

# The Walker Of Voids

## Chapter 81: Never Truly You [2] - The Proposition

"What are you?" Lloyd asked, his trembling body finally gaining the power and courage to speak.

"You tell me." The creature spoke as it continued to morph, causing its feature to slowly move from being slender and tall to have a more defined body.

Its voice was becoming more human, yet it still sounded dark, gloomy, and deep.

Its voice was monotone and emotionless, yet Lloyd didn't know if that was because of its disorienting voice or because it chose to speak that way.

"Are you my shadow?" Lloyd asked with narrow eyes and a voice that would have seemed calm if not for the tremble in it.

"Hahahahahahaha!" The creature began laughing, its laugh becoming increasingly human as time passed, yet at the same time, it became less and less human in its own way. While its skin slowly became moved from being a clump of shadows to actual skin, its voice gained tone, yet the only tone the creature used was that of a dead and emotionless laugh.

It was almost robotic.

It was slowly covered in black clothing, and within a few seconds, Lloyd finally realized what was happening.

It was like looking at a clone of himself.

The creature before him was the exact same as him, wearing the exact same clothes as him and having the exact same facial structure and skin tone as him.

Lloyd didn't need to ask who the creature before him was, because Lloyd knew deep inside that-

"..."

"..."

The creature tapped on his wristwatch and took out a mask, yet Lloyd knew there was no point despite its insistence on wearing it.

The creature before him never smiled... No. It never showed any emotion, whether excitement or rage; it always seemed bored, with its deadpan expression never fading.

"I shattered my arm when I tried moving my energy to it... Do you know how I can fix it?" Lloyd asked.

"You speak like an imbecile, so it is no surprise to me that you cannot control something that is essentially a third arm."

"There was no need for that..."

"I can easily fix our arm if I so wished to do so." The creature spoke, yet to Lloyd, it seemed more like a brag and a slight insult toward him.

"So... Do it!" Lloyd stretched out his arms without looking at them. He didn't want to see the things beyond his skin... It was simply something he was not ready for.

"Let me clarify. I was not offering to repair our arm; I was simply stating a fact." The creature clarified.

"What do you want then?" Lloyd asked, yet it was then that something came to his mind, instantly making him scowl.

"I do not wish to fight these weaklings. You, your teammates, and these monsters have all been disappointments. That black-haired girl interests me, and I'm interested in the boss of this dungeon, so I have a proposition for you..." The creature spoke.

"What is it?" Lloyd asked, his voice no longer shivering.

"I'll heal you, and I'll teach you how to strengthen your body before entering the first commandment, and I will insert information on how to control the void energy inside you." The creature said, its voice sounding a little mischievous despite its dead tone.

"And? What do you get out of this?"

"Do not break through until you reach the boss of this dungeon."

"Is that it?" Lloyd almost sighed in relief, yet he quickly found that sigh stuck in his throat when it continued-

" ... "

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"Shit. The bastard just disappeared." Felix grunted as he dodged all the owls that came towards him.

According to Roderick, Felix was a part of a race of speedsters capable of shifting around their veins to create rune-like patterns that enhance their skin and muscles, allowing them to exert their racial ability to move extremely fast.

Apparently, Felix's race was the fastest in the universe and came from ancestors that could literally rip through space and time with their speed alone.

The Tachymos race [Pronounced Ta-hee-mos from the greek words tachytis and chlomos] were also naturally faster than every other race from birth. This makes them very easy to irritate and a lot less patient than any of the other races, mainly because they everything the other races do seems slow to them.

Felix's body flickered continually, allowing it to appear behind one of the owls and hit them, before disappearing again and continuing the cycle.

However, Hime seemed to enjoy manhandling the owls instead, by immediately lunging at them whenever she felt one of them enter the battle aura's radius, making it nearly impossible for them to catch her off guard.

Rex did practically the same thing, yet instead of manhandling his enemies, he would coat his body with an extremely dense form of Hime's battle aura before coating his hands with mana and attacking the owls with a mixture of most of the martial arts he knew.

The mana around his hands would act like weapons of their own, controlled by his battle aura to shoot into an owl's body and decimate it from within whenever Rex chose to do so. At the same time, it also looked like the battle aura was somehow strengthening Rex's body and making every one of his strikes stronger than the last.

It was almost as if he was sapping energy away from his victims to temporarily boost his strength, yet despite many of the people on his team, including Hime, asking how he does it, he had always refused to answer.

On the other hand, Tina and Roderick were simply supporting the rest of the team, yet Roderick found himself doing most of the support work when he saw that Tina was slightly off her game.

'It makes sense... She's never truly gotten close enough with someone to be worried about their disappearance, and now that Lloyd had fucked off to wherever he is now,

she's worried.' Roderick sighed while shooting several arrows at 3 of the incoming owls, hitting every single one of them in vital or crucial areas before they were subsequently lit afire by one of Tina's spells.

Veronica, on the other hand, was single-handedly destroying the strongest owl, to the point where the owl was forced to mainly defend rather than their usual all-out aggression tactic.

The way she twirled, ducked, stabbed, and swung with her sword had the aggression of a bull yet the grace of a ballerina.

She always found a way to corner the owl with her unpredictable yet graceful movements, while the flow behind her attacks made every attack stronger than the last, to the point where she didn't even have to use any of her abilities.

\*Swoosh\*

Suddenly, the sky slightly darkened as clouds blocked off the sun, and in the same instant, the winds began to pick up to a noticeable extent.

\*Sching\*

\*BOOM\*

Before they could adjust to the sudden change in lighting, wind strength, and temperature, a low screech entered their ears a large figure shot to the ground like a meteor, creating a loud explosion while kicking up a dust cloud in its wake.

"Is that-?"

But before Tina could finish her sentence, they all saw something magnificent. Something that would have made most freeze, not out of fear, but at the sheer beauty of it.

[Flame Control (Lvl 2--->3)]

[Blazing shower]

Pale blue flames formed in the air before spinning into a vortex and turning into a small spherical ball of flames.

As if the clouds had begun raining laser beams, blue lights shot down from the sky and almost created an aurora-like spectrum of lights that danced in the sky.

But all it took was a second for the amazing display to turn into a scene of bloodied rain and scorched bodies.

## Chapter 82: Mutation [1] - Shadow Owl Mutation

Since Lloyd knew that any of the owls above peak first commandment wouldn't be hurt by his attack, he closed his eyes and felt his surroundings.

He could feel everything, from the trees that brushed one another to the presence of the owls in the sky alongside him. Yet, he quickly blocked everything out before focusing on the owls and his flame bullets.

With flames coming out of his feet and back to keep him floating, Lloyd opened his eyes with the utmost concentration, and with a thrust of his arms and clenching his open palms into a fist, he split all the flaming bullets into 15 groups, shooting them all at the weakest owls and barraging them with a rain of flames.

**\*BOOM, BOOM, BOOM\***

The sound of explosions filled the air as Lloyd's bullets ripped through the owls, creating clouds of smoke and burning feathers that made it impossible for the group to see what was going on.

When he finally stopped shooting, Lloyd took a moment to observe his work before noticing something peculiar.

All the owls on the weaker side had turned into carcasses, while all the stronger owls remained unscathed since Lloyd was not aiming for them.

"Well, that used a crap ton of mana..." Lloyd muttered in disbelief before suddenly being pulled back into reality when he felt a gust of wind almost freeze him in place.

He wanted to move, yet before he could do anything, he felt an intense aura coming from one of the stronger owls, causing him to close his eyes so he wouldn't be affected by its presence.

When he opened them again, he noticed that the owl had grown darker, almost like a shadow that seemed to quiver with its every movement.

Lloyd couldn't determine its exact type, yet he could tell it wasn't an ordinary owl. While it wasn't as strong as the stronger owls that the rest of the group was fighting, the thing before him was growing in strength at a tremendous rate... Which could only mean one thing.

"A mutation?" Lloyd asked himself, yet before he could try to get answers, the answers came to him in the form of a dark spear appearing mere inches from his face, giving him less than half a second to dodge the attack.

"Weren't shadows supposed to be the slowest element," Lloyd asked himself with a grunt as the spear cut his cheek, yet the excitement in his voice could not be faked despite wanting to sound angry.

'I could get a new shadow ability.' He thought as a smile threatened to extend from the corners of his lips.

But before Lloyd could give it more thought, he saw several figures shooting toward the owl like arrows, distracting it and drawing its attention away from Lloyd.

It was then that the others arrived, and the fight began anew, yet despite them seeming like they wanted to support him, he could not help but feel slightly agitated by the disruption.

'Don't they have their own fights?' Lloyd thought while staring at Tina and Roderick with a slight frown. Little did he know that, due to them both being mid to late Topaz seals in the second commandment, their senses had improved enough for them to see Lloyd's unsatisfied frown.

"Stop attacking it." Roderick shouted.

"What? Did you hit your head or something. Lloyd probably used all his mana on that attack, so not only is he much weaker than that thing, he is also not equipped to fight it!" Felix shouted back.

"Is that worry I sense in your voice?" Roderick teased.

"YES! I am worried that the only intelligent person in your group will die, and you assholes are just gonna watch!" Felix retorted, making Roderick chuckle.

"We hold off for now. If you see Lloyd struggling against the mutant one, I want you to help him." Hime commanded, instantly ending the argument where it stood.

Seeing that no one was going to help him, an uncontrolled grin appeared on his face. The same one that appeared the first time he was going to fight one of the owls.

'Hopefully, this time I actually get to fight these monsters rather than being pulled into my own shadow as an unsuspecting victim of that thing...' Lloyd thought, unwilling to call the creature he saw by its actual name... Or at least the name he gave it.

Seeing the creature flying towards him, Lloyd turned off the flames and allowed himself to fall towards the ground, yet he was not without a plan.

As he closed in on the ground, the owl closed its wings and perched towards him, the shadows around its body flickering wildly as its piercing blue eyes stared at him like a hawk.

The owl was closing in fast, yet Lloyd was closer to the ground than he was to it. However, when the owl had come extremely close to getting him, it was already too late.

[Shadow Movement]

Suddenly, Lloyd's body sunk into the ground the moment he hit it, and despite the owl's attempt to slow itself by opening its wings, its momentum was far too high for it to stop immediately.

However, just before Lloyd could move away from his shadow, leave it and kill the creature to cement his victory, the sound of something entering a murky and thick water entered his ears, and when he looked around, he understood what it was.

"Since when could shadow users also enter my shadow!" Lloyd muttered before trying to take out his katana.

'It's not here!?' Lloyd inwardly screamed before remembering that he had dropped it when his arms began to crack.

With a loud screech, the owl shot toward's Lloyd at amazing speeds, but despite the owl's amazing increase in strength, it wasn't the only one who had reached a new level of strength that day.

