

## World Mall 171

### Chapter 171 Unexpected Finding

\*Aoooo!\*

"!!!" All of them turned their heads to the source of the howl, realizing that they didn't have a lot of time left. There were even multiple roars coming from the woods.

Jay and the others climbed as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, Clovis went straight to the ruin to stop any beasts from coming out. The first thing he did once standing at the entrance was activate the flashlight.

Even though there was some light near the entrance, it would be hard to find anything much further inside.

So, he tried to make sure there were no beasts near the entrance. He also pulled out his blade, ready to take them on until the rest of the group managed to enter this ruin.

Just like on the outside, the beasts inside the ruin seemed to be responding to the call. Even though a lot of them had been killed, it seemed that there were still a lot of them inside judging from the sounds.

Clovis took a deep breath. It would be troublesome fighting all those beasts with only one blade, so he took a few steps back and planned to use his reflex and slow motion vision to cut down all the beasts that became visible.

The beasts charged forward. The tunnel wasn't too big. Two beasts should have no problem walking side by side, but that was the limit.

Clovis could see the glowing eyes staring at him from the darkness, approaching him at lightning speed.

The first beast came out, getting illuminated by the sunlight near the entrance. Clovis took a step forward while waving his blade to the right. The beast stepped on the wall and leaped to the other side, but Clovis reacted right away and used the short sword to stab him.

The beast smacked the short sword down. Clovis held it hard, but that smack ended up knocking his hand down.

A second beast then became visible, so Clovis hurriedly swung his other sword. The beast planned to knock it away as well, but Clovis twisted his wrist a little bit, changing the trajectory of the sword for a second and avoiding the paw. After that, Clovis turned it back and slashed the beast's head.

Clovis kicked the first beast's head at the second beast that was about to arrive, causing this beast to flinch. Clovis took advantage of that opportunity to close in and strike the second beast.

The third and fourth beasts came at the same time, trying to ambush Clovis.

When Clovis was about to engage them, he heard Kanaria's voice. "Get down!"

"!!!" Clovis hurriedly ducked as a few shots were fired at the beasts. The latter had no choice but to block it with their tough skins, but that was also the moment the shots stopped.

Clovis closed in on the third beast and killed it, while Jay approached the other one and eliminated it.

"Don't look back. We're going to illuminate this entire cave." Melody shouted while taking out another flashlight, significantly bigger than Clovis's.

When she turned it on, the light illuminated more than twenty meters ahead. This intensity was the reason they shouldn't turn around.

The beasts immediately roared while closing their eyes as though they were blinded by the light.

Clovis and Jay hurriedly eliminated them one after another with Kanaria and Melody following right after.

There was still time for those beasts to climb the mountain. By that time, they should have gone deep enough that they could face them after that.

Since the path wasn't as narrow as the one outside, Jay and Clovis could unleash their full power. Their advance was like a bullet. There was no room for Kanaria and Melody to assist them. In just three minutes, they managed to actually go for more than fifty meters while killing more than twenty beasts.

They let out all their frustrations from yesterday's defeat.

However, their advance had to stop when they heard a roar echoing inside the tunnel. This roar didn't come from a deeper area. Instead, it originated from the entrance.

"!!!" Clovis and Jay stopped for a moment. They wanted to turn around, but the flashlight would blind them if they did so.

"Jay, Melody."

"On it!" Jay turned around as soon as Melody lowered the flashlight. When Jay had passed Melody, she pointed the flashlight to the entrance.

On the other hand, Kanaria raised her rifle while Clovis turned on his weaker flashlight.

"Go!" Clovis shouted while moving forward.

He cut down one beast after another while staying on the right, allowing Kanaria to shoot from the left. She shot all the beasts ten or even twenty meters away from them, allowing Clovis to actually take a breath.

He killed all the beasts that were close to him and immediately charged forward to those suppressed beasts. That was when he noticed something unexpected.

"Huh?" Clovis suddenly stopped on his tracks when he noticed something on the wall. Clovis was a bit too distracted so he actually pointed his flashlight at the wall.

How could he not be distracted? There were actually markings on the wall. It was so detailed that the beasts shouldn't be able to create it.

