

World Mall 266

Chapter 266 Shocking

"Ragna?" Shion gasped. "Is he the infamous Ragna? I think the people in this city have heard the rumor about him. His evolution rate is very high, but he has a certain body's constitution that makes him unable to fully utilize his power as a guardian. He is in this group?"

"Well, there might be a change. With their strength and potential, I don't think they will just recruit anyone into their team, so we might be able to see his change. I'm looking forward to it." Shion laughed, neither completely dissing him nor praising him. She had to remain neutral after all.

"Wow!"

"Uoooh!"

"How can these people be that strong when they are so young?"

The people were flabbergasted. It was simply too hard to believe that someone could reach this level of skill at that age.

Some people were actually scouts for big companies. They began investigating the Libation Fiesta, wanting to know their affiliation and the possibility of recruiting them.

On the other hand, Mayor Revan simply clapped his hands nonstop as he excitedly asked the trainer next to him. "Did you see that? They are really strong! Is it true that their strength surpasses their current tier? No, it surpasses even the strength of the people above their tier."

The guy was completely speechless. He thought about the meeting a few days ago and how he hated Clovis for wasting his chance because he couldn't abandon Melody.

However, it seemed that he was the foolish one. If Clovis participated in the first competition, he would be able to claim the first spot. However, it wouldn't give them any challenges that could force them to grow even further. In addition, the impact of their victory in the first competition was much lower compared to the second competition.

If they managed to produce a good result, they would definitely become famous.

He had completely misunderstood them. "Yes. The commentator's assessment was pretty accurate. I have to apologize to them after this."

"Is that so?" Mayor Revan didn't think it was necessary, considering he just voiced his concern. But that was because he wasn't an explorer himself.

However, there was one more person who was shocked to the core after witnessing Libation Fiesta's performance.

It was a middle-aged man wearing a military uniform. He was the one holding the highest military power in this base. He came here to show his support for both the competition and his son, one of the three Tier 4 participants, Rafael.

However, he ended up getting shocked by the appearance of one kid.

Yes, his eyes were glued on the screen that showed Clovis.

"He... Why is he here? No, why is he competing?" The commander gasped, his body trembling. 'I followed my father in the past to meet an esteemed person in the neighboring city, and...'

He couldn't help but recall the face of a small kid who was standing behind his mother.

'Don't tell me... Is he really that kid? Looking at his age, there's no mistaking it.' The commander suddenly dropped to his seat as his face turned pale.

...

Meanwhile, Clovis and the others had cleaned up the area.

"What are we going to do next, Clovis? Should we proceed as planned and achieve somewhere around 8–10th places?" Jay asked while sheathing his blade.

Clovis looked up, staring at the drones. If the beast was the only thing he had to consider, he would simply say, "Yes."

However, Clovis took another look at the group they had just defeated, along with the corpse of the Tier 3 beast.

The timing was simply too fast.

'Considering the distance between each group, there shouldn't be a lot of interesting fights in the first few minutes. Because of that, our fight should be highlighted.'

'I thought about hiding a bit of our power to lower our opponents' guards, but... the enemies will definitely investigate us. Since some information has been given out, I'll be a fool if I don't utilize it.'

Clovis let out a long sigh.

He said, "We'll change our plan. The battle plan remains the same, but we'll seriously aiming for first place in this round."

"!!!" They looked surprised, but Jay simply became more excited. Since his restriction was lifted, he could finally go all out.

Kanaria and Ragna nodded, hiding their strength for the time being.

Now that they had a new plan, they continued to their original destination while accumulating as many points as possible.

Clovis and Jay cut down one beast after another, accumulating a pretty high point by itself.

It was a rather peaceful period since they didn't meet another group during this time.

However, it didn't mean that other groups didn't encounter one another.

During the first hour, there were a lot of clashes among the participants.

Some managed to take down the whole group, while others failed and let a few members escape, which caused them to be unable to steal their points.

In total, ten groups had been eliminated. Another eight groups had lost at least one of their teammates, significantly reducing the number of people on this battlefield.

