

Last System 296

Chapter 296 Choosing The Path

'What should I do?'

This one question rampaged through my head, stopping me from doing anything productive.

Unsure how should I proceed, I was unable to put my energy toward any goal.

And it was all because there were too many things to take care of.

'Should I go check those trails? Or should I stay back and oversee Mia?'

After a long while, I finally managed to produce a simple question. A question so simple, I already knew the answer.

'No, I promised I would never leave her side again,' I recalled the words that I willingly uttered just a few hours ago.

Was I the kind of man who would break his word on the first real obstacle?

'But if I can't leave her side...' I thought, looking down at Mia's relaxed body.

She was still blocked by her growth, but at least her body continued to function properly.

"I guess there is no escaping it," I muttered to myself before taking a deep breath and pushing forth to work.

First, I took down my robes. Then, I brought Mia right on top of my naked back before locking her legs and hands around my waist and shoulders, respectively. And then, just to be sure, I secured her in place with several blankets, acting both as bounds and as to cover her nudity.

"Now the question is, which path should I take?" I asked myself, doing a small jump to check whether Mia was nice and secure on my back.

"I guess I know the answer to this question as well," I muttered before facing the doors and then finally moving out of the building.

"Huh?" Ackhart shrugged when he saw me with Mia attached to my back. "Is she okay?" he asked, clearly disturbed by the sudden change of situation.

"Don't let it concern you," I replied coldly. "Now, lead us to where the paths diverge," I ordered before nodding my head at Hera.

"Fine," Ackhart ended up sighing heavily before standing up and moving away from the building.

His guidance took us well outside of the town, far away from the abandoned structures. There, even I could see two patches of flattened grass, proving that whoever walked through this place did so relatively recently.

"The bigger group went east," Ackhart said, pointing at one of the trails. "I believe they went deeper into the sect, hoping someone in other cities will be capable enough to slay..." Ackhart suddenly swallowed his saliva as he cast a quick glance at Hera.

Even though I didn't hold back when using monsters to describe Hera's kind, Ackhart clearly didn't feel confident in whether or not he was allowed to do so as well.

"To defend them from the disaster," Ackhart finished his former sentence, not before swallowing a gulp down his throat.

"Then this is the path that you will take," I ordered without thinking much.

The path leading in the opposite direction, to the west, was way smaller. And even a newbie tracker like me could tell the group that made it was considerably smaller than the other.

"Huh?" Ackhart shrugged. "What do you mean?" he asked, raising his eyes to my face.

"We are going to split up. You will go east to catch up with the bigger group while we will go east," I explained, pointing my hands at me, then at Mia on my back, and finally at Hera.

"You don't understand what I meant," Ackhart protested, shaking his head. "What's the use of splitting up like that? Why do you even want to make contact with both groups?" the elder asked, clearly unable to see the point of my decisions.

"I'm sending you east because that's likely the easier path to take," I replied, explaining the entire matter slowly as if to a child. "I believe the monsters will be attracted to the areas with filled with their own energy. As such, they are likely to zero-in on the borderlands," I added before leaning my head to the side and smiling gently. "Would you rather take that path instead?"

Ackhart only swallowed a gulp of his saliva.

"Why make contact with both groups, then?" he repeated the question that he deemed to be left with no answer.

"Because Mia wants to reunite with her group?" I replied with a question on my own, acting as if my answer was so obvious that it couldn't be just stated outright.

"And what does that have to do with me?" Ackhart exploded. "The entire order of the world is falling apart. Our continent might change to the point where normal inhabitation of this lands will no longer be possible!" he ranted out, taking a short break only to breathe in.

"What does my request have to do with you," I repeated the man's word, my stare turning colder.

"That's a pretty valid question," I added, looking down at the elder's face.

Then, I took a deep breath to calm myself before approaching the man's attitude once again.

"As far as I'm concerned, that's the only wish that you are capable of fulfilling," I stated, taking a step toward the man. "And since I last checked, I'm also one of the very few people capable of fighting off those monsters," I added, taking yet another step towards the man.

I only moved forward a little. But we were never far apart to begin with. As such, with those few steps alone, I already stood directly above the elder, reversing the natural order of respect.

Despite being just a graduate of the sect, I now looked down at its elder!

"That's why I believe it's in your best interest to fulfill whatever I wish for," I finished my explanation before turning toward the path I had already decided to take.

"Fine..." Ackhart turned his eyes to the side, refusing to look back into my eyes. "What do you need me to do, then?" he asked obediently, growing increasingly aware of the difference between us.

Back when I first met Akhart, I learned quite a few important bits from him. And this was the only reason why I even humored his questions in the first place.

But after reading Mia's letters and experiencing the local politics on my own back, I was unwilling to just let Ackhart guide my moves.

Because rather than falling in line with the political principles of the people of this crumbling world, I was more interested in fulfilling whatever wish Mia could have.

And if she wanted to reunite with her group, then that's exactly what would happen!

Or rather, that's exactly what I would make happen!

"I need you to make contact with the group that went east," I stated after taking a moment to calm myself down. "Once you meet them, first find out whether any of Mia's former teammates is with them. I need you to guide them to my location if you happen to find them," I explained the details of this task.

"Right..." Ackhart muttered, rubbing his chin as he thought about something. "What about you, then?" he asked, raising his eyes and finally daring to look at my face. "I mean, I need to know if I want to find you later on," he added, turning his eyes away as if this topic made him feel somewhat uncomfortable.

"We will be going towards the borderlands, trying to meet up with the other group," I explained, turning my eyes once again towards the path that I wanted to take. "To take this path during a moment like this... It would take some extraordinary courage, stupidity, or genius," I explained my train of thoughts.

I then turned my head around, looking at the elder once again.

"And I'm eager to meet whoever possesses either of those traits," I added, a small smile forming upon my lips. "That, but I also need to find one person," I added, moving my eyes back on the path and taking the first step.

"Could that person be..." Ackhart muttered only to raise his head and speak up, "the pathfinder?"

Hearing the title, I froze on the spot. Because Ackhart was right on the money.

Outside of the idea of chasing after special disciples that went seemingly to their doom, even outside of my wish to investigate the borderlands given their connection to Hera's type of mana...

There was still one reason why I wanted to visit that place.

The one person whom I could truly and without a doubt call my master. Someone who not only helped me a lot but also imparted insanely important skills to me, something that turned incredibly useful while I did my part as a member of the sponsorship system.

"How did you know?" I asked sharply, feeling as if I had touched on something interesting completely by chance.

"It's pretty obvious," Ackhart shrugged his shoulders. "He is necessary if you want to cross the borderlands. And given how both of you come from zero zones, I'm sure you have someone you want to keep safe out there," Ackhart explained his train of thought before shaking his shoulders again.

"Then I will disappoint you," I replied, a small, cheeky smile forming upon my lips. "I don't want to use him. I want to find and help him, to thank him for all the help that he offered me in the past," I explained, finally taking my first, proper step on this new path.

"That's normal as well," Ackhart agreed, still deep into a topic he brought up. "Feeling indebted to the pathfinders is normal," he stated before shaking his head and turning his eyes up, only to make them drill holes in my back.

"What keeps me wondering, though, is why you never mentioned your promoter?" Ackhart asked, sending a chill down my spine. "I mean, the pathfinder and the promoter... Aren't those two the figures that most of the sponsorship workers respect the most?"