[Shadow Enhancement]

Covering himself in shadows as well, Lloyd took the creature before his head, speeding towards it by creating flames behind him that allowed him to accelerate faster than his body would have been capable of, even with the help of [Shadow Enhancement]

Shooting towards it, Lloyd readied his fist and sent out a powerful punch, yet the owl, being stronger than him, easily clashed with his punch and sent him tumbling for a few meters.

Surprisingly, however, it was not only Lloyd who was pushed back, but it was also the owl being forced back several meters.

Finding his balance, Lloyd continued to slide for a few more seconds, but this time he had placed his hand on the ground while fueling it with mana.

\*SCREECH\*

The owl immediately flapped its wings and shot towards Lloyd, yet when it reached him, a shiver went down its spine before the grin on Lloyd's face was thoroughly imprinted in its mind. After all, it was the last thing it saw before pale blue flames burst out of the ground, swallowing its entire vision and shooting it out of his shadow.

## Chapter 83: Mutation [2] - Level Up

[HUGE thank you to Daoist4bMk5P, Zackary\_Davis, and Mattirro for being my biggest golden ticket supporters!]

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"Lloyd!" Tina shouted as she saw the black-haired man standing in the middle of a foggy field composed of pale blue flames. However, just when she was about to run over to see if he was okay, she felt Roderick's arms wrap around her waist as he pulled her away from an incoming talon before throwing her down to the ground.

Placing an arrow onto the device on his wrist, Roderick quickly aimed at the creature before shooting at it until it fell, and when he finally confirmed that it was dead, he turned around with a cold expression.

"I said stand down. He wants to handle this on his own. We only help him when he's in danger." Roderick spoke.

"But, he was in the shadow the whole time. How were we supposed to know if he was in danger?" Tina asked, yet she quickly quieted down after seeing Hime stare at her from the corner of her eye.

While the owl had left Lloyd's shadow looking like a fireball, Lloyd knew that the shadows most likely tanked most of the flames, but there was also a chance that the flames had hurt it.



Looking up from the blue flames encircling where he stood, he squinted into the distance. However, he quickly realized that there was no need for that.

While the owl was no longer covered in shadows to make it appear to look black, Lloyd quickly realized that its mutation had also changed the color of its feathers, making it look more like a stealthy ninja owl than it had before with its half-translucent white wings.

"Huh?" Raising a brow, Lloyd squinted again to see why the owl had suddenly stretched out its wings, yet in the same instant, he felt panic jolt to his stomach as a shower of arrows made out of shadows shot toward him.

'I can block it with the flames... Or at least delay it until I have time to move away.' Lloyd thought.

Just before the arrows could hit him, Lloyd released a large sphere of flames that stopped them and even managed to completely burn one or two of them away.

With the help of the flames, he quickly accelerated and flew toward the owl, dodging the shadow arrows while the pale blue flames on his feet shot him upwards.

"Bring it bitch!" Lloyd shouted before launching a powerful punch covered in shadows toward the owl. The second the punch made contact, the creature was thrown back several meters and slammed into a tree, resulting in a loud \*CRACK\* that echoed through the forest.

Before it could recover, Lloyd shot a kick toward its head and followed up with a series of punches, leaving it dazed and unable to stand much longer. Knowing what it would do if it regained its composure, Lloyd shot both hands forward and engulfed the owl in a pillar of flames.

The pillar of flames burned the owl's body until all of the remaining shadows on its body disappeared, and its feathers began to burn, yet it continued to increase in strength, forcing Lloyd to jump several meters away since he was running low on mana.

Suddenly, a surge of mana shot in every direction as the owl advanced to half-step second commandment, sending gusts of winds through the forest while causing all the small fights to halt for a moment as everyone looked at Lloyd and the ascending monster before him.

The horse-sized black owl monster advanced toward him, and a sense of anticipation and thrill filled the air. The creature was formidable and cunning, Lloyd could see it in its eyes, and he knew he wouldn't be able to hold back even if he wanted to.

Of course, he wasn't about to use his Void Walker abilities, but he would have to use everything else.

'Half-step second commandment? At this rate, it will reach the second commandment within a few minutes. Maybe this wasn't a mutation... Maybe it was an evolution?' Lloyd inwardly analyzed while glancing toward his group. He didn't know what he expected, but he could tell you that he didn't expect to see them staring at him like hawks, analyzing his every move.

On the other hand, Hime looked like she was ready to kill the owl the moment she saw him close to being in danger.

The difference between a Topaz stage second commandment and a half step was like the difference between night and day, so Lloyd didn't doubt that she had the ability to kill the owl with a single attack if she truly wanted to.

Shaking his head, Lloyd took two blades out of his dimensional storage, ready for the fight ahead. The owl charged forward, its massive wings spreading wide as it attacked with its sharp talons. Lloyd dodged to the side, narrowly avoiding the owl's deadly strikes before spinning on his heel and swinging his blades toward it.

His weapons sliced through the air with precision and speed, and despite reacting in time to move away from the attack, Lloyd also predicted that it would try to dodge.

The owl screeched in pain and fury, its feathers flying everywhere as it tried to defend itself, yet it was too late. Or so Lloyd thought.

Lloyd's sword clashed against the owl's stomach, yet instead of seeing red like he had expected, all he saw were sparks followed by the sound of metal hitting metal.

'Sh\*t... Its feathers are as strong as my blade even without its shadow covering it...'  
Lloyd gritted his teeth.

The battle continued as the owl's powerful talons clashed with Lloyd's weapon. Lloyd struggled to keep up with the owl's quick movements and powerful attacks, but he refused to give up.

He knew that he had to push himself to defeat the owl, but he also knew that even if he tried using his flames, he would not be able to land a powerful attack again since he would have run out of mana.

[Shadow Enhancement]

Without thinking twice, Lloyd covered his body in shadows and began to fight with precision and speed that rivaled the owls. Yet unlike the owl, Lloyd had quick thinking to his side while the owl was just a stupid animal who would run away at the first sign of danger.

Lloyd's determination and skill began to pay off, and before he knew it, he started to gain the upper hand.

He knew that his attacks were much more powerful now that he had activated [Shadow Enhancement], but in a situation like this one, it wasn't his body or abilities that held him back; it was his weapon.

Gritting his teeth, Lloyd flipped away from the owl, creating two to three dozen meters of distance between the two.

To everyone's surprise, Lloyd slowly returned his blades to his dimensional storage before-

[Shadow Claw]

Lloyd's eyes shone brightly, and before the owl could react to the claws that ad seemed to have come out of nowhere, Lloyd had already shot forward with all the speed he could muster behind his legs.

Lloyd wasn't in any way proficient in using his claws.

It was one of the main reasons why he barely used them. Or at least that was the case before he began his lessons with Hime. Since his claws were sharper and stronger than his blades, he saw that using them would be the best course of action.

\*Clang\*

\*Clink\*

\*BOOM\*

Clashing with the owl's talons, Lloyd could feel that he could produce much more power with his claws than he could with his blades, yet at the same time, he felt as if using his claws was a much more dangerous approach than using his blades or even his katana.

Lloyd's katana gave less attack power, mainly due to its quality and grade, but that was not all. A katana was simply much less adaptable than claws attached to one's hands.

Lloyd could use them as gauntlets, claws, 10 razor-sharp needles, and much more, while a katana could only be used for slashing, defending, or parrying, even tho the latter would be much easier with European blades that have a hilt and two sides to cut from.

However, a katana's advantages were clear. It cut better than any other blade, and it had more reach than Lloyd's claws, allowing Lloyd to keep the creature at a distance at all times.

However, now that he had to get close and personal to attack his opponent, he needed to find other ways to defend himself.

The owl and Lloyd fought for several minutes as the owl continued to gain strength, but simultaneously continued to get hurt. While its powers increased over time, it still lost large amounts of blood every time Lloyd hit it wherever it was wounded.

They bounced in and out of the shadows, making it seem like a game of cat and mouse, but in this game, the mouse beat the cat before retreating. Lloyd mainly did it to show Roderick that he was listening to his lessons, but it also helped in its own way since the owl's anger was increasing, something everyone could see by the killing intent that was becoming thicker by the second.

After a while of fighting, an idea finally came to Lloyd's mind.

'I got it!' Lloyd thought while a sinister smile stretched across his lips.

Charging forward again, Lloyd stretched out his hand to strike the owl, yet instead of moving away, it chose to intercept with one talon and attack his face with the other.

Unfortunately for it, Lloyd wasn't actually aiming for the owl... He was aiming for the talon.

Grabbing the owl's leg, Lloyd used his body to its maximum output before swinging with everything he had and slamming the owl into the ground.

Seeing this as a moment of weakness, Lloyd focused his energy and unleashed his fire and lightning powers, engulfing the owl in flames while electrocuting it with all the electricity he could create.

The owl screeched in pain and fury, but it was too late.

Reeling his arm back, Lloyd's eyes shone with a hint of rage as his clawed hand descended toward the owl's heart, yet before it could fully reach it-

**\*SCREECH\***

Lloyd felt his face being stretched as the sound waves pushed him back, yet before he could fly too far away, the owl froze.

Lloyd, who had not used a single ounce of killing intent since the start of the fight, had suddenly released everything.

His killing intent flooded his part of the forest, and every creature that stood within it could not help but hold their breath for a moment as the killing intent intertwined itself in the powers of [Monarch's Aura].

After his lessons with Veronica, Lloyd's killing intent had skyrocketed in power. Every day he felt like he was going to die for 5 hours straight, but now that he was in a battle, he finally saw use to those hours of torture.

Flames slowly swirled before becoming a small pale blue sphere, and within an instant, the spheres ripped through the air and shot toward the owl with speeds that could probably put bullets to shame.

The owl also tried to create its own attacks, yet when Lloyd saw it expand its wings out, Lloyd closed his eyes before slamming his hand onto the ground.

'Use the flames as the material, and the shadows as the cement that holds it together.' he thought before opening his eyes and looking straight into the owl's pupils.

[Void Gaze]

[Fire + Shadow]

[Hede's chains - Lock Down]

Black and blue chains ripped out of the ground and wrapped around the already frozen owl, and before it could regain its composure and snap away from [Void Gaze] to even attempt to break the chain, several pale blue fiery bullets ripped through the air before appearing before it.

And in that very instant, dozens of flame bullets shot through the owl, destroying its wings, organs, and heart before entering its brain and melting in an instant.

\*Ding\*

Despite being exhausted, Lloyd looked down at his watch, and when he saw what he wanted to see, a smile appeared on his face, extending from ear to ear as a powerful surge of energy entered his body.