Just like Libation Fiesta, there were a few other groups that dominated the battlefield, especially the three groups under the leadership of a Tier 4 human and Erwin's group.

They knew their points, but they didn't know others' points, which gave them a sense of urgency to take down other groups or beasts to get more points.

However, some groups were content with their current points and chose to hide, believing that their points were enough to be among the 16 groups that would advance to the next round.

Still, there were a few groups that became desperate because they didn't encounter a lot of beasts or people, and they ended up with only a few points.

These people were roaming around, trying to either find a human or a beast.

And Clovis had to actually meet one of those groups.

Clovis raised his head, looking at the group consisting of three Tier 2 humans and three Tier 3 humans.

Unbeknownst to them, they would actually fight a battle they had never encountered before. The battle was against desperate people who would do anything to win.

Chapter 267 Desperate

"There are only thirty minutes left." Kanaria glanced at Clovis. "Should we stop here or continue to aim for the top spot?"

"We'll continue." Clovis's expression turned serious.

"Alright." Kanaria nodded. "Though I don't really like the fact that we're giving them more information... I mean, they are going to review our performance, right?"

"Yes. However, it's not like we're giving them the correct information. We're still holding back to a certain degree."

"So you want them to think that our strength is only limited to this level? And the rest will be just speculation?"

Clovis answered it with a nod.

"Alright, then."

"Wait, guys." Melody suddenly frowned. "I seem to find people coming from that direction."

Clovis glanced in the direction Melody was pointing. Kanaria did the same and noticed the shadow approaching. They were still a bit too far, so they got some time to react.

"Jay, Melody."

"Leave them to us!" Jay stepped forward with Melody. Melody hid behind a tree while Kanaria climbed a tree. The people weren't much of a problem, but they had to be cautious against beasts. Kanaria was there just to ensure that no beasts approached them, considering they hadn't cleared this area.

"There are a total of four people coming toward us. I will be giving you the route, Jay." Melody started picking up the route among the trees.

"Roger." Jay immediately followed the directions. His gaze met two pairs of eyes in the distance.

Now that they were spotted, there was no need to sneak around anymore.

The two guys rushed toward Jay, holding their weapons.

Kanaria looked at their positioning and said, "I found one gunner. They're probably trying to lure you before taking you out, Jay."

"I will take care of the gunner." Melody hurriedly moved forward, looping around so that she didn't get found out.

At the same time, the fourth person was actually injured before coming here. He was coming from the opposite direction, as if trying to cut down Jay's path.

"Jay, be careful!" Melody warned Jay while furrowing her eyebrows.

Jay's expression turned serious as he approached the two guys. When the radar showed him that the fourth person had almost reached his position, Jay abruptly came to a halt.

All of a sudden, a big injured guy emerged from behind a tree that was almost unable to cover his body.

The big guy waved his warhammer as if trying to crush Jay.

From his strength alone, this injured guy was a Tier 3. However, Jay wasn't the type to retreat from a challenge.

He stomped the ground and waved his sword, meeting the warhammer head-on.

Clink!

The clicking sound echoed. With just the weapon type alone, it was clear that the warhammer would win. In addition, the wielder was a big guy who could throw more weight.

Unfortunately, Jay was an abnormal target that had been equipped with both a technique and items from Another World Mall.

Jay actually knocked the big guy's warhammer away.

"!!!" The big guy was shocked. Even his two friends who were about to arrive widened their eyes.

'What? This strength... No, we still haven't lost yet. I'm injured, so...' The big guy suddenly changed his stance, letting the warhammer slip away from his hand so that his entire body didn't arch back due to the momentum.

Jay was stunned because the big guy actually tilted his upper body down and threw himself at him, tackling him on the stomach.

"W-wha—?!" Jay was shocked as he was about to fall to the ground. With a glance to the side, he also found the two guys desperately coming toward him. They seemed to be planning to defeat him while the big guy pinned him down.

Jay gritted his teeth. If this was a real fight, he could simply cut down the big guy, but because this was a competition, he would get disqualified if he killed this guy.

