

The Walker Of Voids

- Chapter 65: Eternal Autumn [7]

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As everyone began to leave the tent, Lloyd felt a tug on his shoulder that caused him to look back.

"Roderick? What's wrong?" Lloyd asked.

"Me and Hime need to speak to you." He whispered before pulling Lloyd back into the tent and waiting for everyone else to leave.

After a while, Roderick and Hime couldn't sense anyone around the tent, yet knowing Veronica, they looked at Lloyd in order to confirm if anyone was listening in or not.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Lloyd asked while pressing his temples.

[4-Dimensional Thought] had just ended, so when they pulled him back in, Lloyd could not help but grunt as the need for sleep tried to overwhelm his sense of thought.

"Is Veronica listening in?" Roderick couldn't believe he was asking the question since it was pretty obvious what they were thinking about. From what they had seen, Lloyd was the only one capable of sensing Veronica.

"How am I supposed to know?" Lloyd asked, his headache getting worse and worse by the minute.

"You sensed her before..." Roderick replied with a deadpan expression.

"No, I didn't. I just assumed that she was listening in. She seemed quite snoopy." Lloyd shrugged.

"She doesn't seem to be around, but it doesn't really matter if she hears us or not." Hime shrugged.

"Alright, we are just going to start then. We only have one question so it won't take much of your time."

"Get to the point then." Lloyd sneered.

"Why did you do that?" This time, it was Hime talking instead of Roderick; however, while it seemed like an interrogation from Lloyd's point of view, Lloyd also recognized that he should be careful since his brain wasn't working the way it should.

"I assume you're asking why I lead a revolution against your old leader, and the answer is simple.

I want to survive. I want to get out of here alive rather than being spilled out with the rest of the dungeon. That guy had no idea what he was doing and would have most likely led us to our deaths, so I chose to impeach him. Are you done now? I really need to sleep."

"Didn't you just wake up?" Roderick asked, yet Hime was more focused on what Lloyd was saying, yet when she saw Lloyd getting up, she quickly spouted out what was on her mind.

"Can we trust you?" She asked, her eyes analyzing every fiber of Lloyd's being despite her inability to see through his skin and see him for who he truly was.

"What a stupid question." Lloyd sneered while rubbing his temples to soften the horrible headache that was beginning to reach unbearable levels.

It had never been like this before, and Lloyd had no idea how he should combat it.

Pain killers? Normal ones wouldn't work. Maybe mana potions would work, yet even then, Lloyd knew so little about his own anatomy that he had no idea what would work on him and what wouldn't.

'I guess there is a first time for everything.' Lloyd sighed before continuing from what he had last said.

"I can just lie, and you would have no idea. Even if you can't trust me, give me one reason why I would hurt your group, and then if you find one, give me a scenario where I, a half-step first commandment, can hurt a group of second commandments without instantly dying a horrible death." Lloyd snarled before walking out of his tent.

Hime and Roderick looked at each other for a moment, yet before they could begin conversing, Lloyd entered the tent again and interrupted-

"Y'all have mana potions for headaches?" Lloyd asked.

"Yeah, we have pain killers over there if you want the-" Hime couldn't even finish her sentence, and Lloyd immediately ran over to the box she was pointing at, rummaged through it, and picked up a bottle with a red liquid in it with the label [Pain Killers].

Without even thanking them, Lloyd left again, this time for good, and went straight to his tent to drink the glass bottle and immediately go to sleep.

Hours had passed, and by the time Lloyd had awakened from his sleep, the sun was beaming through the gaps in his curtain and into his eyes, not that it he felt anything from it. It didn't even wake him up, and the only thing that made him squint was the fact that he still had human instincts he could not get rid of.

As Lloyd got out of bed, he quickly looked at himself in the mirror before pausing to admire his body for a moment, the same way bodybuilders would flex in the gym.

He was wearing nothing but underwear, which only added to his muscular definition.

While Lloyd didn't look anything close to a bodybuilder, his body was defined enough to make most people's jaws drop while also being inauspicious to the point where it didn't show through clothing that didn't cling to his very skin.

"My muscle definition has definitely grown, but my height remains the same... And my weight... My weight?" Lloyd muttered to himself while jumping a few times, yet despite doing so, he felt as light as a feather.

On the other hand, he could probably try to calculate how much he weighs from the sound of his jumps if he activated [4-Dimensional Thought], but after the headache, he got the last time he used it, he chose that it was probably for the best if he didn't use it for such trivial tasks.

'Thinking back, I have been using it for pretty stupid things...'
Lloyd thought as the image of him sitting in front of a tv and answering, "Who wants to be a trillionaire?" questions before the presenter could even say them.

Of course, he would love to go on the show, but they actively stop anyone with a mind-amplifying ability from joining. The other reason was simply that Lloyd didn't want to put himself in the public eye even more than he already did.

It was it enough of a pain in the ass for him to go out as a masked adventurer named Null but to use his real identity to catch attention? That would be too much.

Walking past the mirror, Lloyd picked up his pants from the floor and quickly wore them before walking up to the dining table and taking his shirt and jacket off one of the chairs.

After wearing his black shirt, as well as his black and purple jacket, he walked out of his tent with his hands inside his pants pockets.

"I swear to god, sometimes I feel like its about to snow, then I look up and realize that the clouds are fake." A semi-masculine voice complained, making Lloyd look towards it before looking away just as fast.

"Stop looking up like that, Felix. Knowing you, you'll probably snap your neck trying to look that far up." Veronica sneered.

"Shut up, b*tch! Just because you are the hottest one in this group doesn't give you the right to insult us, you hear me?!" Felix shouted.

"Us? What are you talking about? I was insulting you." She grinned, yet before they could continue their bickering, Roderick walked in between them before reaching Hime, standing on a rock to get the higher ground.

