

Last System 369

Chapter 369 Black Lightning

'What?' I only managed to spare a single thought before I lost control over my body.

The moment I lowered the output of my energy to return my perception of time flow to its usual state... Everything fell apart.

"GAH!" a pained moan escaped my lips when I crashed, face first, into the side of a nearby hill.

'It's a miracle I didn't break myself on any of the trees on my way here,' I thought bitterly, slowly gathering myself up.

It was massive luck on my end that this strange lightning appeared behind my back. If it were to strike right where I stood...

A shiver shook my body as I turned my face back to where the attack came from.

'Who?' a single question filled my mind as I scanned the area in search of an opponent.

Yet, I was unable to sense a single unnatural ripple in the lake of mana in this area.

'Can they hide the presence of their mana?' a logical solution emerged in my thoughts. I shook my head a mere moment later, refusing to accept it.

'Even I can't hide my mana,' I thought as I continued to scan the surroundings with my eyes. 'And I'm already on the weaker side of those who reached near the top. If they could injure that dragon from before, it's all the less likely they would be able to screen the influence of their power!'

A ripple appeared in the lake of mana.

'WHO?!' I turned my eyes in the direction of the threat...

Only for another black lightning to stream down to the ground and tear through the very fabric of the space.

BOOM!

The sound caused by the shockwave reached my ears a moment later, its intensity showcasing the power behind the attack.

BOOM! BOOM!

The strikes started to appear quicker and quicker, each of them seemingly following the path that I took while fighting off the stranger.

'Wait, this isn't an attack,' I realized, only for my eyes to open as wide as the limits of my flesh allowed.

BOOM!

I twisted my body around.

BOOM!

The barrage of lightning came closer and closer.

BOOM!

I leaped away, hoping to escape the attack.

BOOOOOM!

The last of the strikes was so powerful it nearly ruptured my ears.

At first, I thought I had managed to escape the last of the attacks... Only for my body to suddenly go out of control when the powerful shockwave pushed it from behind!

'Not again,' I thought, powerless to stop my sudden flight.

THUMP!

I could feel my bones cracking when my body smashed into the side of the hill for yet another time. Yet, thanks to landing slightly on my side, I could prove one of my earlier observations wrong.

It wasn't that I, by some miracle, managed to avoid all the trees in the way. No. The force of the shockwave that sent me flying turned my body into a bullet that simply cut right through the damned forest!

'This is going to turn into one massive pain,' I thought as I once again attempted to gather myself up.

The barrage of lighting stopped, for the time being, giving birth to a hope that it was now all over.

BOOM!

'I guess not,' I thought, my face darkening as the same spots that the lighting struck before now received another barrage.

"Thank God I moved out of the way in time," I muttered. And that's all I did because the world suddenly spun around as I struggled to stand upright on my unexpectedly weak knees.

My throat filled up, causing my entire body to convulse as I fell down on all fours.

"Blergh..." my mouth turned into a broken dam that now released what had to be a considerable chunk out of my entire pool of blood.

'How am I alive?' I thought, looking at the blood I had just retched out. 'Losing so much blood in a single...' my thoughts went into disarray, only for a second wave of convulsion to strike me down.

For the next few moments, I could do nothing but continuously vomit my blood out. Only when only acid flew out of my mouth did I manage to force a stop to my convulsions before reinforcing my insides with my mana.

The world spun around the moment I attempted to do so. And as if following by a leash, the thunders suddenly grew stronger.

But it then turned out even worse, as those lighting strikes started to move towards me, now freed from the confines they were stuck in before!

'Is it because I used my mana?' I thought, desperately trying to figure out just what the hell was going on.

And then, by a pure coincidence, I looked right into the striking thunder as it fell down to the ground.

"What the..." I uttered, only for my face to turn dark.

Judging from the path the lightning strikes took, it was about to land a square hit directly on my back!

But what was even worse, I realized the meaning of a certain saying from the earth.

'When you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares right back at you.'

The popular quote appeared in my mind right as I looked into the lightning... Or rather, the momentary rift in the very fabric of space that it created.

The opening lasted for a split of a second, the forces of the world itself quickly mending the space back to how it should be.

But in that single moment, I saw it.

An endless ocean of perfectly stable energy. The waves of influence moved from the world to the surface of this endless lake of power, only to cause a ripple that then turned back into a wave of influence on the other side of the lake.

'Ugh...' I let out a long moan of pain when pressure suddenly surged in my brain.

What I saw was just a poor, faulty visualization that my brain came up with to portray things that exceeded my understanding.

The surface of the lake that I noticed was a perfect example. For a lake, there was only one surface. Yet, for the lake of the mana, its surface had two sides. And within the confines of three dimensions, this phenomenon couldn't exist!

Another round of clearing out the content of my stomach followed when my brain attempted to make sense of what I saw in that rift of space.

"Arthy!" Mia shouted, appearing right on the edge of my vision. I could also vaguely hear the steps of someone else approaching.

"RUN!" I shouted with all the strength that I had left in my body.

Even though those lightning clearly didn't come from any force within this world, I could somehow tell another one was about to strike.

'I can't let Mia suffer because of something that I caused!'

This single thought filled my brain.

Then, all the thoughts disappeared from my brain as I acted fully on instinct.

Using mana would cause my body to violently protest. Yet, there was this tiny window during which I could use my mana and, before doing so, would bring retribution upon me.

So, in the act of desperation, I banked all my hopes on this window, launching my mana to propel Mia as far away from this place as I could.

And then, right as all the minuscule amount of mana that I managed to gather on the spot had left my body...

The black lightning struck me squarely in the back.