

The Walker Of Voids

Chapter 91: The Monarch Of The Autumn Forest [7] - Black Hole Horizon

Lloyd had been certain that using his void walker abilities would give him an edge over his teammates, but he was wrong. While power was everything in this world, skill and talent come second.

Lloyd's body might have been strong, yet even with [shadow enhancement], it barely reached the initial stages of the Topaz seal, let alone anything beyond it.

He lacked any decent power since he was still in the half-step first commandment, he lacked proper skill compared to the likes of Rex, Tina, Hime, or even Felix; and even though he has talent, it means nothing in a fight when you haven't developed the other two.

So when he watched as Lachlan's heart was destroyed right before his eyes, he felt like his world was collapsing in on itself, with him being the center of the collapse.

And throughout it all, despite everything in the world seeming to have slowed down to a snail's pace, he heard the same little voice, belittling him from within his own consciousness, telling him-

'This is all happening because of you...

If Roderick hadn't sacrificed himself for you, maybe they would have won...

You doomed them all. Everything began going to hell when you joined their team because you are pathetic, just like the other humans here.

Even Felix was doomed despite being of a superior race... But you. You did this.'

'Then take over... That was our deal, right? You can take over once, for 10 minutes if you teach me how to control the void. TAKE OVER THEN!' Lloyd roared as he moved through the flow of stopped time.

Everything became grey. And all colors except red were gone. It tortured Lloyd that the only color he could see was the red color of his friend's blood.

It hurt... It hurt right where his heart was supposed to be, yet every time the pain radiated from the center of his heart, it reminded him that he was no longer human. It reminded him that he was nothing but a void walker, destined to be hunted for the rest of eternity.

'Now, why would you assume I wanted to take over? To spare you the misery of watching your friends being slaughtered? No... I will make you watch as each, and every one of them is killed. I have been trying to help you since the day you found out about me, yet all you did was reject everything.

Remember when I told you that humanity will make you weak? What did you do? You strolled your way back to humanity and strengthened your connection with them.

You are weak, and today you shall see what weakness does to a void walker.'

"You'll be killed too, you moron! WE ARE THE SAME PEOPLE! You are me! I am you!" Lloyd roared as he fought back the tears threatening to gush out like water out of a broken dam.

"That's where you're wrong. We are not going to die. You, might die on the inside, but physically speaking, we will both stay perfectly alive, it is just that you are too stupid to see it yet, but you will eventually." A masked man appeared out of thin air as his monotone voice shook the world around him.

As the masked man turned around to look at Lachlan's extremely slowly falling body, yet his head perked up in realization before he turned around to look at the boy kneeling on the ground.

"Also, let me remind you that, despite inhabiting the same body, we are not the same people. Think of us as two sides of the same coin... Null and Lloyd. It just happens that one of us is vastly superior to the other."

FWOOHM

Just as fast as he had come, Null disappeared into thin air before color returned to the world, and so did the flow of time.

Lachlan's fall to the ground resumed, causing him to quickly hit the ground before a pool of blood leaked out of the gaping wound in his chest.

"Lachlan... NOOOOOOOO!" Felix roared as he shot toward Lachlan's body. His vision had gone red, yet when the moment of clarity came, Felix was too late.

A leg slammed into his stomach, shooting him straight into the air before he was quickly kicked in the chest and shot across the surface of the forest canopy.

Reaching Felix with an unbelievable speed that only Felix could rival, the monster clasped both its hands into a fist before slamming down with everything it had, shooting Felix into the ground and kicking up an enormous dust cloud.

In less than three seconds of Felix trying to avenge Lachlan, he was already on the ground and most likely already half-dead.

However, that wasn't enough for the monster. It was no longer playing around, and the moment it saw Felix lose consciousness, it plunged toward him with razor-sharp nails, ready to end it once and for all.

And then the monster felt it.

Something it hadn't felt in hundreds of years.

Actual danger to its life.

It was a feeling deeply imprinted in its mind, and it was activating again.

Like a sharp nail slowly slithering over its throat.

And that's exactly what it was.

A deep black blade shot toward the monster's neck as the runes engraved into it shone brighter than ever before.

They were being pumped with mana, to be specific, void-laced mana.

'Shit.' The monster thought as its eyes locked onto the weapon's wielder. Yet when it did, the monster wanted nothing other than to look away.

But it couldn't.

It was locked.

It was as if it was looking into the eyes of the devil, as every nightmare the monster had ever thought of flashed through its mind.

Fear trickled down its back, creating a cold yet powerful chill that shook it to its very soul.

It was as if the monster was staring into the abyss of death itself.

And in the blink of an eye, everything around the monster began to disintegrate in a flash of black and purple light.

[Aspect of Void + Flame Control + Gravity Manipulation + Space Manipulation]

[Void Walker Style - Black Hole Horizon]

Chapter 92: Dungeon Break [1] - Failure

[Thank you thevoidfox for your generous gift]

Everything around the monster began to disintegrate into ashes. The trees, the ground, and even the monster itself began to turn into particles as its existence dissipated very slowly.

However, in a moment of quick thinking, the monster flipped mid-air, using the momentum of the attack to shift its body slightly.

ZHOOOOM

Everything in a 30-meter radius turned into ashes before Lloyd's silhouette dropped to the ground, his eyes glowing purple. At the same time, his body was covered in purple energy that protected him from his own attack.

Felix's body was also covered in Lloyd's purple energy, yet he was still hurt by the attack since it destroyed everything on a molecular level.

'Null didn't lie. If I break down the void element, not only do I get three elements, but I also get variations of the element. Space manipulation can be broken down further into gravity manipulation.' Lloyd thought to himself before looking at his blade, which was also turning into ashes.

'I guess the strain was too much on such a weak blade. I guess, I'll have to use the other one then.'

Taking his other short-sword out, Lloyd's violet eyes darted around for a moment. He knew that the monarch of the autumn forest was still alive; he just needed to find where he was.

Closing his eyes, Lloyd let out a pulse of violet energies that encapsulated everything in a large area around Lloyd. Opening his eyes again, Lloyd pointed his blade toward the north before a disgusted smirk tugged on the corner of his lips.

"Found you."

