held the girl up by her broken wrist before pummeling her as if she was nothing but a punching bag.

"I only hit her a few times." Lloyd smiled.

"Bastard!" One of the boys seemed to finally snap as they shot towards Lloyd with all the speed and power he could muster, yet instead of waiting for him to get close like last time, Lloyd's smile slightly widened as he threw the girl in his hand towards the boy.

"Wha-" The boy could not even mutter a word as he immediately felt danger come from all sides.

Dropping his weapon, the boy caught the girl, yet he would find that doing so would be the biggest mistake he could make.

"Behind you!" One of the girls shouted, but it was far too late.

It only took a second for Lloyd to cover his arm in shadows, yet a second was all he needed.

Using [Presence Concealment], Lloyd had no problems sneaking behind the boy.

\*BOOOOOM\*

Lloyd's fist slammed into the boy's face just as he turned around.

Before he knew it, he and the girl saw a yellow barrier appear before them just before disappearing, yet the damage was already done.

"2 down, 8 to go," Lloyd muttered, his killing intent only becoming more powerful by the minute.

"Everyone! Attack together!" A girl with white hair roared before disappearing in a bright flash of light.

'A light assassin. Interesting.' Lloyd thought to himself before using [Presence Concealment] to hide himself in plain sight.

Of course, he wasn't using it to the extent that he would hide from cameras, but it was enough to make it, so humans have a hard time seeing him.

"Where did he g-" The boy was cut off mid-sentence as he felt something grip onto the back of his neck.

One might say that this was simply a challenge where no one's life was at stake, yet everyone who met Lloyd would tell you differently.

The boy felt Lloyd's killing intent disappear, yet somehow, he felt like it was coming through the hand itself.

The hand gripped the back of his neck tightly.

Making it hard to breathe.

Making his heart beat quickly and his eyes shake in fear.

A hand capable of breaking the strongest of wills.

Yet, when the boy looked into Lloyd's eyes, he felt like he had let heaven pass him. Because the fear he felt at that moment was something that bubbled deep within his primal core.

At that moment, he felt the primal fear of facing a void walker.

And then it became red, just before turning black.

...

"Oh?" Lloyd muttered, his eyes widening slightly as blood splattered onto his face.

"Well, this isn't right." He narrowed his eyes slightly before shrugging and throwing the boy's body away.

"You killed him..." The girl shrouded in light whispered, yet one could feel the rage in her voice as her killing intent skyrocketed.

"Hey! I did no such thing. We simply found out that according to the shields, a stab to the left side of the small intestine isn't lethal enough to send them away. Look how much we learn when we work together!" Lloyd clapped, yet he was forced to move to the side as a blade created purely from light sliced down in a fabulous arch followed by a streak of stars.

"Fuck-"

\*BZZZ\*

"YOU!" The boy covered in lightning suddenly showed up at Lloyd's right.

However-

\*Thud\*

"I'm sorry, but I don't really have time for you." Lloyd sighed, his killing intent becoming increasingly oppressive by the minute.

"I'll just have to kill you now." Lloyd smirked, and in the next instant, the boy was forced to take multiple steps back as Lloyd's killing intent disappeared and was replaced by a presence that seemed to suck the very life out of the area.

"W-What are you?" The boy asked, his voice trembling.

"Me? Nothin' much, to be honest." Lloyd chuckled.

"I am Lloyd." He introduced himself before taking a step forward.

It only took a moment for Lloyd's demeanor to change again, and this time his smile disappeared and was quickly replaced by a powerful stare capable of crumbling mountains with its intensity alone.

"And you... You are nothing."

Without bothering to look back, Lloyd shot his elbow back and slammed it into the stomach of one of the boys.

As the boy collapsed, Lloyd grabbed his head with one hand before turning him towards an arrow created from pure light energy, and without a moment's notice, the boy disappeared in a yellow flash of light.

'This is a lot of fun!' Lloyd thought to himself before covering his foot with his shadow and kicking the lightning-covered boy in the stomach, causing him to puke out anything he had for breakfast.

"Bastard!" The boy with red hair appeared in front of Lloyd with a blade made from flames in his hand.

"I'm sorry, but I really don't have time for you." Lloyd sighed as he used [Presence Concealment] to disappear from his sight.

"Shit!" The boy cursed as he tried to look for him, yet it was as if Lloyd had vanished into thin air.

"H-How is this possible?" The boy asked, his voice trembling.

"Your friend up there isn't the only one who can appear and disappear whenever they want." Lloyd's voice suddenly rang out from behind him, and before he could even turn around, Lloyd had already covered his mouth with his hand.

"Don't bother struggling." Lloyd smirked as he used his other hand to snap the boy's neck, sending him back to the ship in the process.

"Who would like to volunteer to be my next punching bag then eh?" Lloyd asked with a bright smile as he looked at the girl shrouded in light.

"You won't be able to hide forever." The girl threatened, yet Lloyd only chuckled in response.

"And you won't be able to run forever." He countered before disappearing in a blur.

"You think you can just hide from me? I can just use my light to find you!" She roared, yet it was in that instant that she felt every hair on her body suddenly stand up.

"That is my intention." Lloyd muttered as several light missiles shot towards Lloyd at extreme speeds, but there was a twist.

\*Zoop\* \*Zoop\*

Disappearing in a flash of light, the two individuals that were in Lloyd's hands let out bloodcurdling shrieks as light passed through the left side of their small intestine while completely missing Lloyd.

Dropping them to the ground, Lloyd looked up at the girl with an innocent smile.

And all it took was a blink for him to disappear.

\*Spulech\*

-And appeared right behind her with his arm around her neck in a tight chokehold.

For several seconds, she struggled as she continuously used light energy to attack Lloyd, yet none of it seemed to work.

She hadn't even realized it, but she was the last one left.

The lucky ones were sent back, yet the unlucky ones were left bleeding in the lake or ground, waiting for their condition to reach lethal so they could be teleported to the ship and sent back home.

The girl's heartbeat wavered, and slowly but surely, her vision faded, and she was left in nothing but a deep abyss.

"An ironic twist if you think about it." Lloyd whispered into her ears as she lost consciousness.

"A woman of light, despite her struggle, is still consumed by the infinite abyss." Lloyd chortled before letting her go and allowing her to drop into the waters below.

## **Chapter 42: Intermission [1] - The Offer [2]**

[Thank you TheWallOfFantasy for your generous gifts]

\*Splash\*

As the girl fell to the ground, Lloyd's eyes darted to the right, watching as several floating cameras approached him from a distance.

"Perfect timing." Lloyd muttered to himself before sinking into his shadows and disappearing from sight.

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15 Minutes earlier

Upon a building, Lloyd held a small knife covered in purple runes as he tinkered with the spherical object on his lap.

While most would have thought that the sphere was some kind of weapon, especially since he was in the middle of a battlefield where he could be attacked at any second. However, at a closer look, one would realize that he was not holding a weapon. Well, not in this particular sense.

"If I reroute the wires in this order with a capacitor at the maximum input, I single shock to its processor would send an electrical current through it. If I just-" However, that's when it hit him.

Halting his rampant mutterings, Lloyd let out a small smile before touching a certain component.

When Lloyd's finger touched the component, he felt a small amount of mana leaving his body before that same mana ingrained itself into the component in the form of purple runes.

"If I've done this correctly, this camera should send out an electric pulse that will deactivate all electronics in a certain area. The cameras will continue to float around since they use mana crystals as a fuel source, but they won't have the ability to transmit without electricity." Lloyd muttered before his smile widened.

Lowering the device, Lloyd turned it around and looked straight into the large lens at the front of the spherical.

"I've already gained the attention of the higher-ups, now all I need are points."

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Sitting on a tree branch in the forest, Lloyd played with his fingernails until an announcement made his ears perk up.

\*"Time's up! You will now be transported to a different area. Please refrain from moving."\*

It only took a few seconds for bright flashes of light to coat the island's entirety, causing many of the smaller creatures to run into their 'homes' while others simply closed their eyes due to the blinding light.

When the lights finally subsided, Lloyd and the others returned to the same waiting hall they had been in a few hours ago.

Lloyd could not help but look around for a moment as he felt something weird about the room he was in, but just before he was about to let go of the matter, his eyes landed upon a familiar white-haired man surrounded by people dressed just as luxuriously as him.

Just as Lloyd made eye contact with the man, the man also seemed to see him.

And then they all looked towards Lloyd...

They all had the same expressions on their faces, yet while some seemed to radiate an air of confidence, others protruded the stench of desperation.

'The rest are simple recruiters who have been given the job to find anyone with talent. Those four, on the other hand...' Lloyd squinted his eyes before beginning to talk toward them, his eyes shining bright purple as he got closer to them.

The moment he got to a certain distance, he felt an overwhelming pressure press down upon him, but after a moment, he simply walked through the pressure as if it didn't affect him.

However, the same could not be said for the recruiters who had gone pale and had already dropped to the ground, gasping for air and trying their hardest not to faint.

'Zombies...' Lloyd mused while looking at them, trying to reach out for him as if he was some kind of messiah.

"Hello principle." Lloyd smiled slightly, causing the three of them to widen their eyes while the white-haired man extended his hand while also letting out a smile similar to Lloyd's.

"So, have you thought over my offer." The white-haired man asked.

"I have, but I'll need a little more time to think about it. You know, after the little stunt I pulled, I will be gaining a few more options, don't you think?" Lloyd smiled back, yet this time it had a hint of deviousness within it, an amount that made the principal narrow his eyes for a moment before shaking his head.

"No worries. You will come to see that my academy gives much more than the others do." He winked, but that was the extent of what the other principles were going to allow him to do.

The instant they felt like the conversation had stopped, they all came forward to introduce themselves.

"Mr. Elrod. I'd like to introduce myself. I am Elijah Quinn, and the principal of the Caraxes academy. I come from a family with the dragon bloodline, and we only take in the best of the best." A man with brown hair and hazel eyes smiled while extending his hand toward Lloyd.

Lloyd simply looked at his hand for a second before finally returning the handshake.

"Lloyd Elrod. What a beautiful name." A woman with crimson eyes and hair muttered before letting out a smile when she saw that Lloyd's eyes had been drawn to her.

Flicking her back, pursing her lips, and narrowing her eyes, she walked forwards in an exaggerated manner before extending her hand, not into a handshake, but in a way that implied Lloyd should kiss her hand.

"Seducing me will not work, Principal Crimson." Lloyd narrowed his eyes before grabbing her hand. Yet, instead of kissing it like she had expected, he simply turned it to the side and gave a normal handshake.

"Ignore the fool beside me. She is not suited to become the principal of her academy. She was simply the rightful heir or the next in line before someone from her family kills her to take her throne." A woman with golden red hair stepped forward before extending her hand.

She had a serious expression on her face that could not be mistaken for anything other than pure determination.

However, there was something else that made her different. Something that made her stand out from the rest the moment she entered Lloyd's line of sight.

She radiated a majestic aura that could not be replicated by anyone else. It was one that made people cheer in a time of peace and roar in a time of war. It was an aura that gave people the instinctive sense to serve her, and it had a power behind it that had the capability of making the weakest of minds into the minds of soldiers.

She was, in all senses and purposes, a queen.

"I am Alexa Windsor, and I am the Principal of the Royal Elizabeth Academy."