Lloyd was certain that there was no need for the rock since her stature alone allowed her to look over most people in the group, yet he wasn't one to complain about things that didn't matter... Or at least he didn't do it openly.

"We'll be leaving in 15 minutes. Make sure that you all have everything with you, including your tents." She glanced at Lloyd, who immediately took the hint and deactivated his tent, turning it into a small marble that slowly floated towards his hand before being stored within his dimensional storage.

Hime continued to speak about a few more things, like the importance of hydration during the trip and how everyone should stay on alert at all times, even if the sun is out.

She said a few more things, but Lloyd wasn't really listening anymore since he was more intrigued by something else.

'The first element out here is pretty weak.' Lloyd thought to himself as he concentrated on absorbing some of the fire element into his elemental rune.

'And it won't rain any time soon either, so there are barely any lightning particles, even less than the fire elemental particles. And to add insult to injury,

I feel weaker than I did at night because of my shadow sustenance passive ability, and now that it's the day, I can't even spend any of my time cultivating my shadow element, since I can cultivate it 10 times faster at night.' Lloyd sighed.

15 minutes seemed to have passed in the blink of an eye, yet Lloyd did not bother speaking to anyone and instead simply watched from the sideline while trying to figure out how to use the void element to cultivate.

'Maybe if I was next to a spacial tear, it would be a lot easier to cultivate it or at least understand it, yet since we are so far away, I don't really see a point in catching everyone's attention by asking such a weird favor.'

"Alright. Veronica, time to take off the shield. Make sure to keep it with you at all times, okay?" Hime commanded Veronica the same way a mother would command her child. It was a comedic sight, but everyone moved on from it as the group entered the forest.

Everyone followed Hime and Roderick for half an hour, yet after realizing that the most likely outcome of this day would be complete silence, Lloyd finally spoke up.

"How do we know that we are going in the correct direction? Its not the dungeon carved arrowed into the ground to point us in the right direction." Lloyd asked.

"Well, the closer we get, the more monsters we will meet. While the main reason we aren't moving at night is due to the fact that it can get quite dangerous, it also becomes a little hard to distinguish whether or not we encountered more or less monsters. In the day however, the monsters are so little that the smallest increase is noticable." Rex, to everyone's surprise, explained before Roderick could.

"Well, what would you classify as an increase, because the other day I got attacked by a colony of rabbits." Lloyd asked.

"We haven't seen rabbits yet, have we?" Lachlan, despite losing a lot of his courage and pride over the last day or so, asked, yet while doing so, he made sure to keep his head down and not make eye contact with anyone, as if he was too ashamed to even look anyone in the eye.

"I-I d-don't think s-so," Tina replied, making everyone raise a brow again at the fact that Tina even tried speaking.

"Colony? How many are we speaking? 5 to 10? Maybe even 20?"

"Hundreds..." Lloyd grimaced.

"Hundreds?" Veronica asked while her brows knitted in suspicion.

"Well, the explains the state we found you in." Roderick chuckled while Hime smiled.

"Ugh. Anyway, since the sun is coming from here... Then it must have been..." Lloyd paused for a moment.

"That way." Hime pointed before Lloyd could, yet it didn't bother him much anyway, mainly because it was Hime and no one else.

Being the first beastkin Lloyd had ever met, he felt closer to her than anyone else in the group, which was one of the reasons why he was happy when Hime was chosen instead of Roderick.

As the group walked, the atmosphere reached new heights. They were at peace despite being in the middle of a most likely blood-drenched forest. It was a contrast that would have made most artists drool. Beauty in the belly of the beast.

Yet, there was one known fact that every living creature in the universe knew.

Beauty is never permanent

And the beast has yet to awaken...

"My liege... The humans and the Void Walker are on the move again. Would you like us to intercept them?" A pale man with black circles around his sunken eyes asked while looking up, his deep red eyes shining like a pair of tiny stars within the darkness of the palace.

"No... Where is the fun in that? Let them come to me. Let them see a ray of hope, so when they come to face me, I can watch that slither of hope turn to dust before their very eyes." A cruel and wicked grin stretched across the creature's face... A smile so sinister that it made the servant shiver to its very soul.

[King of the Eternal Autumn]

[Ahimoth - The Conquerer of World]

Chapter 66: Sunrise to Sunset [1]

It had been 3 hours since the group had first departed, and despite there being a few small fries on the way that weren't even worth Lloyd's attention, there was nothing but trees and skies to look at.

"I believe I see it." Hime announced while looking into the distance from the top of one of the trees she had chosen to climb.

"Its pretty scorched, so I think it would be a little hard to miss." Roderick chuckled.

They continued to walk toward where Lloyd had fought the rabbits, and while Hime and Roderick already knew what the scene looked like, the rest were frozen in surprise, unable to believe that a half-step first commandment could create so much destruction on their own.

"Nature sure does heal quickly." Lloyd muttered to himself, yet those with heightened hearing heard his words and looked at the charred forest before them.

"Oh? I don't think this is nature's doing. I believe that the dungeon heals over time. Give this a week, and it will look exactly the same as the first time you saw it." Roderick explained while touching a patch of fresh grass that seemed to have been spared despite the scorched planets all around it.

"Does that mean that, in a week or less, monsters are 'respawned'?" Lloyd asked.

"Maybe. I don't know yet, but if we think about it the same way we feel about permanent dungeons, monsters aren't bred; they are spawned. While it doesn't happen much in temporary dungeons, it's not impossible."

Roderick explained.

"Squeak."

"Huh? Oh, look, it's a rabbit." Felix muttered before his hand broke a sound barrier and reached the rabbit in the blink of an eye.

"What are you doing?" Veronica asked while holding Felix's hand an inch away from the rabbit, who was still looking at Felix's incoming hand with its curious big black eyes.

"Well, the kid said he had to fight them, right? It was clearly going to lure me in with its cuteness before chomping down on my head." Felix defended himself while the rest of the group, including Lachlan, face-palmed.