Zip

Appearing before the monster, Lloyd swung his blade at it, this time simply covering it in blue flames rather than the purple ones he used before since they were much more draining than he would like to admit.

Clang

However, the monster simply deflected the attack with his claw, pushing Lloyd back a few meters before jumping away.

"Tsk"

[Void Step]

Teleporting above the monster, Lloyd swung again, this time aiming for the monster's left arm to sever it, yet the monster was quick to grab the blade mid-attack before using it as a lever to send a devastating kick Lloyd's way.

[Void Step]

Letting go of his blade, Lloyd appeared behind the monster with his hands covered in shadows, but the monster expected this, something that was clear to Lloyd since the kick seemed to have never been aimed toward his previous position.

Yet, even in a situation like this, Lloyd continued to grin at the monster since before it knew what was happening, it felt its foot sink into the ground, lowering its height and making its attack come inches short of Lloyd's face.

Without thinking twice, Lloyd cut the tendons off its leg before dropping back and entering his shadow.

"You putent insolent child. You think this shadow realm of yours can hold my mighty being?" The monster roared while Lloyd simply watched it while slowly circling it like a tiger around its prey.

"I was quite disappointed when I saw that I hadn't turned you into atoms, but now that I look at you..." Lloyd paused and looked at the monster's right arm, or to be specific, the lack thereof an arm.

"I enjoy the fact that you are suffering." Lloyd chuckled before looking at the monster's tendon, which had already mostly healed.

"And the fact that you can't regenerate from my attack only makes it even more enjoyable to watch."

ROOOAAAR

Letting out a deafening roar, the monster shot forward with everything it had, quickly attacking Lloyd with attacks of immense speed, yet without its other arm, one could say that the attack rate was only half as great as before.

On the other hand, his kicks, while being slightly off-balance due to the lack of a second arm, were still as powerful as ever. So when Lloyd tried to block one of them, all he got in exchange was a powerful kick that sent cracks all over his arms before shooting him out of his shadow 'realm.'

According to Lachlan, may the universe have mercy on his soul; Lloyd's shadow could be considered as a completely different realm called the shadow realm. It was the reason why the shadow owl could enter it, and it is the reason why Lloyd could force others into it as well

BOOM

Shooting out of the shadow, the monster took into the skies before its eyes glowed bright orange, and its body zoomed toward Lloyd.

[Void Step]

Barely teleporting in time, Lloyd avoided the attack by a mere inch as he quickly appeared in an area without many trees.

'Shit.'

Looking around, Lloyd realized that the monster was forcing him back with the rest of the team so he could pick them off again, but that's where he was mistaken.

"Hime... Rex... Tina... I need you to trust me." Lloyd spoke.

"We trusted you, but you lied to us..." Hime gritted her teeth with tears in her eyes. In her eyes, Roderick's sacrifice only extended the life of a monster.

"I thought of you as one of us... I thought of you as a brother!" Rex roared.

However, Tina remained silent. Lloyd could feel her heart wrench every time she breathed out, while her eyes looked at Lloyd in a way that made him feel his non-existent heart drop to his stomach. They were filled with betrayal, but he couldn't do anything about that now.

"I know, but if we don't work together, Roderick and Lachlan's deaths will be for nothing." Lloyd reasoned as he pointed his blade toward the direction the monster was coming from.

"And I'm not gonna let that happen." Lloyd's eyes narrowed dangerously.

"Also, where the fuck is Veronica?" Lloyd asked, causing everyone to widen their eyes.

"Nevermind her, the thing is nearly here." Hime replied as a figure shot into the sky, uprooting several trees instantly and kicking up an enormous dust cloud.

"Tina." Lloyd shouted, causing Tina to immediately begin weaving runes into the air before creating several arcane barriers between the group and the monster.

However, like a bullet through butter, the monster shot right through the barriers easily, but of course, that was part of the plan.

The team was shocked to see that the monster only had one arm, but since they were feeling so many emotions at that moment, they didn't even take any time to openly acknowledge the fact that Lloyd did more damage to the monster in less than 4 minutes than they did in 7.

It had been 4 minutes since Lachlan's death, yet no one really had a moment to process it. Of course, Hime was still trying to fully process Roderick's death, but everyone else threw the grief to the back of their mind.

They knew that they would have to kill the monster before them, even if it meant they would have to team up with a void walker to do so.

[Racial Ability: Berserker]

A torrent of blood-red energy surged from Hime's body and shot in every direction. The sheer malice and rage she felt materialized within the energy that escaped every pore on her skin.

Her inner screams howled through the skies as they continued to rumble, this time even more intensely than they did when Lloyd broke through.

Despite this bloodlust making it easy for her to be tracked, Lloyd still lost sight of her as she instantly disappeared, her body turning into a blur before it appeared below the last barrier.

ROOOAR

An animalistic roar left her mouth as her arms extended toward the barrier, and the moment the barrier broke, the fields were equalized.

Swoosh

Her claws moved at lightning-fast speeds, unleashing a powerful flurry of attacks at the monster, however, he was not unprepared, yet at the same time, he was far from omnipotent.

The monster tried its best to block the flurry of slashes, and while no attacks landed on any of the lethal areas on its body, it was covered in so many scratches that it was quite literally dyed head to toe with blood.

'Damn it! If I only had my other arm. This is what I get for underestimating that child. What was I thinking turning my back to a void walker!' The monster gritted its teeth before it created a yellow energy burst underneath its feet, using it to quickly dodge an incoming claw before spinning on its heel mid-air and unleashing a devastating punch toward Hime.

Of course, Hime felt the threat from the attack, yet instead of moving away from the attack-

Swoosh

Fwoohm

BOom

Pitui

The punch landed squarely onto her forehead, yet despite shooting into the ground like a broken kite, Hime had dealt more damage than the monster had to her.

In the moment between the fist touching her forehead and the conversion of energy from the arm to her head, her hands he moved on their own as they swiftly ripped out a gaping hole within the monster's stomach.

Since the monster was already quite skinny, the hole in its stomach didn't look as lethal as it would have looked on anyone else. The fact that it immediately began healing did not help argue the lethality of Hime's attack.