"What is someone of the royal academy doing in the same vicinity as a commoner like myself?" Lloyd chuckled, yet for some reason, the tension became much harder to bear as silence descended upon the conversation.

Lloyd felt a shiver go down his spine as he looked into the empty eyes of the "Queen" before him. He could tell that she was powerful at a single look, yet he could not tell how powerful she was.

Whether she was a second commandment or a fourth, that was up to fate to decide.

After what felt like a minute of silence, Lloyd's patience had almost run out as he began to reach for his watch to pull out his blades and gain distance on her, yet right when he was about to do so, he felt the wind shift around him.

Feeling this, he could not help but narrow his eyes and look at Alexa carefully.

"Hahahaha." Yet, in contrary to Lloyd's expectations, she began to laugh before wiping her eyes and explaining-

"You might think of yourself as a commoner, but in the eyes of many of the higher families, you are already one of us. Of course, no one is truly willing to accept that fact since you don't have the same history as our families that goes back generations; being associated with the Glade family alone is capable of giving you high stature."

"Not only are you associated with them, but your parents fought alongside other family heads. It just happens that you grew closest with the Glade family. You have many connections Mr. Lloyd Elrod, and you don't even know it." She smiled, yet her smile only served to make Lloyd more anxious.

Not knowing what to say, Lloyd stayed silent.

"You do not have to make your decision now. I will send you an invitation to my academy that should come in a day or two. The invitation will have all the details you need to make your decision. Just make sure that you are careful what academy you choose." She explained, her voice becoming sterner by the second.

"It's been nice meeting you, and I hope I hear from you in the near future." She saluted before disappearing into an array of blue light.

The other two were about to take advantage of this moment, yet when they saw the look in Lloyd's eyes as he turned away from them, they knew they had no chance of recruiting him.

Principle Relworth smiled, seeing this before disappearing in the same fashion as Alexa before the other two followed shortly behind him.

## Chapter 43: Intermission [2] - Second Trial

"Why do you stand in my way?" A voice reverberated throughout the stars. It was deep and powerful, yet simultaneously, it felt low, as if it was a sound that barely reached the ear.

"I may stand in your way today, but tomorrow I shall not..." A being made of light spoke, his voice soft yet powerful, while his aura extended to the galaxy's edges as if it was reaching for every star within it.

Grasping at the very confines of the universe that it stood on.

"How many times do I have to tell you guys spouting words in random patterns does not create a sentence. You're speaking gibberish at best!" The man standing across the bright figure sneered and tried to fly past it, but he was quickly stopped as a barrier created out of light seemed to sprout before him.

"Let me advise you, friend, this is not her will. This will only bring your downfall. They will besiege the walls of Calabria and bring you to the end."

"What?"

"The stars are going out, Void Walker. Darkness is coming, and silence will fall. Yet before the silence comes a bang. An explosion bigger than any other!" The being made out of light roared as star-like tears came out of its eyes, and its light faded to finally give shape.

A little girl...

That was behind the light, which was holding it together.

" has been birthed and light has shone upon the universe!" The girl wept while the man, who was covered in a dark purple mist, simply stood in place, mortified by the shrill screams coming out of the girl's mouth.

Space fractured around the man, yet he knew that the girl before him was equally strong, if not stronger.

He was not particularly strong compared to Void Walkers at their prime, but he was still considered a Calamity level threat by every race in the universe.

Yet, in front of this little girl, he felt he was nothing but average. In front of a star spirit, everyone either became weak or average.

"Yet it is his death that shall take that final light away. It is his death that will darken the nebulas and open the abyss."

"The Void will break through, and silence shall fall."

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"Lloyd! What the hell was that!?" A voice made Lloyd's ears perk up before making him look back, yet the moment he did so, he could not help but grunt as a figure tackled him to the ground.

All the other participants simply walked around them, while some could not help but throw a few curious glances at the situation before walking off.

"What do you mean?" Lloyd asked through gritted teeth as he pushed Zack off him.

"Did you not see how many points you got? You even beat me!"

"Oh really?" Lloyd asked, his voice showing that he was genuinely surprised by what Zack told him despite already being aware that he did much better than Zack.

"Yeah! Look!" Zack shouted before opening a screen showing leaderboards across all divisions and groups.

[Leaderboards]

[1. Deligia Pendragon - 6821 Points]

[2. Fatima Khan - 5718 Points]

[3. Lloyd Elrod - 5539 Points]

[4. George Cassidy Quinn - 3013 Points]

[5. Scarlet Crimson - 2051]

[6. Zack Varlen Glade - 1992]

[...]

[...]

[...]

"The only reason you didn't do as well as us is because you don't use that brain of yours." Lloyd sighed while knocking on Zack's head.

"HUH! You wanna go bro?!"

"I don't 'Wanna go, bro.' I wanna get this over and done with so I can eat a nice meal and sleep for as long as I want." Lloyd sighed while walking away from Zack, who pitifully followed behind.

'A little more than a day till my next void walk. Sure as hell hope that the ceremony won't last that long.' Lloyd thought to himself as he walked over to a food stand and ordered something to eat.

A few hours went by in a flash before Lloyd and Zack were called back to their groups.

Zack had asked many questions about how Lloyd did it, but all the answers Lloyd gave were that he deceived all of them, robbed their points, and left before the cameras could show up.

He would continue to ask about things such as surviving the explosion that the mosquito queen created by overcharging her mana core.

"Mr. Elrod?" A man with a black suit and sunglasses asked as he suddenly appeared beside Lloyd.

"Yeah?" Lloyd tilted his head.

"You have been fined \$20,119 for destroying a camera and deactivating the rest." The man stated.

"Camera damages? I did no such thing."

"You are the main culprit."

"Being the main culprit does not mean that I deactivated them. Hey, they might have been destroyed during the explosion." Lloyd reasoned while an awkward and slightly agitated expression appeared on the man's face.

"I will further review this case with my bosses." He spoke through gritted teeth and disappeared from where he stood as Lloyd simply waved him goodbye with a bright smile on his face.

'20k? What a load of bullshit. I'm certain that the cameras that were following me around would have cost close to 50-70k each. The rest only suffered minor damages due to it

only being an electro-magnetic pulse, not an attack that fully destroyed its infrastructure.'

'They would have lured with the 20k into confessing before suddenly bringing up the rest of the destruction and fines to throw me down a rabbit hole of fines.' Lloyd thought to himself as the smile on his face refused to waver.

\*"Welcome to the second trial!"\* A voice roared throughout the expansive hall filled with hundreds of people.

'Hundreds?' Lloyd raised a brow, yet after looking around, he realized something.

"They mixed some of the other assassin divisions with ours." Lloyd muttered as he looked around the room.

However, a frown suddenly appeared on his face as his eyes landed on a group of individuals he had barely seen a few hours ago.

'Well, it makes sense that they would bring them back. They had good scores until I came and knocked them out of the game. They did well enough to stay in the entrance ceremony.' Lloyd mused before looking away from with.

\*"All contestants shall be placed into teams of five. Every single team member will be from a different group or division. Team placement will be random. However, the challenge will be lowered according to the group's overall power."\* The voice explained with a monotone, almost robotic tone, yet despite that, Lloyd could feel a hint of amusement within its voice.

\*"Every team will enter a dungeon created to test the members. You will be forced to work as a team; the less time it takes to get to the end, the more points you will have. 'Losing' a team member will cause the team to lose 20% of their points. The more team members you lose, the higher the percentage of points lost."\* The voice further explained, causing everyone in the hall to nod with serious expressions on their faces.

\*"A message showing your team formation will be sent to your watches."\*

Looking at his watch, Lloyd tapped on it a few times before allowing a screen to appear before him.

"I see..." He muttered, a smile slowly stretching across his face.

\*\*\*

30 Minutes later.

Before an enormous blue dungeon gate stood 5 people, each one of them dressed magnificently that not only showed their personality but also their skills, abilities, and class.

"Yo!" A girl with black hair and brown eyes waved, her hair dancing as she turned toward her teammates.

'Goddamn it! Another extrovert!' Lloyd could not help but inwardly complain, but he couldn't do much more than that.

"My name is Fatima Khan, number 2 in this star system and the best archer of my generation!" She grinned before turning to the boy who stood to her right.

"My name is John. I'm going to be the best knight in the universe one day!" The boy thrust his fist into the air as an expression of confidence appeared on his face.

"Yeah! That's more like it!" Fatima laughed almost maniacally as she crossed her arms and raised her chin.

After a fit of laughter, she looked at the girl to her right and asked the same question, and as if Fatima's energy was contagious, the once shy girl who hid behind her shoulders was now filled with both power and confidence.

"My name is Jenna... And I'm going to become the best oracle in the human race-... No. I will become the best oracle in existence!" She roared.

"My name is Jack and... And I'm going to revive martial arts and make them stronger than the art of magic!" Jack screamed, his voice high-pitched, indicating he hadn't fully hit puberty despite being the age of 16.

Just as Jack finished his monologue, the entire team looked toward me with equal anticipation.

\*Sigh\*

Letting out a sigh, Lloyd looked at Fatima with a bit of curiosity. It would be a lie to say that she wasn't moderately cute, as she seemed to have all the characteristics needed to fit that description.

Her face was round, and her eyes sparkled like a child seeing a magic trick for the first time.

She was also quite short in stature, but that was not what caught Lloyd's interest.

'Her aura... It is a little bit like my [Monarch's Aura]... Well, not exactly. My passive is much stronger and has an effect that can be expanded for close to a mile. It can even change the perception of things. However, the fact that hers is weak and almost subtle makes it deadly in its own sense.' Lloyd mused as he parted his lips to finally introduce himself.

"My name is Lloyd Elrod. #3 in this star system and a pretty good shadow assassin if I say so myself." Lloyd chuckled, yet his introduction was anti-climactic at best compared to the enthusiasm the others showed.

However, while he could feel the disappointment seeping out of the other 3, Fatima looked at him differently.

'Amusement?' Lloyd asked himself. He couldn't help but think he had seen that exact same expression on someone else's face before, yet he couldn't put his finger on it.

'I think she was powerful? Hmm. I can't remember at all. Oh well.' Lloyd shrugged to himself.

"Goal?" Jack asked as Lloyd felt close to losing himself in his own thoughts.

Looking at Jack for a moment, Lloyd broke out into a grin.

"Isn't it obvious? I want to be the strongest..."

'To survive.' Lloyd inwardly thought.

"Oh. I forgot to tell you guys my goal haha!" Fatima rubbed the back of her head.

However, as if a switch had been flipped, his whole demeanor changed instantly as her once goofy aura was replaced by one filled with seriousness.

The smile on her face disappeared instantly, and before the other three team members knew it, they had turned pale and began to sweat profusely.

"My goal..."

Is to get rid of every single stinking Void Walker from the face of the universe."

## **Chapter 44: Labyrinth [1]**

"My goal is to eliminate every single stinking Void Walker from the face of the universe."

" ... "

" ... "

" ... "

Before anyone could make a comment on her future goals, the same smile she had earlier returned to her face, causing everyone but Lloyd to let out a breath of relief. A breath they didn't even realize they were holding until they let it go.

The tension in the air was so thick that it made everyone in the group feel like they were suffocating, except for Lloyd, since he had faced pressure that was a hundred times worse than what he was facing at that moment.