The markings had no drawing or something easier to recognize. There were only weird patterns or symbols that didn't make any sense.

Clovis widened his eyes in shock as he couldn't believe what he just saw. This place was a magma vent originally, so no humans should have been here to create these markings. The only reason he wanted to visit this place was because he knew this ruin would be filled with beasts.

But he never thought that he would find all these markings.

However, Kanaria's voice soon startled him.

"Clovis! The light!"

That was right. He was still in the middle of a fight. Although it was only for two seconds, the beasts managed to close in, to the point that when he turned the flashlight back to the front, a beast was already in front of him, pouncing on him.

\*Roar!\*

Chapter 172 Shock

\*Roar!\*

Clovis gritted his teeth and raised his sword, blocking the beast's teeth. However, the momentum still pushed him down.

He hurriedly kicked the beast up in the air. Kanaria didn't miss a beat and shot this beast while Clovis rolled to the side.

That was right. He was still in the middle of a battle. While the markings were unexpected and piqued his interest greatly, he better end this fight first.

'I guess I inherited my grandfather's curiosity.' Clovis thought while standing back up. He couldn't help but recall the time when his grandfather found something new and interesting. He would spend hours if not days just thinking about it.

But he indeed had endangered himself because of it and didn't plan to waste this lesson.

As soon as he regained his composure, he charged at the beasts once again, killing every single beast that came toward them. There were multiple Tier 2 beasts, but luckily, they didn't come at the same time.

In total, Clovis killed more than a hundred beasts nonstop, not counting the beasts that Kanaria defeated.

On the entrance, Jay killed a similar amount. There were simply too many corpses at the entrance that Jay had no choice but to toss them outside just to make some space. Melody was the one supporting him, telling him the timing and other things.

The fight lasted for thirty minutes before they killed all these beasts.

Even Jay and Clovis were exhausted after fighting so many beasts because the beasts were much stronger than normal.

However, Jay took a rest after Melody declared all the beasts had been killed, while Clovis actually ignored his fatigue and went straight to the wall where he found the markings earlier.

"Clovis? Did you find something? It wasn't like you to be distracted earlier." Kanaria asked while crossing her arms, reminding him that one mistake might kill him.

Clovis didn't reply to him as his focus remained on the markings. He even grabbed his device and took a photo of the markings.

"This is..." Kanaria came to him and found the symbols. "What are these?"

"The one that distracted me earlier. I saw two more spots that had this kind of marking earlier."

"For real?" Kanaria furrowed her eyebrows. "Is this manmade? I don't think the beasts are intelligent enough to do this, right? In fact, it doesn't seem to be marks made of the beasts' claws."

"Yeah. That's why I was confused earlier. Unfortunately, I'm no expert. I don't know if this is real or not."

Kanaria looked down, pondering carefully. "The extinct beasts are living in the subterranean world. However, I can't help but wonder if there are human ancestors living in this world. As of now, we have found nothing about them.

"I assume that this is man-made. In fact, do you remember the information?" Kanaria asked. Now that she thought about it, how could that guy know that this was a ruin when it was clearly a magma vent?

Clovis observed them carefully. "Either way, we should find any geologists to check it. I'm going to take pictures of the other two. We should also continue deeper and see if there are more."

Kanaria nodded. "Be careful."

Clovis immediately headed deeper to find the markings he had found earlier. Meanwhile, Kanaria stopped there while thinking this through.



"What if these symbols and patterns were made thousands, if not millions, of years ago? Does this place have a human civilization? Why are the beasts in this area much stronger? Something is a bit fishy."

Kanaria felt something was wrong. However, she needed to know whether this was a real ruin or not before studying the patterns and symbols.

"What's wrong, Kanaria?" Melody asked.

"Look." Kanaria pointed her flashlight at an interesting part of the wall.

"Wow. This is cool." Melody's reaction was rather common and not very interested. At the end of the day, it didn't really matter for her.

"Can your AI scan this or maybe analyze it?"

"Can. But I don't have the connection to the Skynet, so it's going to be impossible to find database from the Skynet. Only the database that has been stored offline."

