

Last System 411

Chapter 411 It's Seriously Damaged... But It Still Stands!

"The scouts are returning," Levi reported silently while staring off into the distance.

It was only about two hours since I finished the task of absorbing all the anti-mana that was left scattered on the battlefield. And in this short frame of time, we managed to organize our now massive group into a marching order before heading down the highway.

It was only about two hours... and Levi's report indicated we were already nearing the first checkpoint on our way to the Tuxi outpost.

'The scouts returning can only mean three things,' I thought, looking off in the distance in hopes of seeing what Levi just reported.

Yet, my attempts were futile. It was not until about five minutes later that I finally could spot the silhouettes of the people we sent ahead lingering at the very edge of my sight.

'It will take them about an hour to rejoin the group,' I thought after taking a moment to calculate the distance, their speed, our speed, the shared vector of approach, and the like. Or, in other words, I eyeballed the situation and came up with an arbitrary number.

"They don't seem to be in a hurry," Levi reported again as soon as I managed to see what he noticed before.

'He just can't help himself but keep on ascertaining his dominance in the field of perceptiveness, can't he?' I thought but opted to gloss over the topic.

It wasn't a competition. And since Levi's eyesight was just slightly better than mine, it only made sense for him to call out the news.

"That means the worst-case scenario didn't come to be," I concluded.

If Levi claimed our scouts weren't in a hurry, then it most likely was the case.

Cultivators of the level of the people we sent ahead could run in three different ways.

The first type of run would be used in their daily life, as they would move around cities or other relatively busy areas. Or, to put it simply, every cultivator was more than capable of running at a speed achievable only for the upper strata of the mortals.

Then, came the second type of run that actually forced them to circulate their energy yet one that allowed them to easily break right past all the limits even the most athletic mortals would come to face someday.

This was also the preferred speed of movement for our scouts.

And then, came the third speed at which only cultivators could move. A speed that incorporated all kinds of techniques, movement formulas, and desperate measures like burning one's own cultivation to escape the danger.

And what Levi meant by the scouts not running referred strictly to the third form of movement.

A speed that would only be used if the scouts happened to encounter something either immensely important or equally as dangerous.

"Worst case scenario?" Mia asked while casually walking right by my side and playing around with my right hand. "Shouldn't it be a best-case scenario?" she poked fun at me. "If they were running, it would only mean they encountered strong monsters," the girl concluded. "In turn, that would mean I could get more resources to advance, wouldn't it?"

In a certain perspective, Mia's words would rang true. In a world where one's life didn't matter, it certainly would.

Yet, in my eyes, it was only a showcase of the few differences in the mindset that remained between the two of us.

"As happy as I would be to hunt monsters to get resources for your cultivation, I don't think the lives of the scouts are worth it," I said out loud before leaning over Mia's ear. "Fuck those scouts, but we can't afford a hit to the morale of our group that such deaths would bring," I whispered.

Mia nodded, showing she understood my concerns.

"We won't find out what happened till they join the group," Levi said, interrupting our moment of silence. "But whatever it was, I'm glad it didn't force them to run."

That was the end of the topic. And just like that, we returned to the same silence that covered the rest of our now huge group.

In the end, traveling through the continent wasn't as exciting as one could think it was.

Outside of the surprisingly rare encounters of monsters lurking around the road, the only prevailing element of the travel... was boredom.

There was only so much to talk about with strangers and most of the topics I would love to discuss with Levi or Mia were too important to bring them out in the open and with a huge number of people watching and listening. Especially when I still couldn't be sure about those people's loyalty.

And so, save for some occasional remarks or small talk, our group continued to move in silence all the way to the point when the scouts finally rejoined the rest of the group.

"There is a huge river ahead, sir," one of them reported as soon as he was done catching his breath.

Even though he didn't push himself past the limits, running for four to five hours straight still took its toll on one of the monsterization victims we saved.

'Taking into account how he lost his cultivation rank, it's almost a miracle he managed to run for so long,' I thought.

"That's good," I then replied, giving the four of our tired scouts some time to recover. "But I only need to know one thing," I then added once I noticed they started to regain their breath.

"Is the bridge intact?"

There was only one river crossing that I knew of. And it perfectly aligned with the highway we were traveling through right now.

'Crossing the river might not be a problem for those people,' I thought, taking a quick glance at the weakened cultivators behind me, 'but it would still be better if we could do so with our feet remaining dry.'

"The bridge..." the strongest of the scouts took a step forward. He then glanced over at his compatriots before turning his face back to me... only to lower his eyes and mutter.

"It's damaged, quite seriously at that," he reported before gathering the courage and looking properly into my eyes. "It's damaged, but it still stands!"