'Explains the slight resentment I got from her.' Lloyd shrugged.

"Hey, guys. No need to be so gloomy. We have a mission and will get first place no matter what. Am I right, or what?" She giggled before placing her hand in the center of Lloyd's group's circle.

Seeing this, the others felt like they had no choice but to place their hands in the center of the circle too.

'This girl... She might become a problem in the future.' Lloyd thought to himself as he followed through and did the same as the rest.

"3... 2... 1... Team Fatima!" She shouted while the other three chanted after her, their excitement seemingly appearing again despite disappearing earlier.

Without batting an eye at Lloyd looking at her intently, Fatima turned around with her bow in her hands and walked into the dungeon, forcing the rest of her team to follow her as well.

'It took her less than a minute to become the leader. Of course her score helped her with such a menial task, but to think that her aura is this powerful.' Lloyd narrowed his eyes before closing them and allowing himself to be submerged by the energy of the dungeon gate's spacial tear.

'Oh man, I love this feeling. Feels a bit like home.' Lloyd smiled as the warm energy of the spacial tear trickled along his skin and moved around his body as if he was being hugged by the universe itself.

However, all beautiful things come to an end, and so did the bliss that the spacial tear brought.

Instead, when he stepped foot into the dungeon, Lloyd was hit by a horrible stench that he felt he could never get rid of.

"Oh god. What is that smell?" Lloyd asked while pinching his nose, yet it took a single glance around for him to understand his situation.

"Ugh..." he couldn't help but grunt before looking away from the grotesque sight.

"You guys. Can you stop puking for a minute? We have a dungeon to go through." Fatima complained, but if one were to hear her voice, one would understand that she was not complaining with malice in her voice but with... Love?

The entire group seemed to feel a little better in an instant, allowing them to stand up and look around as if they hadn't just puked out their entire lunch.

'She's not only a threat, but now she has a power that I cannot fully understand.'

'Maybe I should just...

Kill her?'

'...'

'...'

'What?' Lloyd's eyes widened slightly as the thought of killing her entered his mind. It was abrupt and almost surprising. Never in a million years would he have thought of killing another human being, but now that the thought entered his mind...

'Isn't it the most logical approach?'

'...'

'Ugh, what am I thinking.' Lloyd shook his head before rubbing his temples as he felt a headache coming on.

"Alright, guys. Huddle up a little." Fatima shouted her voice cheerful yet commanding. It was a weird mix since you wouldn't expect to be bossed around by such a petite, upbeat person, yet it seemed to work like a charm as everyone walked over to her with a smile on their faces.

"As you guys can see, this is not your average dungeon. It is layered to look more like a fortress than anything." She explained, causing everyone else to widen their eyes before looking around.

The place was made out of grey, weathered bricks that barely held themselves together to make the structure they were in.

There were no windows, and the only things that were keeping the area lit were the torches that hung upon the walls and sides of the tunnels.

"We're underground. Possibly a tomb or an underground castle dungeon. I hope that we are in the latter, because the former means there are going to be traps." Lloyd explained while adjusting his sunglasses.

While his sunglasses had been shattered earlier, he had an extra pair in his dimensional storage. Sadly, the same could not be said about shirts.

Of course, he could have bought one earlier when he was with Zack, but the thought of getting a shirt completely left his mind due to being showered with questions that his best friend could not wait to ask.

"What makes you think that we are underground?" Fatima asked with a raised brow.

"Oxygen levels have reached 13% compared to the 32% we were breathing in earlier. On the other hand, carbon dioxide levels have risen by about 5%. Air pressure seems to have skyrocketed too, which further proves that we are deep underground." Lloyd explained.

"The dungeon could have simply been engineered that way, you know..." John, the knight, countered, but this only made Lloyd chuckle.

"You think these guys are that simple? Everything in here has a reason. Look around. No windows, but they still have torches here. Why do you think that is?" Lloyd asked while walking closer to John.

"I don't know. It will probably make sense later!" John sneered, yet when Lloyd reached him, he could not help but puff his chest out and push him back.

Yet...

'Unmovable wall...'

Those were the two words that rang out within John's head as he tried to move Lloyd, but before the situation could escalate, John heard Fatima's melodious voice snap him out of his small moment of anger.

"We're running out of oxygen, aren't we." She asked, her eyes slightly narrowed as she stroked her chin.

"Yes!" Lloyd pointed at Fatima with a hint of excitement in his voice.

"Then why aren't we moving!" Jenna asked with panic in her voice and pale face, yet when she looked into Fatima and Lloyd's faces, she got her answer.

"Where's the fun in that?" Fatima grinned while Lloyd covered his mouth as his smile had almost gotten out of hand.

"Well, actually, I think we should get going." Lloyd spoke after taking a few breaths in.

"Huh?" Fatima exclaimed with confusion.

"For all we know, this might be a dungeon that rates out performance on how long it takes us to finish it. Yes, there is a time limit, but I don't think wasting time is a good look upon our group." Lloyd explained while the rest nodded after a moment of thinking.

Fatima grabbed a torch off the walls without skipping a beat before turning around to face her group again.

"Let's get going then, shall we?"

And just like that, they all began to move through the tunnel.

There were no more torches on the way, so they were forced to use the 5 torches placed around the dungeon's entrance.

5 minutes felt like hours to the group as they moved through the tunnel. They could all tell that they were getting deeper and deeper as they went on, which was indicated by the steepness of the ground the group was walking on.

Another 5 minutes passed quickly, and there was still nothing. While Fatima wasn't too worried about the situation, Lloyd was as calm as an unperturbed lake.

And the reason for that was-

'I'm so glad I have night vision.' Lloyd smiled to himself as he walked behind the group. He could tell everyone was becoming tenser by the minute, but he didn't really know how to deal with it.

He had never really thought of himself as a leader before. Usually, he acted as a support or a solo, so when it came to a situation where he had to raise morale, he could do nothing but watch. Or at least, that was the only thing he thought he could do.

"Guys. I'm sure we're almost there." Fatima finally broke the 10-minute-long silence with a few encouraging words, yet despite her aura still flaring out and allowing the hears of

everyone in the group to rest a little, the effect didn't last for long as the tension only came back worse than before.

'It feels wrong to walk around with my hand in my pocket when the guys in front of me are shaking in their boots.' Lloyd sighed, but his breath halted in its place before he shouted-

"Stop!"

Without skipping a beat, every single person in the group froze in place, some of them even balancing in uncomfortable positions that would have made the average person cramp.

"Now, Fatima. Slowly take 2 steps back, and don't move a muscle afterward. Understood?" Lloyd ordered while Fatima simply nodded while doing as he said.

Despite only doing what Lloyd told her, it took her less than a second for her to realize why he had shouted for everyone to stop.

'He saw that from all the way there? Just... Who are you?' She asked herself, but she quickly threw the question to the back of her head as it wasn't important for the time being.

"Alright, I'm going to go to the middle, everyone try to let me through without moving too much." Lloyd asked before moving forward and squeezing everyone.

While the tunnel at the start could have fit two 7ft muscular guys walking side by side, now it could only do 3/4 of that, which only meant that the tunnel was becoming narrower by the second, and Lloyd knew that.

After finally getting to the ground, Lloyd squinted slightly.

From what he could see, traps were going as far as he could see, but at the same time, he felt as if there was some kind of mana field that he could both not see through and see through at the same time.

Without a second thought, Lloyd threw his torch as far as he could until it finally seemed to go through some kind of layer.

As it went through, it sent a ripple throughout this layer, yet that was far from what caught everyone's eye.

\*Kiching\*

The instant the torch left Lloyd's hand, the sound of mechanical gears started to enter everyone's ears, and by the time the torch had gone through the layer, the group was forced to watch as several traps went off in a sequence.

They all seemed to vary from one another as one swung a large mace through the tunnel while another shot a dozen arrows at random intervals within a 2-second period.

"Everyone! Move move move!" Fatima roared while everyone ran as fast as they could without bumping into one another.

While they didn't know whether or not there was a trap behind that layer of mana they saw earlier, they also knew they couldn't die in these dungeons.

\*Click\*

Lloyd's eyes widened as the sound of a mechanical click entered his ears.

\*Click\*

He could hear gears turning as the traps reassembled.

\*Click\*

The second click entered his ears, and he already knew what that meant.

'The traps are ready to be shot again.' He thought to himself, yet by then, he had already jumped through the layer of mana and into the other side before rolling and turning around.

He quickly counted as 2 more followed right behind him, and since Fatima entered before him, that made 4 people in total. However, there was a problem.

"Where's John?" Jenna asked with shaken pants.

"John..." Fatima muttered while clenching her fist.

They knew he was not dead, but he would most likely get teleported outside the dungeon if he hadn't come through.

Some would say that a fate such as that was even worse than death, yet Lloyd would simply tell you to stop overreacting as there are a million other things someone could do with their lives rather than join some prestigious academy.

They could also always retake the exam next year, so there was that.

"Welp, we should probably get going-" However, before Lloyd could utter another word, He watched as a bloodied and injured knight crawled through the mana layer.

"John!" Jenna practically screamed, causing Lloyd to rub one of his ears with a pained expression. However, after looking at John and the injury he had sustained, he could not help but look at the boy in pity.

Jenna quickly got to healing the wound on his thigh, yet due to not having taken out the arrow that had pierced through the thigh and broken through a bone, the tissues simply reformed around the arrow while the bones reconstructed with an arrowhead stuck in them.

Seeing this, Lloyd simply said nothing. Well, it was already too late for him to say anything. They would have to wait until they get out of this hell hole for John to get properly healed.

"What are you doing!" On the other hand, Fatima could not keep silent as she watched Jenna do something stupid.

Fatima began to complain and berate Jenna, but after looking at Jenna's expression of worry and defeat, she forced herself to breathe in and out before looking back at the group with her signature smile and confidence.

"Alright, guys. What's the plan for this one?" She asked, her aura radiating out of her as if she were a sun giving off solar flares.

"Well. You see, the plan is quite obvious when you look at it." Lloyd chuckled while the rest simply stared at him with confusion.

Yet, it only took them a few more seconds for them to understand what he was saying, as the answer to their question was staring them right in the face.

Quite literally, at that.

"We're gonna kill a dragon." Lloyd grinned.

## **Chapter 45: Labyrinth [2] - Undead Drake**

"We're gonna kill a dragon." Lloyd grinned.

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Silence befell the group as they all waited for someone else to move first. Of course, Fatima was the leader of the group, and therefore everyone was waiting for her to do something, yet after seeing that she had been frozen in place too, Lloyd could not help but let out a small sigh before turning around to face the creature standing a few meters behind him.

"Hmph... You humans and your obsession with ending lives." A raspy and old voice breathed out, yet despite the hint of ancientness in his voice, Lloyd looked at him with an unamused expression.

"Dragon?" Lloyd asked to confirm.

"Incorrect. I am a drake. I hate it when humans mess those two up." The creature growled, its piercing amber eyes sparkling in the darkness like two stars shining in the deep abyss.

"My bad. Never seen a drake before." Lloyd explained before shrugging and walking forward. However, before taking the third step, he was quickly stopped by the same raspy voice as it announced.

"I, an earth drake, shall supervise this section of the trial."

"You're wasting our oxygen." Lloyd muttered with dissatisfaction clear in his voice.