ROOOOOAAR

Letting out another deafening roar, Hime shot toward the monster with blood dripping down her forehead. On the other hand, the monster gritted its teeth and cocked back its arm, yet before it could punch forward-

[Hades' Chains]

[Rune Prison]

Black and blue chains shot out of the ground and wrapped themselves around the monster while blue and white runes appeared all over its body, causing its movements to dramatically slow down. At the same time, the power behind the movements also diminished.

Landing on the monster's chest with tremendous force, Hime grabbed the monster's remaining arm and violently tore it off before reeling her head back and landing an earth-shaking head butt onto the monster without a shred of hesitation in her blood-red eyes.

The monster immediately flew towards the ground, yet before it could even touch it-

"Let's end this!"

[Sky Dragon Technique - Lightning Dragon Fist]

With lightning speed, Rex appeared before the monster with a lightning dragon-covered fist that immediately shot out of a dragon serpent, grabbed the monster in its maw, and shot it into the distance with immense speed.

"That's enough!" The monster roared in rage as it quickly regrew its arm and broke away from the dragon's maw before sliding several meters back.

With glowing orange eyes, the monster turned its pale face to the sky before it reached upwards with its only remaining arm and grasped the sky with everything it had.

"I, the monarch of the autumn forest, declare this dungeon my domain and my words absolute." The monarch of the autumn forest roared into the sky as the clouds began to form above him.

"Time dilation--null. Monster activity, maximum." The monster grinned as it brought its thumb and middle finger together.

Pitiu

A blade with purple runes shot right through the monster's chest, instantly destroying its heart before it could do anything else.

"Did you really think that I would let you use your trump card?" Lloyd's laughed with rage laced within every breath he took.

Taking out his blade, Lloyd circled to the front of the monster to look it in its eyes, yet all he was met with was a merciless smile that sent shivers down his back.

"Disgusting." Lloyd spat before slicing the monster's legs off. Lloyd was certain that the monster was dead since it couldn't regenerate from his void attacks, yet if there was even the smallest semblance of consciousnesses inside it, Lloyd wanted it to suff-

"You..."

"Hmm?" Lloyd raised a brow.

"You should have aimed for my other heart."

Lloyd's eyes widened as he tried to slash toward the monster's throat.

[Dungeon Master Ability]

[Induce: Dungeon Break]

Snap

But before he could, a finger snap thundered through the entire dungeon as a shockwave shot through the skies above.

"What did you do!" Lloyd asked, yet it was as if he already knew the answer.

His face showed a horrified expression he had never shown in his life.

"Hahahahahaha... HAHAHAHAHAHAAH." The monster cackled as it slowly regenerated, using the plant life around it to create new limbs and organs. Yet despite seeing the monster regenerate right before him, Lloyd didn't move a muscle.

No... He couldn't move a muscle.

A moment's decision might have cost him everything.

He didn't just fail Roderick and Lachlan but also everyone in the outside world.

'If this dungeon spills into the outside... Deroxa will be flooded. My family...' Lloyd's realized.

And it was all because he made the wrong decision.

All because he hit the wrong heart.

Of course, there was no way for him to know that the monster even had two or more hearts, but it didn't stop his mind from derailing in such a direction.

"Void walker child, I must thank you." The monster cackled.

"If only you had aimed for the right side, cut off my head or even my hand." The monster's smile widened as it cocked its arm back and extended its claws.

Its other arm wrapped around Lloyd's neck as the feeling of powerlessness hung over Lloyd's body.

Every hair on his body stood up; mentally, he knew it was the end.

"You've done well." A feminine voice spoke as a pair of red eyes stared into Lloyd's from the depths of the forest's shadows.

Of course, Lloyd had no problem seeing her due to his [Night Vision], yet he could not help but feel an unsurmountable amount of hope fill him to the brim when the figure stepped out of the shadow.

"Veronica?" Lloyd asked while the monster simply narrowed its eyes.

On the other hand, Veronica's stare became a light and warm smile before a calm yet astonishingly dense wind enveloped the area.

"Let go of him." Veronica commanded.

"Miss. Vampire? How about we share him, huh? I get half; you get half. Its a good deal, right?" The monster laughed, yet it did not back down.

"I wasn't asking."

A cold, merciless voice shivers down both Lloyd's and the monster's spines.

However, unlike Lloyd, who only shuddered for a moment, the shiver continued to shoot through the monster's body before it concentrated itself around the center of its torso. When the monster finally looked down, it realized why.

Using the word 'gaping' would have been an understatement since everything below the monster's neck had disappeared into thin air as a blood mist coated everything behind the monster red.

As its head slowly fell to the ground, Veronica's voice was the last thing it heard.

"I have no need to keep you around anymore."

Chapter 93: Dungeon Break [2] - A Vampire's Betrayal

Walking past the stunned Lloyd, Veronica snapped her fingers and instantly gathered the blood mist into a small red crystal that she swiftly stashed into her storage dimension.

There was no doubt the woman who had saved him was Veronica. She had the same aura, face, and abilities as the Veronica he knew, yet something was different.

"Veronica?!"

"Where have you been!?"

Several voices entered Lloyd's ears, yet he couldn't hear any of them. The most he could do was acknowledge their presence, but he was too busy looking at Veronica.

However, unlike Lloyd, the others were quick to acknowledge his presence.

"Veronica, watch out for him." Rex sneered while glaring at Lloyd.

"Why?" Veronica tilted her head innocently.

"He's a void walker." Hime practically growled while holding one of her bleeding arms that seemed to have lost all muscle strength to move even an inch.

While Tina held her tongue, if Lloyd were to look into her eyes, he would have seen the amount of betrayal she felt. She didn't know if any of what Lloyd had said was real anymore.

What if everything he said was a manipulation tactic for him to get closer to her.

What were his intentions in befriending her in the first place?

Slowly but surely, the development she had made, and the outgoing personality she had created over time, were all beginning to crumble and collapse like a dying star.

"I know." Veronica smiled while Lloyd's eyes widened in shock.

"What?" Rex practically shouted.

"I know. I always knew. From the moment you and Roderick brought him in, I knew he was a void walker." Veronica replied before placing her hands behind her back.