"No. From the fact that they aren't releasing an ounce of killing intent, they are most likely a monster that only attacks you when you attack it, and thinking back to what Lloyd said, attacking one would also anger the entire colony, which would force us into killing them." Veronica explained before reaching out her hand and petting the orange-furred rabbit.

When Veronica tried to pull her hand away, the rabbit moved closer to her and rubbed its head onto her hand as if it was asking for more pats.

A red glint passed through Veronica's eye, a glint that no one other than Lloyd seemed to notice.

Narrowing his eyes, Lloyd was going to say something, yet before he could, he watched a beautiful smile stretch across her face as she held the rabbit in her arms and squealed like a little girl.

"It's so cute!~" She screeched while Lloyd only felt a little weirded out by her sudden change, but he guessed that animals could do that to a person.

"Can I keep it?~" Veronica asked.

"Sure, why not?" Roderick answered while scratching the back of his.

"No. We have bigger things to worry about than a pet rabbit." Hime sneered while glancing at Roderick while embarrassingly shrugging.

The group continued walking for a few more hours while tracing the direction that all the rabbits had come from when Lloyd had fought them by looking at broken twigs, branches, and even footprints.

However, doing so turned out to be much harder than it seemed simply because the dungeon was still healing, meaning many of the footprints had disappeared, or at least the ones that were faint.

"You sure did a number on this area. What kind of spell did you release to do this much devastation?" Rex asked with a hint of excitement in his voice that sent a chill down Lloyd's spine.

"It looks like he used a fire spell. From the wounds seen on the trees, the scorched marks left behind, and the pattern of burns, Lloyd most likely used a flurry of fire bullet spells. However, such a spell would take an extremely high amount of mana to do without a magical artifact to use a middle-man.

Maybe a staff? No... Or it's a magical book with the runes and enchantments written within it to take the toll of the mind and put it on his mana instead, allowing him to focus on making the spell more efficient rather than having to analyze it. But that wouldn't make sense, either. Lloyd isn't a mage. He is a... Mutter mutter mutter mutter mutter mutter mutter mutter mutter..."

The group looked at Tina for a moment before shrugging. Everyone but Lloyd who was perplexed by what he was seeing. The once shy girl was now muttering her theories and ideas out loud without a care for the world.

'Is this the same girl that would squirm every time someone would look her in they eyes?' Lloyd asked himself with an agape mouth.

"Don't worry. She does that sometimes." Rex chuckled.

"Really? She must have some passion in learning the arts of mana and everything about it." Lloyd replied, still feeling a little awkward after seeing Tina in that state.

"Yeah. I feel jealous of her drive to gain knowledge whenever I look at her." Rex sighed.

"Don't you have any passions?" Lloyd asked with a tilt of his head, yet he only received a chuckle from Rex.

"I do. Hey, I probably have the most ambitions in the entire group... I work out every single day and push my body to its brink so it can fix itself by the next day and be stronger than ever.

I work on my martial arts, meditation, and control of emotion, yet in all of those, I'm either not as good as someone else on the team, or I am the best at it but can't match the same drive Tina shows for her interests." He explained.

'He likes her...!' Lloyd immediately concluded. He knew that expression... After all, he had seen it in the past whenever he could look in the mirror.

It was the expression of someone who was so in love with another that they would do anything to catch their attention or gain their love.

A gloomy expression passed through Lloyd's face before it immediately went back to normal before Rex or anyone else could see it.

All good memories come to an end, and Lloyd could remember the precise date when that memory ended since it was the start of a new memory with a new family and a new group of people who cared about him much more than the last group did.

Hours passed, and everyone talked idly. While the number of monsters had seemed to increase ever since meeting with the first rabbit, the increase wasn't as big as they hoped, which either meant that they were very far from where the boss was, or that they were walking diagonally rather than moving in a straight line towards the boss area.

This meant that the trip would take much longer, and at the same time, the chances of completely missing the boss were also very high.

"Hm?" The hairs at the back of Lloyd's neck stood up while a feeling weird feeling welled up inside of him.

'We're being followed.' Lloyd concluded, yet as he tried to turn around to see what was following them, he felt a hand on his shoulder before he realized the group had gone silent.

"What are they?" Felix asked.

"I don't recognize their footsteps or smell since I've never encountered them before, but if I concentrate, I can smell a faint whiff of berries and blood." Hime explained.

"Silent footsteps. Small body. Camouflages well with the surroundings and doesn't seem to be hostile against us..." Lloyd muttered with volume that allowed everyone just about to hear him, yet instead of telling them what they were, a smirk appeared on Lloyd's face as he walked in front of Rex, disappearing from the monster's line of sight.

[Presence Concealment]

Lloyd remained quiet, something he couldn't have done without [Soundless Steps].

As he stared from one of the branches he stood on, he couldn't help but smile slightly when the creature became clear to him.

'As expected... Foxes.'

Chapter 67: Sunrise to Sunset [2]

Landing beside Rex and deactivating his ability, Lloyd spoke-

"They are foxes. They probably just want to steal our shit, and they aren't that strong either. There are only three of them, and since foxes don't work in packs, their attacks won't be coordinated in any way, shape, or form." Lloyd explained.

"You shouldn't have gone without asking me first. That could have been dangerous." Hime spoke with a hint of anger in her voice.

"It's fine. I'm confident in my abilities of going unnoticed by a few foxes." Lloyd shrugged.

"That is not the problem here. I am responsible for everyone here, so you cannot go and do things as you please, is that understood?" Hime asked, yet this time, she sounded truly angry.

"Yes. Sorry." Lloyd replied.

"Veronica. Can you kill them all within a three second gap?" Hime asked.

"Yeah. Just say the word, and they'll be dead." Veronica shrugged.