"I am simply a spiritual projection. I am not actually there. Us creatures of higher races can do that." It explained.

"Last time I checked, drakes were not listed as 'higher races'." Fatima finally spoke after gaining back her courage.

"And last time I checked, you are nothing but a bunch of small insignificant tiny humans who would not even be classed as town-level threats on any planet considered a level 5 or above." The drake retorted before immediately disappearing from sight.

"Did it just... Run away from an argument?" Jack couldn't help but ask.

"I think it did..." Jenna muttered, surprise evident on her face and tone of voice.

"Did Fatima just send a dragon running?" John almost screamed like a 14-year-old girl.

"I wouldn't be so sure." Lloyd cut them off before they could say anything else, and despite John wanting to argue due to the sudden interruption, when he looked towards what Lloyd was looking at, he could not help but feel a shiver go down his spine.

"That wasn't a spiritual projection, was it." Fatima asked as she took a step back while forcing the team to group behind her. Well, everyone did except Lloyd.

"Nope." Lloyd muttered before picking up a rock and throwing it towards the only exit they could see.

However, the rock simply fell to the floor as it bounced off a pile of bones.

"What did you do that for!" Jenna whispered angrily.

Yet before Lloyd could articulate a reply, they all heard it.

The sound of bones grinding on one another as the skeletal structure slowly formed into something more dragon-like.

"Alright, guys, the goal is to drop that thing, not defeat it. Understood?!" Lloyd roared, yet instead of waiting for an answer to come, he covered his hands in a pair of claw-like shadow gauntlets before allowing the rest of his shadow to trickle up his arms and legs and reinforce them as he shot forward without any care for his own safety.

\*Boom\*

The ground cracked under his feet, and before anyone could understand what had happened, Lloyd threw a devastating uppercut toward the bottom jaw of the reanimated skeletal structure.

The head flung back so quickly that Lloyd thought that it would have suffered from whiplash, yet instead of standing around and waiting for his suspicions to be confirmed, Lloyd spun mid-air before transferring all his shadows into his right foot and slammed it into the skeleton drake's side.

The kick was so powerful that the drake went airborne for a few seconds before regaining its balance and landing on all 4 of its feet, yet despite the seemingly useless use of his power, Lloyd got exactly what he wanted.

"Everyone! Go now!" He roared while standing before the skeletal drake, a smug grin on his face as his group got closer and closer to the exit.

However...

\*ROAR\*

Lloyd felt the hair at the back of his neck stand up, and before he knew what was happening, his legs were moving on their own, throwing him out of the way as a torrent of purple flame shot toward him while simultaneously blocking off the exit.

Rolling to the side, Lloyd looked at the exit before glancing at his team and then turning back to the skeletal lizard.

"It's probably been designed to stop anyone from leaving..." Lloyd sighed.

While he had fire resistance, he was certain that none of his teammates did. Also, he wasn't about to take the chance against literal purple flames. For all he knew, they could be flames that afflict damage on the soul itself.

'If only I could move people around in my shadow too...!' Lloyd frowned while forming a plan in his mind that would be successful in taking the drake down.

"Why don't we just try to take it down?" Fatima suggested.

"Well, that's the only thing we can do for now. But you have to remember that not only are we wasting oxygen here, but that the flames are using an exorbitant amount of oxygen." Lloyd explained before his frown deepened.

"Also, the flames are cold. It doesn't make any sense scientifically, but the flames are created through an endothermic reaction rather than the usual exothermic one." Lloyd continued, causing everyone on the team to also frown at the revelation.

"No worries. You have the people who scored second and third on your team. We're going to do better than everyone else. You don't have to worry." Fatima smiled, and as if her smile was contagious, everyone's frown suddenly disappeared before being replaced by a large grin.

Well, everyone except Lloyd since the ability didn't seem to work on him.

He didn't really know why that was the case, but his theory was that he was either desensitized to aura-like abilities the same way he is desensitized against killing intent and bloodlust, or that his monarch's aura ability nullifies Fatima's ability, therefore not allowing it to work the intended way.

Glancing back, despite knowing that Fatima was the appointed leader, Lloyd chose to take charge temporarily.

"Fatima, I need you to get to the back with the oracle. Okay?"

"Since when were you in charge?" She asked with a dissatisfied expression that spread to everyone she was affecting.

"Since the moment I saved your life." Lloyd replied.

"You didn't-" Before Fatima could finish her sentence, she felt every hair on her body suddenly rise, yet before she could even comprehend what was happening, she felt a foot-shaped object slam into her right torso and throw her out of the flame's range.

The other saw it coming long before Fatima and had enough time to dodge due to being further away, yet that single moment had cemented Lloyd as their leader, not because they all thought he was a good one, but because Fatima's gratitude spread to the rest of them.

'I see...!' Lloyd thought to himself with a grin as he finally understood how her power worked, but he knew that there was no time to gloat about his newfound knowledge since he could see 3 fireballs coming towards him from his peripheral vision.

Without thinking, Lloyd quickly performed 5 tumbles before ending it with a backward somersault.

When Lloyd finally reached the wall, he simply sprung off it and flipped over one of the fireballs to eventually appear above the skeletal drake.

Covering his leg in his shadow, Lloyd descended and performed a devastating axe kick upon it that sent a web of cracks over its skull before slamming it into the ground.

"Serpent Style..." A low whisper entered Lloyd's ears before a glint of blue energy within the dust cloud caught his eyes.

Lloyd simply smiled before flipping himself off the skull and watching the rest.

[King Cobra]

The image of an illusory cobra appeared above Jake's silhouette before attacking the skeletal drake.

"Nice one J-... What's his name again?" Lloyd rubbed the back of his neck with an embarrassed expression as he landed on the floor, but after looking around for a bit, he saw that no one was near him.

\*Swoosh\*

Lloyd's eyes widened as several arrows passed by him. His eyes widened, even more when he saw the elements surrounding the arrows.

'3 different elements... Impressive.' Lloyd smirked.

Fire, Air, and Water. Those were the three elements surrounding the arrows, and what made the feat even more impressive was the fact that the three elements she was using were primary elements, not secondary.

Primary elements were a bit like primary colors, despite the fact that there were four rather than three of them.

Yet, even then, the surprises didn't end.

"I shall slay this beast in the name of the father, the son, and the holy spirit!" The boy wearing knight armor roared at the top of his lungs as light beamed out of his sword and illuminated most of the dungeon that was visible to them.

\*Tap\*

[BOOST]

As the boy launched forward, a small ball of milky white energy shot toward his back before enveloping him and increasing all his attributes by 30%. Well, all the attributes were visible at the time. Lloyd had yet to learn if his intelligence had increased or if his mana pool had followed suit.

For all he knew, this boost was only physical.

\*Boom\*

\*Swoosh\*

Lloyd simply watched with an agape mouth as Jack flew out of the dust cloud, yet right before he could retain his balance, he threw two cobras at John that didn't waste a second as they quickly wrapped themselves around John's blade and gave him even more strength.

At that same moment, Lloyd witnessed the arrows explode upon contact while elemental energies viciously attacked the creature.

Within a second of the arrows reaching its target, John appeared above the skeletal drake with his blade held high, and without wasting another second, John put his entire weight behind his sword and sliced down with all the power he could muster.

\*BOOOOOOOM\*

In a spectacular performance of bright and sparkling blue and white lights, an enormous dust cloud rose and spread across the small room they were in.

Yet, throughout this entire performance, only one thought went through Lloyd's mind.

'I've never felt so useless in my entire life...' Lloyd thought with an agape mouth that forced him to cough as the dust cloud neared him.

[Author's note: For those who don't know what tumbles are, they are basically those gymnastic backflips where the person strings off their hand to perform a vertical cartwheel of sorts. You can google it if you want.]

## **Chapter 46: Labyrinth [3] - Tenacity, Courage, and Intelligence**

After the feeling of uselessness finally disappeared, Lloyd surveyed the area.

'Pretty sure that thing is alive, but on a good note, the flames are gone...' Lloyd mused before repeating his findings aloud.

"Just follow my voice." Lloyd shouted while constantly snapping his fingers so they could track his location.

They quickly regrouped after a few minutes of them trying not to trip over debris, and when they finally found each other, they could not help but let out wide smiles.

"Felt my life flash before me." Jenna shuddered.

"Hey! I don't see you holding a sword and getting into close quarter battles!" John sneered.

"I don't see you using all your mana and stamina to boost and heal a stupid moron who jumps into the middle of a battle the moment he sees on." Jenna sneered back.

"Who are you calling a moron!" John pointed at her accusingly, yet she only ignored his antics while the rest of the group simply laughed at their antics.

"We don't have time to waste. It's getting harder to breathe by the minute." Jake informed, causing everyone except Lloyd to nod.

There were two reasons for him not nodding.

One, he didn't feel a difference when breathing.

Two, he was more preoccupied with something else, yet after a moment, he simply shook his head and looked back at his team.

"Let's go." He ordered, and everyone followed his lead. It made sense, after all, since he was the only one with night vision.

"Ooo! Are those new torches?" John spoke excitedly, but after everyone looked at him weirdly, he cleared his throat and repeated the sentence more composed instead of screaming like a 15-year-old girl who got a car for a birthday present.

"I believe they are. But I suggest we limit the amount we take to only two..." Lloyd spoke.

"Why?" Fatima asked while taking a bite from a nutrition bar she had brought with her. While nutrition bars were still a thing during Lloyd's time, they were considered to be a lot more useful than the ones of the past.

To be exact, a nutrition bar was considered to be a normal meal for those in the army or on missions as they were small, healthy, and filled with enough calories to keep someone filled for an entire day.

It was actually one of the main ways people of the 22nd century defeated obesity.

"I have a bad feeling about them." Lloyd simply explained as they all moved forward.

5, 10, 15 minutes quickly passed, and everyone was getting restless again. It made sense, though. After such a heart-racing fight, 15 minutes of nothing could make the calmest soldier feel agitated by the sudden and utter silence.

However, after that, 2 hours seemed to pass in the blink of an eye.

They encountered many things, from groups of small creatures they had to kill to traps and even puzzles they had to complete.

After the 2-hour mark, 'Fatima's Group' found themselves before a puzzle, yet this was a little different from the other ones.

A large illusory figure floated in the middle of the cold room. It was surrounded by mist, as if the room itself was a foggy graveyard; well, at least it was designed that way. But Lloyd knew better than to believe that such a design had no ulterior motive.

'Scary + Low Oxygen = Hyperventilation.' Lloyd thought with an unamused expression.

However, that was not all.

He could tell that his teammates were becoming increasingly drowsy on the way to this room, and while an idiot would think that the journey had caused them to tire out, Lloyd knew that it was something else...

And what terrified him was the fact that he was certain that the reason for this drowsiness was not the lack of oxygen...

No... Anyone with half a brain could make that one up. He wasn't certain what it was, but he had a suspicion.

Of course, he could tell his team about it, but he was certain that it would worsen the situation for anyone other than Fatima. Yet, he still chose to say nothing.

He knew how Fatima's ability worked, so on the off chance she became upset by the news, it was more than likely that it would cause a chain reaction that he did not have the social ability to stop.

"Welcome to the trial of intelligence." An ethereal voice entered their ears and caused all of them to widen their eyes.

"They're a bit like the drake." Jenna commented.

Sighing, Lloyd asked the most important question.

