

Last System 344

Chapter 344 Illegal Foolishness

Vaner stood at the topmost terrace, looking down at the lower levels of the sect.

"Where is everyone?" he mouthed the question out, baffled by the sight before his eyes.

The sect's entrance was blocked shut. But, Vaner couldn't see a single soul either.

'At least there are no monsters here,' he thought, straining his eyes.

He couldn't believe the sight before his eyes.

'Sure, I know I'm high up, but I should still be able to make out some silhouettes!' Vaner protested in his thoughts, refusing to accept the reality.

"For everyone to disappear from the sect..." Vaner muttered, forcing himself to calm down.

He took a deep breath, only to release all his shock and surprise once he breathed out.

'No, it's impossible,' Vaner thought, grabbing the railing that separated the topmost terrace from the edge. He took the jump without a second thought, falling a considerable distance down.

And the moment he landed, Vaner instantly kneeled down.

'There should be another spirit here,' he thought, striking the ground with his forehead.

But no matter how long he waited, nothing appeared.

Only when the sun started to set, Vaner dared to slowly raise his head.

'Nothing is happening,' he thought, cautiously looking around the place.

The terrace looked exactly the same as the one Vaner just jumped off from.

'Could it be...' Vaner raised his eyes towards the place he had just left. "Is the blessing from the highest level enough to get me through, all the way down?"

The question stumped the middle-aged man down.

"If there is indeed such hierarchy between the ranks..." he muttered, slowly squinting his eyes.

"That would be huge," he added a moment later, raising his hand to his chin and then supporting his elbow with his other hand.

The role of patriarch, by the ancient ruling of the sect, was to be passed to the man who reached the highest terrace.

Yet, the trials of climbing were harsh and often would triple its participants. As such, as it entered into a state of slow decay, the Skyladder sect could no longer afford to throw its best at a meatgrinder.

Over the years, the tradition was abolished and replaced in favor of an elective patriarchate.

'But that doesn't mean this law no longer holds,' Vaner muttered, pulling his eyelids up and finally rising up from the ground.

'As much as I would love to fully check those places out...' the former royal twisted his lips in a small smirk. He then shook his head and scaled another railing.

This time, however, Vaner rested his bent legs on it before launching himself at a steep angle downwards.

Now that the power of the topmost terrace had healed his body, Vaner had no intention of holding back.

'Whatever happened down there,' he thought, turning his body in the middle of his fall so that his legs would be directed towards the ground.

A coat of magic covered his descending body, turning Vaner's flesh into a sort of a magical comment.

And then, he plunged down on a terrace several tens of meters down, roughly halfway down the mountain.

'Huh?' Vaner gently landed on the terrace, using the cushion of his spiritual power to soften his descent. He didn't pay much attention, but he instantly noticed the volume of mana in the air dismissing.

His next jump brought him only a few levels above the highest occupied quarters of the sect. The lingering spiritual energy became nearly too thin for Vaner to care.

"Seriously, where is everyone?" Vaner muttered under his nose, leaning over the railing to figure the situation out.

There were no marks of fighting anywhere in the sect. That he could tell even before he jumped.

Yet, not a single soul appeared to be left in the entire sect.

"Did they all retreat somewhere? Or maybe they are hiding?" Vaner mused, looking around the area.

He then calmly jumped down the last few terraces, reaching the level where the sect's hall was located.

Vaner raised himself and looked at the massive gate leading inside the building. He then approached it and raised his hand...

But he hesitated to knock.

'If no one answers...' he thought, clenching his teeth.

All his plans for surviving in this new, changing world involved the Skyladder sect. It was the perfect place to use as a springboard into even greater heights.

But it would be all for naught if all the elders, disciples, and populace around moved elsewhere.

It wasn't the buildings that caught Vaner's interest in the sect but its people.

'To hell with this,' Vaner thought, pushing his hand ahead and knocking on the massive gate thrice.

Only for the dull sound of the wood to be the lone response.

Vaner waited at the gate for quite some time. Yet, as no signs of any answer came, he gulped down his saliva and pressed the doors open.

Even if there was some sort of formation protecting this place, with the blessing of the highest sect's spirit, it could very well not exist for the middle-aged man.

'It's been a while, huh?' Vaner thought, looking around the place as he pushed deeper into the building. Deeper, towards the one place that would hold people if anyone left in the entire building. The throne hall.

"Here we are," Vaner muttered a mere moment later. The main room of the building was pretty close to its entrance, after all.

And then, not allowing himself any time for rest or preparation, Vaner pushed the doors open.

Just like he hoped, the hall wasn't completely empty.

But the sight that welcomed Vaner back to what he considered his home wasn't welcoming at all.

The place was littered with corpses; some of them appeared to be still relatively fresh.

And in the middle of the entire carnage sat down the sect's patriarch, the one figure in the entire sect that Vaner actually looked up to.

"Look who came back," the old man uttered in an empty voice, devoid of any happiness and free of any hate.

To the sides of the throne's hall stood the remaining elders of the sect, the rest of which could be seen spurting blood from their wounds on the floor.

"What the hell happened here?" Vaner asked, slowly moving his eyes up from the scene of a literal bloodbath at the figure of someone he once considered a mentor.

"They sabotaged our only means against the invasion," the patriarch announced soundly, still keeping his voice perfectly calm.

It was as if he was speaking about an administrative decision, not tens of lives lost over some internal dispute.

'What could've happened here?' Vaner asked himself, knowing better than to pose this question out loud.

Sure, he could take on all of the elders and patriarch himself at once... But doing so would make him appear like a rebel.

And this wasn't what Vaner aimed for right now.

"What's the situation?" Vaner asked, opting to go with the neutral approach.

"Those elders conspired to usurp my position by entering the higher levels," the patriarch said, raising from his chair only to then look down at Vaner's face. "During a time of the invasion, such foolishness shall not be allowed!"

The patriarch stomped his foot, making his foot send a wave of sound throughout the entire throne's hall.

"Then I have some bad news for you," Vaner stated, putting a wide smile on his lips.

He then raised his right hand and pointed a single finger up.

"Because I came from the very top of the mountain." Vanner's relaxed smile graced everyone in the hall. "That should also answer the question you wanted to ask, of how the hell did I get back!"