

Last System 353

Chapter 353 Core Monster

'Damn,' I thought, dashing forward with all my might.

My legs stepped upon the concrete mana of the monster's body.

The myriad of tentacles scattered all over the monster's spine jumped in my way. But right now, I only have one aim.

"DIE!" I shouted.

I then coated my legs with mana before speeding up.

And then, the force of Mia's hit finally traversed through the enemy, sending it flying forward.

This was the reason why I stacked momentum right before.

With my spear dug deep into the monster's flesh, I ran on its moving back, turning a small stab into a cut that severed half of the monster in half.

'Again,' I thought, jumping on my last foothold. I turned my body around midair before projecting a barrier behind my back.

"Ugh..."

I lost all the air in my lungs. But I managed to kill my momentum.

I bent my knees at the makeshift foothold before leaping right back toward the monster.

When I first managed to cut it properly, I failed to expose its core. This was my second chance.

'There it is,' I thought when I noticed a ball of an extremely condensed mana.

The core of the monster. The place where its host would be trapped in a quagmire of magic they couldn't control.

"Get out!" I let out a small, short shout when I struck the ball with the butt of my spear.

Right in time.

A myriad of tentacles rushed to stop me from attacking the core... But they were all too late. And with the core separated, the condensed magic lost all of its cohesiveness.

PLACK!

The core made a weird, sloppy sound when it fell to the ground.

"Damn," I muttered, creating a foothold to stay in the air while looking down.

I tried to limit my strength, but my attack was still strong enough to force the core into the ground.

Due to the nature of local mana and the mana of those monsters, the two should repel each other.

For a moment, I couldn't help but ponder over what could happen.

My eyes opened wide when I realized one crucial thing.

'Aren't I playing with forces I don't understand at all yet?'

The sudden realization struck me like lightning.

'Mia!' A single thought filled my mind.

I collapsed the foothold below my feet right as I kicked against it.

This time I didn't bother to control my strength. I was too worried about the potential results of those two types of mana forcefully colliding.

'Because I know what happens then,' I thought, recalling my exploits with the mana engine.

I landed by the girl's side within a single frame of reference. And before the side-effects of such a rapid rush could kick in in the surroundings, I already grabbed Mia and desperately fled away.

BOOM!

Just like I expected, the reaction happened.

'Thank God,' I thought, a wave of relief spreading in my soul.

With Mia firmly in my hands, I could somehow manage to defend her against the mana disaster.

But nothing like it happened.

Sure, a sudden wave of sound was devastating and made me shudder to my core...

"Is that all there is to it?" I muttered a question, turning my head around and staring blankly at the former core.

"What is this...?" Mia muttered a small question as she dropped all of her shock and looked in the same direction.

A broken shell of solid mana decorated the place where I dropped the core. Those shards generated a strange mist that hid most of the stuff in the area.

And right in the middle of this mess, I could see a movement of something big.

"That's definitely not a human," I muttered. I then fixed my hold over the girl, ready to escape at a moment's notice.

"Let me down!" Mia demanded, eager to help out in the coming fight.

"No way," I refused, ignoring my earlier wishes to let Mia lead.

Because the thing that moved inside this strange, dark fog gave me chills.

From this alone, I could tell how different this enemy was from the others.

I tightened my grasp over Nadia's waist and knees.

The body in my hands felt so feeble, so delicate...

I tightened my jaws and squinted my eyes.

"I doubt I can best it," I said in a blank voice.

Mia's attempts to free herself from my grasp ceased all at once.

She looked away from the moving shape within the fog, turning her eyes towards my face. Her body was tense as she stared down into my eyes. She then raised her hand to my cheek. The second I felt her gentle, warm touch on my face, Mai's body relaxed. "Fine," she smiled, raising her arms and wrapping them around my neck. A shudder went through my spine. 'How could she be like that right in the middle of a serious danger?!' I wailed in my thoughts. How was I supposed to keep my eyes on the threat when Mia acted so meek and flirty? 'Should I try fighting it?' I thought, Mia's actions invoking some sort of basic, primal instincts in me. But as I alternated my eyes between the shape in the fog and Mia's feeble body... I clenched my teeth before taking a step back.

Rather than showing off before her, I would rather keep her safe! I took another step to the back... And then I stopped. My face turned blank. "What about the people in the cave?" I muttered a small question, frozen in place. My thoughts turned all calm; my mind turned into a perfect void. Struck with this sudden moral dilemma, I couldn't make a move, be it with my flesh or with my mind. A single image flashed in my head. An image of Mia's body ripped to shreds, her eyes empty, her heart turned into a pool of blood in this unknown monster's jaws. And this image was powerful enough to stop me in my tracks. 'She is my happiness in this world,' I thought, looking down at the girl's peaceful face. She accepted any and all outcome, leaving her own fate literally in my hands while smiling and caressing my cheek. I then looked towards the cave, where some strangers would likely die to the monster if I didn't do something. The choice... wasn't even there. "Let's go," I softly whispered, smiling at the girl as I turned around and gave the leg. I knew my limits. And more than anyone else, I was fully aware that the power of the mana engine wasn't truly mine yet. Sure, with its insane potential, I could blast that strange monster out of the face of this world... But just like I realized before, I would be playing with forces I do not understand.

A single misstep and my life would be forfeit. And while the concept of death was strangely distant, the lack of future with Mia...

Or even worse, harm coming her way?

Someone or something putting a pained expression on her lovely face? Making this gentle soul suffer?

No.

I wasn't a gambler in my past life, but I still knew a little about weighing the risks and chances!

So, without a second thought, I rushed as far away from the scene as I could!

For a moment, I thought that I had made the correct choice.

And then, a sudden roar shook the air.

Only for a massive figure of a winged lizard to appear in the sky.