The group continued to walk for a few more minutes, and just as Veronica began to get agitated, Hime muttered the words she had been waiting for.

"Now..."

Snap

As the snap of Veronica's fingers echoed throughout the forest, Lloyd's eyes widened in shock as he watched one of the fox's head enlarge before exploding into a thousand pieces, splattering blood and gore to everyone around it before the rest of its body dropped to the ground completely limp.

"Now, run!" Hime shouted, and without a second thought, they all began running at speeds that Lloyd could barely keep up with.

A few minutes passed before they all finally stopped running, and before anyone could say anything, Felix asked the question on most of their minds.

"Why did we run?"

"Because of the blood, dumbass." Veronica sneered

"Then why did you kill them in such a spectacular fashion?" Lloyd questioned with a tilt of his head.

"Because that's what Hime wanted. We are going to observe for a bit to see where the most monsters are coming from, and then we will go in that direction until sunset." Veronica explained.

After that, everything happened as Hime planned. Monsters began to run towards the smell of blood while the group did nothing but watch from the top of the trees.

However, instead of watching like everyone else, Lloyd's interest in the monsters peaked, causing him to open his camera search app and take snapshots of the monsters.

"I think these monsters are completely unique to this dungeon. There have only been sights of the rabbits and foxes before, and that was simply an evolutionary thing that occurred in most autumn-like environments." Lloyd muttered to himself.

Everyone around him could not help but think of the irony of the situation, as he was the only person to feel weirded out when Tina started muttering, yet he was doing the same thing and didn't even know it.

Looking down, Lloyd took note of the owl-like white-feathered creature that flew right under them with an eerie silence that made it terrifying in its own right.

That, combined with its looks, made it look like something straight out of nightmares.

The owl had two branches seemingly coming out of its head and pointing upwards, a bit like the antlers of a moose.

"It can conceal its presence despite being so big. But it doesn't make sense for it to have white feathers." Lloyd muttered while jotting down notes around the image of the owl.

This carried on for a while before Hime and Roderick found the best direction to go in since it was also the estimated direction with the most monsters.

Hours passed again, and before they knew it, the sunset was almost upon them.

"We have about two to three hours before the sun fully sets, so let's walk for another hour before trying to find a clearing where we can set our tents down." Hime ordered, but before they could start walking again, a faint rustle entered their ears.

'It's not the owl since it wouldn't make that much noise, and it most likely isn't a fox either since they tend to stay away from us rather than come closer.

The only reason those three even tried attacking us in the first place was due to their excruciating hunger. Hell, I could see it in their eyes. It was almost terrifying.' Lloyd thought while getting into a fighting stance and taking his katana out of his dimensional storage.

However, when Lloyd saw what had come from behind the tree, he could not help but freeze for a moment.

'What the hell is that?!' Lloyd inwardly screamed while Tina didn't waste another second, instantly creating a fireball and shooting it at the creature.

Yet, when the fireball closed in on the creature, its eyes glowed orange for a moment before it seemed to dissipate instantly, turning into nothing but embers before entering the creature's mouth.

However, just when everyone was about to attack the creature simultaneously, they felt like something was different.

"We're surrounded!" Roderick shouted while Hime told everyone to stand towards the center of the encirclement while keeping an eye on any incoming monsters.

The creature was both beautiful and horrendous in its own way. It had the head and ears of a wolf, yet it had enormous antlers coming out of the top of its head, yet they were slightly different from the ones the owl had.

Instead of going straight up, they slowly bent back to the point where it would be impossible for a grown human to comfortably ride it.

They had a wooden texture to them, followed by several spikes that slowly got larger and large as they ran up the antler.

The same could be said about the back of their necks, as they seemed to have extremely sharp wooden branches sticking out of their mane while getting smaller and smaller as they moved down their spinal cord.

While its face was that of a wolf, the rest of its body was a mixture between a horse and deer, followed by a long tail with brown feathers sticking out it, as if it was a giant fan capable of slapping to death anything that got close to it.

While the feathers were brown and orange, the rest of its fur deviated between the color white and a green mixed with grey.

Of course, only Lloyd and Veronica could fully see the creature while Hime struggled to see all of it, but a single glance was enough to tell all three of them that the creature was dangerous.

Chapter 68: Sunrise to Sunset [3]

"Roderick, cover me." Veronica muttered before disappearing from where she stood and appearing above one of the creatures in the blink of an eye.

She held a black and red blade in her hands, and without wasting another second, she sliced down at the creature.

However, just before her blade could cleave through its neck, Veronica's sword was quickly stopped as the creature used its antlers to block the attack.

Veronica's eyes widened slightly, but with a smirk on her face, she used her sword to spin around mid-air before throwing herself and her sword to the side, allowing her to land on a nearby branch.

Holding her giant blade to the side, her eyes glowed a deep red before her body blurred, and within an instant, she was in front of the creature again as her weapon clashed with its antlers.

BOOM

The shockwave was so powerful that despite being several dozen meters away, Lloyd felt like he was about to lose his balance and fall due to the gust of wind that hit him like a speeding truck.

The creature was sent flying, shooting through several trees before slamming into one of the bigger ones and failing to break through it. However, unlike the tree behind it that was almost unscathed, the same could not be said for the creature's antlers.

Yet, before Veronica could go for the finishing blow, she sensed another creature closing on her.

At least, that was the case for a couple of seconds, as the moment the creature had gotten within a 10-meter distance of Veronica, it felt something sharp go through its eye-hole before everything became black.

"Thanks." She thanked before plunging her blade into the creature she was fighting.

"No problem." Roderick replied before finding someone else to support.

Everyone seemed to be doing well against the creatures that attacked them, to the point where most of them didn't have to use their abilities.

On the other hand, while Lloyd would have loved to find out what kind of ability Lachlan had to make him the leader of such a capable group, he had his own problems to deal with.

