

Last System 435

Chapter 435 Mystery Of The Metal Cap

The discovery was something I definitely didn't expect.

First, I could accept the existence of a treasury hidden out in nearly plain sight. After all, hardly any thief would bother looking through the main room of an auction hall for a place where all the treasuries of the auction would be hidden. Secondly, I could understand if the most important treasury of the rich auction house additionally acting on behalf of the royals of the entire country would have a high level of defenses set up.

But...

But the quality of this metal cap and the formations imprinted on it didn't make sense in any of the scenarios that I could think of.

"What do you think it is?" Mia asked in a hushed voice.

I only shared a bit of what I discovered about this cap. And Mia, in all her glory, managed to figure out it was something that she shouldn't talk out loud.

"I'm not sure yet," I admitted in a similarly hushed voice. I then shook my head and raised my eyes.

Levi was standing right to our sides. And while his face was filled with curiosity, there was nothing on it that would indicate he had any clue about the real origins of this cap.

"Levi..." I muttered. I then gulped down my saliva and took a moment to think. "This thing... It's way bigger than I expected." I opted to go with the perfect honesty route. "I need you to ensure I won't be disturbed while I'm analyzing this thing."

Levi's eyes widened in surprise before his expression turned into one of the utmost seriousness. He nodded without saying a word and started to move away, only to end up talking with the few cultivators that were busy cleaning the other parts of the huge room from the rubble.

He talked with them for a while, before turning around and giving me a short look. Then, the cultivators simply picked up and left, only for Levi to follow after them without saying another word.

'I wonder what he told them,' I thought, surprised by a complete lack of a huge reaction from even a single of the cultivators.

I was curious... But I wasn't going to let my random curiosity distract me from the real treasure of the unknown right beside me.

"Do you think it is really something that important?" Mia asked, her voice filled with suspicion even as she took a step back and allowed me to have some space to analyze the cap.

I only gave her an uncertain nod in response as I focused my mana on top of the metal cap, pushing it inside its structure in an attempt to find out what exactly was going on here.

As soon as my mana seeped through the cap's structure, however, I froze again.

It wasn't just because of how complex every formation embedded within this metal disk was or because of how ridiculously powerful its magical defenses were set up; no - what really made me freeze was how familiar those formations felt!

I've never created a formation like the ones I could see within the cap. I never encountered any formation like it either. Because what was familiar about those formations... wasn't within the formation part. What I was actually familiar with was the style in which they were set up.

'It's like something a proper programmer would create,' I thought, gulping my saliva down.

"Calm down, dear," Mia whispered softly, reaching out and using the corner of her sleeve to wipe the sweat that covered my forehead.

Given the complexity of the formations within the cap, just inspecting them without disturbing the flow of the mana within was forcing me into a state of extreme focus. And yet, regardless of how hard I tried... I couldn't penetrate anywhere deeper than just the topmost layer of the formations!

'If analyzing the cap won't work...' I thought, pushing myself to think outside of the box. 'Wait, thinking outside of the box?' I thought, only for a small smile to emerge on my lips.

And so, I retracted all the mana from within the cap.

"Since I can't analyze it in this way," I muttered to myself, "then let's do it the old-fashioned way!"

Rather than explaining my intentions to Mia, I grabbed a random piece of a broken plank before using it as a makeshift shovel to discard all the rubble that covered the circumference of the cap. Then, I smashed my fist a few times into the tiling of the floor, crushing it into pieces and destroying its internal structure. Then, with the wooden shovel back in my hand, I started to dig... All the way to the point where I could no longer get any deeper.

'Isn't this... concrete?' was my first thought when I unearthed a solid matter hidden a few inches below the floor. Yet, after a closer inspection, I soon found out it wasn't something as simple as it would be mind-boggling.

'It's not the concrete I remember back from the earth,' I thought. Its grains were way too big while leaving no pores that would speed up the process of its deterioration.

I tried to smash it into bits just like I did with the floor tiles before... but to no avail. Even when I used nearly my full, physical power, all I managed to achieve was kicking up some dust from the very top layer of this strange, grey matter.

'Back to using the mana, I guess,' I thought, pushing my mana into the matter... Only for it to be instantly rejected!

It wasn't stopped like it would be if it struck a barrier. It wasn't absorbed by some sort of clever formation either.

My mana... simply failed to penetrate into the grey concrete-like matter...

"It's as if it was already filled with all the mana it can absorb," I muttered, more to myself than to shed some light on the situation for Mia.

"Dear, is everything okay?" the girl asked. And as I turned my eyes to her, I finally noticed just how worried her expression was.

I took in a deep breath... and then slowly sighed it out.

"Yeah, all is good," I said while forcing a small smile on my lips. "I guess I was just too engrossed in this discovery," I admitted.

"Do you have any idea what this might be?" Mia then asked, turning her eyes back towards the cap.

"An idea?" I repeated after her. "Yeah, I do. It's either a treasury, a sealed dungeon, or maybe a bunker," I gave off the possible options that appeared in my mind.

"Can you open it, though?" Mia then inquired.

"If I tried really hard, had a lot of time on my hands and all sorts of tools, then yeah, I think I could," I said while lacking my usual confidence. Then, my expression soured a little as my eyes were once again drawn to the metal cap. "But to be fair, I'm not so sure if I should."

I stood up and dusted off my knees before reaching out and offering my hand to Mia.

"Thanks," she said with a faint smile, the hints of worry still present at the bottom of her eyes.

"I'm thinking," I muttered, forcing my eyes away from the cap. Then, I took a step forward and grabbed Mia by her shoulders only to pull her into a bear-like hug. Then and only then, I brought my lips to her ear.

"If someone made so much effort to seal this place shut... There ought to have a reason for doing so."