[Shadow Enhancement (Lvl 2 ----> 3)]

[Shadow Movement (Lvl 1 ----> 2)]

[Shadow Claw (Lvl 1 ----> 2)]

[You have 3 gained new abilities]

[Shadow Wings]

[Shadow Expansion]

[Shadow Arrows]

## Chapter 84: Epiphany? [1]

\*Ding\*

[Shadow Enhancement (Lvl 2 ----> 3)]

[Shadow Movement (Lvl 1 ----> 2)]

[Shadow Claw (Lvl 1 ----> 2)]

[You have 2 gained new abilities]

[Shadow Wings]

[Shadow Expansion]

Despite being exhausted, Lloyd looked down at his watch, and when he saw what he wanted to see, a smile appeared on his face, extending from ear to ear as a powerful surge of energy entered his body.

A smile plastered itself along Lloyd's face, yet before he could celebrate, he closed his eyes and entered his shadow once again.

'Just like he said...' Lloyd thought as he moved the energy within him to his legs, his torso, and the smallest amount to his arms.

Instantly, cracks began to appear all over his skin before pieces of it began to fall off. The pain was so excruciating that he wanted to tear out his eyes.

Yet despite all of this, Lloyd continued until a new layer of skin was revealed, and the moment it did, Lloyd opened his eyes and smiled. It might have taken several more minutes than he had expected, but he was happy with the results.

He felt more invigorated than ever before, while his body felt straight yet light simultaneously. He felt like he could crush a lump of coal into a diamond with his bare hands, but that was probably just a trick of the mind, created from an enormous increase in strength.

'I assume I must do that until my skin no longer cracks. But that also means that my body's strength is purely based on the strongest creatures I can kill. What happens if I just choose not to go above the first commandment?

Does my body continue to get stronger and stronger, or does it continue to get stronger until it is just as strong as my elemental and mana-based abilities?' Lloyd asked himself, yet since he knew he wouldn't be getting any answers any time soon, causing him to throw the thought to the back of his mind.

Leaving his shadow stronger and more healed than when he entered it, he was quickly forced to move to the side as a white owl perched toward him with its talons aimed toward his head.

'Peak first commandment? I shouldn't have too much trouble. Most of my mana is back and I'm completely healed. I should be able to kill it pretty easily.' Lloyd thought while activating [Shadow Enhancement], covering himself in shadows.

[Shadow Claw]

He moved forward, his movements increasing in speed and power with each step. His claws cut through the air like lightning; before the owl could even reach its head out, Lloyd had already slammed his foot into its chest.

The owl screeched in pain before crashing against a tree, yet before it could fly away, Lloyd shot a barrage of shadow arrows at it, knocking it down to the ground. He then leaped forward with great speed while covering himself in flames, and before the owl could swing one of its talons, Lloyd had already reached it.

Grabbing the owl's wings and legs, Lloyd grabbed onto its body with all his strength, causing the owl to screech loudly. Without giving it time to react, Lloyd began to spin as fast as he could while expanding his flames to their maximum output.

Within seconds, he had turned the owl into nothing more than ashes.

Leaving with a smile of satisfaction, Lloyd quickly looked over at his teammates just to be surprised at their shocked expressions as they watched the owl's ashes drop to the ground.

No more owls were attacking them anymore, and by the number of carcasses on the ground, Lloyd would have most likely been correct to assume that they had already killed a vast majority of the owls while the rest must have run away.

"What?" Lloyd asked with a tilt of the head when seeing his teammate's shocked expressions.

"We're just surprised..." Roderick spoke with an agape mouth, yet all he received with a raise of Lloyd's brow.

"That owl was at the peak of the first commandment, but you killed it so easily..." Tina said, her voice filled with disbelief.

Hearing Tina say it herself, everything clicked in Lloyd's mind, making him smile brightly before puffing out his chest and saying-

"I know right!"

"How did you do it? One minute you were struggling with mutating owl. Hell, you were beaten till cracks appeared on your skin, but now you're completely fine and somehow killed a peak first commandment without breaking a sweat?" Hime asked, her voice laced with suspicion.

Lloyd knew that many of them most likely thought there was a chance of him being a void walker, but unlike the first day he had met them, they didn't allow their suspicion to change their view of Lloyd.

The chances were extremely low. Void walkers were a race. They couldn't be birthed out of thin air. Its impossible. Humans can't become void walkers, and the same thing could be said the other way around.

The only way such a thing could occur is only if-

'Wait... I became a void walker because of my class, but that could only happen if I already had dormant void walker genes in me...' Lloyd inwardly thought while keeping his outward smile.

However, before he could go down the rabbit hole that is his family tree, he answered the question everyone was clearly thinking.

"I had an epiphany." Lloyd announced, this time even making some of them gasp while the rest widened their eyes in complete shock.

"You had an epiphany?! Really?" Veronica's voice caught Lloyd's attention, making him turn around just to see Veronica in all her beauty.



Her voice was filled with excitement, but even Lloyd wasn't sure if she was excited for him or if she was excited because she could meet someone who had an epiphany.

'I could have sworn that she was never this attractive... Maybe I'm going crazy.' Lloyd nodded to himself since it was the most plausible conclusion he could think of for his sudden attraction toward the vampire.

Of course, she could have used an ability on him that would make him more attractive, but he doubted that she would do that. What could she gain from making someone like him attracted to her?

"Yeah, I did." Lloyd gave her a thumbs up with a cheery voice.

"Wait, is that why you disappeared?" Felix asked with a slight frown.

"Yep." Lloyd nodded

An epiphany. While it can be used in many contexts, for most awakened individuals, it was the rare occurrence of reaching a new level of understanding, usually followed by adding new abilities, elements passives, or even the increase of talent.

It is a moment in time when someone's understanding of everything accelerates dramatically, allowing them to increase the comprehension of their element and possibly even break through to the next stage or commandment.

While Lloyd hadn't actually had an epiphany, it was the most plausible answer to explain his new abilities, his increase in strength, and his newfound ability to kill a mutated half-step second commandment all on his own.

"Don't epiphanies last for half an hour or more?" Rex tilted his head in curiosity.

"Yeah, and what's a better way to use my epiphany than to fight a mutated monster with the same abilities as me?" Lloyd asked, making some of them nod while the others simply shrugged.

On the other hand, Tina couldn't hold in any longer and dashed forward with all the speed she could muster before tackling Lloyd into a hug.

"You could have told us! I thought you were going to die!" She shouted as she buried her face into Lloyd's chest. However, before Lloyd could even try to comfort her, Hime's voice cut in, making him frown.

"Prove it."

"Prove what?" Lloyd raised a brow.

"Prove to me that you had an epiphany." She demanded as she stared at Lloyd with narrowed eyes.

"Isn't this a little too far. You yourself said that the chances are-" Roderick tried to argue, but Hime stopped him from speaking further by saying-

"Shut up."

Her words were laced with undeniable anger that no one truly understood, but instead of complaining or even arguing, Lloyd complied with her demands.

[Shadow Expansion]

Everyone watched as Lloyd's shadow expanded out from where he stood.

His shadow looked alive as it flickered and moved like a living being, yet instead of stopping there, Lloyd went further.

'I feel slower...!' Everyone thought when the shadows touched them, yet their vision was encased in darkness before they could test how slow they truly became.

[Swallow]

The entire team sunk into Lloyd's shadow, yet despite it seeming amazing, only Lachlan truly understood the accomplishment of Lloyd's 'epiphany.'

In reality, it was just a move that Lloyd thought of when he saw the shadow owl enter his shadow.

"This is what I call my shadow realm. Like it?" Lloyd asked with a chuckle.

"Well, actually, what we're accessing right now is called the shadow dimension.

I'll tell you more about it in our next lesson." Lachlan explained, making Lloyd blink a few times before shrugging and snapping his fingers again to force everyone out of his shadow.

"I have a few other abilities, like those arrows I created out of shadows that I basically stole from the shadow owl thing." Lloyd explained while everyone simply nodded.

After talking for a few more minutes, they all decided to move again.

The rest of the trip was not as eventful as the start, but it wasn't a secret that the monsters were beginning to increase in strength and amount the more they traveled.

Several hours went by in the blink of an eye, and before they knew it, the sun was beginning to set, forcing them to set camp for the night in the nearest clearing.

Hime had decided to give Lloyd a day off the next day since he had been working really hard all week, yet Lloyd had other plans.

As they all entered their tents to finally have a good night's sleep, Lloyd left his and began walking in a certain direction.

\*Ring\* \*Ring\*

Pressing the button in front of one of the tents, Lloyd heard the low chime of a bell go off inside before the sound of footsteps got closer to the door, making him tighten his fist while watching the curtain of the tent slowly open.

A pair of deep crimson eyes stared into his violet ones, before the prettiest smile Lloyd had seen in a while blossomed on the woman's face.

"Lloyd? What are you doing at my tent at such a late time?" Veronica asked with a sweet and almost seductive voice.

"..."

"..."

"What?" She asked.

"I need your help..."

## **Chapter 85: The Monarch Of The Autumn Forest [1]**

"I need your help..." Lloyd asked with a serious expression.

"On what?~" She asked with a cheeky smile on her face.

"Wow... I never knew you were such a pervert... Maybe I should ask someone else. At least then, I won't have to worry about being sexually harassed by a vampire in the middle of the night." Lloyd sighed before turning around.

However, before he could walk away, he felt a hand on his shoulder, stopping him from taking another step.

"Wait! I won't do anything! I promise!" She pleaded

"Nope." Lloyd tried to walk away, yet when he did, he couldn't help but feel like his legs were a little heavier than usual.

"Please! My life had been so boring. I've done nothing but fight weaklings since I came here. Make my life interesting!" She pleaded, yet this time she displayed a side of her filled with desperation that almost made Lloyd feel bad for her.

On the other hand, he would never be able to get the image of her clinging to his leg and fake crying out of his head.

"Sure, sure, whatever you want. Stop screaming like a widow with a recently deceased husband, and come with me. I can't have everyone waking up." Lloyd sighed.

"Oh no. What are you going to do with a maiden like me in the middle of the-"

"Say the word, and I'll send you to my shadow. Good luck finding a way out of there." Lloyd threatened, making her instantly seal her lips before making a zip motion, locking it, and throwing the key away.

While Veronica unironically thought that Lloyd would have taken her back to his tent, when they both left the protective bubble, she felt slightly suspicious of what they were doing. Of course, she still remained silent since Lloyd told her to, and even though she could have quite easily gotten out of Lloyd's shadow if she wanted to, she didn't want to get onto Lloyd's bad side.

Several monsters appeared on the way there, but since most of them were mid-stage first commandments or lower, Veronica did not have to do anything since Lloyd would instantly kill them by shooting a fire bullet through their brain, killing them all in an instant.

While the night was filled with powerful monsters that came in large amounts, this also meant that the weaker monsters would also come out simultaneously, creating a surplus of weaker monsters while also having a large amount of the stronger ones.

"Don't you want to sleep?" Veronica asked, completely forgetting about the seal she put on her lips.

"Not really. I have all the time in the world to sleep since I have tomorrow off, but for now, I want you to help me with something." Lloyd explained.