"It's not a problem." Kanaria nodded. "We just have to make some copies and try to figure it out later."

"Alright." Melody followed the instruction and tried to use her AI to scan the markings. After a minute, she couldn't help but shake her head. "Unfortunately, I couldn't find anything in the database."

"I guess it's useless." Kanaria looked down. "What if the informant made this so that he could get more money by selling this piece of information?"

"That is indeed possible. That's also the reason why this place is not even famous." Melody nodded. If this place contained the information about the civilization that once existed in this place, the military would have swept in.

Kanaria let out a long sigh before saying, "I guess it's useless..."

All of a sudden, Clovis's voice echoed. "Guys. Take a look at this."

Both of them raised their heads, not knowing what Clovis wanted them to see.

They walked to Clovis, wondering what he had found.

Clovis somehow turned his flashlight off and stopped them. "Melody. Let me borrow your flashlight."

"Here you go."

Clovis pointed the flashlight downward before turning it on.

They couldn't help but lower their vision and suddenly open their eyes wide. They originally thought that this was a magma vent, but there was actually a big cave located at the end of the tunnel.

The cave was located about fifty meters beneath the tunnel. A natural cave alone wasn't enough to surprise them. It was what was inside the natural cave that dumbfounded them.

There were actually a few huts inside made of wood and grass. Most of them had been ruined by the beasts, but two of them were still intact.

It appeared that all the beasts that fought against them came from this place. They could even see the steep staircases that led them down.

"What the hell is this?" Kanaria gasped.

Chapter 173 Tricked

"What the hell is this?" Kanaria gasped.

Melody hurriedly checked the radar, finding no sign of life. "No one is there."

"..." Clovis's expression turned grim. Was there really a civilization in the past? Or was this place built only recently?

"I will be going down. Melody will follow me and Kanaria is to observe from this place and call Jay here."

"Alright." Kanaria nodded. Although she wanted to go down as well, Melody was much better assistant than her in this scenario.

So, only Clovis and Melody climbed down the stairs. Clovis's sword remained on his hand in case he found something unexpected.

"There are still no sign of life here," said Melody while maintaining a close look at the radar.

Once they reached the bottom, Clovis pointed the flashlight to the village and turned it on, illuminating the entire village.

Looking at the huts, Melody said, "Their appearance doesn't look that brittle. It doesn't seem that they have been left behind for too long. Years or probably decades, sure. But I don't think it's more than a hundred years, let alone a thousand years. It's definitely something new compared to the geological time scale."

Clovis didn't reply to her, but he indeed agreed with this opinion. If they had been left behind for that long, the wooden logs would have been so brittle that they would have collapsed. And there was no way the beasts would just let them be.

They must have been built recently.

"Does that mean there are survivors from previous civilizations?" Clovis asked before noticing something from the flashlight. "This thing is getting hot."

"That's obvious. It's producing a hundred thousand lumens. This one is better since we have been using it for more than thirty minutes." Melody shrugged. "It's better to take a look at the huts that are still standing with your flashlight."

"Alright." Clovis turned it off and handed it back to Melody. After that, he approached one of the huts. Before opening its door, Clovis glanced at Melody.

"Nothing inside." She confirmed it after looking at the radar and checking the sound inside with her sharp senses.

Clovis opened the door with his sword in front of him. To his surprise, the inside had blood splattered all around the hut. Whether it was the ceiling, floor, or even the wall, they all had marks.

It looked like there were fierce battles inside this hut from all the mess he saw inside, but he didn't know whether this destruction was caused by humans or beasts.

"Are you recording this?"

"Yep." Melody pointed at the floor. "Look at that."

"Mhmm?" Clovis followed her finger and saw markings on the ground. This time, Clovis actually recognized these words. "Huh? This is..."

"My AI actually recognizes these words..." Melody frowned. "They are..."

Both of them said the same thing. "Furenz."

"You know about them?" Melody raised her eyebrows.

"I lived there for three years in the past."

Melody said, "Still... Furenz, huh? If this is the case, these huts are actually made recently by people from the surface. But for what?"

