

Last System 158

Chapter 158 - Corrupted Tournaments

The spiritual energy that would usually refuse to buckle unless forced to do so was now flowing seamlessly through Mia's body.

Every strike of her fist or foot against the training pillar would add to her Qi's momentum.

Soon, every last of her moves turned in tune with the natural flow of her inner energy. Every twist, every contraction of the muscle, or attack itself would be just a part of the melody rang by Mia's power.

'It's all working now,' Mia thought, immersed in her training way more than she normally would. 'It's like adding oil to a burning plate,' Mia realized, lost in the fervor of striking the stone before her.

Strike, strike, strike and strike. Mia's Qi continued to converge on one point, condensing well beyond any reason.

For every bit of energy lost in the condensation, the more spiritual force would flow into Mia's veins, nourishing her body back to the perfect shape.

'Just a little bit more,' she thought, speeding her movements up. Her attacks would fall on the spikes of the energy in her body. Her swings would happen in the lows, tuning into the rhythm of her own energy.

And then it just happened.

There were no tribulations or trials. Once Mia's spiritual energy reached sufficient density, it simply collapsed on itself.

All at once, all the mana within Mia's array vanished, sinking into the abyss of the hole that opened up in Mia's soul.

Then, an explosion of energy stabilized the situation when mana somehow found its way into the formation.

'MORE!' Mia shouted in her thoughts, feeling how the massive amounts of energy coursed through her body only to end up sucked into her core and used as a building material for it.

In this state, time lost its meaning. Mia was stuck within the flow of spiritual energy, unable to see, unable to feel. She couldn't feel her body, but she could tell her fists continued to strike the stone.

And her attacks continued to refine her energy as well!

But there was a limit to how far one could go in one go. After what seemed like an eternity, Mia finally came back to her senses, only to realize that a massive chunk of her soul had turned into a magical core.

'It feels weird,' she thought, looking down at her own chest as if trying to take a look at her core. Yet, as she raised her eyes over at her hands, she realized that there was something far more worthy of her attention.

So far, everything that her core did was sucking the spiritual energy in. But now, once it had already formed, it started spitting it back out!

As the core was just a part of the greater system of Mia's cultivation, the returned energy would reenter the flow of Mia's Qi, nourishing her body even further than it already was nourished.

'It's like the quality of the Qi from the core is higher than the one I can refine myself,' Mia realized the crux of the difference before finally shaking her head and looking around.

She managed to achieve a breakthrough with just a single cultivation tonic...

'No, that's not it,' Mia quickly reflected on what she could remember from the event. 'That spiritual energy... It had to come from somewhere,' she thought, taking a look around.

And surely enough, Veila knelt by the place where Mia previously left her box at. She had the spiritual core in her gloved hand, ready to throw it inside at a moment's notice.

"Did you throw that core inside before?" Mia asked, leaning her head in curiosity to the side.

"You looked starved for the energy," Veila instantly put away the stone in her hand as she started to excuse herself. "I might not know much about cultivation outside of what's common knowledge... But having all your needs catered to is part of that common knowledge," she said, not moving an inch from where she was.

Her intentions were good, but she wasn't going to shy away from the punishment. After all, she just used someone else property without their approval!

"Don't worry, I'm not blaming you," Mia smiled gently.

'That influx of energy really helped me a lot back then,' she thought, recalling the feelings she could experience in a flashback then.

Starved for energy didn't even come close to describing just how desperate she was back then.

Still, it was a strange feeling. She held on to this desperation for only the shortest of moments, yet it felt as if she was stuck in the limbo of lacking Qi for ages.

"It actually helped a lot," Mia added once she was done scouring through her memories.

"That's a relief," Veila said, breathing out a sigh of relief as she collapsed to the back. "Still, I can't even get a good look at your cultivation right now," she added in a slightly dissatisfied murmur.

"Are you hiding it from me? Or is it really fluctuating so much?"

"What do you mean?" Mia asked, surprised by Veila's words, only to look down at herself once again.

And there it was, the event that Veila spoke about.

Ever since Mia managed to establish her core, she believed that she was now free to take a moment and digest what she obtained before figuring out how she should train from now on.

But from the looks of things, it appeared as if she wasn't privy to the privilege of rest.

Her spiritual energy was raging as if it was boiling in a pot. With every breath of hers, every beat of her heart, more and more refined mana would flow out of her core, nourishing the flesh around it.

Bit by bit, Mia's body continued to improve, even without the girl doing any work, all the while her mana continued to surge in!

"I..." Mia muttered, unsure how to reply. She then raised her eyes on the girl's face with a look of helplessness in her eyes. "I'm not doing anything. It's happening on its own," Mia quickly explained the situation with her own words.

Thankfully, Mia's stress was short-lived. Before long, the mana in her body started to settle before finally achieving an equilibrium.

The influence of her core continued to grow with each passing second, but it was now a natural process rather than the forceful expansion it did before.

"Those resources are insane," Mia muttered, more to herself than to anyone else, while casting a glance at the box with the stones and vials. "But they run out so quickly," she added, twisting her lips in an ugly grimace.

