

Last System 314

Chapter 314 Sigma

"We are here," the protobear announced as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

Yet, for me, the place where we arrived was no different from the areas all around the place. Trees, some areas where grass reigned supreme and managed to stave off the expansion of the forest, a small river was frolicking through the geographic structures of the area...

In other words, it was just more of the same. I could look behind, and I would see exactly the same as I would see by looking ahead.

"How is this place any different from the lands we traveled through?" I asked.

It wasn't that I doubted the honesty or the truth behind the protobear's words. As a being brought to life in the aptly named ancient age of this world, it likely knew the things about magic and cultivation that locals could only dream about.

'Keeping the earlier assumption that I'm supposed to be someone special, a remedy to the dying world,' I thought, recalling the stuff I thought about recently, 'should I be able to at least notice the difference?'

"Forgive me for that," the protobear suddenly apologized, catching me by surprise. "I had to test you. You should know yourself that the stuff you are saying and the things that you are doing... do not exactly match," it pointed out, shaking its massive head as it did so.

And welp, what could I say? In the intricate web of lies that I crafted to keep the protobear from realizing that I was simply using it, I was bound to make some mistakes.

I didn't really know what mistakes did I exactly commit. But to be frank, it didn't matter in the slightest. Because now that the cat was out of the bag, there was no point in thinking about it anymore.

"Test?" I muttered, raising my hand and rubbing my chin. "I do accept the apology, but..." I made a dramatic pause just for the sake of my own desire for theatrics, "what kind of test did you conduct?" I asked, puzzled to no end.

Was there something that I was supposed to do? Some way in which I was supposed to react? Or maybe the very fact that I was asking myself those questions meant a passing score for the protobear's test?

"The fact that you cannot see how this place is any different proves that you are actually someone from this world," the protobear released a deep sigh before shaking its massive head once again.

"What I didn't tell you was one more caveat that our creator bestowed us with," the protobear added, lowering itself on its legs to allow our small group to get off its back.

"I'm all ears," I spoke, trying my very best to keep my voice natural.

But I didn't really need to ask. Sure, I was curious about the details and how this caveat was related to what the protobear said about me being from this world... Yet, it didn't take a genius to notice the connection between those two.

After all, if the question of whether I came from this world or not was unrelated to the secret the protobear clearly was about to reveal, why would the beast bring it up in the first place?

"A day will come when a man, no different from any of all, will cometh," the protobear spoke up, his tone changing to implicate those words weren't originally his.

"He will be like any man. But he will be stronger. He will act like any human, yet he will be smarter. Unrecognizable by any, yet unfit for this world. But the flame of his ambition, unless extinguished, will bring ruin upon this world," the protobear continued its words, turning them into a sort of chant.

"If that person cannot be recognized, then how are you supposed to find out who he is?" I asked, feeling a tingle move down my spine.

"This will be a man who knows things that this world has yet to welcome. His thoughts will travel in ways inconceivable for his peers," the beast continued, minding not my question. "He will speak of words that no human foot ever traversed, the words that a human would never be able to reach," the protobear finished up its chant and turned silent.

For the next few, unbearably long moments, only silence ensued. Even when our entire group dropped down on the ground, the protobear refused to explain anything of what it said.

"When the time of change comes, one of you will encounter that man. A man of no renown, yet power unfitting his lack of status," the protobear finally picked its story up only to put it to a pause as it turned its head and looked at me with its castle-gate's-sized eyes.

"When that time comes, bring any and all that you encounter to the great sign of the control zone," the protobear finally uttered some words that, despite making no sense, clued me in on the protobear's original intentions.

"You will know it's him when he reacts to the mark."

It was the last sentence that the protobear spoke before turning completely silent and moving its head back in the direction we traveled to.

'Just what the hell was that?' I asked myself, barely stopping my head from shaking. 'Some kind of prophecy?' I bit down on my lips. 'Isn't it a bit too precise for a prophecy? Aren't the words of the future supposed to be so vague one could adapt them to their own situation at their convenience?' I thought, my soul filling with scorn at the very idea of faking the words of the future.

Yet, there was no denying that, to a degree, I could feel myself fitting most of the criteria that the protobear presented.

"Anyway, this is all that I have to say to you," the protobear released what could only be called an exhausted sigh before admitting. "This is also the end of our journey together. You wanted to reach the borderlands, so here you are," it said before raising its paw and pointing at a nearby clearing. "This is the deepest place you can reach without crossing the border. If you head north from here, you should find the place you are looking for," the beast announced before turning around, clearly about to leave.

"A place I was looking for?" I shouted my question.

Even though the protobear leaving us alone was the best thing that I could ask for, it didn't sit well with me to have yet another set of questions that I would likely never find an answer to.

"How can you know what place am I looking for if I don't know it myself?!" I protested.

The main reason why we moved in this specific direction was to find Mia's missing teammates. The very fact that the protobear helped us to travel by lending us its back likely made us go way ahead of the group we were chasing.

'In fact, I believe it will be harder to find them now than it would be just by following their trail,' I thought, tightening my hands into fists.

"Even if you don't know what you are looking for, I do," the protobear announced in its usual, mighty tone. Yet, rather than spending just a tiny bit of time explaining its words, it simply started to move, threatening to get out of the range of my voice in just a few moments.

"Then how about you tell us what place are we looking for?!" I shouted again, refusing to let this situation end just like this.

Yet, even when I repeated my shout a few moments later, the protobear refused to turn around or answer.

"And it's gone," Mia muttered. She stood just a single step behind me, close enough to support me if anything were to happen, yet far enough not to be a bother. "Do you have any idea what it was talking about?" she took a step forward and coiled her hands around my arm as she asked.

"It does ring a bell, but that's the end of it," I replied, shaking my head in denial.

Even though I trusted Mia with my all, this wasn't particularly the best moment to reveal my true origin to her.

Not when that damned beast lowkey announced that someone of nearly unexplainable origins would bring an end to this very world.

"Well, then, shall we get moving?" Mia suggested either paying no mind to my inner confusion, not noticing it, or intentionally trying to push my thoughts to a different topic.

'What a lovely girl she is,' I thought, raising my hand and patting her head before turning around and looking at the line of the trees just a few meters ahead.

"Yeah," I nodded my head. "Let's get going," I added before taking the first step forward.

"That was weird," Hera commented under her nose, quickly following after me. Yet, her moves stopped a few seconds later, right as I passed by the thin line of the trees that blocked my sight.

As it turned out, we were either on top of a hill, or the lands ahead laid in a deep depression. And it was this geographic feature that allowed me to scan a pretty massive area in front of us.

Gulp.

I swallowed down the saliva produced in my mouth when I realized one thing.

Right now, I received the one confirmation I didn't want.

Because now that I looked at the lay of the land ahead from a lower point of view, I could finally make out a certain shape that I never expected to see in this world.

A shape that I was extremely familiar with. A mark that was one of the last few things I saw before my untimely demise back on earth.

For amateurs, it looked as if the terrain below had the shape of a capital letter 'e.' But I knew better.

The rough contours of the land, something that didn't have any right to exist after millennia's worth of erosion, made it clear that it wasn't the letter E that the land was shaped at.

It was the Sigma mark instead.