"What is the trial of intelligence?"

"It is a trial that tests your intelligence..." The ethereal voice replied unemotionally, yet Lloyd could not help but feel like it was mocking him for asking such a stupid question despite that being obvious.

"Then, why don't you start this test of yours." Lloyd asked with a condescending tone of voice.

A long silence descended upon the group, and no one dared speak.

"I think you pissed it off."

Well, no one with any semblance of a brain dared speak. John was clearly an anomaly amongst humans.

However, before anyone could silently complain about his stupidity, the ethereal voice entered their ears again.

"Who will you choose to represent you?" It asked.

Fatima: "..."

John: "..."

Jack: "..."

Jenna: "..."

Lloyd: "???"

In an instant, everyone turned toward Lloyd.

"Why is everyone looking at me?" He asked.

"Because you're the only one who is particularly intelligent. You also did all the other intelligence-based rooms, so we kind of assumed you'd do this one." Jenna replied innocently, yet everyone else in the group couldn't help but feel like a vein on their forehead would burst.

They all knew it was true, but they felt a little angry when it was said like that.

"Ugh, fine." Lloyd snarled before stepping forward with a look of defeat.

"Do you represent your group?" The spirit asked.

"Yeah, sure, whatever." Lloyd shrugged.

"Who will you choose to represent you for the trial of courage?" It asked; however, this time, the answer was not unanimous.

"What are all the trials?" Lloyd asked

"Tenacity, Courage and Intelligence." The spirit explained.

"John should do Tenacity, and Fatima should do Courage." Lloyd suggested with folded arms.

After hearing Lloyd's words, they both looked at each other for a moment before shrugging and walking to the designated areas.

Lloyd felt like Fatima would do well in courage, and since John is a knight willing to jump into anything for the "Father, son and holy spirit," he should be fine in a trial like this.

On the other hand, Fatima had shown that she was a good leader not only because of her ability to make everyone around her feel less stressed out but also because she could put on a smile no matter the situation.

As spacial energy covered Lloyd, John, and Fatima, Lloyd couldn't help but feel confident about his choice; little did he know that this decision would be one he would look back on and think-

"I was so wrong."

\*\*\*

Appearing in a dark room, Lloyd opened his eyes and looked around for a bit before the lights slowly turned on.

'I won't be there to keep the flames in check, but they should be capable of going a few minutes without me doing so.' Lloyd thought to himself before his eyes widened for a completely unrelated reason.

"Uh... What the hell is this place?" Lloyd muttered under his breath, but after a few seconds of analyzing the place, he seemed to understand what was happening.

As the darkness faded from his vision and everything became as bright as day, Lloyd's eyes scanned the entire room, yet unlike the previous older castle dungeon theme that the dungeon was going with, this place looked more modern.

"This is..." Lloyd frowned.

He was in a completely ordinary room, the only significance of it being that it was clearly a room from an age before the awakening.

"The technology looks 21st century..." Lloyd mused while walking up to the tv.

The room was dyed mostly white; if it wasn't, it was probably either marble white, silver, or creamy.

He was currently in the living room, but with a single glance, he could tell that this house was either a two or three-story house.

"Looking outside indicates that we are at least on the 7th floor... And this tv." Lloyd muttered before touching it.

"It uses gas cells that emit ultraviolet rays. They go through the screen to create an image... It was genius for its time, but its quite crap now that I think about it." Lloyd thought to himself while tapping the screen of the tv.

"4k Resolution and-..."

Looking at the tv, he watched as a casket was held high while a white, red, and blue flag with 4 lines in it fluttered above it.

"British flag? I think? Is this the British empire? Wait, no, they didn't have televisions this good. This is clearly the passing of a monarch, but I can't tell who." Lloyd folded his arms and thought with closed eyes, yet after a while, he simply shrugged and said he would research it later.

"Why am I here?"

Without taking another glance at the TV, Lloyd searched the entire house, and for the most part, it looked pretty ordinary.

It was nothing compared to the standards he was used to, but he could tell that the house he was in was considered a luxury home by people of the 21st century.

However, when he finally reached a window and tried to open it to let Earth's breeze in, he realized something important.

"They won't open..." He frowned before disappearing and appearing at the front door, trying to open it as well, to no avail.

"So, I have to escape this place. Like an escape room?" Lloyd asked himself.

\*\*\*

In a completely different place, a boy wearing heavy knight armor was walking in a desert that spanned out for what looked like light years.

It didn't take him long to take his armor off, and while it was a load off him, quite literally in this sense, he still felt the scorching heat of the desert sizzling his skin.

He could even argue that the sizzling of skin was even worse now that he didn't have anything covering it, but nothing was as bad as the amount of sweat he released when he had his armor on.

\*Rumble\*

"Hmm?" The boy raised a brow but thought nothing of the faint tremor.

\*Rumble!\*

"I swear to god, if it makes me run in this weather I will lose it!" John roared in rage, yet-

\*RUMBLE\*

The sound was getting closer.

"Please..."

\*RUMBLE!\*

"Oh god, please don't make me run." John pleaded, yet it was too late.

\*PWOOOOSH\*

John watched helplessly as an enormous centipede as big as a skyscraper erupted out of the ground, its maw wide open as a devastating shriek left its mouth and caused the desert to shake despite it seeming endless.

"...May the lord forgive me for the unholy words I'm about to spout in his presence." John clasped his hands in prayer before his eyes became serious, yet in that same instant, he had to turned around and bolted in the other direction.

The centipede seemed to recognize his existence, and the moment he began to run, he lowered himself to the ground and began to crawl toward the running boy with clear sadistic intent exuding from it.

Nevertheless, John screamed like a little girl and ran away with his arms flailing around as he let out curse words that I am literally not allowed to put on this site, so I, as the writer, will leave the rest to your imagination.

\*\*\*

In the alleyway between two buildings stood a little girl with jet-black hair that had been tied into pigtails and dark brown eyes that seemed even darker than usual.

The girl could not have been older than 5 years old, yet her eyes were completely dead, like a soldier who's gone insane from the constant music of bullets that rain upon them and take their friends and family on a daily basis.

The little girl was covered in fresh blood. In one hand, she held a teddy bear that seemed to have been soaked in blood from how much of the red liquid was dripping from it.

However, on the other hand, she held what seemed like an adult hand covered in an equal amount of blood, yet this time the blood was dry, indicating that it had happened before the girl showed up.

And in front of her stood a woman with unmatched beauty, covered in blood... A woman who held a pitch-black sword in her hand while her eyes glowed with a fierce and bright violet that could have only been replicated by the stars themselves.

A woman that, despite her magnificent beauty, held an expression of contempt on her face. A complete contradiction to the superb awe-worthy aura she emitted.

The little girl in this story wasn't Fatima Khan... At least, not yet.

The little girl in this story was Fatima Ahmed, a 5-year-old girl who just had watched her mother get slaughtered in front of her, and her father bleed to death as he held her hand...

[Let the Trial of Courage begin]

## Chapter 47: Labyrinth [4] - Personal Hell

Sitting cross-legged in the middle of his room, Lloyd closed his eyes as he imagined the entire room inch for inch.

'If I think about it, I can't open the door, nor can I open the windows. I've tried smashing through, but as expected, there couldn't even scratch the walls, window, and door.' Lloyd thought with a slight frown.

'The goal must be to get out of this place without breaking through anything with physical force. This is the trial of intelligence, therefore I must use my brain to get out of this situation.' Lloyd thought before a grin appeared on his face, and he unclenched his jaw.

'The safe...' Lloyd thought before disappearing from where he sat and appearing on the second floor.

Opening the door to the master bedroom, Lloyd entered the room and walked straight toward the wardrobe before opening and staring at the steel safe that had been pushed to the corner and surrounded by folded clothes.

Taking out the safe, Lloyd looked at it until he realized something.

'Eight digits split into a 2.2.4 format. It is most likely a date... Well, I doubt it would be that easy.' Lloyd scratched his temple as he thought about the latest clue.

He knew that this was most likely some sort of escape room, but since it was a test that was part of one of the most difficult activities he had ever completed, he felt like it was supposed to be a little harder.

'There was a calendar in the kitchen saying that the date was the 14th of September 2022, and from what I saw on the television, that looks like it had come from the stone age, the queen died less than a week ago, and they are taking her to her place of burial. I am almost certain that the current date is not the code to open this safe, but it won't hurt to try, right?' Lloyd asked himself while caressing his chin as if he had a long beard.

Lloyd quickly added the current date without skipping a beat, but just as anticipated, it was wrong. However, despite knowing that it was most likely inaccurate, Lloyd did not expect that the steel box would suddenly shine with a crimson light.

The unexpected flash of light began to disappear after a few seconds, but Lloyd still felt as if something was about to happen.

However, after standing on guard for more than a minute, he finally stretched his hand towards the safe and turned it around after catching a glimpse of the same crimson light.

Looking at the back of the safe, Lloyd watched as the number "5" engraved into the safe glowed brightly. He was certain it was not there before, but after watching, the number "5" was slowly replaced with the number "4".

"4 more tries left, I guess." Lloyd sighed.

\*\*\*

Courage...

Courage?

What was courage?

The dictionary would tell you that courage is the ability to do something that frightens one. Courage was bravery in a different coat.

However, a soldier would tell you something both similar and different.

"The ability to stand before your enemy, look into its eyes and scream 'No More' as you charge at it with everything you've got in order to save those behind you from ending up with the same fate as you."

What a load of bullsh\*t...

Well, at least that's what Fatima thought.

That monologue was one of the last things that Fatima's father told her merely a day before his death. It was one of those moments that one would not forget, no matter how many years passed.

A fixed moment in time. A moment that would have changed everything about you if there was the slightest difference in how the event occurred.

And before Fatima stood another one of those "Fixed" moments.

'If this is courage...'

'Then courage is just torture under a different name.' Fatima thought, her hand losing grip of her father's.

Her eyes were completely empty, and not a single muscle in her body dared move an inch.

The blood between her hand and her father's made the grip weaken even more before, finally, the hand fell to the ground and grew cold as the seconds passed.

The pulse had long become nonexistent, yet Fatima's fear and rage grew into an unstoppable flood threatening to destroy the dam and release something from deep within.

'Was the night always this... bright?' she asked herself.

She didn't know why, but she always remembered the night as being completely silent, the only light entering her line of sight emanating from the three moons that appeared every several fortnights.

They called such an event the lunar Bermuda triangle. She never understood the name, but she always detested the event ever since her parent's passing.

'Why am I not moving? Why am I not doing anything? Why am I just standing here like a complete idiot?!' she roared, yet her voice was nothing but an internal one, meaning that no one other than her could hear her crying pleads.

'Move! MOVE! I'm begging you! Run, attack, anything!' she roared, yet the little girl didn't move a muscle despite that.

Who could blame her, though?

'MOVE YOU USELESS BITCH!' She shrieked when the woman finally moved forward and pointed her blade at Fatima's unmoving mother.

A pity flickered on the woman's face as she looked at the little girl, but it was too faint for Fatima to even point it out.

'NOOOOOO-'

\*Spulch\*

The instant the knife blade went through the heart of Fatima's mother, everything suddenly became white before she lost focus and entered what seemed like a deep, deep dream.

...

Opening her eyes, a little girl with black hair and brown eyes sat up at an amazing speed as her breathing became ragged and her heart beat faster than ever.

