

Chapter 2473

Unable to tell direction with the poisonous fog blocking his view, Darryl felt more helpless than ever. What he didn't realize at the time was that he was trapped in the most dangerous area of the Wild Deserted Secret Region, named as the Valley of Death by the Raksasa Tribe.

The Valley of Death extended to a total distance of over a thousand miles, with danger lurking at every corner of the harsh environment. Not even the bravest warrior of the Raksasa Tribe would dare to enter the area carelessly. Little did Darryl know that he was placed before the cruellest trial by nature itself.

Losing track of time, Darryl had unknowingly wandered in the valley for over three days. In those three days, he had come

across Donoghue's body, deformed and rotting away by the poisonous fog. His Sky Breaking Axe was nowhere to be found, possibly taken by some beasts in the wild.

Darryl paid no mind to his discoveries. All he wanted was to find that gigantic python that swallowed the dragon ball and get out, but the Valley of Death was far too vast and with countless vicious beasts and gigantic pythons in every turn, it was like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Perhaps due to the environment and the poisonous fog, the recovery of Darryl's internal energy was extremely slow. Darryl had felt anxious at first but as time went by, he somehow began to grow accustomed to his state.

Time flew and three years went by. In those three years, the Nine Continents had been restored in peace and its people went back to

their harmonious lives. The Raksasa Tribe had obtained the right to reside in an area near the borders of the Nine Continents through negotiation and had settled in peace with the Nine Continents ever since. Along with prosperity and development, many began to venture into the Wild Deserted Secret Region to learn more about the mysterious area. As the by-products of the trend, unique occupations that were different in nature from that of sects such as mercenary groups, bounty hunters, and various expeditions emerged.

Meanwhile, in the woods south-west to the Valley of Death...

Darryl sat quietly with his legs crossed in a makeshift hut, he opened his eyes slowly with a long sigh. It had been three years since he fell into the Valley of Death. He had completely regained his power not long

after the fall, but had chosen to stay behind in search of the dragon ball. In the first three months of being trapped here, he had come across a Raksasa warrior who had stepped foot into the area by mistake and learnt that the Raksasa Tribe and the Nine Continents had reached a truce. The news finally relieved Darryl from the concern and burden in his heart. Naturally, Darryl had managed to map out the entire area of the Valley of Death within these three years and had learnt almost everything there was to know about it.

‘It's time to go home,’ he thought, as he stepped out of the hut and stared into the sky. He had tried to search for the gigantic python that swallowed the dragon ball again for the past few weeks but was still rewarded with nothing. Darryl knew that he couldn't stay any longer. The dragon ball might be important, but nothing compares to

reuniting with his family once again. Finally making up his mind, Darryl strode out of the hut and began his way out of the Valley of Death.

He didn't go far before was stopped by the sound of footsteps approaching. Darryl frowned as he gazed up, and to his surprise he found over a dozen people cautiously making their way towards the depth of the Valley of Death. The travellers were carrying camping equipment with them. Each and every one of them was powerful, ranking at levels of Martial Saint. Amongst them was a woman dressed in a red long leather jacket, with an alluring figure and wildly beautiful features that no man could keep their eyes off of. She couldn't have been over twenty-five years old. Darryl couldn't help but study the woman and was shocked when he came close enough to sense that her power was at the rank of level one Martial Emperor. Had

the development of cultivation in the Nine Continents truly prosper to this extent, for a young woman in her twenties to actually reach the level of level one Martial Emperor?

It was then when those travellers caught sight of Darryl and surrounded him.

"Is he from the Raksasa Tribe?"

"Sh*t, why does he look like a caveman?"

They scanned Darryl up and down with disdain on their faces. The woman that was leading the party, though, seemed to be curious at Darryl's appearance.

Darryl couldn't help but to feel slightly insulted at their comments. Though he was unable to argue once he realized how he must have looked. He had stayed in the Valley of Death for over three years now. His

clothes had been destroyed long ago due to the poisonous fog, so he went ahead and made himself some clothes from animal skin. Judging from his outlook and the scars on his face, it was no wonder that he looked like a savage to these people.

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"Hey, you!" The leading woman addressed Darryl and asked, "Who are you?"