After all, he was the only person struggling and actively losing against the monster that attacked him, and the creature seemed to know that since it had a wolfish and greedy smile on its face.

'It's the weakest in its pack, so it probably would have run away if it weren't for me being here. Clearly, it's trying to get something out of this whole ordeal, and that thing is most likely my head.' Lloyd inwardly complained while holding the creature back with his katana, yet he still felt himself being pushed back.

'Damn it! This thing is way too strong!' Lloyd inwardly cried out in pain.

The creature seemed to be getting frustrated since it could not break through Lloyd's defense, and while it looked like it was about to give up, it suddenly stepped back before opening its mouth.

A green and black mist came out of its mouth and quickly engulfed Lloyd, and while he had no idea what it was, he could feel his strength leaving his body as the mist slowly seeped into his pores.

Or, that's what the creature thought at first.

Lloyd could not have been more grateful for his Void Walker anatomy than at that moment, and without wasting another second, he slashed toward the creature with everything he had.

However, despite being extremely close to the creature, it was much faster than him in, no matter how you looked at it.

In a split second, the creature had already moved several meters away from Lloyd, and the only thing that Lloyd could do was watch in shock as it disappeared from sight.

Once the creature had gone, Lloyd collapsed to the ground, completely exhausted from the fight.

"Are you okay?" Hime asked with narrowed eyes as she looked away from the two creatures she was manhandling from their antlers.

"Yeah," Lloyd replied, but the creature appeared again, yet now it was at his right rather than being in front of him.

"Damn it!" Lloyd roared while swinging his blade toward it out of anger, but the moment he did it, he knew that it should be the biggest mistake he had made during the battle.

The blade missed, and the creature retaliated with a black beam of energy that hit Lloyd in the chest, sending him flying a few meters away and onto the ground.

He knew the rest of the group was too preoccupied to help him, so instead of asking for help, he stood up again and pointed his blade toward the creature before covering himself in shadows.

[Shadow Enhancement]

As the shadows shrouded his body, Lloyd felt a current of euphoria moving through his body like a pool of cold water spilling onto his body after a long day of training.

The shadows were enhancing his strength and agility, and while it was not enough to make him a top-tier fighter, it was enough to challenge or, at the very least, allow him to defend against the creature in front of him.

And challenge it he did.

The fight lasted for several minutes, and while Lloyd could land several hits on the creature, they were not enough to take it down.

'Peak first commandment. This is doable... I think. F*ck! If only I could use my void walker abilities! They worked wonders the last time I found myself against an enemy of this scale.' Lloyd grimaced while thinking of the mosquito queen who he beat by using [Aspect of Void] against her.

However, he was quickly snapped back to reality as he barely pushed the creature back before jumping a few meters away from it.

However, despite trying to move away from it, the monster did not budge on its goal of killing Lloyd, since the instant it saw him trying to create space between them, it shot forward with all the speed it could muster, shooting past Roderick and Felix and reaching a distance of barely a meter away from its target.

But before it could strike down its opponent, it felt something deep within it scream at it to run...

Every hair on its body stood up and told it to move away, yet such a thing was nearly impossible due to its gained momentum.

[Flame Control]

A hint of orange flashed within Lloyd's eyes, while [Monarch's Aura] intertwined with Lloyd's killing intent to release an explosion of pressure that made everything freeze for a moment.

Lloyd's concentration was at its max despite not using [4-Dimensional Thought], while the world around him suddenly slowed down to a crawl.

The orange rune suddenly began glowing brightly, and before the creatures could find a way to move out of the way, Lloyd had other plans.

Mana moved through Lloyd's arm before blue and orange flames began to spill out of his palm.

Simultaneously, one word echoed through Lloyd's mind, and that word war-

[Incinerate]

Chapter 69: Sunrise to Sunset [4]

[Incinerate]

Fwoosh

BOOM

A tsunami of blue and orange flames left Lloyds palm and enveloped the creature before, yet for an instant, everyone saw those very flames dim, becoming pitch black before returning to their previous color.

Due to Lloyd's killing intent exploding out in every direction within a split second, it could not fully avoid being hurt as it was a few seconds too late in activating its ability to absorb the flames.

However, while it might have been hurt by the flames, especially when they had suddenly become black and several times stronger and more ferocious, in the end, Lloyd was nothing but a half-step first commandment with very little true fighting experience, as well as minimal training from experienced fighters.

His father never had time to train him since he was always in the military until recently, while even though his mother could have taught him instead since many would have considered her just as strong as her husband, she was thoroughly against the idea of Lloyd learning how to fight an early age.

And all those past decisions came down to this moment, where Lloyd was fighting against a berserk beast that, despite being injured, would do everything to kill him.

'Shi-' Lloyd couldn't even finish the thought as he was instantly rammed by the creature, and in what felt like the time between one blink and another, Lloyd had flown past Hime and Veronica, both of which paused to watch the scene of Lloyd smashing through trees before hitting a particularly sturdy one and losing consciousness.

Smack Smack

Opening his eyes again, Lloyd squinted out of instinct after looking up at a light that beamed into his eyes.

The last thing he remembered was a tsunami of pain all over his body before everything turned to black, yet now when he opened his eyes, he could not help but feel extremely energized, to the point where he felt like he could run a hundred laps around his city without breaking a sweat.

However, before he could delve deeper into his fantasies of running an awakened marathon, he was snapped back to reality by the stinging pain that was the reason for his waking up. A stinging pain that radiated from his cheeks and nowhere else.

"Hey, Hime! I think the hes awake." A melodious and soothing voice entered Lloyd's ears, and despite the rash use of words, Lloyd felt like his body was going into a tranquil state.

Just when he was going to close his eyes again and fall into a deep slumber, the face of an angel entered his line of view, making a smile reflexively stretch across his face while his eyes glazed over.