"What is it, honey?" A woman in her mid-thirties asked, her eyes and hair brown and her skin color also pointing in that direction. She wasn't dark per se, but she definitely wasn't of European heritage.

"Mommy! I had a bad dream." The little girl sulked.

"It's okay; it's just a dream, sweetheart." The woman hugged the little girl while giving her a motherly smile that made the little girl immediately forget everything she just saw in her dream.

The little girl quickly smiled while shaking her head, but when she saw another figure enter the room, she did not waste a second before letting go of her mother, charging at her father, and hugging him with everything she had.

Hours passed in the blink of an eye as the little girl had as much fun as she could with her parents. She wanted to ask why her father hadn't gone to work that day, but since she was having too much fun, she chose to forget the question and simply have a good time with her parents.

They went everywhere, from a planet filled with the most beautiful scenes in the observable universe to the largest funfairs in the human colony.

"Let's go." Her father smiled while stretching his hand towards her, yet right before she held his hands, her vision flickered, and she saw something that made her heart instantly drop.

Her father's hand was covered in blood and felt as cold as ice to the touch, and despite feeling like she had seen this scene before, she forced herself to blink again, an action that made the vision go away and made her forget about it the moment she couldn't see it anymore.

"Are you alright, darling?" Fatima's mother leaned down and asked her daughter, yet when Fatima looked into her mother's eyes, she did not see the same happy and energetic glint. No... She saw something different.

Her mother's eyes were emotionless and without signs of life. They didn't move, and she could barely see her mother's pupil as if a dark shadow was covering it, yet that was far from the worst part about it.

When she looked into her mother's reassuring smile, she only felt dread, hopelessness, and sorrow.

Sorrow filled her from the pits of her stomach and made her feel like puking.

And puke, she did.

As Fatima puked for a few more minutes, her mother advised them to go home for now, but her mother's unhopeful expression and one that showed worry, but acceptance at the same time, filled her with even more dread.

"N-No. I think I'm fine." Fatima was reassured, and despite her parents not fully believing her, they didn't push too much.

Possibly because they knew what would happen, and who better to spend time with than your own family?

Hours passed, and as the family left the mall, they walked into a nearby alleyway they thought would be a faster route, but it was clear that their enjoyable time together had made the parents forget...

"Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed. I've come to collect your dept." A feminine voice spoke from behind them, and the instant Fatima heard her voice, she froze.

Now that she heard the woman's melodious yet dreadful voice, Fatima knew that she was in nothing but a dream. A recount of what had happened.

Yet she couldn't move a muscle.

She was scared stiff.

Yet her neck seemed to work.

Slowly, Fatima turned around to absorb the dreadful scene of her mother kneeling before the woman and asking her to give them a little more time with their daughter.

Yet...

\*Sching\*

The woman's blade mercilessly slit across her mother's throat, and all Fatima could do was sit.

Sit and watch as the blade cleaved through the throat, spraying blood everywhere as her mother dropped to the ground face first, but luckily towards her daughter.

It gave her a chance to give her daughter a final, reassuring smile before she succumbed to the darkness that enveloped her vision.

Her father suffered the same fate, telling her a few parting words before being stabbed through the heart as he held his daughter's hands while bleeding out.

And despite all that... Through all that, Fatima didn't move a single muscle. She pleaded, yet nothing happened.

She begged, yet her body stood still, her eyes as lifeless as her parents that lay before her.

"What a cruel world this one can be." The woman's voice finally entered Fatima's ears, and despite being delirious, she heard what the woman said.

And she only became more enraged.

She couldn't remember how many times she had done this.

Over and over again, she had to watch those she loved most die before her, and even after she gained control of her body once again, her body didn't allow her to move.

She had the body of a coward, or that's at least what she thought.

She didn't know how often she would be doing this same thing repeatedly, but it was beginning to affect her soul.

'God... Please, if there is a god out there...'

'Please just end my misery.' She begged as her vision became white again, and she was stripped back 12 hours to when she first woke up.

\*\*\*

In a room painted with mostly white, a shirtless boy wearing all black sat on a table and swung his legs off it. He looked closer to an adult than a child, yet most people could tell he was no older than 20.

It was a skill that came with the culture over the years, and despite people over 100 years old looking at the same age as a 30-year-old man, people could tell how old someone was just by looking at them.

Lloyd wore a long coat that reached his knees that was underlined with a glowing purple fabric.

He wore sunglasses despite it being quite dark in the kitchen, but due to his night vision, he could see right through the glasses as they weren't even there. He simply put them on to hide the color of his eyes.

And at that moment, Lloyd was staring into another person's eyes. Someone with eyes that shouldn't have been prevalent in ancient times, such as the one he was in.

"I think I finally understand." Lloyd spoke, his eyes not leaving the pair of glowing red eyes that seemed to peer back into his soul.

'I think I finally solved it!'

## **Chapter 48: Strength Comes In Many Different forms**

### **[1]**

Looking into the pair of crimson eyes, Lloyd finally broke his stare before flipping the image over to look at the back.

For the last few seconds, he had been analyzing the image of a couple screaming in joy as they rode what seemed to be a fun fair ride. From the water splashing on them, he assumed that it was a water ride, but that part of the picture wasn't relevant... Or, it wasn't relevant for now.

In the picture, the couple seemed to be no older than 20, and since there were several pictures in the house of them and a child, he assumed they had met in high school and grown into a married couple.

He couldn't understand why the woman had a pair of red eyes. Were they contacts? No, because there were pictures of her with red eyes as a baby.

"She might just be unlucky... I heard photos in the past sometimes made people's eyes look slightly red. But this doesn't seem like it. Her eyes were naturally red, and those numbers on the back of the safe were also red." Lloyd rubbed his chin before looking at the back of the picture, which had its time and place signed on it.

"Drayton Manor, 14th of August 2015." Lloyd read aloud before a frown appeared on his face as he moved toward other images.

As he had expected, every single one of them had the date and location at the back of the picture. Well, actually, most of them had the date, while less than half had the place. However, there was one picture that had none of those.

"The red-eyed woman's baby picture. She looks no older than 12 months old, but I don't understand how this would be a clue." Lloyd muttered with his frown becoming more and more distinct as time passed.

Hours passed as Lloyd searched the house for more clues. After getting a few more pictures, Lloyd finally understood the timeline and had a rough idea of the main events throughout these people's lives.

After finding out their son's age and plotting a date for his birth, he tried it out as one of the possible answers yet still somehow got it incorrectly.

The minutes became hours, and the hours became days.

He couldn't use [4-Dimensional Thought] for too long as he would get a headache before having his cognitive thinking capabilities reduced for a short time afterward, so instead of using it all the time, he used it sparingly.

Until...

'Holy shit! I think I actually got it this time!' Lloyd roared.

While he might have celebrated too early when he found the fun fair picture when looking at the sequence of numbers he had just created, he had a really good feeling that it might be the right one.

...

30 Minutes ago.

After looking at all the numbers laid out before him, Lloyd narrowed his eyes before an amazing idea made him smile.

He quickly revised his knowledge of morse code before creating a system that might work.

'There are 14 pictures here, and only 12 of them have dates. If I look at this from a day/month/year standpoint...' He muttered before listing the days in one column, the month in the other, and the year in the last. Of course, he did it all in chronological order, making the earliest picture come first while the latest one came last.

He then split the numbers among each one of them and made a system to calculate the numbers.

'4 and lower is a 0, and 5 and higher is a 1.'

And while it might have seemed like binary, for now, he quickly used this formula to get a sequence of numbers for each number on a date.

Well, that's when he realized it.

The answer was never a date. It was just a sequence used to fool someone into thinking that the answer was a date.

After transferring the 0-1 format into morse code, he finally got-

94/21/5923

Inserting those numbers into the safe, his smile widened as he saw a crimson key enter his line of sight.

He did not hesitate for a moment as he grabbed the key and ran downstairs, and within the same instant, he had inserted it within the keyhole before turning it and opening the door, yet...

\*Fwoosh\*

Just when he thought there was nothing but white on the other side, he felt his body being sucked through the door before he immediately lost consciousness.

However, right before his vision could darken, a booming sound entered his ears. A booming distressed voice, roaring down from the skies themselves.

"Beware Void Walker! The stars are going out!"

"And once they do..."

Silence will fall!"

\*\*\*

\*Thud\*

Falling to the ground face-first, Lloyd quickly got up and rubbed his nose, which had now become red. Tears filled his eyes out of pure instinct to getting hit in the nose.

He quickly wiped the tears out of his eyes before getting out a tissue and blowing his nose, which had started to become runny.

'So much for not having organs. What's the point of this body if I have to perform normal human acts like blowing my nose?' Lloyd asked himself, forgetting that he hadn't gone to the toilet since he became a void walker.

"You're back already? That was fast." Jenna commented.

"Hmm? What do you mean? How long was I out for?" Lloyd asked with a frown.

"5 minutes." Jack replied from a corner of the room where he sat in the lotus position with his legs crossed.

Lloyd could feel a tremendous amount of energy flowing within the boy, an amount he had not felt coming from Jack until now.

"Wait... 5 minutes?" Lloyd snapped out of his trance and exclaimed with shock.

"Yeah, 5 minutes. Why?" Jenna asked.

"Well, I was in there for about 2 days." Lloyd explained and continued to rub his nose.

Jenna was clearly about to exclaim in shock, yet right before she could do so, Lloyd turned toward Jack and asked.

"By the way, what are you doing?"

"Cultivating."

"Cultivating?" Lloyd tilted his head.

Now that he thought about it, he hadn't tried cultivating yet.

Opening one eye with a frown, Jack looked at Lloyd and asked-

"What? Have you never seen anyone cultivate before."

"I have." Lloyd replied while thinking back to the 'blood cultivation' that Zack did whenever they trained.

According to Zack's father, the blood cultivation technique Zack used was something that could only be used by those who had was something that could only be performed by those who had a class that was either linked to the barbarian class or linked to a class that either used blood as their main form of contact, or blood as their main form of strength.

Berzerkers were known for their ability to get stronger as they fought and even stronger as they killed. And while the strength boost is mostly temporary, they can use a specific cultivation technique to take advantage of all the energy inside them to become stronger.

The point was that every cultivation technique was unique in its own way, since, just like a people, plants like a banana tree can't grow in the same conditions as wheat.

"Your cultivation technique simply piqued my interest. I felt such a strong energy come from you that it almost startled me, haha." Lloyd explained and rubbed the back of his neck with a smile.

"Well, if you are that interested, I can explain how it works to you. It's not like you can copy it or anything." Jack shrugged before waving over Lloyd, who completely ignored the frozen Jenna, who was too shocked by being forgotten to do anything other than stand there with an aloof expression.

Sitting next to Jack, Lloyd looked at him and waited for him to say something, but after a minute of silence, Lloyd's patience was running thin.

However, right before starting the conversation, he saw that Jack was about to say something and stopped himself from speaking.

"I'm sorry about earlier." Jack finally opened his eyes and raised his head to turn to Lloyd with a genuine stare.

"F-for what?" Lloyd asked, a little taken aback by the sudden apology.

"You know when we were saying our goals earlier, and you kind of smiled when I said that I wanted to become to the greatest martial artist."

'He did?' Lloyd thought, trying to recall the incident.