She was oddly calm, and the smile on her face felt different. It was no longer bright and warm like the sun.

It was a smile, but it felt cold and distant.

As if it was nothing but a reflex.

An unmovable mask.

Unlike the usual black and red armor she wore, she wore light red armor under a long black trench coat that oddly resembled the one Lloyd wore.

"You knew what he was this whole time, and you didn't tell us?!" Hime asked with suppressed rage.

"Yeah. Anyway, where are the rest?" Veronica asked while looking around.

"Dead..." Tina mumbled, yet everyone heard her clearly.

"That's too bad." Veronica shrugged.

"..."

"..."

"..."

"That's too bad? THAT'S TOO BAD!? THEY DIED BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T HERE! BECAUSE OF YOU AND THAT MONSTER BEHIND YOU THAT YOU WERE HIDING!" Hime roared, yet she quickly winced as unbearable pain shot through every inch of her body, yet the tears that came out of her tears were not those of pain but those of grief.

Veronica watched the scene coldly, yet she did not react despite one of her friends weeping on the ground.

"Veronica..." Lloyd finally spoke after throwing the thought of grabbing Felix on the way out to the back of his mind since they would be forced out soon enough.

"Yes, Lloyd?"

"I assume this is what he meant... You did this, didn't you..." Lloyd asked before raising his void rune-covered blade at Veronica as Null's voice echoed within his mind.

It took less than a second for Lloyd's rage, grief, and pain to fuel his killing intent to its maximum output, and within the same instant, all the remaining void energy shot down from the sky toward Lloyd in the form of an enormous purple beam of light.

"I have no idea what you're talking about." Veronica smiled as her coat flapped in the wind while her blood-red eyes pierced through the purple light and stared right into Lloyd's eyes.

"You set this all up..."

The boss monster was never supposed to be that strong.

You were never strong enough to erase someone an entire foot in the amethyst seal." Lloyd gritted his teeth as void energy pooled into his body.

"Is that what you think?" Veronica asked, her voice calm.

Lloyd knew he was being reckless. She easily killed a creature that could defeat the entire team, and since she had killed it when it had regained its peak strength, that made her far stronger than all of them combined.

Yet, Lloyd couldn't control himself. Unlike the rest of the team, he was just a 17-year-old who had lost two people he had grown close with through battles that stretched the lines between life and death. He had no idea if Felix was even alive anymore.

He was trying to keep his focus on the battle, yet he failed to end it.

His secret was out, and his entire team hated him, even Tina. He would most likely be executed when they leave the dungeon, and his family and friends will be killed or exiled for harboring a void walker despite it being unknowingly.

He was angry. He was grieving. And for all he knew, his family could be in danger because of him! Because he failed to end the monster. Because he made the wrong decision.

So when he realized what Null meant by his words, it all came out in the form of unbounded rage.

"You're the reason my family is in danger.... You're the reason Lachlan and Roderick are dead!" Lloyd roared as she shot forward with a pitch-black blade in his hand that he began to swing wildly.

However, despite seeing Lloyd coming toward her, Veronica didn't retaliate. She simply dodged the wild attacks with a sympathetic smile on her face.

She didn't speak, but she didn't have to. Lloyd felt her eyes mock him. Mock his humanity.

'Look at you. So pathetic.' Null spat.

The others were confused and trying to comprehend what was happening, yet Hime was surprisingly the first to start moving out of the three.

Despite her injuries, Hime was quick to ignite the same bloodlusted form she had used earlier as she sped across the grass field and attacked Veronica with everything she had.

However, unlike her treatment of Lloyd, Veronica wasn't as merciful when it came to anyone else.

Without hesitation, Veronica reached out her hand and grabbed Hime by the face before slamming her into the ground without a hint of hesitation.

Looking toward the incoming pitch-black blade, Veronica disappeared into thin air and appeared behind Lloyd as, her hands tightly wrapped around Lloyd's wrists.

Despite using all his strength, Lloyd couldn't budge an inch. Even the void energy shooting down from the sky barely burned her skin.

Of course, it was clear that the energy was doing damage, yet it was nothing compared to her vampiric regeneration speed, which seemed to work even under the stress of voice energy.

"Lloyd, I need you to calm down. I didn't kill any of them." Veronica tried to reason, yet Lloyd was having none of it.

[Aspect of Void + Flame Control

Hundreds, if not thousands, of purple balls of flames swirled in the sky above them both.

"Get... OFF ME!" Lloyd roared as the sky rumbled before several violet flame bullets shot toward Veronica while creating loud mind-rattling bangs in their wake.

BANG

BANG

BANG

Hundreds of shots were fired in rapid succession, yet Veronica didn't move an inch. The flame bullets were like flies to her that didn't even penetrate her coat.

Lloyd couldn't believe it. No matter how much he tried, he couldn't break free of Veronica's grip. It was as if his hands had been molded inside the densest and strongest metals of a dwarf star, making him completely incapable of moving his hands.

"Do you see them? Look at your so-called teammates." Veronica whispered while forcefully turning Lloyd toward Hime, Tina, and Rex.

"Look at their faces. Do you see their expressions?" She asked, but Lloyd closed his eyes and tried to turn his head away.

However-

[Blood control]

Spraying blood onto Lloyd's face, Veronica quickly used [Blood Control] to control the movements of his facial muscles.

His head refused to heed his commands, and despite his struggles, he was forced to look upon the disgusted and hateful expressions they held toward him.

With all the willpower Lloyd could muster, he clenched his jaw and barely closed his eyes, yet the scene was deeply imprinted into his mind. No matter how hard he tried to look past their looks of disgust and hate, now that he was forced to confront them, he felt as if he was being eaten from the inside out.

' "Do you see it?" '

Veronica and Null asked at the same time.

' "You can, can't you?" '

"Shut up..." Lloyd cried out.

"They hate you. These lessers you are trying to protect and the lessers you lost on your journey up to this point, none of them care about you. Look at the way they look at you as you struggle. As you try to protect them. They haven't moved a single muscle to help you." Veronica spoke, her voice filled with sympathy.

Yet, her voice felt warm and familiar. It was the voice she used when she nursed him back to health after their training sessions. It was the voice that gave him comfort and warmed his heart.