The woman went by the name of Lillian Willis, and was the leader of the Blood Thorn Mercenary Team. Ever since the establishment of a peace treaty between the Raksasa Tribe and the Nine Continents, everything had returned to normal. The Continents had been cooperating with one another harmoniously, bringing forth prosperity and growth. Along with the rapid development, many began to shift their interest towards the boundless potentials of the undeveloped, yet vast Wild Deserted Secret Region. Wild Deserted Secret Region's environment had always been inhabitable, making it difficult for anyone to step foot into it. Though the Raksasa Tribe

managed to survive in such harsh environments, they were still desperate to cross the Chaotic Mountain Range and return to the Nine Continents. That alone was enough proof as to how horrid the area was.

While the environment might have been hazardous to humans, it was home to unharvested resources. Most importantly, it had created the perfect haven for countless beasts that were mainly the offspring of some of the infamous ancient monsters such as the three-headed blood python and the underworld black tiger. Having to survive in such harsh habitat, the beasts that resided in the area were much more powerful than the ones that were found in the Nine Continents, and therefore possessed purer inner cores. It was common knowledge that enchanted beasts' inner cores were incredibly effective as a booster

for cultivators' power, and could be sold at extremely high prices in auctions or black markets. With that being said, countless cultivators from all across the Nine Continents had come together, forming various organizations that aimed to venture into the Wild Deserted Secret Region and to hunt the beasts for their inner core. Some might decide to consume the inner cores themselves to power up, whereas some might sell to the black market to obtain bigger profits. The Blood Thorn Mercenary Team led by Lillian belonged to the latter.

"Me?" Darryl scratched his head absently at Lillian's question before replying with a smile. "I am from the Nine Continents, came here to hunt." Darryl intentionally had his strength hidden as he spoke, seeing that it would be better for people to not discover his identity.

"Hunt?" The men that stood behind Lillian couldn't hold back their laughter at the claim. "Look at what you are wearing, it makes more sense if you were to say you are here as animal baits."

"Haha...seriously, anyone could hunt these days. Unbelievable."

"True that, it's like these people are too stupid to understand the consequences."

The men teased Darryl with utter disdain.

Recently, more and more parties from the Nine Continents were sent into the Wild Deserted Secret Region, apart from mercenary organizations and adventurers, many came alone trying to exploit whatever resource they could come across. Darryl's gear, however, was far too crude for him to be a competition to the men.

Naturally, Darryl paid no mind to the insults. He smiled wordlessly, before speaking directly to Lillian, "If you guys are here to investigate the Valley of Death, I will advise caution. The Black Sand Pythons are active these two days." After spending over three years in the Valley of Death, Darryl had already known the area like the back of his hand. The Black Sand Pythons were precisely the ones that he ran into when he first arrived. They were extremely vigorous and once they grow into the size as thick as the radius of a bowl, they will develop strength equivalent to the level of Martial Saint and could be quite a challenge to ordinary cultivators.

A man who wore a black scarf around his neck stepped out and sneered at Darryl's advice. "Let me tell you something, we are here to hunt those Black Sand Pythons. We wouldn't even come here if they weren't

most active during this time of the year." The man spoke arrogantly as if everyone was beneath him. He went by the name Otis Reid. He ranked at level five Martial Saint and was assigned to be the vice leader of the Blood Thorn Mercenary Team. Darryl didn't care for his arrogant demeanour and decided to ignore him.

Lillian, on the other hand, scowled in disapproval. "Otis, watch your mouth." She scanned Darryl up and down before saying, "Judging from what you said earlier, you seem to be quite familiar with the area?"

Darryl nodded in response.

"If that's the case...can you consider being our guide? Right now we are really in a desperate need of one." Lillian walked closer as her eyes shone with excitement. It was the first time that the Blood Thorn

Mercenary Team stepped foot into the Wild Deserted Secret Region. Just like everyone else, they came hoping to hunt down some of the beasts, to obtain their inner core to boost their own powers and perhaps, make some profit by selling the rest.

Lillian might be prideful with her position as the leader, but still, she was aware of the risk of venturing into the unknown. Darryl seemed to be a perfect candidate for a guide and that could make things much easier.

Darryl hesitated at the suggestion. He was on his way back to the Nine Continents just a few minutes ago, he couldn't possibly spare the time to be their guide.

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"Don't worry, you only need to lead the way. I will make sure that you receive an appropriate amount of commission once we are done hunting those Black Sand Pythons," Lillian added hurriedly, noticing his hesitation.

Seeing the sincerity in her expression, Darryl didn't have the heart to refuse and nodded. "Okay!"

"Leader!" Otis yelled. "This man is obviously useless, how could he possibly lead the way for us? He is probably going to run before the Black Sand Pythons even show up."