But he couldn't recover from his position, and it would only take an instant for these two guys to kill him. Even Jay couldn't defeat his opponents in this position.

"Die!" The two guys approached him and swung their blades, planning to just hit Jay.

However, they soon heard a gunshot from the side. The next thing they realized, one of them had already been shot in the head. The momentum of the bullet knocked him to the side as the paint spread all over his hair.

At the same time, a short sword suddenly flew from the side and appeared between them, almost hitting the other guy's blade.

"!!!" Even though the short sword missed, the person was already stunned, instinctively taking a step back to avoid whatever was coming.

He glanced to the side, finding Clovis approaching them.

Clovis took out his pistol and shot the guy and the big one in rapid succession, eliminating them.

All three of them were shocked that they were eliminated all of a sudden. The remaining guy emerged from his hiding spot, wanting to do the same thing. He planned to shoot Clovis and Jay in rapid succession.

However, when he came out of his hiding spot, Melody did the same, shooting him first from behind.

"Gah!" Their gunner was pushed down by the force of the bullet and glanced at the shooter, realizing that he was also already defeated.

Jay simply couldn't believe that they would resort to such a thing. In a real battle, they would have died before attempting such a thing.

At the same time, he couldn't find any rules that they broke. The rules merely stated that they couldn't kill, so as long as they weren't 'killed,' they could still do something.

"NO! We're still able to fight!" One of them roared, standing up again and marching toward Jay, planning to cut him down. They didn't want to lose the preliminary match.

Jay hurriedly pushed away the big guy that restrained him and tried to get back up. 'Tsk. It's too late.'

Unfortunately for that guy, Clovis appeared at a timely manner, kicking him on the cheek and blowing him away.

"Tsk. I really hate this type of fight." Clovis sighed after landing.

Chapter 268 Retreat

"Tsk. I really hate this type of fight." Clovis sighed after landing.

Clovis hurriedly pulled Jay up so that they could get away from these people. With distance, they shouldn't do anything reckless like earlier.

"Sorry." Jay extended his hand.

"No problem." Clovis slapped Jay's hand quite hard as if telling him to be careful.

Jay could only give him a wry smile, knowing that he had done something bad. "Now you know why I don't really want to kill my enemies, right?"

"I guess."

"To kill the enemies, we have to corner them first. However, the cornered enemies will fight back since they're going to die anyway, trying to drag us together. Even with such an overwhelming gap, the enemy can simply throw a grenade and explode together or something.

"The fact that we can't kill them in this competition eliminates our only option, which is going for a swift kill."

Jay's expression turned grim since he had just experienced it.

"Anyway, it's good that you're alright." Clovis waved his hand to Kanaria, thanking her for the assist.

Jay looked down, falling into deep thought.

"Also, I should be thankful that you can experience such a thing early on. I'm afraid that the same thing will happen to Ivan pretty soon."

"!!!" Jay widened his eyes. Now that he thought about it, Clovis indeed wanted to eliminate Ivan from the competition by showing the enormous gap and the Drake Group's corrupt method.

When that happened, Ivan might likely be coming in the same manner. However, Ivan shouldn't be foolish enough to face them head-on. With such a hidden danger, they should be on guard all the time.

"I understand. I'll take this experience to heart." Jay nodded with a serious expression.

Clovis smiled, satisfied. He simply chose to regroup first before getting his short sword back. After all, he wanted these people to calm down first.

But to his surprise, right after Clovis and Jay returned to their original spot, Melody and Ragna suddenly reacted.

Ragna stepped to the side and raised his shield while Melody warned them, "Another incoming group!"

"!!!" Clovis and Jay raised their heads, seeing multiple people between the trees.

Kanaria and their sniper were pointing their guns at each other without pulling the triggers yet.

Clovis's expression turned serious after he recognized one person among the enemies.

"That's..." His eyes were locked on the woman with light blue hair. He saw that person talking to Erwin. She was one of the Tier 4 participants, Aileen.

Their gazes intertwined as both of them were holding their weapons. The tension started building up.

Jay raised his blade while Melody prepared the battle plan.