"What do you want me to help you with?" She asked.

"Well..." Lloyd thought for a moment, trying to think of a way to not tell the truth or at least bend it to a certain extent, yet when he turned around to look into Veronica's deep crimson eyes, most of his coherent thoughts went out of the window.

"I found this new way to cultivate. Whenever I kill a monster, I still have the energy inside the monster come into my body.

Then when I have a good amount of energy in me, I can divide it into different portions. Some of it is healing, some of it is used to replenish my mana pool, and the rest is used on each individual body part to strengthen the limb." Lloyd explained before frowning after realizing how much he had said.

"..." Veronica smiled brightly before stepping forward and tip-toeing to reach Lloyd's ear. Her stride was graceful, and the way she held her arms behind her back made her seem slightly dominant, yet at the same time, it felt like a way for her to puff out of her chest without making it obvious.

"I'm so glad you felt comfortable sharing your secret with me." She whispered, her breath tickling the back of Lloyd's ear while dyeing his face a new shade of pink.

They continued to walk for a few more minutes, and after walking for a while, they finally found themselves standing in front of what they could only describe as-

"Ooo! A bloodbath. How exciting!" Veronica squealed while Lloyd watched her do her thing while regretting the fact that he had brought her along.

"Looks like there was a battle here, and looking at how the orangy bears are the ones who are eating the bats, the bears were clearly superior despite their lower numbers." Lloyd analyzed.

"It looks like a few of them died. Look." Veronica pointed, making Lloyd turn his head to look at the pile of dead bears with a single bat standing them.

"I thought you said the bears won..." Veronica commented.

"Maybe they had a truce? Clearly, that bat is outnumbered... But-"

"It's stronger than bears on this side, who don't seem to have a leader anymore..." Veronica finished Lloyd's sentence off, making him raise a brow just for him to frown when he saw the proud smile on Veronica's face.

"Alright, you wanna kill them?" Veronica asked while tilting her head.

"Yeah. You're mainly here for support incase I almost die or something." Lloyd shrugged and stepped forward.

'The bat is half-step second commandment, and the bears are all peak first commandment... Alright, let's do this.' Lloyd thought while dashing toward the bat first.

[Presence Concealment]

[Shadow Enhancement]

\*BOOM\*

Before the bat could even react to him suddenly disappearing, Lloyd appeared in front of its head with his hand cocked back as mana surged to his arm.

His fist moved like lightning, and within an instant, it connected with the bat's head, sending it rolling several meters away.

'I could use my lightning, but it is nowhere are strong as my shadows or my flames...'  
Lloyd thought to himself before dashing forward, yet the bat was ready this time.

\*BOOM\*

\*BOOM\*

\*BOOM\*

Hearing the sound of two titans clashing, the bears tried to run away, yet the moment they did, they felt their bodies freeze in place, their muscles unwilling to move an inch despite trying their hardest.

[Blood Control - Motion Zero]

Veronica thought while holding her hand out and freezing the bears in place before looking back at where Lloyd was, watching his battle from the highest branch she could find in the area around them.

As the battle between Lloyd and the enormous bat raged on, the autumn forest leaves around them rustled and shook with the force of their blows. Lloyd's shadow powers were put to the test as he fought to defend himself against the bat's sharp claws and teeth.

The bat seemed to possess an almost unending supply of energy, its wings beating wildly as it tried to get the upper hand. Lloyd, however, was not one to be

underestimated. He summoned a series of shadow arrows and shot them at the bat, each one finding its mark and causing the bat to cry out in pain.

Despite the bat's strength, the unpredictable way that Lloyd used his shadow abilities slightly overwhelmed the bat.

With Lloyd's eyes glowing purple, Lloyd smiled before-

[Shadow Expand]

[Shadow Enhancement]

The size of his shadow increased, before the very same shadow wrapped around Lloyd's already shrouded body, boosting his own strength and allowing him to land powerful blows on the bat.

However, a problem was quickly becoming more and more apparent...

'That little shit is flying too high.' Lloyd thought with gritted teeth, but that's when he remembered that the bat wasn't the only thing that could fly.

[Shadow Wings]

Slowly, the shadows shrouding his entire body began to lessen slightly, yet they weren't dissipating... In fact, it was quite the opposite.

The shadows slowly thickened near Lloyd's back before they morphed and transformed into a pair of two large black wings, spanning three meters in wingspan.

The wings shifted and flickered like they were alive, while the aura they gave off was sinister enough for even Veronica to feel them despite being several dozen meters away.

"What in the world-" She muttered, yet the sound of a loud explosion cut in before she could finish her sentence.

\*BOOM\*

Lloyd was catapulted up by the sheer power behind his wings and his [Flame Control], instantly reaching the same altitude as the bat, who froze in place for a moment.

Yet a moment was all Lloyd needed.

Speeding forward with a trail of blue flames left behind him, Lloyd reached the bat instantly before raising the blades he had taken out of his storage since he had completely forgotten to retrieve his katana from when he had dropped it earlier.

Razor sharp, the blades covered in blue flames hovered menacingly near the bat before Lloyd swung them faster than a blink of an eye.

The bat quickly moved out of the way and tried to attack from a distance, yet it was all in vain as Lloyd managed to strike it repeatedly with his flurry of fiery swings.

Finally, Lloyd's blades hit their mark and sliced the bat in half with a loud [CRACK], its body thudding against the ground as its blood oozed out all around it.

'We're pretty high up, and at the state that my body is in, I could probably survive a fall like this, right?' Lloyd asked himself while looking down at the forest below him.

From his perspective, the trees looked like ants, and the slowly falling back only shrunk in size the further they dropped.

Lloyd, knew that it would most likely survive the fall, so without thinking twice, Lloyd crossed his blades over his shoulders before engulfing them in blue flames that slowly condensed over the blade, making it twice as large as before.

[Shadow Wing + Flame Control]

The shadowy feathers on Lloyd's wings lit aflame while the shadows shrouding his body condensed as if they were trying to brace Lloyd for the G-force that was about to him.

[Black Shooting Star]

Lloyd's wings flapped for the last time, the tips of his black feathers becoming light blue as they all acted like thrust engines.

Lloyd looked like a black and light blue star shooting down from the sky, and before he knew it, he had broken several sound barriers before he found himself in front of the bat.

With the bat under his foot with both of them shooting toward the ground at the highest speed possible, Lloyd finally swung his blades right before they hit the ground, an action that not only incinerated the bat, but also broke his fall and sent out two pale blue arches of flames out of his blades that shot out through the forest for several meters in each direction.

Lloyd landed gracefully on his feet as if he had been doing this since he was born while the last of his feathers dissipated into shadows before finally looking up at Veronica waiting for him on her branch.



\*Clap Clap Clap\*

"Well done... I'm actually pretty impressed." Veronica complimented, yet despite knowing Veronica for smiling around him all the time, for once, her smile actually seemed genuine... Something that weirdly warmed his none, existent heart.

## Chapter 86: The Monarch Of The Autumn Forest [2]

Weeks passed in the blink of an eye. Everything seemed to go by so quickly, as for the first time since having entered the dungeon, Lloyd actually felt like he was having fun with everyone.

They all knew that they were getting infinitely closer to the boss's lair, so they made as much of their time together matter.

Around the 4th week mark, Lloyd had his void walk, yet despite everything that had happened last time, he was in the void; nothing of real interest happened... Well, except for what happened when he entered the void.

\*\*\*

"Holy mother of shits..." Lloyd muttered as he stood in what looked like a complete wasteland.

Looking around for a moment, he saw a floating castle in the distance, and after looking at it, the position of the sun, as well as the faint aura around him, everything clicked in his mind...

"Wait, did I do this?" Lloyd asked himself, yet the answer to that question was obvious.

"Can't believe that I did all this for basically just lightning control..." Lloyd sighed before turning around and walking the other way.

While he could have activated [Shadow Wings] and flown to the castle, his instincts told him that he wasn't ready for whatever it stored, making him turn to other locations for easy targets.

6 hours went by pretty quickly, and in the end, Lloyd had fought nothing but cannon fodder, something he should have probably expected since he had taken to coward's route rather than going for the castle straight away.

"I feel Felix would really make fun of me if he ever found out about this... Good thing none of them know that I'm a void walker." Lloyd shrugged with a sly smile as he killed his last lightning wolf before being transported out of the void.

\*\*\*

While it had confused Lloyd slightly when he found himself in the void 2 weeks later than he had expected, it almost made sense to him in the end.

One week had passed in the outside world since his void walk, and 3 weeks and 2 days had passed in the dungeon despite dungeon days being a little over double the size of the outside world's time.

Of course, the only question to be asked in a situation like this would be, 'What would happen if I am in space.'

While Lloyd would have loved to know the answer to that question, he simply had absolutely no idea. How was time measured in space? Most humans measured time in seconds, while other species used things like rels or something else that Lloyd couldn't remember.

'You'd think that the united races would find a common unit of measure, but I guess not. Reminds me of that thing from a couple millennia ago where continents would fight over the internet over which measurement system was better.

It got really bad when the British tried to fuse the two together.' Lloyd chuckled before reading the book in his hand that he had borrowed from Tina.

It was one of the only 6 off days he had throughout the 1 and a half months he had been in the dungeon, which was basically the equivalent of three earth months.

"Oh, what the f... Really!? A cliff hanger! I went through so much suspense for a cliff hanger?! Are you crazy?!" Lloyd slammed the book down onto his table and quickly left his room in order to eat in the canteen for once.

"Oh? You're finally leaving your room?" Felix tapped Lloyd on the shoulder, yet instead of replying, Lloyd only grunted.

"You see me every day for a minimum of 20 hours. I am quite literally outside more than I am inside..." Lloyd snarled.

"It was a joke, man. Don't wake it too seriously." Felix laughed while slapping Lloyd on the back before asking-

"You going to the canteen?"

"Wow... Such intelligence. How did you figure out my destination without me even telling you? Does your race have some kind of psychic ability?" Lloyd asked in an almost dead voice and a deadpan expression.

"How was I supposed to know. You might have been going to Veronica's room. You, too, have been hanging out a little too much recently. Hey, you can tell me anything, bro! If you two are... You know..."

"Really?" Lloyd asked, his voice changing slightly as he turned his face away from Felix as if he was trying to hide his blush.

"Yes, bro! You can tell me anything. I will never tell a soul." Felix smiled widely while leaning in slightly so Lloyd could whisper in his ear.

"Anything?" Lloyd asked.

"Yes! Anything."

"Okay..." Lloyd leaned in slightly before whispering-

"Knock Knock."

"..."

"..."

"Who's there..." Felix answered with a slightly nervous expression.

"Mr. Mindyur"

"Mr. Mindyur who?"

"Mr. Mind your own business... Anyway, go harass someone who isn't me, please. Thanks." Lloyd thanked him before increasing his walking speed and entering the canteen before Felix could return to his senses.