"Yeah, just look at what he is wearing. What help could he possibly be?"

"We should just go on our own," said the

others as they all nodded in agreement.

Lillian frowned at the comments of her subordinates, visibly agitated. "Are you the leader or am I? My decision is final, shut your mouths," said Lillian in a harsh tone. Seeing that she was irritated, Otis and the others refrained from saying anything else but were still casting glances of contempt at Darryl.

A few minutes later, the group were slowly beginning to enter into the depths of the Valley of Death, following Darryl's lead. Lillian and her men were amazed and uneasy at the same time as they were exposed to the mysterious domain that was clearly filled with danger for the first time.

Lillian picked up the pace to walk by Darryl's side and said, "Oh, I still don't know your name."

"Darren Derby!" Darryl paused for a moment before replying calmly. The name came to his mind without much thought to it. After all, it's an alias he had been using. If he was being honest, Darryl was dying to reveal his true identity, but refrained at last under consideration of how he looked at the moment. How embarrassing would it be for someone to know that the man who looked like a common beggar right now was indeed the famous Darryl Darby?

They soon arrived in the area covered in poisonous fog as they spoke. Darryl immediately stopped and turned to Lillian and the others, trying to warn them. After all, Darryl might be able to walk past the fog easily, but to these people of the Blood Thorn Mercenary Team that ranked at the level of Martial Saint on average, the fog could be lethal. Just as he was about to say something, he paused in shock as he caught

sight of what Lillian and the others were doing. Each member began pulling out helmets from their backpacks and putting them on.

Darryl couldn't help but let out a laugh at the sight. It had seemed like the Nine Continents had truly prospered in the three years he was gone, and technology had now become one with cultivation. Darryl instinctively noticed that the helmets were made of unique materials that would hold against the poisonous fog. Even so, they would still have to be mindful of the duration of their stay, in case their helmets cave before the corrosive fog.

Just as Darryl analysed their situation, Lillian pulled out yet another helmet and handed it over to Darryl. She said, "Put this on." As far as she was concerned, Darryl would fall short even when compared to the

weakest member in their group. But little did she know that he had no need for the helmet at all. Nevertheless, Darryl accepted it and put the helmet on without hesitation.

That was precisely when strange hissing noises were heard from the trees ahead of them, a Black Sand Python appeared before their eyes almost simultaneously. The python was as thick as a man's arm, its power ranking up to the level of level five Martial Saint. Lillian's eyes popped at the appearance and immediately drew her sword.

"Steady," Darryl warned, his expression concerned. Darryl was well familiar with the habits of the Black Sand Pythons and he knew that there was a nest somewhere in the area they were in. Different from other species of pythons, the Black Sand Pythons

live in groups and when one shows itself, so the others must be not far behind.

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Lillian initially refrained her urge to attack, but Otis beside her could not bear any longer.

"Leader, this imbecile knows nothing. Why are you listening to him?" Otis let out a roar before charging in with a sword in hand. The other members casted each other a look before following suit. The Black Sand Pythons were upper-middle class enchanted beasts, their inner cores were a treasure in the eyes of all cultivators and were extremely popular in the black markets. They had come all the way here for the sole purpose of hunting down the Black Sand Pythons and now that they had finally caught sight of one, how could they possibly let the chance slip by?

"What a bunch of morons," Darryl cursed

inwardly before shouting across towards Lillian, "Ask your men to stay alert on the surroundings. The Black Sand Pythons are gregarious. It's not possible for one to wander on its own, there must be more."

"What?" Lillian's heart stopped in shock. She knew that the inner cores of the Black Sand Pythons were valuable, but she hadn't a clue of their social habits.

"Everyone, watch out!" Lillian yelled at her subordinates but it was apparently too late. Otis and the other members began to hear appalling hisses from around them. They had been surrounded by the Black Sand Python that they had seen earlier. Instantly, a few Black Sand Pythons slithered out of the woods towards the men in incredible speed. Lillian stomped her feet in frustration and hurried towards her

comrades while shouting back towards Darryl. "Darren, stay back and be careful!"

Darryl smiled at her warning. He hadn't thought that Lillian would be such a caring person who would worry about the safety of others under these circumstances. He complied and hid himself behind a tree, pretending to be scared. For a moment, Darryl had the urge to head over and help, but the more thought he put into it, the more he felt that he should refrain from doing so.

'Youngsters nowadays are far too reckless, this ought to teach them a lesson,' he thought.

Lillian and the others managed to coordinate with one another facing, against half a dozen of pythons at the beginning but they were slowly beginning to lose strength.