Aileen paused for a moment before sheathing back her daggers. "We're leaving."

"!!!" Her teammates looked surprised, but none of them complained... or at least, not yet.

Clovis clicked his tongue, not because he couldn't fight against a powerful person, but because she must be acting carefully because of Erwin.

"The main competition will be quite hard." Clovis let out a long sigh. "Melody?"

"They're leaving... about to exit the distance of our radar."

"Are there any other enemies around the area?"

"Other than a few beasts, no."

Clovis let out a long sigh and said, "We'll retrieve my weapon first before retreating in the opposite direction. Remember to be extra careful. The closer to the time limit, the more desperate they are."

"They can sacrifice themselves and get the last kill just to get the points from us. If we have five hundred points, they will get all those points as long as we're all dead and they still have one person in the team that is still alive." Kanaria nodded, fully understanding the severity of the situation.

"But they don't know whether we have a lot of points or not, right?" Ragna asked.

"No. That's the reason why they only give us updates on our own points, not those of other teams. However, the other teams don't care. Just imagine how many groups remain after almost two hours. They will think that the surviving groups will have a certain degree of points that will allow them to be among the final 16 groups if they add their own points," Clovis explained.

"I see." Jay nodded.

"Anyway, we'll go around for another twenty minutes and just remain hidden for the last ten minutes. That should be enough." Clovis changed his plan a little bit after seeing the reaction from Aileen.

"Roger."

...

Meanwhile, Aileen was thinking a similar thing.

"Miss Aileen. Why do we have to retreat? We can crush those groups! They only have three Tier 2 and two Tier 3 explorers. They are too insignificant compared to us." Her teammate complained.

The other teammates were staring at Aileen, wanting to know her answer.

"That was the best choice." Aileen shook her head.

"Why?"

"At least explain the reason to us. Your decision didn't make sense earlier."

"Weren't they the group that you asked me to investigate?" Her friend, Lana, asked.

"!!!" The other teammates raised their eyebrows. It was unexpected for that kind of group to get Aileen's attention.

"Are they strong?" Lana frowned.

"I don't know," Aileen replied without a change of expression.

"What?"

"If you don't know..."

"They might not be that strong."

Aileen shook her head and said, "Well, you want me to tell you the one thing I do know?"

"Very much so." Lana nodded furiously. The others also fell silent, looking at her with a curious expression.

"I've never really talked about it, but me and Erwin do go pretty far back... ever since we both studied in the academy as rivals. It's true that Erwin's combat talents are inferior when compared to mine. However, I have never seen someone else that can compare when it comes to his eyes for people. If that's the man that Erwin has acknowledged, then he might not be ordinary.

If we clashed with them, we would probably suffer a huge loss as well."

All her teammates dropped their jaws to the ground as they couldn't believe what she had just said.

Only Lana, who was her best friend, looked at her dumbfoundedly as she couldn't help but think, 'Is the comparison for combat talent necessary?'

Chapter 269 Rank

"What's this? What's this? Libation Fiesta has just encountered Bloody Rose?!" Shion stood up, announcing it with so much excitement.

"Uooh!" The audience cheered as though they were expecting something. The battle between the two groups would definitely spark a lot of excitement.

Mayor Revan turned pale when he saw their encounter. "No! Not good! If they fight..."

Mayor Revan might have some confidence in Clovis and the others, but he didn't believe that Clovis's group was able to fight against Bloody Rose.

He thought, with some luck, they would be able to get into the top eight, if not the top four, as long as they didn't encounter a team with a Tier 4 explorer in their team.

However, he never thought that they would encounter one so soon. "Run away! Don't fight with them. Focus on achieving a high rank first before doing the challenge!"

Mayor Revan panickedly waved his hand, hoping that Clovis would retreat.

But the battlefield was even more unpredictable.

"What? Bloody Rose is actually leaving?!" Shion shouted with a dumbfounded expression.

Some people were left disappointed, thinking that they had just missed an important match.