And it was the voice that made him slowly fall for her.

"S-Shut up... Please, shut up!" Lloyd pleaded, his eyes slowly and almost unnoticeably becoming dimmer... Becoming more distant. As if his soul was darkening, the human side he had been clinging onto for so long slowly coming untethered.

"They can't accept you for who you are, but I can. I can accept the void walker side of you, if you can accept the vampire side of me." Veronica turned Lloyd toward her and looked him directly in the eyes.

"You and me, we are different. We are superior. We aren't like these humans and lesser beings. We are people with power. We can change the universe!" Veronica smiled warmly.

"I am not the one who killed your so-called friends, Lloyd. You did. The lesser side of you did." She leaned in closer, to the point where Lloyd could feel her breath on his skin.

'Erase your humanity.'

"Because that lesser side of you makes you weak." she leaned forward and landed a deep kiss on Lloyd's lips. A kiss that made his problems subtly fade into the background while.

The grief and anger, it all disappeared.

And slowly, Lloyd stopped struggling until Veronica didn't have to hold his arms anymore.

"That's it. Just relax. I'll make this easy." She muttered after moving back a little to look into his dull, almost lifeless purple eyes.

[Void Walker Style]

Purple runes slowly moved up Lloyd's right arm before his pale white skin turned obision black.

Slowly raising his arm, Lloyd muttered-

[Star-Collapsing Fist]

Chapter 94: Dungeon Break [3] - Final Spell: Arcanum

[Star-Collapsing Fist]

Space warped around Lloyd's fist as it traveled faster than the eye could see.

Purple energy swirled around Lloyd's fist, and before Veronica could even react to the sudden attack, it was already right in front of her face. However, Veronica was no ordinary person either.

Thousands of calculations went through her mind in a split second as she instantly used [Blood Control] on herself to move as fast as possible.

She barely avoided the attack in time.

The moment Lloyd's fist passed her face by mere inches, everyone felt a shift. It was as if the wind pressure and density had suddenly changed, and at the same time, shudders went down the spines of everyone, including Lloyd.

Space ruptured right in front of Lloyd, and as he retracted his fist, he stared upon the rupture in space while taking on a feeling he didn't always get to feel.

The feeling of complete relaxation. It was unlike anything he had ever felt before from anything else. Not even Veronica could make his problems wash away like the sensation he got when looking or stepping into a void, and now that he was so close to one, the sensation was close to its peak.

The spatial tear shot into the distance for hundreds of meters. While it was extremely long, it was much narrower than its length, only coming at about twice the width of Lloyd's fist.

Cracks began to spread out of the space rupture, yet when the universe finds a vacuum, it tries its best to fill it with anything, especially when that vacuum is one between dimensions.

As if the very reality around the rupture was being warped, everything within a 2-meter radius of it got sucked in.

BOOM

And in less than half a second, it all imploded. Everything happened between the first and second, making it look like Lloyd had shot a beam out of his fist and created a 2-meter wide crate that went out for hundreds of meters. Yet, despite its speed, Veronica had more than enough time to become a blur and appear on a tree branch several meters away.

Veronica's abilities were way beyond Lloyd's, yet Lloyd still felt like he could beat her despite knowing that. Even though he knew using it would kill him.

The moment he broke through, he felt something inside him become shackled, and despite it being just a feeling, it was as if he knew exactly what had happened.

All his cooldowns had been set to 0, and since he had only cooldown, it meant that his deadliest ability had become usable again.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM

Lloyd's arm shot out several times a lightning speed as the fabric of reality raptured before his fist, creating a line of the pure abyss that seemed to shoot infinitely into the distance.

Veronica dodged quite easily at first, but the close Lloyd got to his ability wearing off, the faster he attacked and the more reckless he became.

While at first, he made sure to attack directly at Veronica, Lloyd began to attack everything around her too.

While it seemed like Veronica was simply dodging with ease to Lloyd, Veronica was beginning to struggle.

She had seen what happened to the tree behind her, and she could not help but think that the same would happen to her if she took a direct hit from Lloyd's attacks.

Lloyd's accuracy and prediction of her next moves were improving at a terrifying rate, so she quickly found herself being cornered before she knew it.

Zip

Zip

Zip

Lloyd's body flickered around as he essentially spammed the use of void step because he knew that he had an infinite supply of godsent energy shooting down from the sky.

He didn't care if he got to use the energy later. She had already killed 2 people he cared about, so he wasn't about to let her kill anyone else.

"Lloyd, I need you to listen to me!" She roared, yet her voice only enraged Lloyd more.

Every word that came out of her mouth was like a mockery of everything he stood for, and while he might not have stood for a lot, he knew one thing.

"I've heard enough." Lloyd spoke, his voice filled with so much rage that it felt like it was almost laced with void energy.

Veronica closer her mouth and stared at Lloyd for a moment before she seemed to have made a decision.

"So be it." She muttered while rising to the sky.

Blood began to surge toward her from all around the forest as animals and monsters alike turned into clumps of blood, leaving behind drained carcasses.

As the blood shot toward her, trees withered on their paths, and the orange leaves and grass turned dark brown. She wasn't just sucking the blood out of living creatures; she was sucking out their very life force, including the remaining life force from those who had fallen.

At the same time, Lloyd felt the runes on his arm begin to fade, and the instant they did, cracks shot through his entire arm as an unimaginable amount of pain made him feel like dropping to the ground and screaming at the top of his lungs.

Yet, he just looked at his crumbling arm slowly turning into ashes. His eyes were devoid of all emotion this time, yet deep within, he felt a spark.

A spark of something magnificent.

On the other hand, Veronica extended her arms in both directions and closed her eyes, causing all the blood she had gathered to turn into hundreds of spears.

When she opened her eyes again, the sky darkened, and her eyes shone like two crimson stars in the night sky, barely lighting up the area around her but making everything a shade redder.

The remaining blood shot toward her body and covered her from head to toe before the life energy entered the blood, causing it to shine bright crimson.

'The blood knight in crimson armor...'

It was an old story told to children to make them go to sleep. While to children, it seemed believable, to adults, it was just another fairytale story that came around when the earth had awoken its mana for the first time.

