

Last System 338

Chapter 338 Emergency Holomessage

I pressed the button on the stone, not really sure what to expect. Yet, when a blue mist started to ooze out of the crystal, I instantly dropped it to the ground and retreated a few steps.

'Poison?' I thought, instantly surrounding myself and Mia with a barrier aimed at separating all the mist from the rest of the room.

But contrary to my worries, the mist didn't spread. Rather than that, it condensed into a single, roughly half-a-meter high pillar before its shape started to change over and over again.

"Hello, dear recipient," a voice appeared from beyond my barrier. At the same time, the blue mist stopped forming, turning into a figure of a human, roughly a fourth of normal human size. "I bet you are wondering who am I, how can I speak despite being long dead and all," the figure attempted to make an educated guess, only to follow it with a smile. "And the answer is simple. This message is nothing more but a mere hologram, recorded in advance and set to play out before the eyes of whoever finds it," the figure explained.

It then placed both of his hands on its hips before laughing out loud for a short moment.

"The greatest challenge of recording this piece lays in selecting the information you will find crucial while leaving aside stuff that you might not understand," the figure spoke.

'Huh?' I suddenly noticed a certain, peculiar element of the hologram.

Eager to check it, I took two steps to the side... Only for the figure enclosed in a barrier to continuing facing me.

'So it's a real hologram,' I thought, feeling my eyebrows moving up my face.

Back in my original life, the technology to project a three-dimensional image onto a two-dimensional space was still in its infancy. And here, I could see someone using its super-developed version just to pass a short message!

'The more things I learn, the more likely my guess turns out to be true,' I thought before focusing on the words from the message again.

"That's why I prepared a set of five things that you need to learn and remember. First off, not a single soul in this town is alive. They are all just like me, interactions, words, and reactions recorded in advance," the figure stated, only to then hesitate and rub the side of its head. "Actually, the people you can find in this city are far more advanced illusions than this message."

'Huh?' I shrugged, not really expecting this kind of topic to appear. But more importantly, wasn't the content of this message... actually wrong?

'Maybe there is a specific region of this place where we could find all the characters?' I thought before sharpening my ears again.

"Make sure to be careful about killing them. While it's possible to revive them if you find it necessary, the cost is usually much higher than the benefits you can get from looting the things you would normally need to buy!" the figure warned.

And then, it twitched as if there was something cut out from the explanation.

"Secondly, be wary of spreading the knowledge about this place around. This location might be your greatest asset, but it can also become the reason for your doom," the voice gave another warning.

Yet, before it could speak again, it twitched for the second time.

'Huh?' I shrugged, recognizing the way in which the figure shook.

Rather than moving naturally, changing its position, or something like that, it simply... stepped down from its leading leg and rested its weight on the other.

But the problematic part was how it all happened within the change of a single frame.

Way faster than a human should be able to move.

"Fourth, make sure to secure your spot at the stronghold. It could prove more important than you believe!" the voice gave another warning.

"Excuse me?" Mia spoke out, the puzzled expression on her face proving she also caught on to the problem. "Shouldn't there be a third point first?" she asked, turning her huge eyes towards me as if I could somehow give her the answer.

"No idea," I shook my head, keeping all my focus on the figure.

'There are only two possibilities. Either it was never intended to be the part of this message...' I thought. Yet, when the second possibility appeared in my mind, my entire body froze.

'Or someone made sure to change it afterward,' I thought, swallowing a mouthful of saliva.

"And lastly, be sure to explore the scrolls of wisdom!" the figure advised. "They might be really costly, but they could also prove to be of much help!"

With those words, the mist suddenly dispersed, turning back into its loose form before.

"That was...." I muttered, only to then shake my head, "strange," I finished before looking at Mia.

"What happened to the third point?" Mia asked again, accepting the eye contact. "They changed their mind after recording the whole thing?" she suggested, taking me by surprise.

'How the heck does she know it's possible?' I asked myself, my eyes opening just a little bit wider than before. 'Someone like Mia should struggle to even grasp the concept of recording. How come she is already aware of the magic of postproduction and editing?'

This was just a single element of the puzzle, a single element that once again reminded me of how there was some sort of hidden force orchestrating some of the things we were going through, if not all of them.

"Or maybe someone else managed to modify it," I muttered in response, calling forth the shop window again. Yet, right as I was about to return the message to recover the little bit of energy I wasted on it, the mist suddenly turned red.

"Emergency message!" a voice came from the new red mist. It then began to form again... but the end result was different from the one before.

"The holomessage system is compromised. We can no longer ensure the messages will be delivered whole," the same voice from before announced.

Yet, the mist didn't form in the image of the same man from before. Instead, it depicted a tired man sitting down on some stool with some sort of liquid dripping down from the corner of his lips.

"I don't know who you are, nor do I know the extent of your knowledge. But I can only hope that you will figure out a way to somehow fix this problem," the man said, staring directly into my face no matter from which direction I would look at the image.

"Since I can no longer ensure you will hear everything that you should, there is one more information, one that you shouldn't learn yet, that I can give you," the voice announced, its words turning chaotic.

'He isn't even speaking in proper forms,' I noticed, taking a step closer as if worried that the figure's words would somehow miss my ears.

"I'm Elyon Musk, the seventh, the last heir to the Musk conglomerate," the figure announced. It then stood up from its chair before struggling to raise its right hand up before striking it down on his chest.

A bit of blood trickled down the figure's mouth as a result.

"And under oath made in my name, I promise you this," the figure said, the look in its holographic eyes intensifying. "Your surname that your system shows. Find the document named after it and make sure to unlock it. Those are the few messages that the enemy cannot corrupt," the figure said.

The man in the hologram then coughed up some blood and took a step forward. Yet, as it reached forward, towards the viewers with its hand...

The man suddenly dropped to the floor, not to move ever again.

And so the hologram continued playing, displaying nothing but the corpse of the last heir of the Musk fortune.

"I think I can say it with confidence now," I uttered after I managed to deal with the first wave of shock. "This world is definitely the earth that I knew," I explained before falling down on the pillows on the bed and taking a deep breath.

"That should be enough of discoveries for now, isn't it?" I thought, hanging my head to the back as I took my time to sort my thoughts out.

"Arty..." Mia muttered as she sat down by my side and cuddled herself up to my arm. "What is the enemy that guy mentioned?" she asked in a tiny voice, a voice that clearly didn't demand an answer.

"I don't know, sweetie," I admitted, shaking my head. "I don't know."

With nothing better to do, I allowed the hologram to keep on playing while I browsed through the other documents available for summoning.

'I should look for the option of opening up the archival versions of the recording,' I made a mental note before scrolling far enough to find the document the emergency holomessage advised me to open.

"To Pendragon Heirs," the title of the document said. Sadly, I couldn't summon it.

Because if the cost of summoning the "to whom it may concern" message was a drop in the sea of my mana, then the cost of summoning that specific document would take about fifteen of my maximum potentials... and then some more!

"I guess I need to get stronger," I muttered, taking my time to slowly organize everything that this message taught me.

"What should we do, then?" Mia asked, rubbing her cheek against the muscles of my arm.

"I think it would be for the best to ask someone who saw what happened," I replied, forcing myself to stand up from the bed.

Yet, before I could make as much as a single step, the figure of the hologram suddenly dispersed, only for the mist to reform into a weird-looking lifeform.