After all, the Black Sand Pythons moved at incredible speed and were extremely powerful when they attacked with their tails.

Darryl no longer hesitated as he saw the group struggling. He picked a few rocks from the ground and sprung them out with his fingers, each containing his internal energy and they flew at the speed of a bullet. Instantly, the rocks connected with the heads of the Black Sand Pythons with impressive precision. Another feature of Black Sand Pythons that was different from other species was that while the weak points of other types of pythons were hidden exactly at the seven inches mark on their bodies, the weak points of the Black Sand Pythons were located on their head. Darryl was mindful about being secretive. Without anyone noticing, the Black Sand Pythons were weakened by his attack and were then

killed by Lillian and the others with ease.

The moment they retrieved the inner cores from their prey, the entire Blood Thorn Mercenary Team cheered in joy.

"Darren!" Lillian hopped over, excitement filling her delicate features. "A promise is a promise. You helped us find the Black Sand Pythons, so you can have this inner core as a reward," said Lillian as she extended a hand to offer one of the inner cores.

It was then when Otis came between them abruptly and yelled, "Leader, why are you offering him the inner core? He was scared sh*tless hiding afar while we were fighting against the Black Sand Pythons. What gives him the right to claim a reward when he didn't contribute at all?"

"Yes, it took us so much effort to finally get

our hands on these. Why should he get one?"

"Besides, he didn't help us to locate the Black Sand Pythons. We just bumped into them naturally."

"Leader, we don't need someone this useless, just cast him away," said the others, all nodding in agreement. None of them tried to conceal the contempt in their eyes.

Though he managed to ignore the insults so far, Darryl had to admit he was slightly irritated at this point. 'Damn you all,' he thought, 'if it weren't for me, you would be in the stomachs of those Black Sand Pythons by now.'

Darryl tried his best to remain silent. On the other hand, Lillian seemed to be resolute with her decision.

"All of you, stop. We keep our promises. Besides, Darren here did warn me about the pythons," she said, glaring at her men.

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Lillian handed the inner core over to Darryl as she spoke and Darryl took it without hesitation. The inner core of a Black Sand Python didn't mean much to him, but he would rather not raise suspicion by not accepting it as it would contradict what he said earlier about him being here to hunt. Otis and the others were indignant but had given up on saying anything else.

"Darren!" Lillian stared further ahead into poisonous fog and asked, "are there more Black Sand Pythons nests in there? Can you lead the way and take us in?" A few Black Sand Pythons were hardly close to what Lillian had intended to achieve on this hunt.

"What?" Amused by her recklessness, Darryl paused and thought to himself,

‘These people really do not fear death. The deeper they get into the Valley of Death, the more dangerous it gets. Apart from the Black Sand Pythons, there are countless terrifying beasts ahead that are far too powerful to be dealt with, especially considering this crew's capabilities.’

"Sure, but let's renegotiate the commission. I will take thirty percent of the inner cores of however many beasts you manage to kill from now on, or it's no deal," said Darryl determinedly. He knew that they would not have listened if he were to tell them the truth. He decided that it would be far more effective to simply raise the commission so they would give up. Almost instantly, the men looked as if they were about to explode upon hearing his request.

"What the...what do you think you are talking about?"

"Thirty percent? Who do you think you are? You really think we can't survive without you?"

"Leader, just look at how greedy this man is. You treated him with generosity and here he is asking for more."

Lillian, too, was clearly upset with Darryl and tried to bargain. "Darren, thirty percent is far too much. Can we negotiate this?"

"No!" Darryl shook his head in unwavering determination. Lillian and her men might have sufficient skills to hunt some of the beasts that were found at the edge of the area covered by the poisonous fog. But if they were to truly step foot into the depths, none of them would last a minute before getting wiped out.

"Why you..." Lillian stomped her feet in frustration. "Fine, I guess I misjudged you."

We simply have to find the Black Sand
Pythons without you. Your guidance is no
longer needed."

‘How despicable! I had thought that he was
a sincere man. Who knew he would turn out
to be so greedy?’ Lillian thought to herself.
She waved her hand at her men and said,
"Let's get going."

Otis and the others all gave Darryl nasty
looks before turning to follow Lillian into
the poisonous fog.

Seeing that they weren't willing to give up,
Darryl scowled and warned them, "I
wouldn't do that if I were you, you guys are
going to regret going in without my
help."

Otis and the others burst into laughter at his
remark.