It was the story of a crimson knight who upheld justice and destroyed monsters wherever they found them.

According to the stories, after protecting humanity for hundreds of years, one day, the blood knight almost went insane after seeing all the evils of the humanity they had been trying to save for hundreds of years. Who were the real monsters?

Legend was that after killing an innocent child in its blood-lusting state, they gained a sense of their old self back and killed themselves to stop their rampage, and while some stories end there, others say that the blood knight's ghost still roamed the earth for the years to come.

The thing was that, every civilization that is still alive to this day had the same story for the first few hundred years of their newly awakened civilization.

But... What if the blood knight in crimson armor wasn't dead?

What if it had been hiding under our noses for thousands, if not tens of thousands of years.

What if they had inhabited a different body or reincarnated like some of the elven stories say.

What if they had been reborn as a vampire?

"I see..." Lloyd muttered as he looked away from his crumbling arm and into the sky where Veronica stood, staring into his soul with her vicious blood-red eyes.

"Last chance." She spoke emotionlessly while grabbing one of the blood spears and making it twice as large.

"To give up and join you, right?"

"Yes..." She simply replied.

"..."

"..."

"If I join you, will you let the others live? Including my family and my parents?"

"..."

"Answer the question." Lloyd growled.

"What if I say no?" She asked with a tilt of her head.

"Then I'll kill you."

"..."

"..."

"Ha... Ha Ha... Hahahahahahaahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha." Veronica began cackling, her laugh sounding more maniacal than it usually did.

However, before she could respond, a voice echoed from behind Lloyd, causing him to slowly turn around and look into the pair of dark brown eyes that stared right into his bright violet ones.

"Don't join her!"

"?" Lloyd raised a brow

"I know I haven't been very accepting... of you... But I was scared. I felt betrayed... and... I felt like I didn't know who you were.

I know you. I know who you are, and I know no one could fake what we all had. No matter what you hid from us, you will always be a part of us." Tina smiled warmly while raising her staff and letting out a deep breath before...

Swoosh

Three crimson spears shot through Tina's chest, yet her smile did not waver for an instant. No... It only got bigger. It only became greater.

Lloyd's eyes widened in horror as he felt rage almost overtake his senses again. He could almost feel Null's expression at that moment, yet when he looked into Tina's eyes, he stopped.

'So this is trust, huh...!' Null spoke inside Lloyd's mind.

"Even if you are a void walker, you're not a bad person, and I'll make sure you never turn out like the others did." She coughed as blood began to leak from her mouth before she slammed her staff into the ground.

[Final Spell]

"And hey... Even in death, I will always love you." She smiled before blood leaked out of her eyes and orifices.

[Arcanum]

Chapter 95: Dungeon Break [4] - Arcanum Tina vs The Blood Knight in Crimson Armor

[Final Spell]

[Arcanum]

As Tina slammed her staff onto the ground, unbelievable amounts of mana circled around her body, instantly destroying the spears that protruded from her chest and temporarily sealing up her wounds.

A look of pure shock appeared on Veronica's face, seemingly unable to believe her eyes.

"You shouldn't be capable of using that..." Veronica gritted her teeth while readying the hundreds of spears that floated around her.

Tina raised her staff again, pointing it at the sky before slamming it down again, gathering mana from the earth below her and absorbing it into the staff alongside the mana she had gathered from the sky.

Tina's hair fluttered in the wind as the violent storm began to pick up in speed, and before anyone knew it, thunder crackled through the clouds while rain poured from the skies like water out of a broken dam.

"Arcanum Domain." Tina whispered, yet her whispers thundered through the entire dungeon.

"Shit." Veronica gritted her teeth and clutched her fists tightly when she felt her control over the blood spears significantly weaken, yet despite trying her best, she could not recover her control in time.

A blue beam of light shot toward Veronica at speeds that rivaled Lloyd's void rapture.

Veronica quickly moved her hands and tried to block the attack by morphing her blood spears into blood shields, but after seeing them barely moving, she resorted to dodging by the skin of her teeth, slightly scorching her blood armor.

While she had lost most of her control over the blood spears, her control over her blood armor had remained the same because the armor was touching her body, making it nearly impossible for anyone of the same strength to dominate her control over it.

"Lloyd... I need you to leave. Follow Rex. He took Hime a few minutes ago and fled to the west." Tina spoke as her figure floated into the sky, her now bright blue eyes staring back at Lloyd. The roots of her hair were also turning silver, and while it made her look like an angel, to Lloyd, it looked like a timer.

"You're going to die if you carry on using that form." Lloyd argued, yet Tina simply smiled.

"So what? I was already going to die, why not make a difference as I go out." She replied, her words causing Lloyd to feel short bursts of dread.

Looking down in shame, Lloyd's eyes fell on his missing arm, yet when he looked again, he realized something.

Looking up at the purple beam of light shooting toward him, he felt a semblance of hope glistening deep in his heart.

"The breakthrough void energy is healing me," Lloyd muttered to himself while a dangerous thought passed through his mind.

BOOM

a blood-red magical aura exploded out of Veronica's body and flooded everything within a several-mile radius. Her aura wasn't like anything Lloyd had felt before.

It was filled with so much anger and killing intent that it felt more like the suffocating aura of an unbeatable monster.

'Half-step Third commandment...' Tina and Lloyd thought simultaneously as a grim realization hit them. Veronica was no normal person. She was a prodigy amongst prodigies.

With such a large gap in strength alongside her terrifying close combat abilities, it was nearly impossible for them to leave alive, no matter how much one of them tried to stall for the other to flee.

Gritting her teeth, Tina suddenly widened her eyes before tensing every muscle in her body. In the same instant, every blood spear that was once under Veronica's control was now covered in a bright blue and white hue before shooting toward Veronica at lightning speeds, all at once.

Veronica simply sneered when she saw the incoming spears, and with a burst of energy, she stopped them all in their tracks and destroyed the hue around them.

With a snap of Veronica's finger, the spears slowly turned around and shot in the other direction, absolutely desecrating most things in hundreds of meters.

