

Last System 281

Chapter 281 Turning Point (1.6)(End Of The Sequence)

I struggled; there was no denying it.

For every second that my body was coated in the mass of mana creating my avatar, more and more impurities would go into my flesh, corrupting my potential even further.

In theory, I could simply create more processing stones to increase how much energy I could filter through my formations...

But doing so would require me to find time to do so. And I didn't even need a single attempt to know that the monster right in front of me wouldn't give me such a chance.

As such, for every blow that I would execute, two things would happen. First, yet another chunk of the violet mana that made up the monster's body would fall to the ground. As it was coated in a thin layer of pure energy, the monster couldn't reabsorb it, leaving the former chunks of its body for me to consume. Yet, that was the end of the good news.

Because for every punch of mine, my corruption would also raise.

'It's already point-sixty-three,' I thought, gnashing my teeth as I continued to push my right first, then left fist, only to follow up with two kicks and then repeat the entire process.

In theory, this corruption wasn't that bad yet. After all, the last time it grew for me, it did for three whole points all at once!

What was the worrying part was that this time, my corruption didn't rise alone. It brought the capacity corruption along, and this statistic was far more dynamic with how quickly it grew.

'It's already seventeen-point-four,' I thought, sparing but an instant to glance over at my status, displayed in the corner of my vision. 'At this rate, I don't think I will be able to beat this thing before I lose half of my potential,' I thought grimly, sending yet another punch right towards the monster's jaw.

But this time, my attack failed to connect.

After exchanging blows... or rather being on the receiving end of my attacks for a while already, the monster learned the pattern.

My attacks were swift, consecutive, and didn't give it any breathing room... But it managed to get used to them, finally growing capable of maybe not countering them yet, but dodging them.

'Fuck,' I thought when my avatar's fist missed the monster's head by just a single meter. Given the scale, it was akin to brushing through its fur. Yet, nevertheless, my attack missed. And once the streak of my combo was broken, I couldn't pin the monster in place any longer!

'Dodge!'

Something deep within my soul shouted, forcing my body to move before I could do it with my own awareness. Only thanks to this instinctual reaction did I manage to avoid a powerful, slashing attack of the monster's paw.

The monster missed... Or rather, it failed to connect its attack directly. Yet, the sudden passing of a densely packed violet mana was still enough to shake my control over my own energy, making my avatar waver.

'This won't work,' I thought, taking a step back to recover from the attack. Yet, before I could even regain proper control over my avatar, the monster attacked again.

"ROAR!" it uttered a battle cry before raising its upper body and then slamming both of its paws on the ground.

'What, are you an ape or something?' I thought, rolling out of the danger's way.

Once again, I managed to escape the attack with my physical body... But the same couldn't be said about my avatar.

Or rather, that's what I initially thought, only for the wave of my own energy to slam right into my insides.

For as long as I controlled my avatar perfectly, I could somehow keep the expenditure and income of my energy stable. But once the attack shook the stability of my oversized projection, the energy quickly went out of control, threatening to pull me along.

'Begone,' I thought, casting aside the entirety of the energy I used to construct the avatar.

It was a massive loss... but one that I had to take. I had no time nor attention to spare for attempting to regain control over this energy. Doing so would only open me to further attacks. And as the last two encounters proved, I was still too inept at using my avatar for it to be an effective way of fighting.

'Back to spamming the bolts, I guess,' I thought, raising all the formations that I could before swallowing my pride and rushing to the back, as far away from the monster as the confines of the cage I built allowed.

I glanced around the scene, trying to take stock of the situation.

Outside of the inverted cone of my energy, people were going into a mode of panic.

Some were trying to crawl their way out of the devastated building. Others were stuck in place, unable to overcome the terror that froze them in place.

And then, there was Mia, simply standing in place and looking right at my position.

'FUCK!' I internally shouted, digging my shoes in the ground and refusing to retreat even a single step further.

A strange feeling ignited in my soul when I realized that it wouldn't take long before my escape would bring the brunt of the danger to where Mia stood.

'I guess I don't have any choice,' I thought, abandoning all the reason.

I then turned my eyes back toward my enemy. And for but a brief moment, I felt as if I could understand it.

The monster itself wasn't interested in killing me or others. It wasn't interested in mana, resources, or anything else that would prompt people or animals to fight.

What this being was interested in was the fight itself. As such, by standing my ground and refusing to retreat any further, I managed to gain its respect.

'But why would I care?' I thought, forcing this realization aside. Then, ignoring all the warnings of my system, I slammed all the violet energy that I had left into the engine.

POOF!

All my reason, all my sanity, all of my system... All of it drowned in a sudden flood of pure energy that penetrated through every last cell of my being.

If it was torture to toughen through it before, then the pain now grew so large that my mind was incapable of properly conveying it.

But I only needed to hold it in for a brief second.

'Now,' I thought when I managed to amass enough of the power. Yet, when I attempted to launch it all directly at the monster...

Nothing happened.

It felt as if I was trying to push a massive stone with my bare hand while standing on a slippery slope.

I simply didn't have enough internal power to push such an overwhelming amount of energy. And while I struggled to do so, this energy continued to corrupt my situation, burning through my magic pathways as if I drank a swimming-pool worth of acid!

'I need to do it,' I thought, watching with a sense of powerlessness when the monster raised its paw.

Right now, I couldn't move at all. The overwhelming amount of energy corroded my body to the point where even moving appeared like an impossible task.

'At this rate, she will die too,' I thought, glancing over to where Mia stood...

