

Last System 428

Chapter 428 What A Fraud I Am (Still Vaner's Pov)

'It's been already two days,' Vaner thought as he descended down the sect's hall and moved along the main path through its open grounds.

Back in the day, this path would lead outside of the sect and towards the major city that connected all the commerce from the surrounding villages, allowing the sect members free access to all the items they could ever want.

Yet, as it was right now, this path lead to the location of the biggest job that was ever taken in this sect, save for when the ancestors settled those grounds down.

Right now, this wide well-maintained path led to the excavation site, where all the sect members were working day and night to remove all the stone that blocked the only passage leading outside of the sect.

'Look at them go,' Vaner thought a moment later when he climbed up a small hill. He could see the work site from there already, along with all the tiny silhouettes of disciples and elders alike, tirelessly working at breaking apart the huge boulders and then moving them out of the way.

'In the future, we could use all this material to build some more structures,' Vaner thought, taking a mental note of this small idea. 'That is, assuming we will remain within the relative safety of the sect grounds,' he thought as he raised his eyes towards the terrace sides of the mountain the sect was hidden in.

Even though it's been a week since he entered the sect and claimed the seat of its patriarch, Vaner has yet to find both time and the opportunity to leave everything behind and go look into what he found within the mountain before.

An entire week during which those under him continued to dig out the stone while Vaner kept on doing his best to unbury himself from the mountain of paperwork that the death of the former sect master left him with.

"Still..." Vaner muttered, making a voice for the first time since he left the sect hall. "The work is going even better than I expected it to," he admitted to the satisfaction of the two elders that accompanied him.

It was an unnecessary waste of manpower to have elders accompany Vaner for every trip he made outside of his quarters. A needless pretense that led to those two elders wasting their time rather than contributing to the excavation job.

Yet, at the same time, it was a pretense necessary to keep the lofty image of the sect's patriarch, something Vaner was making full use of.

"It's good to hear, patriarch," one of the elders replied, his face brightening up a bit.

Ever since Vaner's announcement, the spirits of everyone in the sect were pretty low. While the time pressure that Vaner put on them led to everyone working their damn hardest... It wasn't a state of mind nor stress for the body that they could keep on for long without breaking.

'I guess I should help them out a bit,' Vaner decided after observing the small changes appearing on the elder's face.

He then descended the hill and approached the very outer ring of the job area.

"Patriarch!" the elder currently on the overseeing shift for the job cupped his hands together and lowered his head as soon as he noticed Vaner's appearance. "It's a blessing to have you here," he added through his clenched jaws.

Vaner, just until recently, was considered one of the outcasts within the elders' bunch. The lowest of the low could keep his seat as an elder only due to the former patriarch's favor. As such, even a week after his sudden ascendance, there were still quite a lot of voices dissatisfied with his unexpected promotion.

Yet...

There were voices of dissatisfaction, yet no one dared to oppose him. The show that he gave when taking down the former sect patriarch along with his claim to be blessed by the sect's ancestral spirit itself was enough to stop even the most prideful and the dumbest of the elders from acting up.

"Greetings, little brother," Vaner replied, making use of his authority again to call the other party with the official form only he in the entire sect was privy to. "It's great to see you here. There is something I need you to do," Vaner then announced.

"Your word is my will, patriarch," the elder replied, repeating the same gesture as before while hiding his dissatisfaction by lowering his head even further.

"Call everyone out," Vaner requested. "At the current rate... I'm worried we won't make it in time," he added.

The timeline that the sect had for clearing out the entrance from the rubble was the three weeks that Vaner announced, rather than four-to-five weeks that they could realistically survive. Because after opening the sect up... there was no telling how long it would take them to find a stable source of food for everyone!

"Esteemed Patriarch, are you..." the elder asked, opening his eyes wide. Yet, he cut his sentence short while shaking his head. "I understand. What I heard, I will fulfill," he then added before bowing again and leaving his spot.

And quite interestingly, the look in his eyes changed a little. There was still quite a lot of unhappiness and displeasure... but now, a hint of respect flashed in the elder's eyes as well.

