

Last System 413

Chapter 413 Aquatic Beast's Devious Scheme

"Only heavens knows what kind of monsters reside within."

Levi's voice was trembling. His eyes were stuck on the surface of the river as if moving them away would lead to his instant demise. His hands tightened into fists, proving he was ready to jump into a fight at a moment's notice.

"But judging how quickly they got to grow, it's also pretty easy to guess what their diet consisted of since the river grew!"

I gulped down my saliva.

Despite lagging behind only the last few ranks in terms of cultivation alone, I couldn't sense anything that Levi was talking about.

No amount of tricks I had up my sleeve allowed me to peer through the natural barriers of sight, sound, and mana perception to see what exactly made Levi as on edge as he was right now.

But that didn't matter. Because I wasn't someone who would ignore Levi's warning just because I wasn't able to sense the same warnings as he did.

"So the bridge is a trap," I muttered, instantly accepting Levi's words. "But I can't see any marks of anything attacking the passage," I then added, squinting my eyes as I took a closer look at the bridge.

Sure, it's pylons were damaged to the point it was only a matter of time, and a very short time at that before the entire thing would come crashing down.

And yet, no matter how much I strained my eyes, I couldn't see a single clue that would indicate the bridge itself was no longer safe to cross.

'This kind of trap could only work once. And a huge number of monsters had to pass this bridge only recently. It makes no sense for the bridge to still stand if it only serves as a trap for the monsters lurking in the river below.'

The monsters that I fought with earlier in the day had to come from all over the place. And although I had no proof of my assumption, their number was far too great for those hordes to come from the areas limited to one side of the river.

'Some of those monsters had to come from the Tuxi land, that I'm quite sure about,' I thought, taking a step towards the bank of the river. 'So how did they get past this obstacle?'

Since the bridge still stood, I could only think of several methods by which the aquatic monsters could hunt those who attempted to pass it.

First, the entire construction was nothing more but an illusion. If that were to be the case, then the unfortunate cultivators would confidently step upon the bridge and then walk to their own demise, falling down the construction as soon as they would step on the bridge's parts that were no longer there.

Yet...

Illusion on this kind of scale was something even I would struggle to construct. And while it was possible to do so...

It simply didn't make mathematical sense for a monster to output an insane amount of energy necessary to construct such an illusion only for some small fries that would dare to cross the bridge.

It was possible... but it would hardly net the monster any positive amount of energy it could get from its unfortunate meals.

The second option was simpler and limited the potential illusion from a full reconstruction of the parts of the bridge to just patches that covered its broken parts.

'That scenario makes a little bit more sense,' I thought. 'Covering gaps and holes would be a task easy enough on one's mana output to warrant using it for some small fries.'

I gulped down my saliva.

The third and last option that I could think of was a complete lack of illusion.

In this scenario, the monsters wouldn't waste their energy trying to change how others perceived the world. Instead, they would rely on monsters and cultivators' confidence in their ability to cross the bridge, relying on shaking its structure to force its victims out of the safe passage.

I took yet another look at the bridge's construction. I saved every element of it into my memory, burning it into an image that wouldn't disappear from before my eyes even after I closed them.

And there it was, the likely way in which the monsters from within the water could turn this sturdy construction into a death trap for anyone daring enough to pass through it.

"They are going to shake the bridge," I muttered after calculating the pressure points of the construction and its weak points.

And then I gritted my teeth.

'That bastard...' I thought.

Now that I knew what I should be looking for, actually locating it was an easy task.

Sure, all the pylons that supported the bridge around the deepest parts of the river were damaged. But what I failed to realize before... was how there were fewer pylons supporting the bridge than its construction was designed to have!

'In this way, by striking the existing pylons, the load would be transferred directly to the path, violently shaking it,' I thought.

"I get it," I muttered, seeing with the eyes of my imagination how the long line of people would be suddenly struck with the realization that what they considered to be a stable passage would turn into one massive and unsteady swing.

"I think I figured it out too," Levi added. His face darkened. "Whatever is waiting for us in the depths of this river sure does know how to hide its fangs," he added.

A blade lurking in the darkness is the most lethal one.

Were it not for Levi's extreme senses and instincts, I would likely lead all of my newly recruited people right past the bridge, eager to bring them all to the relative safety of the Tuxi Outerpost. And it was likely the exact scenario that the monster lurking in the river's depths was hoping for.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

'Just like with illusion, shaking a bridge this massive has to take quite a lot of effort,' I thought, forcing myself to approach the situation as rationally as possible. 'And that means, there is only one way to make people pass it in a relatively safe manner.'

I took a deep breath and opened up my eyes.

"Everyone!" I shouted, turning myself on my heel and glancing over at the crowd of former experts behind me. "We will be crossing the bridge... One at a time!"