Only to see Jenne attempting to pull her away, clearly against her wishes.

Logically thinking, I should be grateful to him. Jenne was trying to pull Mia out of harm's way, after all.

Yet, the expression of unwillingness on her face...

A spark went through my soul, igniting my consciousness.

"BEGONE!" I shouted when a mind-numbing wave of fury exploded in my soul. And by some miracle, this allowed me to finally push my mana forth!

It wasn't as speedy as my bolts. Not at all.

This desperate outcry of my soul only managed to give it a tiny little bit of momentum... But it was enough for this overwhelming power to leave my system.

For a few more seconds, I had to endure the drawbacks of drawing such a power, as it still remained within the sphere of influence of my Mage's Tower. Yet, just as the monster's paw was about to fall right down on my head...

The monster's paw encountered the solid wall of my mana. And just like it happened when this attack reached the defenses set up by the sect's elders before...

The monster's paw simply disintegrated.

But the wall of my energy didn't stop there. It wasn't fast at all... But its march couldn't be stopped by anything.

Bit by bit, the enormous body of the monster evaporated when the energy of my wall and the energy that made up its body clashed.

'It's over,' I thought, falling to my knees, overwhelmed by the damage that, in my recklessness, I did to myself. Right now, all that was left for me was to watch my job conclude.

Once the monster realized what was going on, it attempted to turn tail and escape. But even with me struggling to catch a breath, the inverted cone that I had created before still stood, limiting how far the monster could escape.

And once it was squeezed between my cone and my wall... It simply continued to vanish inch by inch before the tattered body of a young girl was all that was left of it.

'So I was right,' I thought, gritting my teeth as I forced myself to stand up and rush forward.

Just like the man who emerged from within the monster I fought with before, the girl was unconscious. And once her body lost the support of the sea of energy it was swimming in, she started to fall.

'Fuck,' I thought, forcing my body up. I then rushed forward at my top speed and jumped up, catching the lifeless body in midair.

"That was close," I muttered when I fell to the ground, making sure to protect the girl from the impact.

Right now, what she had to say was of utmost importance. And I wasn't going to make the same mistake of letting her hide her secrets in death.

'Ah,' I moaned slightly when the extreme exhaustion of the moment finally caught up to me. And right at the same time, all of my spells collapsed.

Even though I still had some mana left along with a steady supply of it coming from my engine, I was in no mental state to keep control of such a powerful war machine that my mage's tower turned out to be.

"Kill her!" someone from the audience shouted after a momentary silence that ensued the second the fight was over.

"Kill her!" someone else joined the chant before the entire crowd that failed to escape started to shout those two words over and over again.

For them, the girl in my arms embodied the disaster they had just all gone through.

"Fucking morons," I muttered under my breath, still struggling to gather any energy on my own.

Then I heard it.

"Arthur..." even without looking, I could tell it was Mia's voice.

Even without looking, I could tell that she was rushing forward, eager to approach me.

And as much as I wanted to just let go of all my struggles and hesitations, I couldn't allow her to get any closer.

"Do not take another step!" I shouted from the bottom of my soul, even unknowingly infusing my voice with my mana.

"Ugh..."

Hearing an unexpected moan, I turned my eyes to face Mia... Only to notice her stuck in a weird position as if someone froze her in time, right as she was about to take a step.

'What the...' I thought for a second before my eyes widened.

There was only one reason why my words could stop her like that. The one mechanism that I swore never to use against her.

The forced obedience of a slave towards its master.

A wave of guilt coursed through my soul when I realized what I had just done.

'No,' I told myself, forcing my throat to swallow a mouthful of my saliva. 'This is for the best,' I thought, perfectly aware of how she would end up if she approached me right now.

It wasn't my mental state that made me stop Mia in her tracks. For some reason, maybe due to my exhaustion, my body didn't revolt at her sight, nor did my mind.

But I was still full of that violet energy. The energy that would likely kill me if not for the intervention of my system.

And if Mia were to get even a step closer...

I closed my eyes, refusing to look at the pained expression of my beloved.

I could tell that she couldn't understand what was going on. The tears welling up in her eyes were the daggers that sank deep into my soul.

But between hurting her with this misunderstanding and hurting her for real, the lesser evil was obvious.

"Kill her!" the voices in the crowd continued to chant, unaware of the tense situation I was in.

"Give this girl to us," suddenly, a new voice appeared close by.

I turned my head around, only to notice one of the sect's elders walking toward me.

Judging from the poorly hidden grin on his face and the perfectly fine state of his clothes, he not only didn't take any part in the fight but also treated the current situation as his personal opportunity.

And with his eyes trained on my face, I could tell that the lifeless body of a girl in my arms wasn't his target whatsoever.

"Fuck off," I replied, tensing my muscles and forcing my body to stand up.

I then cast one last look at Mia, only to end up biting my lips.

"There is no time to explain, not now," I muttered silently, just loud enough for the girl to hear my words. "I promise I will find you," I added before gathering up my mana and surrounding myself with it.

Coated with condensed mana, I could hardly see anything outside of my sphere of influence. That meant no one on the outside could see the details of what I was doing inside!

As such, rather than risking yet another flight through the skies that would soon be dominated by the meteors, I kicked a random rock high up as bait before drilling a hole into the floor.

Just like I expected, the enormous area where the fight took place had an extensive network of service tunnels drilled underneath.

'I promise,' I thought, sending one last glance to where Mia was frozen in place. "I won't let any harm come your way," I whispered, hoping that my words would somehow reach the girl before dropping down into the hole of my own making.