When he entered the tent, Lloyd couldn't help but narrow his eyes at the fact that it was pitch black...

'Did my night vision stop working or something?' Lloyd asked himself while taking another step forward.

However, this time he felt a mana signature under his foot, making him looked own with a raised brow.

'A Rune?' Lloyd scratched his cheek before stepping away from the rune and looking up again.

He could finally see again, yet despite knowing that his eyes were working properly, he could not help but widen them as he looked at the display before him.

"Happy birthday!" Tina's voice entered his ears, yet Lloyd felt like his whole body had frozen in place for some reason.

Confetti fell on him from every direction as the entire team slowly appeared one by one.

"Wait? Is this for me?" Lloyd asked, slightly confused by what was happening, but after a moment of thought, a smile tugged at the corner of his lips.

"Yep. I know you were a little down because you couldn't celebrate your birthday with your family, so I did the next best thing." Tina smiled, a scene that made a warm and fuzzy feeling radiate from where his heart would have been.

"Thanks..." Lloyd muttered before pulling Tina into a hug, yet due to her being a lot shorter than Lloyd, she found her face forcefully buried in his chest. However, instead of moving away or struggling in embarrassment, she simply smiled and returned the hug.

Taking a step back from the smiling girl before him, Lloyd took a moment to look around.

The once bland, almost prison-like, canteen was filled with decorations. Balloons floated at the top of the tent, while several 'happy birthday' signs hung upon the walls.

Glitter could be seen covering half the tent while a surprisingly well-made cake with 17 protruded from the cake.

Sitting down at the end of the table, Lloyd could not help but think back to all the things that had happened over the month and a half. He remembered sitting in the exact same place he was right now, arguing with a once anger-prone Lachlan, who was probably just stressed.

"Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday dear Lloyd... Happy birthday to you!" They all sang as they circled around Lloyd, some of them singing with more excitement than others, yet Lloyd felt like they all meant it.

"Blow the candles and make a wish." Tina clapped excitedly, while Lloyd simply smiled and did as she told him.

"I don't really believe in this wishing crap, but I guess there is no harm done in me wishing for something." Lloyd scratched the back of his head before blowing out the candles.

'I wish we all get out of this alive.' Lloyd thought

The rest of the night felt a little fuzzy. No one drank, but for some reason, it felt like a weird and seizure-inducing dream.

"It's hard to believe that you went from barely being able to fight against a mid-stage first commandment to fighting early-stage first commandments in less than 7 weeks," Lachlan remarked before taking a bite out of the cake.

"Well, Lloyd and Tina have been working extremely hard recently. Tina also broke through to the late stage of the Topaz seal recently." Rex pointed out while also taking a bite from his cake.

"Well, I couldn't have done it without you idiots." Lloyd chuckled.

"Lloyd is literally the only person I know who compliments and insults us in the same sentence. We are your elders! Respect us!" Felix pointed his fork at Lloyd.

"Felix. Don't think I forgot about how you beat me up the first time we met. When I reach the second commandment, you can say bye bye to ever bullying me again." Lloyd chuckled.

"Hey! I thought we were cool now!" Felix went slightly pale.

"We are... Until I reach the second commandment. Then I'm going to beat your ass." Lloyd grinned while everyone laughed at the two's antics.

While everyone had grown closer over the last month and a half, the friendship between Lloyd and Felix was by far the most dramatic.

While they both started off despising one another, they grew closer over time.

They both began hanging out and sparring a little more than they usually did, and despite Lloyd's schedule making such a thing close to impossible, they still found the time in the day to do so.

They both knew they both had secrets the other didn't know, but it didn't matter. Not to them, anyway.

However, Lloyd's friendship with Tina was a lot stronger than everyone else's. Lloyd couldn't explain it, but it was as if something had clicked the moment they spoke to each other.

"Tina." Lloyd called to get her attention.

"What?" She asked.

"Thanks for th party." Lloyd smiled while Tina turned beet red.

"S-Sure. No problem. You would have done the same for me." She mumbled while twirling her hair around her finger.

"We have to give Tina credit. She really opened up over the last few months. Old her would have tried to do this all on her own, but this time she actually asked us for help." Hime complimented.

Seeing Tina becoming redder by the second, Lloyd raised his cup of juice and spoke-

"To Tina!"

"To Tina!" Everyone exclaimed while raising their cups.

Hours went by quickly, and before they all knew it, sunrise had come again, and they were all ready to depart.

"You know, I'm surprised that you guys haven't drunken yourselves to death yet." Lloyd smiled while remembering how Zack and his friends would drink till they blacked out.

"Yeah, it's against military code to drink inside dungeons. We were taught that anything can happen in a dungeon at any time, so we should always be ready for a fight if it comes out way." Hime explained.

"Makes sense." Lloyd nodded before the team fell into silence, yet rather than it being awkward like it usually would have been, this one was comforting.

They all trusted each other with their lives, and while some of them held secrets of their own that they might not want to share with the group, there was no doubt in any of their minds that every single one of them would take a bullet for the other.

After a while of walking, Lloyd and Felix found themselves at the back of the group, making Lloyd quickly think of one of the things that he had never had the chance to ask about.

"Hey, Felix..."

"What?" Felix tilted his head.

"The first time Hime talked about you, she said something about a problem you had which made you take on this insane training regiment that you make me go through every day... You don't have to answer, but-"

"Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you about that, huh... Well, I don't really care that much. I didn't trust you at the start, so I didn't want to tell you, but I guess that you are now my friend, you might as well know..." Felix chuckled before continuing.

"You see, my race, the tachimos race, as you might already know, has the racial ability to move extremely quickly. A toddler could crawl at a couple dozen miles an hour. Our skin is more tolerant to wind friction. And most important of all, our minds are perspectives are naturally faster than most if not all other races." Felix explained before a frown appeared on his face.

"I was born with a genetic defect that made my mind half as fast as all the others of my species, and while that made me think a lot faster than most other races, it became harder and harder for me to use my abilities without hurting myself the older I grew..."

So, instead of wallowing in what I couldn't have, I chose to train from the age of seven. Every day I dedicated my mind and body to giving myself intelligence to counter my slower thinking and reflexes to counter the fact that I can't see things as slowly as others of my race.

Of course, no matter how strong or how much I trained, other Tachimos didn't see me as one of them. Can you imagine being just abnormal enough to not be accepted by your own race, yet being too different from other races to be accepted by them?" Felix asked with a sad smile.

"But it's okay now..."

"Hm?" Lloyd raised a brow.

"Because I have you guys now... Ugh... I knew that sounded cheesy as it came out of my mouth." Felix stuck his tongue out in disgust while Lloyd simply chuckled beside him.

Yet, it was killing Lloyd. To not be able to tell anyone about who you truly are, despite loving them from the depths of his heart.

After hanging out with all of them for so long, Lloyd finally understood why comradery was stronger than friendship...

'What was the saying again? Know a friend for your whole life, and you can trust them till they break a promise... Fight alongside a friend, and you've made an ally for life...'  
Lloyd inwardly thought with a sad smile.

Hime was always uptight, yet she would show a soft side every now and then. It was almost like she was the caring mother of the group... Strict, but she did it for your own good.

Felix almost reminded Lloyd of Zack. They are hard to get along with at first, but when you break the outer shell, you get a brother that you can never let go of.

Lachlan almost felt like the group's dad. He lost his position as the leader, yet he matured and got over it quickly. Even without the title of leader, he might have become a better leader than he could have ever been.

Tina was naive and shy, yet she was the hardest worker Lloyd knew to date. She had a drive to her that would have made most gasp in awe. She was amazing in every way, and in Lloyd's perspective, she almost felt like the little sister he never had.

'Gotta make sure my little sister doesn't ever hear of what I just thought.' Lloyd inwardly thought.

Rex made Lloyd feel comfortable wherever he was, while Roderick felt like an older brother to Lloyd. Lloyd could always ask for his advice, and it helped that they were both quite intelligent.

Veronica though...

'I guess she supportive. She helps me out every time I have an off day so I guess that's-

"Guys..." A voice snapped Lloyd out of his thought process, and when he looked forward.

"Is that what I think it is," Rex asked with a shocked expression.

"OH SHIT! WE FOUND IT!" Lloyd exclaimed with excitement.

"WE FOUND THE BOSS'S LAIR!"

## **Chapter 87: The Monarch Of The Autumn Forest [3] - Family**

Everyone saw it. The scene of a palace in the distance, standing tall amongst the autumn trees.



The sight was magnificent, yet at the same time, it was terrifying. Lloyd had a bad feeling about whatever lay inside that palace; in a way, what the palace symbolized felt a little more heart-wrenching.

That palace represented the end of their journeys together. It represented the moment they would split off and looking at how the army operates, it was very unlikely that Lloyd would ever see them again.

However, Lloyd was not the only one who thought this way.

Tina watched everyone smile around her, and despite wanting to also smile, she knew that whatever she had outside this dungeon was in no way better than what she had with Lloyd.

"Are you happy? You finally get to see your parents and siblings again. You must be dying to see them, right?" Tina asked after walking to the back when everyone started walking again.

"To be honest, I do miss them, but I'm also a little sad," Lloyd replied

Widening her eyes slightly, Tina asked, "Why? I'm sure you'll see us again."

"We both know that is unlikely. You know how the military works... They send you wherever they want. I'm probably not going to see you guys in a long time... I'm almost certain that none of you knew each other before this mission, and the same will happen over and over again." Lloyd smiled solemnly, but it was quickly replaced by a look of determination.

"But Felix said it best... That's okay. We don't need to see each other. Hey, bet I'm gonna hear all about you in the news soon." Lloyd chuckled

"..."

"..."

\*Tap tap tap\*

\*... ..\*

"Lloyd..."

"Yeah?" Lloyd answered

"I want to be a teacher."

"Really? Nice! W-"

"Wait, just listen, please..." Tina pleaded while cutting off Lloyd's encouraging words.

"You know, behind those walls, anything could happen. There could be treasures, or there could be corpses... I have faith that we can get out of there alive, but if we don't...

If we don't, then I want you to know that I love you..." Tina spoke, her heart beating so hard that Lloyd could hear it outside her house.

"..."

"You don't have to say anything. I don't expect you to reciprocate those feelings either... I just needed you to know that... I needed you to know in case we don't make it out of there." She turned toward Lloyd with a beaming smile on her face.

'I mean... She's only like 3 years older than me? I pretty much look and act like an adult, so I don't blame her.' Lloyd thought before reciprocating her smile.

"Thank you..."

"Hm?" Tina looked a little confused.

"I'm honored. To have the smartest girl I know fall in love with me. Man I must have had an amazing glow up in recent years." Lloyd chuckled, making Tina also begin to laugh.

