

## Last System 431

### Chapter 431 To Save The Past While The Future Crumbles

"What grandiose names..." Vaner muttered while retracting his hand from the wall.

"Authorization I can understand. Corporation likely is an archaic word for cooperation... But Sigma? Technical maintenance?"

Vaner shook his head.

"No, I won't get anywhere with just guesses. I can't mix those words either," he told himself as he took a step back from the entrance and sat down, staring at the plaque he could see and the parts of the wall that invoked the words despite its runes being long lost to the decay.

"Technical Maintenance Shaft..." Vaner muttered, staring at the only place with the runes left.

"Shaft... Is this some sort of an ancient joke?" he thought, grasping at the straws. "If it's the shaft, then there should be a shroom and balls somewhere!"

Vaner shook his head to the side, hoping to see some clues in his surroundings.

But not a single part of any of the highest terraces appeared to be anywhere close to the structure of the penis that Vaner had in mind.

'Wait, maybe I'm looking at it from the wrong perspective?' he thought. Then, he stood up and looked down the inner slope of the mountain.

'Maybe the shroom is supposed to be down there?' Vaner squinted his eyes as he recalled the details of what lay at the bottom of the mountain hole. 'But I can't recall any ravine between two hills standing side by side. There are no random ponds or sources of water either,' he thought before raising his eyes and looking at the crown.

'Assuming the shroom would be down there, then there should be a mark for the balls somewhere within the crown...'

Vaner scanned the topmost part of the mountain... but to no avail.

'If that's not it, then what?' he asked himself as he went right back to square one.

'Maintenance... Maybe this word has the same meaning as it does today?' Vaner put forth a courageous guess. 'Maintenance shaft...' he kept on repeating the words in his mind, only for his eyes to inevitably oscillate towards the opening in the side of the mountains.

"Wait, why am I looking outside when this plaque clearly describes where this door leads?" Vaner jumped up to his feet, baffled by his own incompetence.

"And maintenance shaft..." he then repeated, taking a step closer towards the hole in the mountain. "Maybe it's not a penis joke at all, but the shape of this tunnel!"

Vaner shook his head, forcibly removing all his excitement from his soul.

'It will do me no good to be hasty,' he reminded himself before taking a deep breath and then slowly releasing all the air out from his lungs.

"It's a maintenance shaft. And of a Tech-Nyi-Cail type, whatever the ancients could mean by that," he muttered to himself.

Vaner then gulped his saliva down as he took a step towards the entrance.

Right now, only the invisible wall of courage separated him from the hole. A barrier that only stupidity, courage, or information could break.

'Let's think about the other things the voice called,' Vaner decided, retreating the hand that he almost broke past the barrier with.

"Authorized personnel only," Vaner repeated the words that he heard from the ancient spirit guardian, or whatever in fact it was. "Authorization I can understand. Personnel most likely has something to do with the person, while only means to restrict the entry," Vaner analyzed every word.

"Or in simpler terms, people who are authorized might pass those doors," Vaner muttered to himself.

He then heaved a sigh of relief.

'Am I just that intelligent or is it just luck that at least parts of this mystery are relatively easy to solve?' he thought while allowing a bit of pride to fill his thoughts.

Then, his mood soured as a realization struck him.

"That, or maybe it was designed to fool me into believing it's all that simple?" Vaner put forth yet another guess, before shaking his head and dropping the topic, moving on to the last set of clues.

"Property of Sigma corporation," Vaner muttered. "Meaning of property is obvious. Yet, it also implies that this entire structure..." Vaner whispered before taking a step back.

Then, he looked down and along the entire length of the massive mountain.

"That means, this entire thing..." he gulped his saliva down as he struggled to accept the realization that kept on banging at the doors of his mind.

"A mystery of our world, a structure that nature should never be able to make on its own..." Vaner took a deep breath to calm himself down. "Not only was it made with a human hand... but it also belonged to some sort of a group?!"

Vaner was no stranger to the concept of obscenely rich people. He met a fair share of filthy wealthy merchants and cultivators, people so rich they could treat entire sects or even nations as handymen or pieces on the board of their business.

Yet, they were all limited by what fits within human perception. Meanwhile, given how this thing required a marking, not only this damn landmark was an item that a certain group of people owned... then clearly, as something that had to be marked, it wasn't the only one of its kind to belong to the same faction!

"Sigma corporation... Sigma cooperation," Vaner translated the ancient words into ones he could better comprehend. "Were they some sort of overlords of the ancient era?" he asked himself. "Or

maybe I'm misunderstanding something and they only owned a part of this entire landmark?" he then thought as his eyes wandered back to the erased parts above the entrance to the mountain hole.

'That would explain the need for marking it up,' Vaner thought, quickly leaning to accept this new idea as it was far easier for him to stomach.

"But that also means, I can no longer figure out anything just from the outside..." Vaner muttered to himself as he approached the hole in the mountainside yet again.

He then breathed heavily as he reached out with his hand... only to stop it just an inch away from the invisible barrier that his own fear created.

"Even if I reached the top of this world, I might be nothing more but an insignificant insect in the eyes of the ancients that constructed all of this," Vaner thought, his sadness causing a long wrinkle to appear on his forehead.

Then, his eyes wandered off to the abyss just a few steps behind him.

"Even if I die here, they should be able to get out," he muttered to himself. And once again, his eyes gravitated back towards the mysterious door.

"Maybe that's what my entire life was all about?" Vaner suddenly asked himself. "To risk my life as an explorer of the past while the future of the world is crumbling?"

The patriarch of the skyladder sect closed his eyes and allowed the feeling of those words to coax his soul for a moment.

"Right as the world is falling apart, I would set out on a mission to save the records of the might the humans once wielded," he muttered, his motivation swelling up in his insides.

"So that even if our world were to crumble, one day, all this knowledge, all this might, all those wonders..." Vaner took a deep breath and closed his eyes, "won't be fully erased," he whispered, taking a step forward.