Clovis couldn't answer that question. There were a lot of possibilities and he didn't know which one might be the truth. "But what about those markings on the tunnel?"

"My AI didn't recognize their patterns."

Clovis rubbed the writing gently while saying, "Survive."

"That's the word?"

"Yes. Looking at this mark, it doesn't seem that they are made of nails or sharp blades."

"Yeah. The thickness alone is..." Melody abruptly stopped and bent her knees. She then placed her nail next to it and pressed down, making a similar stroke. "Human's nail?"

Clovis couldn't imagine what kind of environment would lead to a person using their nail to leave this mark on the floor. And the mark looked much deeper, meaning that it took multiple times to produce each stroke.

"I feel like something fishy is going on here." Clovis raised his head, pondering. "If I have to guess, something illegal. If we get involved in this matter, I'm afraid that it will lead us to an even more troublesome problem."

"So, we leave this place and treat it as if we haven't gone here?"

"On the one hand, I feel like we should report this place at the very least. On the other hand, I'm afraid that whoever's responsible for this place will find out. No, I think I'm more suspicious of the informant."

"!!!" Melody twitched. Clovis was actually right. The informant told them about this ruin, so he must have gone to this place previously.

Had he reported this place to the authorities? If he had, wouldn't the military have acted? What if the one who created this place was much more important than they originally thought? They should have the power to stop the news from spreading.

But if that were the case, they would definitely have found the informant and eliminated him.

So, Melody couldn't help but wonder who was actually the informant?

Clovis gulped down. "Shit. We've been had."

"What's wrong?"

Clovis explained what happened when the informant gave them the option to pay for more information about the hot spring but they acted as if they knew about the ruin.

Clovis ended his explanation with a question. "What if the cave was a secret and the informant knew we wouldn't have known about it? He acted as if he fell for our bluff and gave the information regarding this place."

Melody crossed her arms, finally understanding the actual problem. "Who was actually that man?"



"I don't know. I think it's not good for us to stay here any longer."

"So, we'll retreat right away?"

"No. I don't know if we're being observed or not right now. I think it's best to follow the actual plan and act as if we haven't found this place and go back according to the schedule."

"Making it look like nothing goes wrong?"

"Yes." Clovis might be curious, but this one made him remember the idiom, 'Curiosity kills the cat.' Hence, he had no choice but to leave even though he felt that the moment he fell for the informant's trick, he had fucked up.

Chapter 174 A Visitor

As soon as Clovis climbed back up, he told them what they had found and warned them about the dangers.

"That was my fault. I should have figured it out in the beginning." Kanaria bit her lips.

"No. It wasn't your mistake alone. I was with you during the negotiation." Clovis shook his head.

"No. If I want to be a master of logistics, I should have been better at negotiation." Kanaria clenched her fists, realizing that her carelessness had actually endangered the group.

"Ivan looks like he wants to kill us. Those mysterious people are also aiming for our lives through the beasts. This is just another one, so who really cares to be honest?" Jay shrugged.

"..." Clovis was taken aback by Jay's words, but he soon chuckled and patted Jay's shoulder a few times. "Hahaha. Right? This is just another one."

Jay just wanted to play it down, but Clovis took advantage of it so that Kanaria didn't take all the blame.

"As Jay said, the one who made all this probably came from the same city. The highest explorer in our city is Tier 6, which Jay and Kanaria's families have. So, I don't think it's going to be that much of a problem."

"Mhmm... I'll probably tell my mother about it. She might be able to get some clues. Knowing her personality, she might even use it to blackmail the person behind this." Kanaria nodded, feeling a bit relieved.

"Anyway, let's not talk about this for now and just continue our exploration. Gather all the essence first and head straight to the top of the mountain. Let's get into the hot spring."

"But isn't it too early?" Melody put her hand on her chin. "It's best to dip in during the night."

"Is that so? I don't know if there is any difference." Clovis shook his head.

"I mean, the temperature will go down during the night. The breeze from the chilling wind makes your body cold, and that's a perfect time to dip in, feeling the warmth of the hot spring. Do you not know the bliss of being cold and hot at the same time?"

