

Last System 412

Chapter 412 The Riven... Changed

'Is it fitting to call our group a group, or should I refer to it per caravan already?' I wondered while everyone walked forward, ready to meet with the challenge ahead.

'Or maybe an army should be an even better fit?' I continued to scour my brain to decide on the most fitting word.

This was the sad truth about how travel looked like, something that all the novels I read in my past life failed to bring up.

It was easy to read a passage that said something along the lines of characters spending the night under the night sky or traveling for a few days to reach another city. It was easy to read two paragraphs worth of them getting tired by the constant walk or getting so bored that no talk would stick for longer than just a few exchanges of words.

But the sad reality of travel actually was limited to just two things, one of which we could avoid only because of our improved physical state.

But there was no cultivation level that would save one from the dangers of boredom.

The distance that separated my group from the bridge when I first heard the report of the scouts wasn't all that great. If I were to run through it, I could cover it in ten to fifteen minutes tops. I could shrink that time even further by capitalizing on some of my movement techniques

Even by infusing my body with more mana than usual I could reach an average walking speed that would cut the time necessary to cover the distance to less than thirty minutes.

Yet, I couldn't do it.

Not with Mia walking by my side and clearly enjoying the stroll. But first and foremost, not when I was on the front guard of the entire group of fallen cultivators.

As such, a distance that should take me no longer than half an hour to cover ended up stealing two hours' worth of everyone's lives.

"We are finally here," I muttered as soon as we reached the foothold of a small hill that supported one end of a relatively massive bridge for this world's standards.

'And it doesn't look like a trap either,' I then added in my thoughts, purposefully hiding this sentence from the people around me.

The idea that the bridge ended up becoming a trap was something I analyzed while getting bored out of my mind as we traveled towards the bridge.

I only considered this option... because if it were me, this bridge would've long turned into the greatest source of income and resources that one could think of in the entire area around!

After all, it was the only crossing on the local river that allowed one to step into the area formerly known as the Tuxi domain.

"That's weird," Levi muttered, suddenly freezing on the spot as he stopped walking and looked towards the river.

For a second, I was tempted to ask him to elaborate on what caught his attention. I looked at his face, ready to pry my mouth open and ask.

And then I saw the clouded look behind his eyes.

'Asking can wait, ' I decided then and there, turning my eyes back towards the bridge.

It was damaged. And to a huge degree at that, just like the scouts reported.

The two pylons that supported its middle part over the river were now holding on by a force of some sort of a miracle. They were beaten up and broken apart as if some sort of monster gnawed away at them for fun.

And yet, save for the bridge's pylons, the crossing was in relatively good shape.

"Okay then," I muttered to myself. I then turned around, raising my hands and slapping my cheeks as I did so. "Everyone!" I then shouted after taking a second to gather the air in my lungs. "Let's start crossing it! Once we get to the other side of the river, we will be only a few hours away from our destination!"

The second part of my shout was designed as a morale boost to all the fallen cultivators that ended up putting their faith in me.

For people on their level, walking for a few hours shouldn't be a challenge. Even though there wasn't anyone above the core expansion stage amongst them, there wasn't a single soul below the mana extension level amongst them either.

'This kind of travel should be a breeze for them...' I thought, slightly surprised by the complete lack of motivation that I could still see in those people's eyes when we first departed on our way. 'Maybe it's the effect of the time they had nothing better to do but to analyze their situation?'

For a second I humored all sorts of guesses and random analyses of the situation that swarmed my mind. And then, I ditched them all away, not willing to waste precious time on such a folly.

'Whatever the case, they need a morale boost,' I decided, tightening my fists as I started to gather air in my lungs again. 'And nothing beats learning that we are almost there while one is on the road!'

"Guys, make sure to cross the bridge one by one!" I shouted my order. "It looks how it looks, so let's not put any unnecessary strain on it!"

My words should be obvious. No sane man would dare to push the already damaged bridge to the limits of what it could hold while in a perfect state.

After all, if we were to end up destroying it, we would have no other choice but to cross the river in a more... primitive way.

"Well, worst case scenario, some of us will get wet," I thought out loud before sighing to myself.

"No." Levi suddenly spoke out, even though he only limited himself to a single word.

He then stepped forward, moved past me, and turned around, all for the sake of standing before me and placing his hands on my shoulder. Then, as he looked right into my eyes, he spoke.

"Whatever the case, don't let anyone in that river," he said, stressing out every word that came out of his lips.

"Huh?" I shrugged a little. "Why?"

Levi gulped down his saliva before turning his head to the side and throwing a look full of suspicion at the river.

"Look at the water and tell me what you see," Levi requested, ignoring the opportunity to simply give me the answer to what he was worried about.

Knowing the man's character I didn't insist, opting to take a closer look at the river, just as he advised.

At first, I couldn't see anything extraordinary.

Sure, there were claws and teeth marks on the pylons, some of which were deep enough to threaten their structural integrity.

But those things were above the surface level of water. And my former master clearly requested me to look at the water instead.

With no other choice, I heaved a short sigh before focusing my eyes on the river. And although I couldn't see anything extraordinary, as soon as my eyes moved towards the sides of the river...

My body twisted and my face darkened.

"Whoever ends up in the water will be devoured," Levi finally gave out the answer as soon as he noticed the sudden changes that happened on my face.

And I could see where he was coming from. Because the bridge that spanned three times the width of the river when I crossed it in the past...

Now had only a few meters spare before it would connect two points, both covered by the surface of the water!

'The river grew to nearly three times its original size,' I thought, gulping down my saliva.

And, as strange as it might sound, this explained the claw marks on the pylons.

The water species that inhabited the river were originally too small to threaten the pylons. Or to be more precise, whoever built the bridge, did so while taking only the naturally occurring river species in mind.

But ever since the disaster happened, some variables have changed. And as a result, the river grew to nearly three times its size... and so did the habitat within.

"Right now, only heavens knows what kind of monsters reside within," Levi muttered in a low voice, clearly unwilling to let this realization hit any of the cultivators we saved. "But judging how quickly they got to grow, it's also pretty easy to guess what their diet consisted of since the river grew!"

