

Last System 339

Chapter 339 Chimera

"What the hell is this?" I muttered, taking a step closer to the strange projection.

'If my guess is correct, that guy's corpse is still out there; the mist just moved to animate the stuff that actually keeps on moving,' I thought, trying my utmost to rationalize what I was seeing.

Yet, despite all my worries, the holomessage didn't cease to work. Instead, the strange beast that it represented kept on going forward, allowing the mist to put its entire frame into the message.

"Oh my god," I muttered when I finally realized what I was looking at.

It was a mix of all the most hideous creatures that the human movies even put on a screen.

"Arty?" Mia approached my side, uttering my name as she wrapped herself around my arm.

Sensing her body tensing up, I could tell that she was preparing for a fight.

"Calm down," I said softly, using my right hand to pat Mia's waist. "It's only a projection. It's not like it can hurt..."

Before my words could even fully escape from my mouth, the beast in the projection suddenly turned around.

The figure from before would appear to always look me in the eye, making itself pretty dizzying to look at. Yet the monster that appeared right now didn't bother to follow the procedure necessary to record the message in a specific way in order to achieve that weird result.

Instead, it simply stepped into the frame, allowing its entire body to get scanned... And then, it turned its massive, lion-like head toward the recipients of the message.

Its eyes were completely black, devoid of pupils or whites. Its head looked like a lion's... if one were to take the lion's impressive fur and then replace it with an entire horde of poisonous-looking snakes.

"A chimera," I muttered, my lips moving on their own.

And right now, this chimera was looking directly into my eyes, as if it could somehow see me despite thousands of years and likely thousands of kilometers separating the two of us.

"ROAR!"

The monstrosity uttered a battle cry before rushing forward... And slamming against the barrier that we set up in advance!

"WHAT THE HELL?!" I cried out in shock, using the fact that Mia was wrapped around my hand to shove her to the back, pushing her out of the potential harm's way.

"Arty, calm down!" Mia called out, trying to take the reins of the situation once she realized I was temporarily out of use.

"It's only the mist acting up!" Mia shouted. Her eyes widened. Her hands trembled when she placed them down on my shoulders.

"Ah," I muttered, my eyes opening even wider when I finally understood what happened.

Sensing Mia tensing all over, I believed that she somehow noticed some stuff that I failed to. As such, I was ready to join a battle the second an opponent would strike down.

But then came the worse part.

'It is as in this saying,' I thought, recalling a small story I once saw. 'If there was a room with happy parents and their year's old child, and the man suddenly started to float in the air...'

I shook my head and clasped my hands against my cheeks. The sudden surge of blood in my head allowed me to cleanse my thoughts and refocus on reality.

"It would be the wife who would be the more surprised one, as the kid has yet to understand that it's something unusual," I whispered, finishing off my line of thought with a few silent words.

"What are you talking about?" Mia asked, the look on her face showcasing just how puzzled she was by my words.

"Nothing much." I shook my head. "Just trying to rationalize my reaction from a moment before," I explained before turning my eyes back to the chimera in the projection.

And just like before, it continued to rampage, constantly putting more and more effort into breaking through the rudimentary barrier I initially set to confine the mist.

'Who would've thought that this barrier would actually turn pretty useful,' I thought, a small smirk appearing on my lips. 'Well, I'm glad that it worked out fine,' I thought before locating where the strange crystal of recording was.,

Due to the movements of the figure from before and later the chimera, the projection itself moved quite a bit away from the very item that projected it.

"Should I smash that crystal?" I asked out loud, turning my head around and looking at Mia.

Normally I wouldn't even ask about something like this, but this step was necessary for me to accept the changing role of Mia in our relationship.

It was something that I started thinking about when I left the sect to get her. Yet, as I have yet to reunite with her back then and was still troubled with my past, those thoughts never really developed much.

Still, I at least realized that while I never voiced it out, I kind of imposed several expectations on Mia, assuming they were her natural role in our partnership. Yet, rather than trying to control Mia or anything like that, I did exactly the same to myself, assuming the burden of leading the two of us forward and the struggle of facing the consequences of my decisions.

But that was a pretty self-centered way of thinking.

'Assume the duties I want just because I can fulfill them easily?' I thought before shaking my head. 'No. Just a moment ago, Mia proved that she has cooler blood than me, at times,' I thought, shaking my head as I approached Mia from behind and wrapped my hands around her shoulders.

Then, I pushed the crystalization of my thoughts towards my lips, shaping them into the form of several short words.

"What would you like me to do?" I asked, resting my forehead on the back of Mia's shoulder.

"Huh?" Mia twitched, turning her face around to look at me. Sadly for her, the way in which I hugged her from behind was precisely calculated to prevent her from stealing even a single glance of my face.

'Remember, Arty, this is all for her sake,' I thought, steeling my resolve.

If I wanted Mia to try taking the leading role in our duo, I had to entrust her to make the right calls. And even if I would judge her calls to be wrong, following through with them and later facing the consequences was more logical than just lecturing the girl and stopping her from making mistakes in the first place.

For me, it was but an exercise in proving my trust to Mia as well as my willingness to share the burden of the task I was naturally disposed to complete alone. On the other hand, it was good training for Mia, who, ever since she rejoined my side, didn't show much ambition.

"Well then," Mia only needed a moment to accept her new situation and get into her new role. "How about smashing that recording first?" Mia suggested, right as the first cracks started to appear on the barrier.

"How about I simply desummon it?" I suggested, perfectly fine with suggesting stuff that Mia couldn't get herself.

It wasn't that she was inept or bad at leading. She simply couldn't account for the possibilities she wasn't aware of.

"Can you do that?" Mia asked, her eyes opening a little wider than before.

"Sure thing," I replied, calling forth the windows of the system of the room before refunding the purchase of the message.

In an instant, the chimera, the mist that made it up, and then the strange crystal that the mist originated from - they all disappeared as if never to be seen again.

"That was easy," I said before allowing a small smile to appear on my lips. "Now then, what should we do next?" I asked, still set on making Mia lead our next moves.

And I would only drop this idea when she would be about to make some devastating mistake or would simply approach me to ask to relieve her of the duty.

"First, tell me what you think about this... thing," Mia ordered, turning her eyes towards where the chimera continued to struggle just a moment before.

From the looks behind her eyes, it was clear that Mia was troubled by something about it.

"I believe that it's a being from a higher plane of existence than we are," I replied without hesitation.

It was pretty clear to me that this beast saw us. Yet, how could something from the past see someone from a far-off future?

The answer could be only one.

It was a being that wasn't restricted to operating in three dimensions while following the natural flow of the fourth. Rather than that, it was a being that had to be able to break the restraints placed on three-dimensional beings to break through the barrier of time and space that separated us.

"That, or it was capable of using magic on a scale we can't even imagine," I added, only to then shrug my shoulders.

From my point of view, there was no point in worrying about that beast. The likelihood of an ancient enemy from thousands of years in the past suddenly waking up to trouble us...

In my personal opinion, it was abysmal.

But it wasn't my call to make, to decide what to do about it. Not now. And just like I stated before, not until Mia herself would ask me to take the lead again.

"Do you think we should be worried about it?" Mia asked, looking me directly in the eyes.

"No, I think not," I replied, answering Mia's question to the best of my ability.

"Good," Mia nodded her head before sitting back on the bed and patting a place beside her with her hand, indicating me to follow her there as well. "Now then," she spoke up again as soon as I sat down by her side. "I want you to tell me more about this place, that musk guy, and everything that you believe could be important for our future."