

## I Created 354

### Chapter 354

As Zhi Ruo and Mei Lin make their way through the crowd, they overhear snippets of conversations. The general sentiment towards the Starlight Sect is far from sympathetic. "They deserve it," sneers one onlooker, not bothering to lower his voice. "Always bullying those weaker than them. I hope their Sect Master never comes out."

Another voice chimes in, this one belonging to a member of another sect. "The Starlight Sect has had it coming for a long time. If their Sect Master perishes in there, it'll be a boon for all of us. No more tyranny."

The disdain and hope for the Starlight Sect's downfall are evident in the crowd's murmurs. It's clear that their reputation for cruelty and dominance has earned them few allies among the cultivation world.

Zhi Ruo, overhearing these comments, clenches his fists tightly, a mixture of anger and resolve flashing in his eyes. "Let them talk," he says under his breath, his voice laced with venom. "When I become Sect Master, I'll make them all pay."

Mei Lin, standing beside him, remains silent, her expression unreadable. She knows better than to voice her thoughts amidst the hostile crowd. The weight of their recent ordeal and the reality of their sect's precarious position weigh heavily on her.

After an hour of tense waiting, the atmosphere suddenly shifts. A collective gaze turns towards the tower as the portal at its base shimmers intensely. Whispers surge through the crowd like a wave as six figures emerge from the glowing portal, their steps unsteady, their expressions a mix of relief and exhaustion.

It's the Sect Master Tianwei and his five elders of the Starlight Sect, each bearing the marks of fierce battles. Their robes are torn, and their bodies are bruised, but it's Elder Lianzhao who draws immediate attention. Supported by two of his fellow elders, Lianzhao's condition is dire, his injuries so severe that he seems to be teetering on the brink of death. His once vibrant aura is now dim, barely clinging to his battered form.

A hushed silence falls over the crowd, the weight of the moment palpable in the air. The return of the Starlight Sect's leaders, especially in such a battered state, is a sight few had anticipated.

Whispers and murmurs ripple through the onlookers, their expressions a mixture of surprise and schadenfreude. The Starlight Sect, known for its dominance and ruthlessness, now seems vulnerable, its leaders wounded and diminished.

The teachers and the remaining students of the Starlight Sect, who had been waiting anxiously for any sign of their leaders, rush forward. Their initial relief at seeing the Sect Master and the elders quickly turns to concern as they grasp the severity of Elder Lianzhao's injuries.

Sect Master Tianwei, despite his own injuries, maintains a stoic facade. His gaze sweeps across the crowd, a silent challenge to any who might see this moment of weakness as an opportunity. Yet, it's Elder Lianzhao's critical condition that dominates the scene. His labored breathing and pallid complexion are stark reminders of the tower's dangers.

"Quickly, we need to get Elder Lianzhao back to the sect for immediate treatment," Sect Master Tianwei commands, his voice carrying the weight of his authority despite his weakened state.

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"We never expected the tower to be this perilous," murmurs one of the teachers, his voice laced with worry. "To see Elder Lianzhao in such a state..."

Among the crowd, the reactions are mixed. Some can't hide their glee at the Starlight Sect's predicament, their whispers sharp with barely concealed delight. "Looks like the mighty Starlight Sect isn't invincible after all," someone comments, their voice dripping with satisfaction.

Yet, there's also a grudging respect for the Sect Master and his elders, who ventured into the tower and returned, albeit battered. "They may be tyrants, but they have courage," admits another onlooker, his tone begrudgingly admiring.

As the Starlight Sect members quickly form a protective circle around their leaders, preparing to transport them back to their sect for healing, the crowd's attention remains fixed on them. The event has shifted perceptions, revealing vulnerabilities where none were thought to exist.

In the midst of the tense atmosphere, a voice cuts through the crowd, clear and authoritative. It belongs to the sect master of a well-known sect, a powerful figure in the cultivation land, although their sect is beneath the Starlight Sect in terms of strength, they are still second in this land.

"Sect Master Tianwei," he calls out, stepping forward with a calculated grace. "With all due respect, since you are all done with exploring the tower first..." His voice trails off, but his smirk is evident, a silent indication of his inner glee.