"Angel? Am I in heaven?" Lloyd asked with a euphoric smile on his face.

"No... You're in my tent, and I need you out in the next 30 minutes or so." Despite the voice remaining the same, Lloyd's expression immediately morphed into a grimace.

"Oh... Its only you." Lloyd sighed as his voice changed from one at peace to one that had been hardened by the infinite trials of war.

"Why do you sound disappointed..." A vein bulged on Veronica's forehead while her words were laced with anger.

How could he switch up that quickly? Did he not find her attractive? Nonsense. Everyone in the world found her attractive. She had thousands of suitors!

"I expected an angel, yet I found myself looking into the eyes of the devil's incarnate." Lloyd sneered while Veronica's patience dwindled.

"Get out." She muttered, yet despite Lloyd's wanting to argue a little more, he knew that saying any more would aggravate Veronica enough to hit him.

'I'd rather not die.' Lloyd thought to himself before getting up and leaving the tent with his coat in his hand.

"As Lloyd left Veronica's tent, he bumped against a figure that caused his head to bounce while allowing him to look up and look into the eyes of the person he had just run into.

'Explains the bounce.' he thought before smiling.

"Hey, Hime. What's up?" Lloyd asked.

"You've been unconscious for hours, yet you seem completely fine." She narrowed her eyes.

"I'm running on adrenaline. The first thing I saw when I awoke was Veronica's face, so try to imagine the scare I got when her blood-red eyes locked with mine. I still get chills when I think of how she was about to stick her fangs into my neck." Lloyd replied while shuddering.

"Oh really?" Hime asked.

"Yeah."

"Then how about you explain the cracks in your skin." Hime's eyes flashed with a hint of red as she analyzed Lloyd's body language to look for even the briefest hints of lying.

However, instead of lying, gaslighting, or changing the subject like Hime expected, Lloyd did the complete opposite.

"Miss... Everyone has their secrets." Lloyd's voice was monotone, and his aura had completely changed. At the same time, his eyes were hollow and empty, as if there was no soul behind those eyes that stared directly into her soul.

"Even you do... However, the difference between the two of us isn't just our secrets, but its the fact that one of us chooses to mind their own business, while the other is choosing to snoop." Lloyd spoke, his eyes never breaking contact with Hime's, yet at the same time, it felt like he wasn't even looking into her eyes but into something beyond it...

Hime's face scrunched up in an expression she would not have been capable of recognizing if she had looked into a mirror.

"Oh, well. Let's keep this as our little secret, alright?" Lloyd smiled, his emotionless persona disappearing as easy and as fast as the flick of a switch, a characteristic of his that sent a shiver down Hime's.

As Lloyd began to leave, Hime called out-

"Oh. Uhm, there is a tent meeting in an hour. Please be there." She asked with a noticeable shudder in her voice that even she recognized as she spoke.

"Sure... I'll be there," Lloyd replied before waving at her and leaving to set up his tent; however, despite both of them seeming mostly collected on the outside, they were both inwardly screaming the same thing.

'What the f*ck was that!?'

An hour passed in what felt like a blink of an eye as Lloyd found himself opening his eyes once again after having them closed for the past hour as the sound of an alarm rang in his ear.

He had been meditating for the past hour, trying his hardest to find a way to absorb the space element into his purple rune, yet no matter what he did, the only way that seemed to work was by injuring himself, something he was not particularly keen in doing especially after realizing how low his pain tolerance was compared to others he knew.

'You'd think I would develop a bigger tolerance to pain after almost dying, almost dying again, dying, being scorched alive, and being beaten up by different monsters, but apparently not.' Lloyd thought before the image of purple runes infesting his skin and scorching him alive sent a shiver down his spine.

"I should get going. I'd rather not have Hime shout at me again. That was terrifying." Lloyd muttered to himself with a grimacing expression, but after thinking for a moment, he could not help but recall what happened the last time he had talked to her.

'It was as if I had suddenly activated [4-Dimensional Thought], but even then, it felt a lot more intense than the last time I did it. And what the hell did I mean when I said that I knew her secret?

I sounded so convincing I even convinced myself that she had a secret that I knew, but now when I try to think of what it was, I just get a headache...' Lloyd scratched his head before shrugging.

"Oh well. That's a problem for tomorrow's Lloyd. Today, I have to get through that meeting of theirs without going to sleep." Lloyd chuckled while grabbing his jacket and wearing it on the way out.

It took him less than a minute to walk to the larger tent in the middle of the camp, and since he hadn't taken any time to appreciate his surroundings, he took this one-minute walk to see everything around their camp.

'I can't see any traces of our previous battle, so we must be a couple hundred meters away from the last location, or possibly more... The place seems nice, but we are at the top of a hill, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage.

While being on top of a hill makes it easier to see any incoming enemies that come out of the forest around us, it also targets us, not allowing us to blend in with the trees, not that the giant dome around our camp helped with that in any way.' Lloyd thought before snapping out of his trance when he found himself in front of the tent.

Several voices could be heard behind the tent, and Lloyd was certain they most likely didn't sense him coming.

Not wanting to snoop outside for too long just to get caught, Lloyd parted the curtain and entered the tent as a wave of warmth spilled onto his body.

However, the following words he would exchange with the group would not fill him with the same warmth.

"Oh good, you're finally here." Roderick let out an awkward smile before continuing-

"Alright, let's get this over and done with. After watching your battle yesterday, we all took a vote and kind of realized that you are very bad at fighting, yet since you are going to be in our group for god knows how long, we took another vote and came to a decision...

Each and everyone one of us will be training you in different aspects of fighting to ensure that your chances of survival are as high as possible while ensuring that you won't be a burden on us.

Is that understood?" Roderick asked at the end with a smile that slightly agitated Lloyd, but from how everyone looked at him, Roderick's question only had one real answer.

"Yes... Sir..."