"Don't get cocky. I've seen men a 100 times more attractive than you!" She declared while crossing her arms, yet despite trying her best, she couldn't keep a straight face and immediately began giggling like a little girl.

This went on for a while, to the point where the rest of the group started to feel like something was wrong with both Tina's and Lloyd's minds.

"Maybe they snapped after finding out how close we are," Felix whispered to Veronica.

"Doubt it. Lloyd's mind probably snapped due to all the torture I've been putting him through." She chuckled.

"I always felt like you were going a little too far... I just never knew how to tell you without being beaten up." Felix commented.

"Well, even if he hates me, at least he's no longer a wimp who cried over a bee sting anymore. I've made him a pain resistant man! As you can see, I am extremely proud of my creation." Veronica grinned while a shudder went down Felix's spine as he inwardly prayed for Lloyd.

Hours passed by, and even though the palace seemed close at first, it was only the perspective that made it seem that way.

The palace was enormous, yet in a way, it felt out of place.

A black palace covered his vines and webs of cracks.

'Grey would have made more sense.' Lloyd thought while imagining what a grey castle would look like.

"You nervous?" Roderick asked after appearing out of thin air and nudging Lloyd in the side, yet at this point, Lloyd was used to it.

"A little. But We have you, Hime and Veronica. Basically the dream team." Lloyd chuckled.

"You might not believe me when I say this, but Felix and Lachlan are just as strong as Hime and me."

Tina and Rex are a little young, so they aren't as strong, but Tina makes up for it with her intelligence, and Rex makes up for it with his amazing spiritual aura control." Roderick explained.

"Lets just hope that is enough." Lloyd muttered to himself.

"Stop worrying." Roderick turned to Lloyd before raising his arm and touching his bicep.

"We're strong. All of us. You might think that you're the only one who improved, but you made us improve too." Roderick chuckled

"Heh. I'm a half-step first commandment, how the hell was I responsible for you guys' growth." Lloyd chuckled while Roderick simply smiled and looked forward.

"Think about it... Would we be alive if Lachlan was still leading us? It was amazing how you bent over the situation to your desire. You taught Lachlan humility. You helped Tina find her voice and courage? You gave Hime a chance to showcase her leadership skills? You softened up Felix, and you gave Rex a sparring partner." Roderick explained.

"Some of them don't sound that impressive." Lloyd scratched the back of his neck with a tinge of pink dyeing his cheeks.

"That's what you think, but in their eyes, you gave them a thing they didn't have before they met you... Don't you think Rex enjoyed teaching you martial arts? His biggest passion?"

Every single one of them feels indebted to you, and even I do." Roderick smiled, and despite being curious about what he did to make Roderick indebted to him, from the glint in Roderick's eyes, Lloyd knew that it was best to not ask.

"Oh yeah. You didn't mention Veronica."

"..."

"..."

"I think your influence on her was a little negative actually." Roderick shuddered.

"How so?" Lloyd tilted his head slightly.

"I had the duty of waking her up last week. Her entire tent was covered in picture of you. It was kind of creepy."

"..."

"..."

With silent mourning, Lloyd placed his hand on Roderick's shoulder before sighing.

"My apologies." Lloyd whispered.

"Huh?"

"I did not intend on stealing the girl you were interested in. However, Doth not fret mine cousin! I, the legendary wingman, shalt help thee woo yond mistress to thy side. All 'twill taketh is time and patience!" Lloyd smacked Roderick's back before walking ahead of him while puffing his chest out.

'Did he get possessed by a Shakespearean soul or something?!' Roderick looked at Lloyd's back with an agape mouth.

Everyone continued walking, but the closer they got to the palace, the quiet everyone got.

At some point, it was nothing but silence. The creatures of the forest didn't dare to make a sound, and nor did the group.

The silence was the only constant in this god-forsaken land, but that was not all.

Lloyd felt like he could smell the anxiety of his teammates. He could see their every shudder. He could hear as their rate of breathing slowly accelerate. He could hear everyone's loudly beating hearts as if they had drums within their chests.

Everyone was like this... Well, everyone but Veronica. Her heart rate was eerily steady for some reason, yet Lloyd didn't think much of it since she was always calm.

They all wanted the walk between where they were and the palace doors to be longer, but they all knew that no time was enough to prepare them for the upcoming fight.

After all, a sentient mind's biggest fear is the fear of the unknown, and even though they all knew that the boss couldn't be too bad, they could not get rid of the wrenching feeling within their guts that made them want to turn around and leave without coming back.

"I guess there's no turning back from here..." Lloyd sighed as the realization kicked in.

"Lloyd, since you're not a part of the army, you have no obligation to-" Hime spoke, yet Lloyd quickly stopped her.

"We're a team... We do everything together, even if it means that we die here." Lloyd tightened his fists. He knew it would kill his family if he were to die here, but it would kill him if he found out that his entire team died because he abandoned them.

"You're wrong..." Roderick muttered as he stepped forward and placed one hand on each gate.

"We're a family." He smiled before pushing with everything he had, allowing the creaking doors to slowly open, allowing sunlight to illuminate the palace for the first time in years while unraveling what lay within its shadows.

Yet in the very moment, Lloyd felt himself being pushed before-

\*Whizz\*

The sound was light and almost inaudible to the human ear.

Yet everyone heard it...

No. Some even sensed it. It was a powerful mana signature, too fast for anyone to react, but just slow enough to make the hairs on everyone's body stand on their ends.

It moved like lightning...

Fear filled their hearts, and adrenaline pumped through their veins.

No one wanted to look back, because they all felt it.

The cutting winds that left marks on their skin.

And the scorching heat that radiated from the blast.

\*Thud\*

The sound was lifeless, yet everyone recognized it.

It was the sound of a dropping body.

A lifeless body...

"I have to say, its taken you guys a lot longer to get here than I had expected..." A man with piercing orange eyes slowly stood from his throne as his aura exploded out of his body.

His aura was suffocating, yet his words were somehow worse.

Each syllable felt like a dagger laced with poison dug into their hearts, yet none dared to look back.

None except...

'No...'

Lloyd's eyes looked upon the scene before him in horror as he laid on the ground after having narrowly avoided the beam... yet it was at a cost.

'This can't be happening...'

He didn't know how to feel...

'Why did you push me...'

Lloyd had never felt like this before.

A void...

'No... no no... no no no... no no nononononononono.'

He could feel it... A void was opening up in his soul, rapidly filling with something else entirely.

'This is my fault...'

'Yes... it is.'

'I did this...'

'Yes, you did.'

Lloyd's eyes finally met with a pair of lifeless brown eyes.

Their body was still, completely unmoving, as they lay in their own pool of blood and brain matter, their face frozen in time, showing Lloyd the last expression they made before the beam shot through their head.

[Commandment: 99.999%]

Shock.

Fear.

Terror.

Horror.

And most painful of all...

Regret

[Commandment: ...]

There lay the person Lloyd relied on most.

Roderick Porter was dead.

[Commandment: 100%]

[Breakthrough initiated]

## **Chapter 88: The Monarch Of The Autumn Forest [4] - Breakthrough**

Two fists clashed in the middle of an arena while cracks slowly spread through the stone surface.

Lloyd and Zack stared into each other's eyes as they both forced the other back.

Sliding back, Lloyd quickly did a flip to stabilize himself while Zack simply threw his hands to the side, allowing the sheer power of his arms to create a wind pressure strong enough to stop him in his tracks.

"Hehe. Stare upon my power, as I shall take over the world!" Zack roared.

"What?" Lloyd asked, seemingly perplexed by Zack's random outburst of weird speaking.

"Never mind." Zack sighed.

"You two have been improving nicely." A voice entered both their ears, making them look toward the entrance of the training room to see Olivia and Layla.

"I know right." Zack puffed out his chest while Lloyd simply chuckled.

"But I think Lloyd has been having problems breaking through. He's improving fighting-wise, but-" Zack scratched the back of his neck before Lloyd finished his sentence for him.

"Everything else has been kind of stale." Lloyd shrugged.

"I guess that's normal. People are your ages usually find it hard to break through the next commandment, so you don't have much to worry about." Layla smiled before patting Lloyd on the shoulder and ushering the two boys to the living room so they could take time to eat and relax.

"Hey, Zack! I heard that you beat up my brother." Elana grinned from ear to ear as she looked at Lloyd almost mockingly.

"You thought you were all high and mighty when you reached the half step so quickly, but look at you now. Zack already surpassed you in strength. How does it feel, huh? Are you going to cry? Its okay, don't cry." Elana snickered while rubbing Lloyd's head.

"Elana. Stop teasing your brother." Noah scolded, making Elana let go of Lloyd and look away with an audible 'hmph.'

It had been two weeks since Lloyd left his clone in charge of his normal life, and everything had gone completely as expected. After Lloyd used a portion of his mana pool to create a clone that could think independently, Lloyd left, and the clone played his normal life like it usually did.

Wake up, spar with Zack, eat, spar with zack, eat, spar with zack, and then finally go to sleep.



'I'm lucky I left just after reaching the half-step. At least now it makes sense why I'm not improving strength-wise. Man this is tiring. I hope the real Lloyd come-' However, before clone Lloyd could finish what he was thinking, he felt a sharp pain shoot through his chest.

\*Thud\*

Collapsing to his knees, the clone gasped for air to the best of its ability while clutching onto its heart in agonizing pain.

"Lloyd!" Olivia screamed and also got onto her knees.

"Are you okay? What's happening!? Are you hurt?!"

By the time Olivia could ask all those questions, everyone in the room had circled around Lloyd, with Benjamin even calling Ruben over in case of a medical emergency.

"Shit. Okay, I need you all to listen to be carefully, okay?" Lloyd spoke through gritted teeth as images of the original Lloyd's memory flashed before him.

"Ruben! Call the hospital immediately!" Benjamin roared before Layla dropped to Lloyd's level and tried to use her best inspection skills. Despite her ability to basically analyze anything she wanted, she never used it on family or friends without asking for permission first. However, since this was an emergency, she went right in and analyzed his body...

"Shadow clone?" she gasped before a wave of suspicion hit her.

"Shut up and listen!" Lloyd roared, immediately silencing everyone who wanted to ask what Layla meant.

"I'm a shadow clone that the original me put here before leaving for a dungeon raid two weeks ago." The clone grunted.

Raising his finger and covering it in a single claw, the clone began carving a set of numbers into the ground.

He knew he had to do this. He didn't really understand what was happening, but there was one thing that he was sure of, and that was that the original Lloyd was in danger, and he had to do everything to save him.

"These are the coordinates to the dungeon's portal. I don't know what's happening in there, but I know that the original is in danger." The clone gasped for air despite not needing it to breathe.

After finishing writing the last few numbers, he rolled over and writhed in pain, yet that was not all.

"Wait. Why would he-"

"What are you still doing here, you morons. Time works differently in dungeons. Start moving!" The clone shouted.