Sect Master Tianwei, still supporting the gravely injured Elder Lianzhao, turns to face the speaker. His usual commanding presence is diminished by his injuries, yet he manages to maintain a facade of calm. The challenge laid bare before him, coming from someone who, on any other day, would cower in his presence, grates on him deeply.

The sect master's smirk grows as he continues, his tone laced with faux courtesy, "Didn't you say that you would share all that you know inside the tower?" His words are a thinly veiled jab, and they resonate with the crowd, stirring whispers and murmurs of anticipation.

Tianwei can only grit his teeth in response. The pain of his injuries and the humiliation of being called out in such a manner weigh heavily on him. It's a stark reminder of his current vulnerability and the precarious position of the Starlight Sect. "Of course, I'm a man of my word," he finally replies, his voice strained but steady.

He takes a deep breath before beginning to share his story, the tale of their harrowing experience within the mysterious tower. "Inside the tower... there's a different world," he starts, his voice gaining strength as he recounts their journey. "We were teleported according to our cultivation levels. The place where we elders were taken to was a realm of floating islands."

The crowd listens intently, hanging on his every word. "And the students," Tianwei continues, "they were sent to a land of the dead." His revelation sparks a wave of murmurs among the onlookers, their curiosity piqued by the mention of such perilous environments.

As Tianwei shares his story, the implications of his words become clear. The tower is no simple structure; it's a trial, a test of strength and will, with dangers untold. The crowd's reaction is a mix of awe and fear, the allure of the tower's mysteries now tempered by the reality of its challenges.

At that moment, Tianwei understands that his original plan to monopolize the tower is no longer viable. The collective gaze of the cultivators is fixed upon him and his sect.

In the midst of this charged atmosphere, Sect Master Tianwei stands tall, despite the evident toll the tower's challenges have taken on him and his elders. The eyes of the cultivation world are upon him, some filled with scorn, others with a reluctant respect. As he recounts the harrowing experiences within the tower, a realization dawns upon him, one that remains unspoken but heavily weighs on his mind.

"Also, the tower is too much for my sect to monopolize," Tianwei thinks to himself, observing the rapt attention of the crowd. "If this tower becomes more popular, even the central region might get interested in this too. I need to change my plan."

The crowd, absorbing every detail of Tianwei's recounting, begins to buzz with excitement and anticipation. The mention of different realms within the tower, each posing its own set of challenges and rewards, ignites a spark of adventure in the hearts of many. The prospect of uncovering rare treasures and secrets, of testing one's mettle against unknown dangers, becomes too enticing to ignore.

Among the onlookers, a young cultivator from a lesser-known sect can barely contain his excitement. "Did you hear that? Different worlds inside the tower!" he exclaims to his companion, his eyes alight with the thrill of potential discovery. "We might get lucky and find a rare treasure!"

His companion, equally captivated by the possibilities, nods in agreement. "Yes, and with the Starlight Sect's leaders so gravely injured, this might be our chance to explore without their interference. Let's gather our sect and prepare to enter the tower."

As word of Tianwei's revelations spreads, the initial hesitance of the crowd begins to dissipate, replaced by a fervent eagerness to explore the tower. Groups of cultivators from various sects start discussing strategies and forming alliances, their spirits buoyed by the thought of embarking on this new adventure.

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Even as Tianwei watches the crowd's reaction, his thoughts are on the future. The tower's mysteries have proven too vast for any one sect to claim dominion over. In acknowledging this, he prepares to adapt, to find new ways to maintain the Starlight Sect's influence in a world that has suddenly become much more uncertain.

In the midst of the bustling crowd, Zhi Ruo and Mei Lin exchange a knowing glance, their minds buzzing with the implications of Tianwei's revelations. The once-feared Starlight Sect, now battered and vulnerable, stands at a crossroads, its fate uncertain in the wake of the tower's mysteries.

"I never imagined the tower held such wonders," Zhi Ruo muses, his voice tinged with awe as he watches the crowd's reaction. "To think that there are other worlds waiting to be explored..."

As the crowd's excitement builds, the tower stands silent and imposing, its secrets hidden within, waiting for the next brave souls to uncover them. The adventure has just begun, and the cultivation world will never be the same again.