

Last System 250

Chapter 250 - Im Sorry, Elder

"So, do you think they will pick us?" Veila asked as their group slowly made their way up the street. She didn't look at Mia while asking this question, too busy bathing her own face in the warm rays of the morning sun.

"I don't know," Mia shrugged her shoulders as she replied. "And I could hardly care at this point," she added, rolling her eyes.

It wasn't Veila's fault for asking this question.

Given it was the selection day today, when the participants of the coming intersect tournament would be chosen, Veila was fully within her right to ask this question.

But after learning everything that she did over the past few days, Mia's approach towards the topic changed drastically.

"Huh?" Veila shrugged in surprise, instantly giving up on her previous relaxation to cast her eyes at Mia's profile. "That's something new, isn't it?" she pointed out, leaning her head to the side as if in an attempt to get a better look at Mia's face.

"You see, there were two main reasons why I wanted to join the tournament," Mia replied after taking her time to slowly breathe all her air out and then take a long and deep breath in. "I wanted a chance to get back at someone with whom I have yet to settle the score, and secondly, I wanted to find yet another way to let our group rise," she explained before turning mute as if her words were self-explanatory.

Seeing that she wouldn't receive any further explanations from her friend, Veila took her time to process Mia's words.

"Giving up on your personal fight, I can understand," Veila said after taking her time to think through her next words. "But the other reason, letting our group raise?" she then pointed out, once again glancing at her friend's profile. "Did you give up on it as well? And if that's the case, can you tell me why?"

It wasn't a tricky question despite sounding like one.

Mia only needed a single look at the honest look in Veila's eyes to realize the girl was genuinely surprised and curious rather than trying to uproot her position within the group.

Mia then released yet another long sigh before raising her face and closing her eyes, allowing the sun to cover her skin with its gentle warmth.

"I was forced to realize just how meaningless all of our struggles were," Mia said in a disheartening tone.

"And what do you mean by that?" this time, the voice behind this question was rougher, proving it wasn't Veila who posed it.

'Sander?' Mia guessed, slowly lowering her eyes and casting a quick look to her side.

After spending several weeks together, she could easily recognize her teammates just by their voices alone. As such, it came as no surprise when her idea was spot on.

Even though Sander's voice was hushed, clearly aimed at stopping the other disciples around them from listening in on their discussion, she could still easily recognize the innate roughness behind it.

"Let's just say that I saw just how little our combined power matters when confronted with truly powerful people," Mia explained in a way that didn't reveal too much while at the same time showcasing her line of thought.

Yet, what she couldn't control, were her lips that turned into an ugly grimace the second she recalled the auras of Arganar and Ackhart.

Even though the former of the two turned out to be someone whose interests aligned with hers, she still couldn't stomach just how oppressive Ackhart's aura was.

'Even though I'm almost at the seventh stage, just recalling that memory stifles my breath,' she thought, clenching her hands into fists.

From that point on, Mia turned silent.

The friends that attempted to lightly interrogate her before either had the courtesy not to push any deeper into the topic, or they noticed her expression and realized that any attempt at doing so would be futile.

Before long, the entire crowd of people that they were a part of finally reached its destination.

It was a relatively unpopular plaza, hidden in the deep part of the sect's outskirts. While there was no rule stopping people from coming here during a different time...

There was hardly any reason for anyone to do so as it was nothing but a vast, empty courtyard with nothing but a small stand located in its middle.

'Huh?' Mia opened her eyes when she detected she was about to bump into someone. Realizing that they arrived at the spot, she stopped her steps and froze in place, only for her eyes to widen the second she scanned the area.

'Since when does this sect have so many disciples?' she thought, stunned by the full scale of the crowd gathered in a single place.

'Is this some sort of scheme to hide us in the crowd?' Mia thought, looking around. 'In such a massive gathering, there is hardly any chance anyone will notice us!' she realized.

For a moment, Mia's soul wrestled with her morals, unwilling to accept such a blatant way of trying to influence the proceedings.

But this feeling lasted only for a moment, only for Mia to roll her eyes and shrug her arms a moment later.

'Well, whatever,' she thought before turning her eyes towards the small street from which a group of elders walked.

She has long decided what the right approach towards the intersect tournament should be.

Instead of trying to please the royal servants of the auction hall by trying hard to join the tournament or doing the opposite by going for the breakthrough, Mia simply decided to go with the flow.

If her group were to be selected, she would participate to the best of her ability. But on the other hand, she didn't do a single thing to increase her chances of actually getting selected either.

Just like she explained earlier to Veila, now that she saw the true scale of who her and Arthur's true enemies were, she couldn't care less about small scuffles with Jenne back at the Skyladder's sect!