Chapter 70: Autumn Training [1] - Environmental Awareness

Standing across from a white-haired man. Lloyd could not help but sigh when thinking of what had led up to this.

"Now that he's agreed, can I be the one to show him his schedule?" Veronica asked with a sweet smile that hid the cruel one she wanted to show.

"No." Roderick rolled his eyes.

"Pretty please?" She begged.

"No..." Roderick sneered.

"With a cherry on top?" Veronica asked again, yet this time she had gotten uncomfortably close to Roderick, to the point where he could feel her breath tickle the back of his ear.

"Goddamnit, fine! Go ahead." Roderick shouted with a faint blush on his cheeks, making Hime face-palm and everyone else, except Lloyd and Felix, chuckle.

Lloyd felt slightly surprised that Lachlan had laughed despite how depressed he had been over the last day or so, but he threw that thought to the back of his mind the moment he saw the schedule they had in place for him.

"I thought that a day in this dungeon only had 32 hours." Felix raised a brow, yet when he saw his name on the schedule, he was overridden with rage.

"I know that a day-night cycle in this dungeon consists of 32 hours of the night and 18 hours of day, but do we really have to use every second of it to train?" Lloyd asked, yet he was not the only one with complaints.

No one other than Hime, Roderick, and apparently Veronica had seen the schedule, causing many of them to widen their eyes in surprise, while one seemed to have the most to complain about.

"There is no way in hell I'm going to train this walker-looking brat." Felix roared.

"There will be no discussion when it comes to this schedule. It has already been made with the thought of Lloyd being behind us in the commandment; therefore, we will need to train him harder than he had ever been trained before." Hime explained.

"Can't someone else train him?!" Felix shouted.

"No. Since your racial abilities and your genetic dysfunction have forced you to hone your senses and instincts past anything any of us could reach, you would be the best person to teach him that." Hime explained before looking at the schedule again.

"The training regiment is split into seven different six-hour regiments. Felix will start Lloyd off first by training him to hone his instincts, reflexes, and awareness for 6 hours

before the training is passed on to me, who will teach him the art of beast fighting." Hime read aloud, yet the last part of her sentence made even Roderick raise a brow.

"You said you would teach him how to fight against beasts. Are you sure you want to teach him your races martial art?" He asked.

"Its fine." She waved Roderick's concerns off before continuing-

"Rex will teach him human martial arts and the basics of fighting, Lachlan will train him in using his shadow abilities, Veronica will teach him whatever she thinks is necessary at the time." A huge smile appeared on her face, causing a shiver to go down Lloyd's spine.

"Finally, Tina will teach him elemental magics, cultivation, and ways to improve his use of his elemental abilities. This will spill over into the day, where Roderick will take over and teach him about scenario strategies and basic probabilities." Hime finished explaining before looking Lloyd in the eye and smiling.

"Good luck."

Feeling agitated when remembering Hime's smile, Lloyd folded his arms and waited for Felix to stop sulking and actually begin training him.

Little did he know, the training had already begun.

Swoosh

"Huh." An audible sound came out of Lloyd's mouth before the hairs at the back of his neck stood up.

Without a second's thought, Lloyd raised his arm to block the attack that he had assumed was coming from his right based on the sound of the wind being parted, yet he found himself quickly corrected.

"Just because it sounds like I'm coming from your right-" A voice entered Lloyd's right ear.

"Doesn't mean that I am actually there." Lloyd's eyes widened in disbelief as the sound now came from his left, yet before he could react in time to the attack he knew was coming, a foot entered his line of sight before smashing into his face and sending him several meters away before regaining his balance.

Felix landed gracefully with a deep frown etched on his face before sneering at Lloyd.

"You are much worse than I thought you were. No wonder you lost against that elk-looking monster from before." He sneered again.

"It was an entire commandment above me." Lloyd argued with a tone of complaint in his voice, yet Felix was having none of it.

"Yes, it might have been an entire commandment above you, but is that really a reason to have lost so badly against it?" Felix spat.

"Yes... Also, I put up a pretty good fight if I say so-" Yet before Lloyd could finish his sentence, he watched Felix's body flicker for a moment before completely disappearing from sight.

However, just a moment later, Lloyd felt a foot slam into his back, sending him a couple of meters away before, but instead of allowing Lloyd to regain his balance, this time Felix appeared above Lloyd and slammed his foot onto Lloyd's back once again, consequently smashing Lloyd into the ground as Felix stood above him with one foot on his back.

"Yes, you are pretty strong for someone who hasn't reached the first commandment yet, but do you really think that you are the first person to have reached the power and skill that you show?

You were born lucky to have such a powerful awakening, but other than that, you are pretty weak." Felix sneered before taking his foot off Lloyd's back and slamming it into his side, shooting him across the grass field.

"But despite your luck with awakening, you are still plenty weak. I've seen people with pseudo-mythic classes at the same stage of cultivation as you, capable of defeating Peak Topaz stage Second Commandments with ease."

"Yet you seem to have two different affinities, a plethora of abilities with some being more versatile than others, two parents in the military who are both Generals, more than one passive, an aura that can send a shiver down every first commandment's spines, yet you are incapable of measuring to even a fraction of their power."

Lloyd felt Felix's powerful glare fixate on him, yet instead of cowering like most at his stage would have, he stood up and looked into Felix's eyes with a pair of unblinking violet eyes filled with scrutiny and sparks of rage.

'If I could use my Void Walker abilities in front of you guys, you wouldn't even be standing here.' Lloyd thought before closing his eyes and calming the rageful storm that was brewing within him.

Swoosh

Yet before he could do that, he felt Felix's foot smash into his chin, giving him an uppercut so powerful that his feet left the ground and levitated multiple meters of it for several seconds.

"If that wasn't enough, despite clearly having wielded a sword for your whole life, you don't have a single shred of environmental awareness." Felix spoke as he appeared at Lloyd's side before slamming his foot into where Lloyd's liver would have been if he was not a void walker.