"Everyone!" the elder shouted as soon as he reached the entrance to what looked like a mine. "Get out this instant!"

The elder's shout was filled with the feeling of urgency, it was a voice one would use upon noticing the signs of the mine starting to fall apart.

And as one would expect from simple disciples that were doing most of the digging, as soon as they heard the worried voice, they started to run out of the shaft at top speed.

Soon, all the disciples who were currently in the shaft escaped from what they perceived to be a lethal trap before gathering before the mine's entrance.

"Esteemed Patriarch..." the elder currently in charge of the work turned around and nodded his head towards Vaner.

'I guess it's time for me to play my part,' Vaner thought as he took a stride forward and moved past all the disciples only to stand right at the entrance of the mine.

"Is everyone out?" Vaner asked. A single scan of mana was enough for him to confirm no soul was left in the tunnel... but this kind of check wasn't cinematic for his underlings enough. Or in other words, it didn't give them enough of a caring patriarch impression to satisfy Vaner's needs.

"Yes, my patriarch," the elder in charge reported. "All the disciples are out and accounted for."

"Great," Vaner muttered.

He then closed his eyes and focused on his inner state, accelerating both types of spiritual energy that danced inside his flesh.

The air tensed up from the overbearing amount of energy that gathered right where the two separate flows within Vaner nearly started to merge.

'This attack...' Vaner thought, bringing both of his flows to the absolute limit of how fast they could circulate, 'will cut the path open!'

Vaner encouraged himself before separating a small bit of energy from his basic flow. He then put his hands as close as he could without actually letting them touch.

"BURST FORTH!" Vaner then shouted, clapping his hands together and creating another point of contact between his two flows. This time, however, he allowed the small strand of free spiritual energy to get accelerated by the natural point of contact between the flows, before shooting it right between his hands.

The already accelerated mana entered into the narrow space between the two flows, receiving yet another boost to its speed. And as it shot out of Vaner's fingers, the skyladder's sect patriarch finally allowed it to take a proper, physical form.

BOOM!

A single strand of extremely condensed energy shot out of his fingers. The power of the projectile caused Vaner to wobble to the back, nearly losing his stability and failing to control the direction of the attack.

"My patriarch!" One of the escorting elders was quick to notice the problem. He stepped forth and pressed his shoulder against Vaner's back, stabilizing him in the spot.

The ray of Vaner's energy was so condensed it actually took a physical form, giving out a gentle, yellow light as it penetrated deeply into the tunnel.

'Expand!' Vaner thought, opening his hands a tiny little bit and allowing the ray to turn wider at the cost of its power.

And then, just like that, the entire event ended. The energy Vaner was willing to sacrifice for the job exhausted itself. The man shook on his feet.

"Patriarch!" the same elder from before instantly reached out, helping Vaner to remain on his feet.

"Now, we should be able to escape this prison in time," Vaner muttered in a weak voice, pretending to be exhausted to his limits. He then brought his arm up and rested it around the elder's shoulders. His knees shook, threatening to give up under the weight of his body. "Help me back to the sect hall," he ordered in what could only be classified as a whisper.

'A perfect showcase of how far I'm willing to go for the sect,' Vaner internally smiled.

Yet, as he turned around, he was faced with a wall of unmoving disciples and elders of the sect alike.

'Did I overdo it?' Vaner suddenly started to worry. 'Are they trying to use this chance to take me down?'

The people before Vaner clasped their hands together and bowed down like one man.

"This disciple greets the patriarch!" they all shouted at once, showcasing their gratitude for Vaner's sacrifice.

The tips of Vaner's lips quivered a little.

'Even though its just an act...' he thought, before closing his eyes for a second. And as he opened them, Vaner could no longer hold back his smile. 'What a fraud I am,' he self-loathingly thought before raising his hand and nodding towards the crowd. "I helped as much as I could, cough, cough," he said before bending in half while biting the inner side of his cheek only to then pretend to cough blood. "But now, it's up to you to finish the job."