

Last System 392

Chapter 392 Small Talk Before The Fight

"The monsters are coming," I said, turning my face towards the east.

It wasn't something I observed with my mana sense. The distance that separated the incoming threats from us was way too great for me to detect any weird movements of the mana.

No. I detected the monsters with nothing less than what could only be called a sixth sense. Or in broader terms, a combination of all my senses, experience, and levels of perception I couldn't consciously control.

"How many?" Levi asked while lowering himself to his knees and looking in the same direction I did.

I, in turn, gave him a baffled look.

"How the heck should I know?" I asked. "I don't even know if those are the anti-mana monsters or the normal ones," I pointed out while rolling my eyes.

The difference between the two was massive. Both in terms of what we could gain from the fight and how we should approach the fight itself. Yet, despite my eagerness to hunt down some anti-mana monsters to let Levi consume their power and advance to the stage of pure-mana user...

'It wouldn't hurt to get some materials to fix and improve my formations,' I thought, scanning the state of all my arrays with a quick look.

To say that they were about to break apart would be a gross overstatement. Yet, at the same time, I couldn't help but get embarrassed when I thought about the discrepancy between my power and the materials I used to construct my greatest source of power.

'Pebbles picked up randomly from the side of the road are the foundation upon which I built my mage's tower,' I thought, gritting my teeth in a fit of annoyance. Then, another truth dawned upon me. 'Maybe upgrading them would allow me to reach even greater heights?'

"Now that I think about it, I'm sorry, but I hope those are not the monsters from the other dimension," I muttered.

The world was changing, everyone knew that. And in this changing world, the need for me to get stronger was even greater than ever before.

And yet, here I was, parading around with nothing but my mana engine, thinking it would be enough to face whatever awaited me in the massive span of the continent.

'I guess I grew too complacent ever since reuniting with Mia,' I thought, turning my eyes towards the girl.

'And thinking about this, I didn't really help her grow that much either,' I thought to myself, raising from my battle-ready position and taking a step toward the girl.

"What's up?" Mia asked, sensing my approach and dropping her guard.

This damned girl knew I wouldn't dare to distract her if the fight was right around the corner and thus assumed we had enough time to talk a bit.

"I know I should've asked this long ago, but what cultivation stage are you on, right now?" I asked. Yet, right as the girl opened her mouth to answer, I suddenly raised my hands to stop her from doing so. "No, that's not it," I shook my head. "What do you need to grow stronger?"

Knowing what level of cultivation Mia had wouldn't provide me with any useful information. Not in terms of fostering her growth, that is.

As she had no system to her side that could foster her growth, it would be wrong of me to assume that her cultivation would be exactly the same as mine... especially given how I wasn't only a cultivator but a mage as well!

"What do I need to grow stronger, huh?" Mia muttered, averting her eyes a little.

'Huh?' I twitched, not expecting Mia's expression to darken the way it did right now. 'Did I somehow strike a bad vibe?' I asked myself, desperately rushing to figure out the potential reason for it.

And thank God, or heavens, I wasn't as dense as all those protagonists from the novel I read in my previous life who would miss not only the hints but direct answers that Mia gave me in the past.

'She considers herself to be a burden, not a partner,' I thought, recalling all the instances when the girl signaled it.

"I..." Mia hesitated a little. "Even after all the times we did it, I'm still in the beginning stages of a mature enlightenment," she muttered, refusing to look me straight in the eyes.

"I see," I whispered, reaching out with my hand and placing it on the girl's shoulder.

Mia twitched a little, not prepared for this strange, new kind of distant intimacy.

"You've worked hard, didn't you?" I praised her, raising my hand only to move it from her shoulder to the top of her head. "You know that my situation is special so don't you dare compare yourself to me, okay?" I then requested.

"I know," Mia replied, still keeping her eyes away. "But that doesn't change how I'm..."

"Stop it, dear," I said in a little bit sterner voice. I also stopped rustling her hair and moved my hand toward her lips only to close them up with a single finger of mine. "Just a few days ago, you were only at a core expansion stage," I whispered while leaning over the girl's ear. Then, I took a step back, put a confident smile on my face, and turned around.

"Levi, a quick question," I then said, calling out to my former master... and the only one who had real knowledge of the cultivation of the lower realms as someone who went through them in a normal way. "How long would it normally take a person to advance from eight to the eleventh rank?"

"A decade?" Levi answered right away, giving me a weirded-out look.

This question came out of nowhere, after all. Yet, upon noticing how I didn't look away nor change the expression on my face, Levi changed his position and rubbed his chin while thinking about the answer that would satisfy me.

"Well, if you went with accumulation alone, it could take you more than a century," he replied again after a short moment. "If you could use an abundant amount of cultivation resources and have someone to guide your cultivation..." he took another moment to think.

"Five years?" he forwarded a guess. "Or a year if you had every possible advantage in the world."

Judging from Levi's tone, a year was already a time that most of the cultivators could only dream about. A time so short that it would likely be taken as a freak incident rather than a rule of thumb.

"See?" I said, turning around and smiling right in Mia's face. "Normally, it would take people over a year to accomplish what you did in how long?" I then turned my statement into a question. "Two weeks?"

"I never said I'm dissatisfied with the rate at which I'm growing," Mia rolled her eyes and took a step forward, killing the distance that I put between us to have this small talk with Levi. She then brought her hand up and struck me in the solar plexus with her forefinger. "I'm dissatisfied with how, no matter how much I try, I can't catch up to you."