Nevertheless, Lloyd was sent straight into the ground, kicking up a dust cloud so large that it was nearly impossible to see him embedded in the ground with a large crater surrounding him.

Barely getting up from where he lay, Lloyd touched the area he had been kicked in just to find cracks spreading out from it.

While gritting his teeth, Lloyd contemplated using [4-Dimensional Thought], but after recalling the headache he had suffered the last time he used it, the fact that he still had 6 sessions left, and the fact that this was training, not fighting, he shook his head and tried to overcome the problem using his natural intelligence rather than his ability.

'I could figure out his attack pattern, but that isn't the point of this training... I need to form my instincts and create an environmental awareness capable of allowing me to sense attacks and react within an instant.'

However, despite Lloyd's thought process, he could not help but see a pattern in Felix's attacks, and it was the fact that he purely used on his legs to attack.

'Feels like a form of taekwondo, maybe? It's as if he took a martial art that mainly used his legs and adapted it to his speed.' Lloyd thought to himself before looking Felix up and down through the smoke.

'No... What am I thinking.' Lloyd face-palmed, yet the image of Felix's veins moving around and morphing into blood-red runes remained in his mind.

However, before he could shake off the memory, something else helped him do so as a speed foot shot through the dust cloud and slammed into Lloyd's face, hitting him across the field once again.

This one-sided beating continued for three more hours, and just when Lloyd was about to use his flames out of anger and frustration at the fact that he was struggling to even

touch Felix, let alone hit him, Felix suddenly stopped in his place before landing gracefully.

"Alright. Now that I've released most of my frustrations, let's get to the actual training." Felix stretched with a wry smile on his face.

'This bastard...!' A twisted expression appeared on Lloyd's face, but he was quickly able to hide most of it... Well, everything except the vein that was bulging from his forehead.

"Sit down right here." Felix pointed at a spot in the field of mostly destroyed orange grass before flickering and appearing almost 10 meters away.

Lloyd did as he was told, but for some reason, he felt like he would regret doing so. As if his future selves were shouting at him to not start this journey since it would only end in an endless misery of painful training.

Before Lloyd could react to the sudden gust of wind that hit his face, he saw something cover his eyes.

"What is this?" Lloyd asked with a weirdly calm voice.

"A blindfold." Felix answered simply.

"Why?" Lloyd knitted his brows.

"It's part of the training. Don't worry about it too much." Felix spoke normally, but Lloyd could not help but feel like there was a large smile on his face, one that stretched from ear to ear.

"The way I trained my senses was simple. There are three stages to this training.

The first stage of your training will train 3 of your 5 basic senses. Sound, smell, and touch. By blindfolding you, I've robbed you of the sense that you rely on most and force your body to enhance every other sense.

The second stage of your training will force your body into allowing you to sense mana, and the third stage will force your body to rely on your very soul to sense other people's auras.

I know that mana and aura sound the same, but they are fundamentally different, especially when it comes to sensing things. Think of them as both being either your right hand or left hand. Assuming your right handed, mana sense is your right hand. You were born with it, and instinctually throughout the first few years of your life, you found yourself using it more often until you've mastered doing everything with it.

Aura sense, on the other hand, is your left arm. You were also born with it, but for some reason, it has always been the weaker arm. Of course, you can train it so it can reach the same stage as the right arm, but your right arm will always be the superior one in everything you do."

"..."

"What?" Felix asked after seeing Lloyd's agape mouth.

"That's a surprisingly good analogy." Lloyd replied.

"Surprisingly?" Felix raised a brow before a frown appeared on his face.

"Are you calling me stupid?"

"Well, I always assumed that you were the least intelligent person in this team."

"..."

"..."

"Anyway..." Felix smiled while a shudder went down Lloyd's spine, and within the same instant, he understood why.

thud

A small thud could be heard as a pebble-sized rock smacked onto Lloyd's forehead with enough power to make his head lean back.

"Let your training begin."

"Are you sure you want to have him trained?" A voice echoed within a room with two figures sitting down at a small round table. Rather than sit across from the woman, the male with black hair sat beside her, so that they didn't have to look each other in the eyes, but to where they could both turn 45 degrees to do so.

"Yes..." The woman replied with a one-word answer, yet her cat-like ears twitched for a moment, making the man narrowed his eyes.

"There is a chance that he might be one of them. He has all the characteristics of one, the only thing left for us to see is his race's energy and abilities. Are you really willing to strengthen a monster like that?" Roderick asked.

"The chances are extremely are extremely thin. You know how unlikely it is for one of them to pass all the scanning devices... Hell, after the war, the united government put so many scanning devices that they probably don't know where half of them are if they aren't activated. They literally cannot awaken without being caught." Hime explained before continuing.

"And you said it yourself. He is the child of two generals. Humans can't give birth to void walkers, and if he was replaced or turned into a void walker, I doubt that two generals wouldn't be capable of seeing past a measly half-step first commandment's swapping game."

"You saw the cracks."

"I did, and they don't mean much. Several Mythic and Celestial classes are capable of completely changing someone's anatomy. You know that better than anyone here, and you've seen how it can mess with someone's head.

To not be accepted by their own race, nor the race they had transformed into." Hime glared at Roderick, making him seal his mouth for a few minutes.

The sound of metal and glass clattering as they both ate their food in silence echoed throughout the tent, yet before Hime could finish her food and return the plate to the dining hall tent, Roderick spoke up once more.

"And what if he is a void walker... What if, in a life-and-death battle, he is forced to show his true colors and uses his void walker abilities. What then?" Roderick questioned while glancing at Hime, who was on her way to leave the tent.

Pausing, he turned just enough to side-glance and look into Roderick's eyes.

"Then, and only then, will I kill him myself."