

## Last System 317

Chapter 317 Is Everything... Fake?

With our path to the back now blocked, we had no other choice but to push forward.

'I wonder what Hera and that other guy will do,' I thought, deciding against revealing those thoughts to Mia.

We both had enough to worry about right now. There was no point in putting any further burden on the girl just to ease my own.

'I can only hope they will somehow manage,' I thought, dropping the topic and stepping ahead.

No matter what was hidden within those ruins, there was only one way to find out. And with our only option to retreat now gone, there was hardly anything better for us to do too.

"Woah," I couldn't help but let a small moan of awe escape from my mouth when we emerged out of the tunnel.

The insides of the ruin didn't appear to be touched by a massive chunk of time at all. They felt like they were deserted maybe a week ago, a month in a most drastic scenario.

'But it's impossible,' I thought, shaking my head.

All I needed was to recall the spider's web all over the tunnel to confirm that no one touched this place for at least several tens of years and likely several hundred times longer.

"Magnificent," Mia echoed my awe, looking all over the place.

The whole thing was supposed to be under the ground... But the wide streets, high ceiling, and even some kind of artificial lights made me feel as if I was walking through the open streets on a sunny day.

'But what is this uncanny feeling?'

Ever since I placed my foot for the first time in this place, I had this strange feeling of déjà-vu. I felt as if this wasn't the first time for me to enter this place... even if I knew for a fact it had never been here before

I had never been here before... but for some reason, I felt as if this was the most natural environment for me that I could find in this whole wide world.

The streets were as wide as they would be in a modern city, not a town with a history tracing back to the middle ages. After all, the streets became so wide only when the use of cars became a widespread trend. Before this invention took the world by storm, the streets were only wide enough to allow two carriages on them!

Yet, the style of the building was clearly inspired by the medieval architecture with its arches, columns, and mighty presence of some of the buildings.

'Just what is this place,' I wondered, unable to utter a single word.

And then it struck me.

Sure, it was my first time being here... in person, that is. It was also the first time for me to see this place... But once again, not in general, but in the first person.

'Isn't this the protagonist base from Sigma's main franchise?' I asked myself, unable to stop the memories from proving this guess of mine right.

The outline of the streets. The architecture of the place. Even the small details like the sign with a half-eaten fish dangling over the doors to the nearby Inn...

All one needed to do was to add the NPCs to turn this place into one of the main locations of the game that made the Sigma corporation what it was!

But what was even worse, was how I felt right at home in this place. It was as if this entire underground facility was designed... all for the sake of fitting someone like me.

'Someone like... who exactly?' I asked myself, stunned by the notion.

Because there was only one thing that allowed me to access this place. And it was my system. Only by copying my statistics onto that empty wall of status did I manage to open the doors.

Didn't this make it obvious who this entire facility was for?

'Questions who made it or for what purpose can wait for later, I guess,' I thought, placing my hand on the wall of a random building.

'Tic!'

The familiar sensation of the system reacting appeared in an instant.

"Arty?" Mia muttered as she approached me from behind with a worried look on her face.

'Huh?' I stopped in my tracks the second I cast a quick glance at her expression. Because outside of the worry... I could see a strange tension.

"I can't take it, after all," Mia muttered, grabbing my hand and then using it to pull herself to my side.

As her face buried in my chest while her hands coiled around my arm, I could feel just how delicate, how fragile she was at this very moment.

"I really want to know; I'm sorry," she whispered right into my side, refusing to raise her eyes and look at my face.

And with just a single look, I could judge one thing.

Her current expression wasn't the one that I wanted to see her wear.

"I see," I muttered in reply, turning my head around and scanning my surroundings. I then took a second to recall the details of the city before looking to my right. "How about we get ourselves a room first?" I suggested.

"Huh?" Mia shrugged. From this alone, I could tell she didn't expect me to take her request so easily.

I then waved my hand, pulling out one of the windows that appeared in my system.

And this was also the greatest showcase of how this place befitted me.

I couldn't know this, but I somehow felt that by wishing for the window to appear, I could make it visible for all to see.

"WOAH!" Mia stepped back, surprised to the core of her soul, when the map of the city suddenly pulled out in her face.

'It's just like I thought,' I told myself before releasing a deep sigh.

This small stunt I just performed was the last test that I could come up with. The last check was to see whether I simply imagined everything or if it was real.

"What was that?!" Mia turned her eyes from the map to my face, her face showing just how insanely curious she was about everything. "Arty, talk to me!" she cried out, a look of desperation appearing on her face.

"Just come along, for now," I shook my head before reaching out and grabbing Mia's hand. "It will be better to sit down in a room rather than talking out in the open like that," I pointed out, dragging Mia forward, right towards the nearest tavern.

When I first realized where we were, I intended to bring Mia to the high-class Inn located in the middle of the town... But it was far too far for us to travel right now, especially with how tense Mia became.

'It appears she reached the limit of bullshit that she can take,' I thought, gently brushing my fingers through her hair.

Mia was in a hurry to hear my explanations... but she still turned silent and obediently followed me through the perfectly well-lit corridors of the underground city.

'This place looks like the time didn't touch it at all,' I thought as we delved deeper into what was supposed to be ruins. At the same time, I ran through every point of interest that would initially exist within this city.

But most of them were now useless.

'Without NPCs to run things through, there is hardly anything good about this place,' I thought, realizing just how empty this location was without all the people staffing it.

In the end, there was no point in visiting a blacksmith's shop if there was no blacksmith, to begin with!

"Arty..." Mia muttered again, tugging at the back end of my robe. "I really can't hold it any longer!" she protested in a small voice, tears squeezing out of her eyes.

'Fuck,' I cursed inwardly before turning around, grabbing Mia by her back and by the back of her knees before lifting her up and hurrying down the road.

We were already close enough to reach the place in just a short moment, but for some reason, I could see Mia's mental state deteriorating.

'Is it just her worry? Or is it something else?' I asked myself, puzzled by the sudden change.

In the end, didn't she claim that she would wait for me to be ready just before we set foot inside the ruins?

"We are almost there," I whispered as I reached the doors of the inn only to kick them open and rush inside.

The internal part of the building was just like I remembered it from the game, with the one distinction of all the non-player characters being nowhere to be found.

Still, there was steam rising from the pot on the stove; the shelves behind the counter were filled with bottles of various alcohol, and even the counter itself housed several half-empty glasses.

'This place is really eerie,' I thought as I sat Mia down on the bench at one of the main dining tables of the inn.

"Arty..." Mia whispered through her tears, her face twisted in extreme grief and worry.

'She is doing far worse than I expected,' I thought, feeling how panic made my guts revolt.

I couldn't see the reason for Mia's suddenly worsening state. In turn, this lack of knowledge made me unable to see a simple solution to her alignment.

'Maybe explaining everything will actually work?' I thought, only to dismiss the idea right away.

This entire thing...

Didn't it feel like this place trying to force me to fess up? Was this sudden change just a way for the local security of this insane place to check whether I was truly someone who should be allowed inside?

My face darkened.

Whoever or whatever it was that could make use of Mia like that would end up facing my wrath!

But for now, doing something to help Mia out was of the utmost importance.

"Mia..." I whispered, looking down as I focused on the thing that mattered the most.

"Arty..." Mia snored before wiping the tears out of her eyes with the back of her hand and looking directly into my eyes. "Is everything between us... fake?"