"I did?" Lloyd asked aloud.

Even after recalling the incident, all he could remember was him acting slightly bored, since he was bored.

"Yeah, and then you went on to being all unenthusiastic, so we all kind of thought that you were either making fun of us or thought you were better than us." Jack chuckled while Lloyd almost paled.

'Damn...!' He inwardly sighed.

"Oh, my bad. I didn't wanna seem like that." Lloyd looked around awkwardly with no expression on his face, but Jack could tell he was uncomfortable... It was almost written on his face despite his sunglasses hiding away a lot of the emotions that would have been clear otherwise.

"And the way you glared at Fatima made us think you were jealous of her." Jack laughed while Lloyd felt a vein protrude from his forehead, bulging out and becoming visible but barely being hidden by Lloyd's hair

"That's why we acted a little badly to you." Jack explained while Lloyd began to question his ability to sense other people's emotions.

"But now that we fought alongside you, you aren't a bad person. Hell, most people as strong as you and Fatima wouldn't bat an eye at a guy like me who prioritizes martial arts over my class, but both of you treated me well. You treated me equally to everyone else, while Fatima encouraged me to fight no matter how hard a fight was. So thank you." Jack smiled.

The conversation went on for another minute with Jenna pouting on the other side of the room, yet after they called her over, the pout disappeared and was quickly replaced by a bright smile that lit the room as she skipped over to them.

"Alright. Before I explain how I cultivate, how do you two do it? Mine is a bit complicated since its mainly created to help martial artists like myself to ingrain mana and martial arts into our system, not only making us strong physically, but also spiritually." Jack explained.

Yet despite Lloyd understanding most of what was said, Jenna simply gawked repeatedly while opening and closing her mouth.

Jack then looked at Lloyd, who quickly nodded and explained-

"Well, I don't actually cultivate."

"..."

"..."

"Not the normal way anyway." Lloyd finished, making both of them let out a breath of relief.

They didn't know what they would have done if they had found out that Lloyd was some kind of supreme being capable of getting as strong as he is from not cultivating at all.

"Aren't you a little young to participate in this ceremony anyway? I understand if big shots like that Glade guy participated since he had an amazing talent and class, but you look no more than 18 despite your stature. Most people wait until they are half-steps before taking part." Jenna asked.

'That explains why most of the seven reapers haven't taken part in the ceremony in the past few years. Now that I think about it, shouldn't they take part this year? I haven't checked yet.' Lloyd thought before shaking his head and looking at Jenna.

"Well, my friend Zack and I have been training for a while, and since he was going to partake, I assumed that I might as well join too." Lloyd explained before shrugging.

"Back to the cultivation, please. Despite wanting to know more about your take, we are running low on time here. The other two should be back any time now." Jack explained, causing Lloyd to nod and explain.

"My father has this sword style we passed down the family. It's called the [Flower Petal Style], and it has a sequence of moves I do every day that makes mana flow into me. Then I just have to eat, which becomes like a nutrient that strengthens my body and increases my cultivation once the food is fully digested." Lloyd lied through his teeth.

Well, it wasn't a full lie.

The flower petal style did have such a moveset, and if he were a normal person and completed the set, he would grow in strength. The problem was that the moveset simply didn't work on him, and he could only assume that the reason was because he was a void walker.

'Now that I think about it, my cultivation isn't the thing that makes me this strong...' Lloyd thought to himself.

He would most likely lose if he were to have an arm wrestling match with someone like Osmygold, and the reason for that was simple.

Osmygold was a 1st commandment human, while he was a half-step. While Osmygold might have a hard time winning, he would most likely win if Lloyd didn't use any of his abilities.

And this got Lloyd thinking.

'How strong are my abilities?'

He killed a high first-class being quite easily, and that was without using his flames, yet it made sense to him. At least to a certain extent.

His [Flame Control] is the ability of a hobgoblin with amazing talent, capable of controlling its flames from the moment of its awakening despite how hard flame control was supposed to be, according to OracleOfFlames.

Hell, even [Aspect of Void] was a power he was not supposed to get until much later.

While [Shadow Claw] and a lot of his other shadow abilities were nothing special on their own (except shadow enhancement), Lloyd's capability of using them to their full extent, combined with his natural combat prowess (his martial arts and sparring experience), as well as his physique that made him much stronger than the average person in his class, made him a force to be reckoned with.

Suddenly, he was forced to snap out of his realization as the sound of someone collapsing into the cold floor entered his ears.

Looking back towards the center of the room, Lloyd saw John lying on the ground before a portal.

The other side of the portal showed a sea of sand, which explained why John was laying in a bunch of sand as they all ran over to him without thinking twice.

"Are you okay?" Jenna asked with distress in her voice.

"What do you think?!" John sneered before coughing sand out of his lungs.

Without skipping a beat, Jenna began healing John, and within moments of her starting, another portal opened up, yet there was something different this time.

\*DOOOM\*

Even Lloyd felt it this time.

Dread.

Absolute dread.

A dread that would have made non-awakeners drop to their knees and rock themselves back and forth in the fetal position until they slept.

"W-W-What is that?" Jenna asked with fear laced in her words.

On the other hand, Jack got into a fighting stance and waited for the creature on the other side to jump through.

Lloyd unconsciously summoned a katana and held it in his hand. He could tell that it felt a little different, almost as if it had bonded with his soul, but since he was getting ready to fight, he couldn't take any time to look down at the pitch-black katana he had just created out of thin air.

The same katana he used in his void walks.

As they all waited for the creature to come through, Lloyd quickly realized that the bloodlust wasn't affecting him the same it did to the others, and within a moment, it finally clicked.

"Don't tell me," Lloyd muttered with a frown.

At the same instance, a bare and slender foot, covered in blood, came through the portal and stepped onto the cold and hard ground.

The bloodlust seemed to increase further, to the point where John had completely lost consciousness while Jenna had dropped to the ground and reached the point of almost peeing herself.

\*Thump\*

Yet, in an instant, it seemed like the bloodlust had vanished as the creature coming through fell face-first and slammed into the ground with a low thud.

This creature covered in blood and grime was none other than Fatima, that, despite being unconscious, felt like something had changed about her.

'Oh... Crap.'

[Author's note: Extra long chapter for you guys! Thank me later.]

## **Chapter 49: Strength Comes In Many Different forms [2] - Fatima Vs Void Walker**

"Fatima?" Lloyd asked with his brows knitted into a tight frown.

He knew that the black-haired girl before him was Fatima, but her entire atmosphere seemed different...

And the blood... The blood didn't make it any better. The Bloodlust that came out of her felt like that of a wild animal's, but who was he to speak when his Bloodlust was technically much stronger.

Bloodlust and Killing intent was not the same thing, despite most ignorant people thinking that they were.

While killing intent is a controlled feeling/aura that allows a person to exude their inner emotions to the outside world, Bloodlust was an aura that was completely out of control, as if the being became a rabid wild beast willing to kill everything in its path while being blinded by rage.

While the exuding of killing intent is something that happens naturally when someone chooses to take a life, Bloodlust is more of a state of mind that very few classes can control, berzerkers and barbarians being one of the few capable of doing so.

"If she exuded bloodlust, it means something really bad must have happened," Lloyd muttered just loud enough for Jack to hear him.

"How do you know its not killing intent?" Jack asked with a whisper despite knowing that Jenna and John were far from a state capable of comprehending their conversation, even if they spoke normally.

"I know what bloodlust feels like." Lloyd simply replied while Jack nodded in understanding without asking another question.

Walking forward to examine her body, Lloyd realized that her body was filled with cuts and bruises, to the point where he was certain any other person unawakened would have died of blood loss.

Kneeling before her, Lloyd watched Jack wobble a little before clutching his head.

"Headache and drowsiness?" Lloyd asked with an unsurprised tone of voice.

"How did you know?" Jack asked, yet despite Lloyd expecting him to have a suspicious expression on his face when he looked over at Jack, he saw nothing but curiosity.

"I felt it a few minutes ago too." Lloyd lied through his teeth.

"Does that mean we are running out of oxygen? Too much carbon dioxide I'm guessing, so we are suffering from CO2 poisoning?" Jack asked with a grimace.

"I don't think that is the case." Lloyd muttered while checking Fatima's body for any significant injuries.

"What is it then?" Jack asked.

Lloyd knew that an explanation would waste the little amount of oxygen they had left, but despite that, he felt the childish need to gloat.

"What do you get when you combust something but you don't have enough oxygen or heat?" Lloyd asked.

"Uhhh... I don't know. It's been three years since I've taken a science class." Jack rubbed his neck awkwardly.

"Short answer, you get carbon monoxide, and I'm sure you are well aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide, am I correct?" Lloyd asked before Jack's eyes widened in realization.

Looking at the flames surrounding the room, a panicked expression appeared on his face, yet before he could start panicking, even more, Lloyd smacked both of his cheeks and looked him in the eyes with a stern expression.

"Don't panic. It could cost you your life." Lloyd spoke while releasing a little bit of killing intent which caused Jack to hold his breath for a moment before slowly calming down.

After calming down Jack, Lloyd looked toward Fatima with a frown before inwardly asking-

'What the hell happened to you?'

\*\*\*

Earlier.

She didn't know how many times she had to go through this.

She couldn't remember how many times she had stood there and watched her parents being slaughtered like cattle who didn't resist in the least.

And all she could do was watch.

Watch and scream, yet somehow not move a single muscle while doing so.

Her screams were far from audible, making her feel even worse every single time it happened.

Until she finally snapped.

It might have been her 500th attempt; she lost count after a while.

"Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed. I've come to collect your debt." A feminine voice spoke from behind them, and the instant Fatima heard her voice, she froze.

Now that she heard the woman's melodious yet dreadful voice, Fatima finally realized where she was...

She was in her personal hell. A hell-loop, to be exact.

Yet, despite her knowledge, she couldn't move a muscle.

She was scared stiff.

Yet her neck seemed to work.

Slowly, Fatima turned around to absorb the dreadful scene of her mother kneeling before the woman and asking her to give them a little more time with their daughter. Yet from the expression the woman had worn, Fatima knew that she wouldn't spare them.

She hadn't spared them the last 500 times; why would she do so now?

For the 500th time, Fatima felt dread like no other, but it was different this time.

This time she felt different. As if something a seal inside her had finally shattered.

As if her soul had awakened once more.

And as if waiting for this moment, a torrent of emotions flooded her mind. Everything she felt over the last 500 hell-loops returned stronger than ever, and despite feeling reborn, her eyes had become listless once more.

The woman raised her blade and took a breath in, and just when she was about to slice through Fatima's mother's throat, she felt something.

\*Crack\*

"You wanted courage..." Fatima muttered, yet that mutter alone seemed to echo for miles.

\*Crack Crack\*

"Then I'll give you courage..." She spoke softly, but the power behind her voice alone caused the ground below her feet to shatter while simultaneously shaking the entire city.

"Since this is going to be your final battle..." Her sinister voice echoed as her eyes turned pitch black while black and white energy began to surround her, slowly crawling up her legs before enveloping her torso and then her face.

Covered in black-and-white energy, the woman couldn't see Fatima properly, yet from the aura and energy that exuded from her alone, she knew that the little child she had pitied earlier had not become a monster beyond her wildest imagination.