Do you not sleep with a freezing air conditioner and cover yourself in a quilt with one of your legs outside the quilt instead of just getting the air conditioner to the right temperature?"

All of them were flabbergasted when Melody said all that with such a passionate face.

"What? You never did that? You guys are no fun." Melody rolled her eyes.

Clovis scratched the back of his head. "Anyway, we can climb to the top right now and check the surrounding area, especially the right hot spring to dip in. After that, we'll set up the tent and also clear up the surrounding area from all the beasts. This should at least use up several hours.

Taking into account the rest and lunch in between, I think by the time we're done, it should be close to dusk."

"That's not wrong."

They agreed with the arrangement and started working on it. They first gathered all the essence in the tunnel and just let the ones outside stay there for the time being. They could still recover their essence later anyway.

Once they were done, Clovis climbed the mountain using the same method. Fortunately, there weren't any beasts on the surface.

However, he felt a bit overwhelmed once he reached the top.

"This is..." Clovis raised his eyebrows. The top of the mountain was extremely vast. The magma chamber seemed to have collapsed and filled up, forming a huge crater in the center.

There were some small plains that could be used to set up their tents.

He hurriedly screwed the bolts to the rock and tossed the ropes so that they could get up.

After setting up their tents, Clovis began the hunt with Kanaria alerting all the beasts in the area with her rifle. More than two hundred beasts were eliminated easily since they had the high ground.

After that, Clovis ordered Jay and Melody to take their essence while Kanaria supported them from the top. Meanwhile, he looked around for the hot springs, finding five such pools.

Unfortunately, after checking their temperature, only two of them were low enough to dip in. They didn't have the proper equipment to lower the temperature.

Hence, Clovis just picked one spot near the camp.

Jay and Melody finished their job two hours before dusk. Melody had assured them that there was no sign of life in the area aside from them, so they should be fine now.

After dinner, they discussed who would go first since there was no way they would go in together.

"We'll definitely take longer, so you guys use it first." Kanaria waved her hand, sending the two boys off. She and Melody were busy cleaning up the plates.

"Oh!" Clovis waved his hand while walking to the edge. They carefully walked on the narrow path and reached the small plain where the hot spring was located.

The hot spring produced more mist during the night, but Clovis and Jay weren't the ones who would care about it.

They just took off their clothes and immediately dipped into the hot spring.

"Ah... this is nice." Clovis muttered. The warm temperature relaxed his body. Even Jay, who didn't say a lot, had his expression melt.

"Something like this is nice once in a while," said Jay while leaning on the rock.

"Yeah. This feels relaxing. The view is amazing." Clovis absolutely agreed. Just as he leaned back, he heard a woman's voice echoing from the side.

"I'll also join you two."

"Oh!" Clovis agreed as though it wasn't a big deal, thinking it was Kanaria or Melody. But one second later, he realized that he didn't even feel her presence or recognize her voice.

"!!!" Clovis stood up with his hands on his waist as if trying to pull his sword even though they weren't there. He raised his head and saw a woman sitting not far from them. "Who?"

Chapter 175 Introduction

"Who?" Clovis was the first to react, followed by Jay right after. They all looked at the woman, who suddenly appeared out of nowhere. None of them felt her presence the whole time.

Before them was a woman sitting with a relaxed expression. She had long blond hair, tied into a bun on the back to avoid her hair getting wet. She covered her body with a towel, but they could see the blue string attached to the back of her neck, clearly wearing something underneath.

Her face looked like a pure girl, but her gaze felt like they were able to strip everyone naked.

She covered her face with both hands while saying, "If you stare at me that intensely, I'll be embarrassed."

Clovis's expression turned grim, asking the same question. "Who are you?"

He was ready to leap out of the pond and grab his weapon.

She looked surprised before pointing at herself. "Are you sure you don't know me? I thought I was famous enough. I guess I'm no different from a normal person if someone doesn't care much. Before I introduce myself, I will have to say this, I'm not your enemy. In fact, if I were your enemy, you two would have already died."

"..." Clovis waved his hand to Jay, signaling him to back off. He didn't say anything wrong. "Still, you don't expect me to trust that, right?"