Tina furrowed her brows before quickly creating several barriers around herself and Lloyd to protect them from the attack. She had sacrificed more than half her lifespan on the power she had been given, so there was no way in hell she was about to let any of it go to waste. She would make sure that the remainder of her friends would get out of the dungeon alive, so she wasn't about to take any chances.

The barriers around them almost broke after several spears hit them, but instead of waiting for the next attack, Tina sent one of her own out.

"Arcanum: World Blaster."

Suddenly, the skies above the dungeon lit up with a bright blue hue, and powerful magical energy enveloped the entire area.

Veronica's face scrunched up when she felt the overwhelming power in the air.

"What is this?" Veronica asked more out of curiosity than disbelief.

"Is this..." Lloyd's eyes widened before he decided that the best course of action would be to get as far away from Veronica as possible.

Hearing a rumble come from the clouds above, Veronica looked up with a raised brow. Yet, before she could even react to what she saw coming toward her, she was enveloped by an enormous beam of pure mana that shot Veronica into the ground while scorching everything around her.

The beam slowly began to expand, going from 2 meters in radius to 10, 20, 40, and finally a hundred meters in radius.

When the beam of pure mana finally disappeared, an eerie silence followed, only to be broken by the sound of Tina collapsing onto the ground.

Lloyd quickly rushed to her side and held her in his arms, trying to keep her awake.

"Tina... Are you okay?" Lloyd asked in a worried voice. Half her hair had become silver by this point, so Lloyd could only imagine the stress of using her domain to complete such an attack.

Her domain spell was the ability to control all mana in a certain radius around her. Of course, those with stronger wills and higher commandments can override this with the use of their own spells, but natural mana is free for the taking. She had simply pooled

every single natural mana particle in the area into a single blast that shot down from the sky.

Lloyd could see that the spell had temporarily sealed off her mana and energy, rendering her immobile and powerless while also putting a heavy strain on her life force, second commandment seals, and her mind.

"I have to admit... That was a pretty good attack." A voice echoed through the dungeon as Veronica slowly stepped out of the crater; her armor had taken the full brunt of the attack, causing it to be mildly scorched.

Cracking her neck, Veronica stepped out of the crater and onto the soft ground.

Seeing this, Tina attempted to stand up, yet the moment she did, she felt every cell in her body ache in pain to the point that not even her vocal cords had the bravery to move enough for her to scream.

"You've done enough..." Lloyd muttered while patting her head lovingly.

"I'll take it from here." He smiled as Tina begged him with her eyes not to fight Veronica, yet he had already made up his mind.

When he turned around to ensure Tina couldn't see his expression, Lloyd dropped the act and looked at Veronica with a soul-chilling stare.

"Oooo. I'm actually scared." Veronica laughed as she continued to walk forward. She knew Lloyd wouldn't activate his void breakthrough energy so close to Tina, so she was taking full advantage of it, not that it mattered anyway.

So far, it felt like Veronica was simply playing with the two of them, the same way a cat would play with the corpse of a mouse or a rat. In her eyes, they were nothing but playthings now, so she was simply extending the amount of time she gets to have fun with them.

"How do you like my new arm?" Lloyd asked while showing her his now-fixed arm.

Her eyes widened slightly before narrowing in suspicion, yet Lloyd closed his eyes and took a deep and shaky breath before she could say anything.

"What's wrong?"

"Scared?" Veronica teased.

"No..." Lloyd replied, his voice sounding cold and distant as if Null had taken over again, something that simply was not the case.

There were Lloyd's raw emotions, and even though he didn't like the idea of him being close to Null in any way, shape, or form, he could not deny that they were similar in a certain sense.

"Don't mind me too much." Lloyd whispered before opening his eyes and looking into her bright crimson ones.

"I'm just getting ready to finally kill something that isn't a dungeon monster..." Lloyd spat before getting into a fighting position.

"You? Killing me? You know what, I'd love to see you try." Veronica laughed, yet she quickly choked on that laugh as a powerful aura sent shivers down her spine and Tina's, Hime's, and Rex's spines.

"It's my turn..." Lloyd announced as his aura flared before an abyss appeared directly behind him.

[You feel a wandering presence watching you...]

The silhouette of a pair of black and violet eyes shone in the sky, and looked directly at Lloyd before closing and disappearing in the same instant.

[You have received Eris' blessing.]

[Void Channel]

Chapter 96: Dungeon Break [5] - [Void Channel]

[Void Channel]

Pain.

That was all Lloyd felt, so to save his mind from completely breaking, his mind went blank.

Violet runes traveled from his back to the rest of his body, slowly covering his entire body with at least 1 rune per square inch of skin. His aura turned cold and bland, yet at the same time, there was something sinister about an aura being so bland.

As if it was dead, without a single heartbeat to commemorate the fact that he had reached a threshold far beyond his current grasp.

So when his aura spread throughout the dungeon, it resonated with the dungeon itself, as if it had become a part of him. An entity of void under his control.

Silence prevailed for what felt like a lifetime for anyone who could think or feel at that moment, and for the first time since entering the dungeon, Veronica felt danger.

* .. *

* .. *

* .. *

Her face was paler than normal.

Every one of her breaths was ragged and staggered.

A single sweat drop streaked down her face, and the moment it fell off and hit the ground, the true battle had begun.

Lloyd's body looked like it was almost glitching. Like his entire body was slowly breaking apart, and the very universal code that kept him held together was being destroyed.

In a moment of desperation, Veronica threw her spear toward Lloyd with all the power she could muster.

The spear sounded like thunder as it broke through sound barriers and reached Lloyd in the space of a millisecond.

Yet...

Zip

Lloyd's body glitched and flickered before it appeared several hundred meters away with Tina in his arms again. He had deactivated the breakthrough energy that came from the sky the moment he decided to use [Void channel], so he didn't hurt Tina in any way by moving her away from Veronica's spear's range of destruction.

Veronica's spear had shot through the forest at tremendous speeds, destroying thousands of trees before hitting the autumn king's castle in the distance and blowing it to smithereens in a magnificent bright crimson energy explosion.

Looking at where Veronica was, Lloyd stared into the sky where hundreds of crimson blood spears rose to the air and pointed in his general direction, and with several loud sonic booms, they all fired toward him with half the speed of the last spear.