"Welcome, everyone," one of the elders stepped ahead from the rest of his group before jumping right at the podium in the middle of the plaza. "I'm pleased to see that you answered our call so readily," he announced, scanning the crowd with his eyes.

"First thing first," the elder wasn't going to give anyone the time to process his opening sentence. "Anyone below the fifth rank, you are free to go back to your usual tasks," the man announced, only for a wicked smile to appear on his lips. "We cannot risk our sect's face by putting weaklings on the tournament," he added, clearly not bothered by the potential resentment he was creating.

'Is this an attempt to give those below the fifth stage more motivation to keep on training?' Mia thought.

While she didn't care about the selection process on its own, she couldn't help but get curious about the reasons behind the elder's choice of words.

Mia looked around, only to see the confirmation of her thoughts.

Quite a lot of disciples turned angry. They clenched their hands or cast angry looks at the elder... But nevertheless, with a single command of this man, a great majority of the crowd simply dispersed before disappearing from the plaza.

"That's..." the elder hesitated when the people stopped moving, leaving only a small group of people standing in the place. The look on his face alternated from surprise, through happiness mixed with disbelief all the way to the same stoic expression he had initially.

Yet, instead of pushing the proceedings through, the man turned his head around and whispered something to the rest of the elders that came to the place with him.

'What, did he expect that there would be far fewer disciples left?' Mia thought, unable to stop a smile from forming on her lips. 'I guess the results of my actions took him by surprise!' she thought, her soul tickling in just the right way.

Even though Mia gave up on her attempts at changing the sect from within, she still couldn't help but feel a sense of profound satisfaction when she saw just how many normie disciples managed to reach the fifth stage so quickly.

"Now then," the elder finally composed himself and turned his eyes back to the remaining disciples on the plaza below his stage. "All those below the sixth stage of cultivation are free to go as well," he stated, this time managing to take Mia by surprise.

'Is he really that confident?' she thought, instantly noticing the drawback of her earlier happiness.

It appeared that upon noticing just how many people managed to reach the fifth stage, the elder came to the wrong conclusion that this increase would be the same for the people of one stage higher!

"While your progress is astounding, it's not yet enough," the elder stated, clearly treating those of the fifth stage differently than all those below it. "But keep up the good work, and you might have a chance during the next tournament!" he shouted in an attempt to encourage those that he just chased away.

Once again, the plaza turned chaotic as most of the remaining disciples took and left. Yet, this time, this process took considerably less time to conclude.

Mia looked around and then counted the remaining people. Outside of her group, five more disciples remained standing, bringing the total tally of the sixth stage disciples to ten.

"Anyone of the seventh stage or above, if you are here, then stop this folly right now and leave," the elder squinted his eyes as he looked at every last of the disciples only to let his eyes rest on the face of a particular one amongst them. "You should be clearly aware that only those below the seventh stage of cultivation can join the tournament!"

"Tsk," the man whose face attracted the elder's attention clicked his tongue before turning around and leaving the place as well.

In the end, only Mia's group of five, Dirk, Kathia, and two other disciples that Mia didn't recognize, remained on the field.

'So they came here as well,' Mia thought, finally noticing the presence of her former rivals.

At the current stage of her life, she couldn't care less about the sponsored disciples. Their actions were infuriating... but that was it. Even Jenne's actions were far more despicable, and Mia still decided to just forget about him in the face of the real threat.

Yet, as Mia moved her eyes on the elder, she realized that he still ended up pretty surprised.

'He expected a lot less of us to remain?' Mia guessed, only to shake her head. 'No, if that were to be the case, he wouldn't let go of the fifth stage disciples,' she realized before shaking her head.

There was no point in trying to figure out what that elder was thinking.

Still, the moment of consternation lasted for only a while before the elder regained his composure and jumped down from the stage.

He then approached the first disciple in the line that formed after everyone else left.

"Why do you want to participate?" he asked, looking right into the man's eyes.

"I want to prove the greatness of the Tuxi sect!" the man shouted in response, pushing his chest forward and his chin up.

There wasn't even a hint of hesitation in his voice or actions. Most likely, he already knew such a question would appear and took his time to prepare for it.

"Why do you want to participate?" The elder moved on to Kirk, who was next in line.

"After receiving so much help from the sect, giving it a reason to stand proud amongst others is the least I can do!" Kirk stood at attention and shouted his answer with confidence.

Kathia's answer to the question struck the same buttlicking tones.

"Why do you want to participate?" The elder finally reached Mia, asking her the same question that he asked everyone else.

Mia put a small smile on her lips as she looked the elder directly into his eyes.

"I'm sorry, elder, but I don't think my answer will satisfy you," she answered calmly, ignoring the snickers that instantly followed from her left where the sponsored disciples stood.