"Quickly?" Veila opened her eyes wide, shocked by Mia's words. "You managed to break through the core establishment stage and reach well into the half of the spirit manifestation. You are not even done yet..." Veila shook her head. "And you still think those run out pretty quickly?" she asked, refusing to acknowledge Mia's words.

"That's not what I meant," Mia quickly shook her head, removing the grimace from her face. "It took a cultivation tonic and a spiritual stone for me to break through the core stage," she pointed out. "And I believe my extensive effort so far also had a big role to play in that," she added.

"What does that have to do with anything?" Veila asked, slightly confused about Mia's sudden explanation. "I mean, one's cultivation slows down as one climbs higher, is that what you are hitting on?" she asked, trying her best to understand her friend.

Yet, before Mia could give her answer, people started to converge on their location, all eager to congratulate Mia on her advance.

It wasn't an easy thing to sense the subtle changes in one's cultivation, especially while focusing on one's own training.

But people watched Mia ever since she appeared on the training field with cultivation materials. The moment she drank the cultivation tonic, nearly half of all the people in the location were focusing on her instead of their own fists.

Even with all this attention, it wasn't easy to take notice. Or rather, it wouldn't be easy for the people that Mia was accustomed to dealing with.

Using cultivating resources as the main way of lifting their own power-up, the sponsored disciples never developed the acute sense for the spiritual power.

They simply had no need to.

But in this field, in the training area for the normal disciples, it wasn't the case.

Every last person that was present was someone who trained his ass off to grow, even despite a complete lack of resources.

Combining their acute spiritual sense with already focusing their attention on Mia, it was no wonder they were quick to notice the change.

"Thank you, thank you," she replied impassively to all the praise that people showered on her.

'No, thank you,' she thought in her head, easily recognizing the greedy looks of the many.

They didn't congratulate her because of her achievement. They were simply using this opportunity to get on her good side.

'Normally, that would make me think less of them... but it only shows how determined they are to grow,' Mia thought before moving her eyes back on Veila.

Stuck in the crowd, she didn't expect Mia to actually keep paying attention to her.

"Tell me, please," Mia approached her friend. "Is there any way for normal disciples to obtain cultivating resources?" Mia asked.

'If the need for resources increases as one's power grows, then this sponsorship isn't worth much at all!' she realized, instantly moving on to look for other ways to grow stronger.

"There are some, but only on the paper," Sander said, appearing amidst the crowd out of nowhere. "Congratulations on the breakthrough," he added with a gentle smile.

"What do you mean?" Mia asked, puzzled by the unexpected response.

"You see..." Sander hesitated for a moment only to shake his head sideways. "No, you should ask Veila instead. Sorry for interrupting," he said before scurrying off.

'What the hell was that?' Mia thought, confused by his sudden appearance and even quicker retreat.

"Forgive him; this is one of his weak points," Veila muttered, stepping inside Mia's array to shield herself from all the people in the crowd. "You see, there are tournaments for the disciples. It's a simple team battle. Whichever team wins, they get the real prize," she explained in a few concise words.

"Isn't this a great opportunity?" Mia asked, surprised that there actually was a way to obtain resources for normal disciples.

'Right, if something like this exists, they have no benefit of sharing this information far and wide,' she realized before refocusing herself on the girl.

The crowd all around them made it hard to talk properly.

"It's not," Veila shook her head as she replied. "Those tournaments are heavily corrupted. Basically, only sponsored disciples participate nowadays, as there is no point for us to do so as well," she said.

"And why is that?" Mia pressed on the topic, feeling as if she was nearing some kind of important reveal.

"Because it's all a ruse," Veila spat her words out, annoyed just by touching upon the topic. "They basically came to an agreement and are rotating the winners," she explained. "That's why, whenever a 'normie' team dares to show up, they simply combine forces to bully us out," she added, turning her hands into fists.

After a few more minutes of explanation, Mia knew everything that she needed to know about the tournaments. The only downside about learning it all was having her mental state shaken by the sheer audacity of the sponsored disciples.

For them, the rewards of the tournament were meager, practically negligible. The only reason why they kept on blocking the tournaments was to deprive the normal disciples of the resources!

'And the sect is even allowing that?' Mia thought, struggling to fit the pieces together. 'Isn't this place supposed to heavily lean towards meritocracy?' she asked herself.

Then, she shook her head to get rid of all those useless thoughts.

'No, it doesn't matter,' she thought, moving her eyes back at Veila.

"So we have you, most likely Sander and me. We need two more," she said, a plan already hatching in her head.

"Huh?" Veila shrugged, surprised. "What are you talking about?" she asked.

Mia ignored the question and pressed on.

"Do you think you can find two more people?" she asked. "Preferably talented, but the willingness to work harder than anyone is a must," she explained her desire.

"Wait, don't tell me..." Veila muttered, catching on to Mia's plan.

"That's right," Mia smiled gently at the shocked girl. "I plan to make the team on my own!"