Yet, instead of dodging like before, Lloyd simply raised his hand and-

[Void Walker Style]

[Wave]

Waving his hands over the incoming spears, Veronica was forced to watch as Lloyd cast a mass teleportation technique, completely vanishing her attacks and sending them far into the distance, where Veronica wouldn't have any control over them anymore.

With a scowl, Veronica cut her hand and pooled out enough Blood to create a great sword the same height as her before using the Blood of her armor to blast herself at Lloyd.

Surprisingly, Lloyd did the same thing, shooting toward her like a violet star rising to the sky.

Veronica slashed down with everything she had, yet her sword slashed through a purple light.

The slash sent out an arch that scarred the ground with an enormous slash mark, yet she quickly realized that Lloyd was no longer in front of her.

The hairs at the back of her neck stood up, making her immediately turn around, swinging her blade toward the direction of danger just to find no one.

"Come out you coward!" She roared in rage while frantically looking around.

"Very well." A void echoed from all directions before a purple light shone in her peripherals, alerting her of his presence.

Yet, the light was not what it seemed.

Lloyd stood in thin air with limp arms and legs, and just like a man hanging from a rope, his presence was completely lifeless.

Glitching once more, several purple lights shone around Veronica from all directions as Lloyd's body seemingly began to appear at random locations, his figure multiplying into the hundreds.

[Void Walker Style + Shadow Manipulation]

[Void Clones]

Hundreds of clones reeled their arms back as void energy slowly covered their arms.

Veronica gritted her teeth but quickly acted before it was too late.

[Blood Knight Technique]

[Blood of the fallen]

Blood began to secrete from the ground, and before all of Lloyd's clones could attack, half was immediately pierced by hundreds of blood needles that shot right through them, destroying their bodies and causing them to disperse.

The other half teleported in time before throwing their fists forward and blasting a void rapture toward Veronica, yet now that there were fewer of them, she was quickly able to dodge the attacks by using her peak speed.

"Aren't you quite weak..." Lloyd's voice echoed again as the remaining clones propelled themselves at Veronica.

Landing on the ground, Veronica quickly spun to cut one in half, yet just like the original Lloyd, they would teleport away at the last moment before sending out a quick jab at her.

"For a half-step 3rd commandment?"

The clones began to pile up quickly, and while that made them easier to cleave through, they were also rapidly chipping away at Veronica's armor and body.

Of course, she could regenerate, but all things have a limit, and the clones testing that limit.

Veronica was slowly being overwhelmed by the number of hits she was taking, but at the same time, she was learning and growing. Her power remained the same, yet the efficiency of her attacks improved dramatically.

She got used to teleportation of the clones in less than a minute, creating attacks that looked like they were aiming for the clones themselves, but actually aimed at the area she knew they would teleport.

Minutes felt like hours to her, and by the end, there were only 20 clones left.

She felt a spike in the power of the clones around her, and while she didn't think much of it at first, she felt a shiver down her spine when she saw the clone's faces deform into disgusting, creepy smiles.

Their eyes and mouths were completely black and hollow, while their lips quite literally morphed to stretch from one ear to the other.

Without a second of hesitation, they all created void raptures that pierced toward Veronica like small beams of pure darkness.

Veronica tried her best to dodge the attacks but quickly realized something.

'They aren't aiming for me?' She thought, but when she looked at the patterns of attacks, her eyes widened in horror.

Looking into the sky, Veronica watched as it lit up with thousands of purple stars.

However, she wasn't looking at the true threats.

All the clones suddenly appeared right next to her before quickly pouncing on her, yet now, when she looked into their eyes to kill them, she did not see black. Instead, she saw bright purple flames slowly rising from the depths of their bodies. All her danger senses were going off, yet she was far too late.

[Aspect of Void + Flame Control]

[Void Flames]

A beam of purple light shot into the heavens, and in the next second, a violet explosion encapsulated everything within a mile and destroyed anything within 5 miles of the blast.

Of course, Lloyd had moved Tina very far away from the blast radius, yet when there was nothing but smoke and scorched earth, Lloyd was there, floating in the air and simply staring down at the aftermath of his ability.

"You are quite the cockroach, you know." Lloyd spoke.

He had already regained consciousness, and while the pain was barely bearable, with the goal of killing Veronica in mind, he couldn't think of anything else.

"I'm... I'm going to kill you." Veronica stated that as she barely stood up, her armor was half destroyed and her body severely wounded.

"You'll pay for this!" She roared, her eyes turning to large slits as her passive ability [Apex Predator] activated.

Lloyd could feel her power increasing dramatically, and while he knew he had the upper advantage so far, he also knew that could change very easily.

So, since she was using her trump card, why shouldn't he use his?

SNAP

[Eris' Blessing + Void Control]

[Reality Deteriation]

As if the entire world around them had begun to break down at the snap of Lloyd's fingers, the ground began to distort before everything in the distance started to curve upwards.

'What the fuck...' Veronica stopped in her tracks. She was no longer angry, nor was she shocked anymore.

There was ground above her, to the right of her. It was as if they were encased in a box, which only meant one thing.

"A true domain." She muttered with a terror-stricken face while Lloyd simply tilted his head at her words.

"You're a monster." A muttered before she slowly closed her eyes.

"I should have seen it sooner. It was you, all along, hasn't it?" She asked while forming a blood spear in her right hand and pointing it at Lloyd.

"I have no idea what you are talking about." Lloyd replied without much thought while creating a violet blade out of pure void energy.

"I finally understand all your unexplained abilities and tremendous power despite not having even reached the first commandment. I finally understand my purpose." She muttered before her body turned into a blur.

"My purpose, is to make sure you never get out of this dungeon alive!" She roared before slamming her foot into the ground and shooting herself into the sky.

"Don't act like you're the good guy." Lloyd sneered, his tone unamused at the bullshit she was spouting, but without thinking twice, he extended his hand toward her and...

[Pull]

Creating his fist, Lloyd pulled his hand back, and as he did so, reality before him distorted, and despite both of them not having moved a single inch, Veronica was now right in front of Lloyd, his blade traveling toward her neck in a violet blur.