"Rage... So much rage..." Layla muttered to herself, but no one had time for whatever she was trying to say this time.

The clone slowly took its final breaths while its shadow gradually sunk into the ground; A final thought came to his mind as his brain finally synchronized with the original's.

A thought that only Layla heard.

"Why..."

\*\*\*

"You must have realized it already. The reason you haven't reached the first commandment." Lloyd's voice echoed within the abyss, yet unlike his usual voice, it was monotone and emotionless... As if it was spoken by a lifeless robot.

"..."

"Do you know why I want you to strengthen our body instead of breakthrough? Do you know why I even bothered to teach you how to control the void energy that enters your body every time you kill something?"

"No..." another voice replied, yet unlike the monotone one, it was filled with much more life and emotion.

"It's because we are different from these humans." The masked man took a step forward" "

"We are different from these mortals."

"We were chosen."

"We changed for the better."

"We are special, and those humans out there are in no way as special as us." The black-masked individual stood right in front of Lloyd, his purple and black eyes staring into Lloyd's purple and white ones.

"We have so much potential, so we cannot stop at just ordinary..."

"Every time you shatter your vessel, you create a stronger one to replace it. A true void walker body... That is what we should aim for. Only then should you breakthrough... Only then should you strive to cross the boundary between you and the next commandment. Only when the moment comes to shed your humanity will I help you reach the other side."

\*\*\*

Lloyd closed his eyes as the rage that boiled within his soul converged on the pool of void energy he had been saving up for his breakthrough for several weeks.

And as his rage took over the energy, it pooled itself into Lloyd's void rune powering it to its maximum and initiating-

[Commandment: 100%]

[Breakthrough Initialized]

"How rude of me to not introduce myself." The pale monster stepped forward with a disgusting smile on its face.

"Welcome to my palace. I am the monarch of the autumn forest. I may not have a name right now, but I should get one when my dungeon spills over into your planets."

However, despite his upbeat voice, no one could hear him over their own heartbeats.

"Don't look back." Hime's voice reached everyone's ears as rage and determination intertwined within their eyes.

A new fire burned within them, and at the moment, nothing mattered more than the desire to kill the creature before them.

"Natural formation. Stay calm, and don't grieve too hard. It's what they would have wanted!" Hime roared before they all released their kill intent.

'Five? Did two of us...?' Hime thought in horror, yet she quickly understood why there were only five.

\*Rumble\*

The winds howled like mourning wolves, while the clouds roared with the rage and power of a lion.

And it was at that moment that a beam of purple light shot down from the sky, piercing towards a particular individual.

'Do you finally understand?' The voice asked, its tone laced with emotion for what felt like the first time. An emotion that Lloyd knew all too well; after all, it was an emotion he constantly heard in the voices of the higher families whenever they spoke to him...

'Why keep your humanity when humanity is so fragile.'

\*BOOM\*

As if the sky had ripped open, pools of void energy surged into Lloyd's body and channeled themselves into his void rune.

The power was intoxicating, and the sheer amount of it almost made Lloyd faint, yet only one thing kept him steady.

Lloyd didn't say a word yet, but everyone knew how he felt because they were feeling it too.

"Aww. Did I make you angry?" The creature asked with a cruel and wide grin on its face, yet before it could take another step-

"Tell me, can you feel it?" Lloyd's distorted voice shook the air around him and made the very ground beneath his feet shudder under his presence.

"Huh."

"Can you feel it?"

[Void Step]

Lloyd's body blinked out of existence and appeared behind the monster.

The monster's eyes widened in shock as it turned around, yet when it did, there was nothing there.

\*Zip\*

The monster's hand shot forward, aiming for Lloyd's heart, yet the moment his hand entered the purple energy covering Lloyd, waves of excruciating pain shot through his body.

"What is the meaning of this!" The monster roared, yet when it saw a palm right in front of its face, every single muscle in its body froze while Lloyd's eerily calm voice echoed within its ear.

"Can you feel my rage?"

[Aspect of Void + Flame Control]

\*BOOM\*

## Chapter 89: The Monarch Of The Autumn Forest [5] - Puppeteer

[08/01/2023 This chapter has been fixed]

"Can you feel my rage?"

\*Crackle\*

\*Fwhoom\*

Within a moment, a tsunami of pale blue flames shot out of Lloyd's palm and enveloped the pale monster.

However, while the flames didn't hurt at first-

"W-what?" The man roared as the once blue flames flickered between their original color and bright violet.

[Aspect of Void + Flame Control]

Bright violet runes shone all over the flames as they began moving like an entity of their volition. The power of the flames skyrocketed, causing even the ground around the place monsters to slowly turn into molten magma.

Lloyd watched the flames spiral around the monster, and since he knew he wasn't expending any brain power on controlling the flames, he knew that it must have been the work of the void energy.

The winds began to pick up, and the skies howled as if they themselves were trying to express Lloyd's rage in his stead.

However-

"AHHHHHHH."

Letting out a deafening roar, the self-proclaimed Monarch of the autumn forest shot out of the flames and blasted straight for Lloyd.

"Flame tendrils."

However, the instant the monster began to move, Lloyd clutched his hand into a fist, causing several purple runes to flash over the flames before they broke into segments.

Forming into flaming tendrils, they whipped at the monster, forcing it to jump away from Lloyd to avoid the attacks.

The monster glared at Lloyd for a moment before a disgusting smile appeared on its face.

"Your efforts are futile. You are nothing but a child in my eyes. Do you know how long I've lived for!" It roared.

"Shut up." Lloyd's sneer entered the creature's ears, and before it could react to the fact that Lloyd's voice was coming from another direction, a palm suddenly struck him in the chest, yet despite the strike not even putting a scratch on the creature's body, Lloyd had achieved what he wanted from the start.

While the monster had several masculine features, Lloyd's mind refused to think of it as anything but an "it." His rage for the monster was unbound and limitless, yet he found calm in his heart in the moment of anger.

\*Boom\*

The monster shot toward Lloyd like a bolt of lightning. Lloyd's eyes widened slightly at the sudden increase in speed, yet when its fist landed on Lloyd's abdomen, Lloyd's shock turned into a menacing frown.

The sound of flesh hitting flesh echoed throughout the area, and before Lloyd could control his velocity, the monster shot towards him in what looked like nothing but a streak of orange light.

Appearing above Lloyd, the monster cocked its hand back and released a devastating punch that-

\*Boom\*

Slamming Lloyd into the ground, he felt cobweb-like cracks trickle through his back; before the monster could attack again, he closed his eyes, flipped back, and threw a kick at the monster's face.

Flipping away, Lloyd's vision suddenly blackened as a fist smashed into his face and as he tumbled away violently.

'Your humanity has made you weak.' A familiar voice spoke, yet it was completely different at the same time. Almost unrecognizable, yet it was the most recognizable voice he could hear.

'Look at you now. You have showed your true nature. The nature of a bloodthirsty rage-filled void walker!' the voice laughed as excitement and thrill filled its voice for the first time ever, almost making it sound like Lloyd instead of an emotionless robot.

'Today, this will be your baptism. The event that will create a better Lloyd! A better us!' it continued.

Slowly, Lloyd felt as if the world around him had become darker... Almost black and white. Yet when Lloyd looked at the ground, his eyes only perceived a field of bloodstained grass spanning for miles.

"Humanity makes you weak." A voice echoed through the infinite field of blood grass before a figure wearing a black mask appeared a couple dozen meters in front of Lloyd, wearing the same clothing as Lloyd, yet it was covered in blood whole. Lloyd was mostly clean.

Slowly, the space around Lloyd began to distort, and as if they had always been there, 6 bloodied and dismembered bodies appeared around Lloyd, each spewing more blood than the last.

Each body was different, yet Lloyd recognized them all. And they seemed to have recognized him.

Their dead eyes wriggled around within the eye sockets of the dead skulls before they locked on Lloyd, yet despite wanting to look away from the bodies, he couldn't move his eyes.

"And companionship makes you weaker." An emotionless voice spoke, shaking the very world it had created.

"Look upon your dead companions and know that..."

"That they are all dead because of you."

\*\*\*

\*Boom\*

Lloyd's eyes glazed over as his rage grew further, and the void energy shooting down from the sky increased in power and intensity.

When Lloyd's consciousness returned to the real world, he found himself standing around a purple bubble.

"Stop." Lloyd muttered before glancing at the sky.

In that very instant, the energy pooling down from the sky stopped, yet the purple clouds remained.

"I'll deal with you later." Lloyd spoke with seething anger in his voice before looking forward and searching for the monster with his eyes.

'345.6 meters away.' Lloyd thought while expanding his mana sense to the maximum power.

Stepping forward, Lloyd flashed purple and appeared a few meters above the monster.

\*Swoosh\*

A hand pierced through the air, yet it was not aimed at him.

\*Clutch\*

A burly figure grabbed onto the monster's arm and tried its best to stop it, yet despite her best efforts, the monster was clearly just playing around with her.

"My servants would appreciate a woman like you." It grinned menacingly as it stopped its hand halfway and opened it to grip onto Hime's throat.

"You... Bastard." Hime spat with a croaky voice, yet despite seeing her suffer, Lloyd remained unmoving... As if he was completely indifferent when it came to if she lived or died. Of course, Lloyd was waiting for the best moment to strike, and what's a better way to find the right time if it is not by analyzing your opponent as they beat your comrades half to death.



'What were you angry about again? Maybe you just felt like killing that monster. Just imagine how much energy it would give you.' The voice tempted.

'I'm avenging my friend.'

'By letting the woman who cared for him die? Stop lying to yourself. We both know you don't care about them. You just used them, and so will they use you. Can't you see it? They saw you teleport. They are terrified.'

Lloyd's eyes slightly narrowed as he looked at the people at the ground, yet he did not see what he expected to see.

Not everyone remained motionless like Lloyd.

They were all angry, some even angrier than Lloyd, while others were less angry.

However, unlike Lloyd, they suppressed their emotions and fought with heart.

"Let go of our leader!" A feminine voice screamed as flaming homing missiles beamed down from the sky and shot toward the monster.

"Oh. I forgot you were here too." The monster's grin disappeared and swiped at Tina's flame missiles, dissipating them instantly.

"Let fuckin go!" Felix roared before his body turned into a blur, appearing and disappearing as it struck the monster hundreds of times a second.

The blood-red runes on Felix's body scorched his skin as he used his racial abilities to the highest extent.

However, despite moving fast enough to leave after images, the monster's hand moved just as fast, blocking every attack with a single hand.

Still, Felix didn't give up and kept attacking, yet each time he tried to land a blow, the monster moved a little faster, making it hard for Felix to land any hits.

In the end, Felix is forced to fall back and take a defensive stance as the monster begins to crush his throat.

"Hime, Move!" Felix shouted, yet even before he could finish his sentence, Hime had already moved.