"I'll give you everything." She spoke with a dominance that would have made an emperor drop to his knees.

Black and white lightning bolts shot out of Fatima's body, while her eyes became hollow and white.

[Racial Bloodline Temporarily Unlocked]

[Name: Fatima ???]

[Commandment: Unknown ]

[Race: Unknown]

[Class: ???]

[Talent: 9-Star]

[Affinity: ???]

[Passive Ability: Transdimensional Awareness (Lvl 9)]

[Abilities: 5th Dimensional Telekenisis (Lvl 9), 5th Dimensional Energy Manipulation (Lvl 9)]

"What the hell!" The woman roared and flipped back several times before readying her katana by covering it with bright violet energy.

A white rune shone in each one of her violet eyes, before a powerful gust of purple icy winds shot towards Fatima, or at least what was left of her.

Raising her hand towards the incoming attack, Fatima emotionlessly waited, and without skipping a beat, the icy gust of wind disappeared before the woman felt something pull her.

It all happened in less than a second, and before the woman could even realize what had happened, her face had slammed into the little girl's palm before a strong grip enveloped the rest of her head, beginning to ever so slightly squeeze with a power that slowly increased.

Not wanting to die such a pathetic death, the woman tried to cut off the arm Fatima held her with, but just as the blade was about to touch the arm-

\*Shatter\*

The blade crumbled into a million pieces as a barrier appeared between the blade and her skin.

"Damnit!" The void walker let out a muffled roar and pointed her hand toward Fatima's face.

\*BOOOOOM\*

In an instant, a large and powerful violet iceberg formed, slamming into a nearby skyscraper and even threatening to tip it over.

The moment the void walker had encased the little girl in the ice, the woman took advantage of that split second and quickly got out of the girl's grip.

'I'm a peak second Commandment. How is this happening to me!? I'm a void walker! I am a part of a superior race, how can I be losing to a pathetic human child!' the woman inwardly roared, but she knew that she had to run.

Or at least, she was going to try to.

\*Crack\*

\*BOOOOOOOM\*

Ice was flung into the air as a powerful blizzard formed over a certain part of the city.

Floating in the air, Fatima looked towards the void walker with an unshakable stare that peered through the blizzard itself and stared into the woman's soul.

"Huh." The void walker exclaimed as she saw the girl point at her, yet her unspoken question was quickly answered by a low rumble that entered her ears, followed by two buildings moving towards her at an extremely fast speed.

\*BOOM\*

\*Zip\*

The two buildings turned into dust, but whatever was left of Fatima's consciousness knew that the woman was not dead.

Instead, she was probably right behind her.

Looking back, Fatima quickly raised a barrier as she watched a fist shoot at her at lightning speed, breaking the sound barrier and appearing before the barrier in a mere instant.

[Void Walker Style]

The moment the fist came in contact with the barrier, a purple flash illuminated the surroundings for miles before it suddenly became dark.

Within an instant, the darkness shrunk and became concentrated at the fist.

Simultaneously, the fist began to shine in the shape of a four-pointed star, with the inner part glowing purple while the outer part shone with a pitch-black light capable of warping space itself.

[Star Collapsing Fist]

For an instant, the buildings around them began to warp and get sucked into the area of impact, but in the blink of an eye-

\*BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM\*

A beam of black and purple energy shot through the city before firing into the sky.

That one attack killed millions while trillions of dollars worth of infrastructure just disappeared.

Landing on the ground, the woman quickly widened her eyes as she felt danger coming from her right, and in a split second it took her to react, she barely moved out of the way as a black and white beam shot toward her from a distance.

"Damnit... She's still alive after that?" The woman asked before forming a pair of knuckles dusters created from what looked like a pitch-black material, so dark that it didn't even reflect light.

[Void Walker Style]

Smashing her fists together, she stepped forward, shone slightly, and disappeared immediately.

In the next instant, she was right in front of Fatima, yet right before Fatima could react to her appearance, the woman appeared behind her before punching her in the liver and sending her flying towards an unscathed part of the city.

However, right before Fatima could start smashing through the city, she stopped herself mid-air, but the void walker already anticipated this.

Appearing above her and performing an axe kick, she shot down at impeccable speed.

However, within an instant, the woman was in front of Fatima, slamming her foot onto the top of her head a full second before she was supposed to reach her.

[Teleportation Barrage]

For the next three minutes, Fatima continued getting pummeled by this woman as she would use [Void Step] to appear anywhere she wanted before slamming a foot or fist into Fatima.

"Enough!" Fatima roared and pointed an open palm at the woman, freezing her in place before slowly crushing her alive.

The woman quickly used Void Step to escape, but to her surprise, Fatima's hand suddenly appeared right before her face as the little girl catapulted herself through the air at such speed that it allowed her to appear before the woman before she had even appeared there.

\*Swoosh\*

Teleporting out of the way in the nick of time, the woman barely escaped death, yet when she looked up again, she knew that death would follow her no matter where she was.

And that death came in the form of a little girl with powers rivaling hers.

Instead of appearing in front of the woman again, Fatima simply walked towards her instead, yet somehow, from the woman's point of view, the walk felt a lot more terrifying than her tremendous speed.

The walk was ominous and horrifying, not only putting the woman on edge the whole time but also causing her to feel a small amount of fear as the girl released an unbelievable amount of Bloodlust.

\*Zhip\*

Appearing Fatima's right, the woman was certain that the girl wouldn't see her attack coming, yet as if the world had slowed down to a crawl, her eyes slowly widened as the little girl stared at her with a side eye, waiting for the woman to attack so she could finally grab her.

"Forget this." The woman muttered and teleported over a mile away.

"I'm going to end this today, even if I have to take the surface of this continent with me." She roared and made a gesture that looked like her grabbing the sky.

[Void Walker Style]

At the same time, Fatima also seemed to have enough, causing her to point an open palm in the general direction of where the woman was before muttering-

[100% Release...]

And as if they were in sync, they both roared with equal vigor to one another-

[Violet Sky Fall]

[Dimension Breaker]

[Author's note: For those confused about why Fatima is so powerful, it will be explained in due time. Don't worry; it will all make sense in the future, and you will completely forget about your temporary hate for me... Hopefully ...]

## **Chapter 50: Strength Comes In Many Different forms**

### **[3] - [Entity] Vs Void Walker**

[Violet Sky Fall]

[Dimension Breaker]

Grabbing the fabric of space, The void walker pulled down with all the power she could muster. At the same time, it looked like the atmosphere had disappeared as a blanket of darkness covered the sky above the city.

In the same instant, the stars in the sky began to glow bright purple before something unbelievable happened.

'The stars...' Fatima's shell of a body looked up and thought with an amused voice.

"Are falling." It muttered before looking at the void walker and releasing a devastating attack.

A black mass of infinite darkness formed into the shape of a small sphere surrounded by 3 large raindrops that looked like they were tears in the fabric of space.

The black mass shot through the air as a pitch-black beam with small white lights that glowed like tiny stars.

The beam moved beyond the speed of light, but one did not need to move at the same speed to avoid an attack with a trajectory.

Using [Void Step] a split second before the attack, the void walker dodged the attack by a hair's breadth.

Blinking in and out of reality, the void walker performed several attacks that landed perfectly on the entity before it, yet before she could celebrate, she watched as an arm covered in dark energy sliced through the air and appeared before her neck in an instant.

[Void Swap]

Blinking out of reality once more, the void walker not only disappeared from where she stood but also seemed to have placed something there too.

Despite the entity's momentum, it stopped its hand right before hitting the object, but it was already too late.

Having swapped positions with one of the stars she had created, the void walker smiled as the winds moved in the spherical current around the star before an explosion engulfed the entity, making it disappear within its flames.

The explosion covered everything within a mile radius, but this did not deter the woman from flicking her wrist and homing the rest of the stars at the entity.

In the same instance, hundreds of thousands of stars possibly shot toward the massive explosion. Not even the void walker knew how many stars she had created, but she knew that [Violet Sky Fall] was a technique more than capable of wiping an entire continent off the face of a planet.

\*BOOM\*

However, right before the Void Walker could celebrate, she heard an explosion come from behind her, and as she looked back, her eyes widened, and her face turned pale.

The scene before her was horrifying, possibly even more frightening than the scene of the very sky falling.

A strong pull force made the void walker snap out of her reverie.

Seeing a dark mass swallow half of the destroyed city in an instant while growing in size, the woman snapped her fingers and instantly directed half of her falling stars toward it.

Thinking back, The void walker couldn't help but grimace for an instant as she thought back to the beam that was about to hit her.

'If that thing hit me, I would have been toast.' she thought with a frown.

As the stars started getting sucked in, they also began to orbit around the miniature black hole.

While the woman knew it wasn't a real black hole, since one of that size would have swallowed the planet hole, it replicated the features of a black hole.

As the stars surrounded it, the woman muttered-

[Reversal]

Hundreds of thousands of the small stars began to suck in everything in their vicinity before turning them into dust and absorbing them into themselves.

And since they were slowly moving towards the center of the 'black hole,' something unimaginable happened.

It happened in a split second, but if one were to slow down time, they would watch as the stars moved in random patterns as they affected each other.

The scene looked like a sun making millions of solar flares simultaneously, but then the black hole was torn apart in an instant before the stars also imploded.

Feeling relief, the void walker slapped herself and turned around as quickly as possible. She didn't have much mana due to [Voilet Sky Fall] and [Reversal].

'If I can't beat that thing within the next few minutes, I should just use my remaining mana to create a [Void Tunnel] as far away from here as possible.' She thought to herself. However, she was instantly snapped out of her thoughts when she saw her stars frozen mid-air.

'Crap.' She widened her eyes and tried to get away, but the instant she thought of doing so, she gritted her teeth and almost cried out in shock.

'I... I can't move a single muscle.' She inwardly screamed.

As the flames and smoke from the explosion disappeared, a little girl (by her standards) no older than 19 stood in the middle of the blast without a single scratch.

The black and white energy that had coated her before was nowhere to be seen, and in its stead, the girl released a powerful aura that encapsulated everything for several miles.

She floated in the air, yet she didn't do it like others who had the ability to fly. While most would float with an almost heroic pose as the wind fluttered their clothes, allowing them to give out a majestic aura like no other, she floated like a hanged girl, with the entire weight of her body seemingly supported by only her neck.

She had no shoes on, and her legs pointed at the ground as if they were completely limp while her arms hung by her side, moving side to side as if the rope around her neck hadn't lost the momentum from when she first kicked away the chair from below her feet.

The aura around her made the void walker feel one thing and one thing only.

Dread.

An insurmountable amount of dread that would have made the sanest of people go mad.

While her clothes also rocked back and forth with her arms, the strong winds didn't seem to affect her arms or clothes in the least, making her seem eerily still despite her chaotic environment.

As the void walker tried to regain her sanity, the girl's figure suddenly disappeared in a flicker before appearing before the woman.

Looking into the girl's eyes, the woman noted that the whites of her eyes were almost pitch-black alongside her pupils. On the other hand, her iris was a light grey that slowly became lighter and lighter as it reached the pupil.

The girl's hair was also a perfect wavy jet-black that draped down her shoulders and reached her waist in length.

Despite having worn basic overalls during the death of her parents, she now wore a snow-white victorian dress that reached her knees.

'What the hell are you?!' The void walker thought while calculating ways to escape her current situation.