"This piece of garbage is clearly being sulky

now that he realized he couldn't get anything from us."

"We are going to regret going in without your help? What a joke..."

"Just ignore him."

Realizing that they wouldn't listen, Darryl sighed in resignation before going after them. If he was being honest, he wouldn't even bat an eyelash at these reckless brats. But now, he no longer had the heart to watch as they send themselves on a suicide mission.

Lillian's expression turned cold once she noticed that Darryl was following them.

"Stop following us, get lost!" she shouted. She had treated the man with respect, and yet he repaid the favour by asking for more. Such a behaviour had clearly offended Lillian and she was visibly fed up with

Darryl's presence.

Darryl smiled bitterly and opened his mouth to respond, but froze once he caught sight of what was behind Lillian and the others.

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Lillian and the others immediately turned around upon noticing the change of expression on Darryl's face, and were all shaken by what they saw. Another team of adventurers consisting of approximately fifth-teen men approached at a steady pace. Each man was powerful with the weakest amongst them ranking at level five Martial Saint and the strongest ranking at level two Martial King. The men were equipped with full-bodied armour and gas helmets that were far more advanced than the ones Lillian and her men had.

"Tut-tut." Once the two groups were right before one another, the bald-headed leader of the other group scanned past Otis and the other men before eventually focusing on Lillian. His subordinates were just as enticed

as their leader by Lillian's appearance. Lillian's forehead was still damp from the earlier fight, her alluring features were made even more sophisticating as sweat dripped down her face. Her body was outlined by the red leather jacket she wore, emphasizing every curve of her perfect figure.

"What a pleasant surprise to come across such beauty in this sh*thole," said the bald-headed man with a loathsome grin, with his eyes practically glued onto Lillian. The men who stood behind him followed and began smiling evilly as well. The bald-headed leader was called Earle Warren. He was in charge of the Snow Wolf Adventurists, which was at best a glorified name for a group of bandits. Countless groups had been sent into the Wild Deserted Secret Region by different forces across the Nine Continents recently, Earle decided to bring his men with

him and try his luck as well. But before encountering any beasts on their way, they managed to come across Lillian and her subordinates instead.

Though Lillian was deeply disturbed by the eager eyes that were focused on her, she knew that she was in no position to do anything about it. She was the leader and naturally, the strongest of the Blood Thorn Mercenary Team, ranking at level one Martial King. Even so she was powerless before the men in front of her. Many of these men ranked at various levels of Martial King, and with the bald-headed man ranking as high as level three Martial King, Lillian and her men wouldn't stand a chance against them.

"Brother!" Otis forced a smile and fawned over Earle trying to be on his good side. "We are all here for the same purpose of hunting

the beasts, we should look after one another..." Otis's expression at this time was filled with modesty and adulation without a trace of his previous disdain towards Darryl. Before he could finish, one of the subordinates of Earle interrupted.

"Who do you think you're calling your brother?" A muscular man strode over fiercely before slapping Otis in the face without any warning. "Stop acting like we know you or something."

Snap! Otis was sent spinning in the air before he landed on the ground with a pained cry. He covered his face helplessly. 'What did I do wrong? All I did was speak,' he thought.

Earle stared down at Lillian and the others as he scanned them over once again and sneered. "From the looks of you, it seems like you were in battle not too long ago.

Which beasts have you killed?"

"If you've managed to get your hands on inner cores, you better hand them over before things get nasty," the man next to Earle shouted.

Lillian and her men shared looks of reluctance and anger. 'A bunch of bandits. We worked so hard to finish off those Black Sand Pythons, why should we hand the inner cores over to them?' they thought to themselves. One of the Blood Thorn members replied carefully, "Brothers, we couldn't possibly be capable of killing any beasts. We were just here out of curiosity. We did come across some Black Sand Pythons earlier, but we ran after failing to fight them off and we ended up here."

Lillian and the others nodded frantically in agreement. Earle scowled in response, not trusting them.

"Brothers." It was then when Otis abruptly pointed at Darryl and said, "This guy right here is familiar with the area, he knows where to find those Black Sand Pythons." Otis's eyes flashed cunningly. He knew that Earle and his men wouldn't let them go easily without getting something out of them first, so he might as well try to divert their attention elsewhere so that he and the others could escape.

Darryl was dumbfounded for a moment. He couldn't help but to cast an irritated glance at Otis. 'Sh*t, how did I get dragged into this conversation? Quite a cunning fellow, he is. Is he trying to use me as a decoy?'