"Well..." She paused for a moment. "In that case, are you familiar with the name Skylark?"

"Skylark?" Clovis furrowed his eyebrows.

"I guess only someone from the Hacfield family wouldn't know about us." She chuckled.

"!!!" Clovis's expression turned grim the moment he mentioned his family.

At the same time, Jay put his hand on his chin while muttering, "I think Kanaria has mentioned this name once. If I'm not wrong, they are a conglomerate from a Tier 8 city. They are from the neighboring country and can be said to be the richest company in that country."

"Oh?!" She smiled and placed her hand on top of her chest while politely introducing herself. "It's a pleasure to meet you. My name is Hana Skylark."

Clovis pondered for a moment before asking, "So, what is the reason for such an important person to come all the way here?"

Hana shook her head. "Compared to your identity, mine is simply worthless."

"That's not my question."

"I guess it's hard to gain your trust right away. I thought you would open up a bit if we took a bath together." Hana smiled before raising her head. "Please, two ladies. You don't have to point those guns at me."

"Who are you?"



Clovis raised his head, finding Kanaria and Melody aiming their guns at Hana. However, he hurriedly said, "Kanaria, Melody. Lower your guns right now."

"Clovis, do you know her?" Kanaria frowned.

"No. I want you to lower your guns for a different reason... Now."

Kanaria and Melody exchanged looks. His wording made it hard for them not to notice something was off.

When they lowered their guns, Clovis added, "Raise your head and see what's about your head."

Kanaria and Melody followed his instructions and found a spherical drone hovering above them. There was a hole in the middle of that drone, looking like a gun muzzle.

"!!!" Both of them shuddered, realizing that if they had dared to pull the triggers, they would have been shot before that happened.

The fact they didn't notice such a thing hovering above them meant they were such a failure, considering they were people whose strength lies in their senses.

After they saw the drone, this spherical drone flew down and stopped next to Hana, showing that she was the one controlling it.

"I apologize for their actions." Clovis actually apologized even though he was angry. He realized the difference in their levels. While he might be able to escape with his life intact, people could still target Jay and the others. That was why his grandfather's warning might be useful, but he wouldn't be able to protect them for long.

"I should apologize too for appearing all of a sudden." Hana turned to the two girls. "How about you join us here, ladies? I'm pretty sure you're going to be interested in the discussion as well."

"..." Kanaria and Melody exchanged looks and decided to join. However, they stood on the side instead of entering the hot spring.

"I guess that's fine too." Hana smiled before turning to Clovis. "I will make it simple. I want you, Clovis Hacfield."

"Huh?" Clovis looked confused, while Kanaria instantly became hostile. Only Melody was calm enough to actually ask, "Do you mean his family?"

"That was my original intention, but after seeing your performance in the last two days, I changed my mind." She smirked.

"In the last two days?" Clovis squinted his eyes before remembering the corpse they found. "You were the one who left behind that corpse?"

"I was trying to clean it up, but you actually showed up much faster than I originally thought. Since I didn't have time, I just hid at the top and watched your team." Hana shrugged.

"Don't you think you should have helped on the first day?" Clovis asked.

"You will just become much more suspicious of me. You know it, I know it."

Clovis couldn't deny that fact. The fact she appeared here alone was already suspicious, and with how she came all the way here from another country, there was no way Clovis would believe her.

"Kanaria? Do you know her?" Clovis asked while glancing to the side.

"Yeah. She came from the top ten wealthiest family in the world and the parent company, Sky, was listed as the fifth biggest company.

"She created a new company with the help of her grandparents with the name OpenSky, mainly dived into aviation business. She managed to create a battleship that could fly, which looked like a fortress in the sky and planned to commercialize it soon. When that happened, her company's evaluation would skyrocket.

"Yet, despite focusing on her business, her talent was no joke either. Right now, she is only 18 years old, but she has already become a Tier 4 human. Thus, making her one of the most influential people under twenty."

Clovis and the others looked shocked from everything Kanaria listed.

Hana, on the other hand, chuckled and said playfully, "Oh my. It was thanks to my grandfather. I wasn't that great."