The monster's eyes widened in surprise as it felt a sudden pain in its chest, yet before it could do anything, it felt something hit its chest.

And the hits didn't stop there.

[Sky Dragon Technique]

[Dragon lightning fist]

Rex's fist was covered in lightning, and when it touched the monster's chest-

\*Boom\*

An explosion sending out several bolts of lightning appeared, yet before Rex could celebrate, he felt something grab onto his wrist.

"Haha. That tickled."

\*Crack\*

"AHHHHH." A blood curdling left Rex's throat as he felt his arm being snapped in half. However, before the monster could rip the wrist from its socket or crush it beyond recognition, a sense of dread fell over it.

"What-"

"What did I say about shutting up?" Lloyd asked as violet energy covered his arm.

[Void Walker Technique]

Lloyd firmly places his fist into the monster's abdomen before launching it several meters away.

In the same instant, Lloyd appeared right behind the monster and placed an axe kick directly into its shoulder.

"Void step barrage."

\*Zip Zip Zip\*

Teleporting all around, Lloyd slammed the monster around like a ping-pong table, teleporting behind it after every hit just to send out an even more powerful attack.

Eventually, the monster crashed onto the ground, and Lloyd canceled his technique.

"There is no escape." Lloyd spoke, his voice loud and clear as he stood in front of the monster, ready to face off against it in a battle of life and death.

"Nice technique..." The monster complimented before jumping from where it lay and facing Lloyd, completely unscathed.

"No one told me a void walker would be coming to my Dungeon," it grinned, yet behind the grin Lloyd felt fear... No, he almost tasted it.

The fear of a void walker. The universal treasures. The people chosen by god. Of course, those were just titles people gave to them, and while Lloyd didn't believe in any of them, the titles alone left their impact on the people of the universe.

'Its scared, but its also confident that it can take me...' Lloyd thought as several human-like creatures flew past him at the speed of sound. While he didn't recognize the humans, he recognized what they wore.

'Soldiers? There were supposed to be no soldiers for miles.' Lloyd thought, his mind slowed down slightly before looking back.

"These were soldiers that got to that baster first. I'm just giving them use, after all, what good are they dead if they aren't my puppets." Lachlan grinned.

'They seem to be ignoring the fact that I can teleport, or that the monster called me a void walker...' Lloyd narrowed his eyes.

'They just can't process if yet. Just wait, you will remember this conversation when they are beating you to a pulp.' The voice spat, however, Lloyd was too busy trying to find a way to contribute.

Lloyd's mind raced as he tried to think of a way to win, yet eventually, he decided on one plan.

He would have to calm down. Raging would not solve anything, and using [4-dimensional thought] was out of the question. He remembered how he blacked out last time as well as the horrible headache. Never again, he thought.

Lloyd closed his eyes and focused his energy, channeling it towards his center. He felt the void energy grow within him, and controlling it the way 'it' taught him, Lloyd moved allowed it to soak into the very structure of his body, channeling it into his bones, muscles, tissues and cells, slowly empowering them with the power of the void.

"Alright..." Lloyd exhaled.

"I'm going to enjoy this." Lloyd smiled hatefully as his killing intent exploded out of his body, exuding a dense and suffocating black and red aura toward the monster.

## Chapter 90: The Monarch Of The Autumn Forest [6] - Puppeteer [2]

[The chapter before this has been edited. There is a time stamp at the top of the last chapter for you.]

Everyone in the area frowned, yet it was the monster who was taking the full brunt of Lloyd's killing intent. They all threw Lloyd a glance, yet they knew what was more important at that moment. Or at least what was more important to them.

Why would Lloyd spend so much time with them if he was a void walker? Why would he care if Roderick died? Why did he just break through into the first commandment? What were his motives if he wasn't there to kill them?

Was any of it real?

Was the meeting between Lloyd, Roderick, and Hime not a coincidence?

What if it's part of his master plan?

What if he planned all this? What if he is the reason Roderick is dead?

Those were the questions running through everyone's minds at that moment; however, while some, like Tina, had already written out Lloyd as a void walker, others felt their rage turning toward something else.

"Have I angered the void walker?! Hahahahahehehehe. I've never seen one so weak before." The monster snickered as it widened the space between its legs, lowered its body, and hung its lifeless arms to the ground.

A cruel smile appeared on its face, stretching from ear to ear, while its eyes glowed brighter than ever.

"How about I dissect your dead body?" It snapped its head to the right and instantly shot toward Lloyd.

[Shadow Expansion]

[Shadow Enhancement]

[Shadow Wings]

Shadows instantly shrouded Lloyd and increased his strength, yet instead of fighting the monster head-on, he did the one thing it didn't expect.

\*Flap\*

"Running away are we?" The monster asked, yet Lloyd simply stared at it from the air without answering.

'I don't want to waste using the rest of my breakthrough on this monster, but if I try to focus on breaking through, this bastard will attack me without a doubt.' Lloyd inwardly thought.

'Fuck it. This thing killed... It killed Roderick, and I will avenge him with or without anyone else.' Lloyd clapped his hands together as he remembered the information that had been poured into his mind.

\*'When you start breaking through, remember one thing.'\* Lloyd recalled the voice's words.

\*' Your connection to the void will grow stronger; therefore, your understanding will increase alongside it... Yet as a void walker, you can reach unity with it. The moment you manipulate the void... '\*

"The void becomes an extension of me..." Lloyd muttered while dropping to the ground, this time surrounded by his teammates.

However, despite all of them looking toward the monster with hatred, something overcame their body the moment Lloyd landed amongst them, causing them to move away from him.

Even Tina, to who Lloyd had thoughts of expressing his void walker side of him to, moved away from him and stayed at an angle that gave them a direct eye line of him.

While they all knew the monster was the enemy then, they could no longer trust Lloyd since he could be the enemy the moment the creature died.

Seeing that his teammates were wary of him, it slightly killed Lloyd on the inside, as if salt had been poured on the gaping wound that was Roderick's death.

Taking out his blades, Lloyd held them both at his sides before launching forward.

[Aspect of Void]

Purple runes trickled through Lloyd's blades before they were quickly covered in blue flames.

'Looks like I can only use aspect of void on one thing at a time.' Lloyd thought when his flames didn't turn purple.

Shooting past the rest of his teammates like a raven's shadow, Lloyd attacked and swung at the monster with a flurry of swings, yet when it saw him coming, it simply smiled.

"Come on, come on! Don't hesitate!" The monster taunted, laughing wickedly at the fact that Lloyd was trying to fight it.

"You can't hit me with your sword like that!" The monster said, smiling as it continued to taunt him.

Lloyd kept swinging his blade as fast as he could, but it seemed the monster could block every single strike.

\*Thwack.\* \*Thwack.\* \*Thwack.\*

Each strike fell short of the monster and sent it back a few steps, which caused the beast to laugh even louder.

"Hahaha! You think you're going to beat me with swords? Let me show you how it's done."

Lloyd gritted as he focused on the center of the monster's chest.

He wasn't going to let the creature mock him. He wouldn't allow himself to feel fear.

His blood boiled with rage, allowing him to forget the pain of Roderick's loss for a moment, yet the pain came back threefold and fueled Lloyd's rage once more.

This time he charged straight ahead, not caring if he took damage because of it.

He was becoming narrow-minded, yet he did not care. It was almost light he had gone into a berserk state, and that theory was only amplified after a wave of bloodlust shot out of his body and pulverized the grass around him as if it had real form.

The monster smiled at Lloyd's futile attempts at beating it, yet despite losing all his team's trust, every single one of them got into position. Everyone except Veronica, who, for some reason, had completely disappeared.

Swinging his blades at the creature, Lloyd watched it avoid and block most of his attacks before it extended its nails and swung toward his head.

However, before the swing could reach him, Lloyd made an uncomfortable turn as his feet exploded with blue flames, catapulting his kick right into the monster's face.

"I have to ask myself, did I really wait a month and a half for this?" The monster sneered, its face completely unscathed by the attack despite taking it head-on.

Lloyd's eyes widened slightly as he watched the monster's hand reach out for his leg. He quickly tried to focus on a coordinate for him to teleport to, yet before he could vanish, an iron-clad grip grabbed onto his ankle while the sound of cracking resounded throughout the forest.

"Ahh!" Lloyd roared and tried to kick the monster in the face for it to let go, yet it remained completely unscathed with a menacing grin on its face.

"Let go." A void was ordered. The instant the monster looked towards the source of the voice, however-

[Sky Dragon Technique]

The silhouette of a blue dragon with long wooden horns covered Rex's foot before that very foot slammed straight into the monster's face, causing it to loosen its grip upon Lloyd's ankle before being thrown back a few meters.

However, the monster quickly regained its balance by landing on its hands, but before it could complete the flip, pair of clawed hands shot towards its face, giving it a millisecond to dodge the attack.

Spinning on the palm of his hand, the monster avoided the attack by less than half an inch, seeing Hime's claws as more dangerous than Lloyd's. Lloyd's blades were covered in void runes.

Then the next attack happened.

A powerful blast of wind rushed forth from the dragon's mouth, forcing the monster to evade again. Then the air rushed out of the way, forming a wind wall between them.

With a mighty roar, the dragon silhouette released a blast of fire directly behind it. The fire rushed down the wind wall, pushing it back just enough to give the monster room to maneuver.

'Tina's magic.' Lloyd thought when looking at the fire and wind magic before him.

\*Swoosh\*

\*Swoosh\*

\*Swoosh\*

Several humanoid figures covered in dark flames shot toward the monster at subsonic speeds.

While some used daggers, hammers, and axes, others used swords, bows, and staffs to fight the monster. Of course, it had no problem killing these corpse-like creatures that were eerily familiar, yet it was only when he shot his hand through the last one that he realized that they were all actually dead.

'A puppeteer? How interesting.' It thought while pointing a finger toward where Lachlan stood.

"I think your forgetting something." Felix whispered with an enormous sword in his right hand as he swung it with amazing speed toward the monster's head.

But the blow missed as the monster easily blocked it with both arms.

"That wasn't so bad. What do you say though, my turn?" The monster grinned, and just when Felix crossed its arms, getting ready for the incoming blow to its stomach, the monster flickered before disappearing as hundreds of cracks formed in the ground and large chunks of the dirt below them flew in the air.

\*Boom\*

The sound of the air literally exploding as the monster moved through it caught everyone's attention. Before anyone could react to the sudden speed, the monster appeared before Rex, its foot in front of his face. Yet, instead of landing a direct hit and moving away, the monster stomped down onto Rex's face, instantly burying his head into the ground before flickering away once again.

Its eyes traveled through the scenery, and when it saw Lachlan shouting Rex's name, it grinned and appeared behind him.

"Lachlan! Move!" Lloyd roared, but it was far too late.

A hand shot through Lachlan's chest, destroying his heart and killing him instantly.