"Why are they leaving? Are they aware of Libation Fiesta's strength? Are they thinking that this battle is not worth the effort? However, they have crushed all the teams that challenged them. Is Bloody Rose so resourceful that they manage to actually find the Dark Horse of the competition?!" Shion kept asking a lot of questions, making the audience think instead of getting disappointed.

They couldn't deny the possibility. After witnessing their strength, they knew that Libation Fiesta definitely had the chance to rank very high in this competition.

Everyone was dying to get an answer.

However, Shion hurriedly directed their focus by saying, "It's unfortunate that we can't watch such a match. However, we're very sure that we'll see them a lot in the main tournament. There isn't a lot of time left. Who will actually get first place in the preliminary match?"

The participants continued moving according to their strategy. A lot of people had gone into hiding, playing it safely so as to avoid getting ambushed.

However, some desperate people also ran around like crazy, searching for other competitors.

After Clovis ran into one more desperate group, he decided to play it safe and stay hidden for the rest of the time. Still, the second desperate group was more manageable, considering Jay didn't underestimate his enemies and took some measures to get rid of their desperate attack.

When the time was up, there was a signal flare released into the sky.

Erwin looked up while smiling. "Let's see... How are our competitors doing?"

Rafael was sitting on a small boulder while placing his elbows on his knees and clasping his hands with a grim expression. He was on the edge because this was a matter of protecting the city's pride.

If people saw that the group that represented their city wasn't on top, they would lose trust.

The same applied to the third Tier 4, Martial Master Rika. She crossed her arms while leaning on a tree, waiting for the points to be calculated.

Meanwhile, Clovis was opening the screen of the competition, looking at the result that was announced by the organizer.

Shining Star Competition - Preliminary Match.

Eight Swords - 860 points.

Bloody Rose - 835 points.

Libation Fiesta - 811 points.

Imemine - 807 points.

Dragon Fist - 764 points.

The list continued up to sixteen groups, but the most important groups were these five.

Rafael pumped his fists with a grim expression, feeling a bit of relieved that he didn't disappoint. He managed to lead his group to take the first spot.

"Ohh! We're the first!"

"We did it!"

"Hahahaha!"

While the others were celebrating, one of his teammates looked confused as he asked, "Rafael... Something is odd. Who is this Libation Fiesta?"

"Mhmmm?" Rafael furrowed his eyebrows and took another look at the ranking.

...

Bloody Rose.

"We are second? Just a bit more to get the first place. Aaahhh!" One of them was frustrated.

"NO!" Another clutched his head while kneeling on the floor as if the world were ending.

Aileen was simply staring at the ranking with a serious expression.

"It seems that you weren't wrong, Aileen." Lana smirked, pointing at Libation Fiesta's name. "They are ranked third."

"That's right, Miss Aileen. You were correct! Although we didn't know how they managed to achieve such a high score, it was clear that we would suffer a lot of damage if we clashed with them earlier. Let alone second, we might not even get the top tree."

Aileen didn't reply to them as she glanced at Lana with a face devoid of emotion. "Lana."

"I know, I know! I'm going to compile all their battle records for you and investigate their background." Lana waved her head cheekily.

Aileen just closed her eyes as if she were satisfied with the answer.

...

Imemine.

"This... We are fourth? Who is this Libation Fiesta?" The people in this group were confused, believing that they would get at least the top three in the ranking after working so hard.

But what was even more shocking was that Erwin, the most conceited guy in the team, was actually smiling.

"You sounded like you were having fun." His friend rolled his eyes.

"Hahahaha! It's been a while since I've had a rival."

"I don't think he acknowledges you as his rival... just like Aileen."

"Hahahaha! This is just a preliminary match. We'll be taking them down in the main competition!"

"You are not even listening." His friend sighed, knowing Erwin's personality.

"I'm looking forward to our duel, Clovis." Erwin grinned.

...

Dragon Fist.

"Fifth... Libation Fiesta." Rika of the Dragon Fist muttered before raising her head as though she had just acknowledged yet another competitor.

...

Unlike them, Clovis's team was in celebration.

"We are third!" Melody pumped her fist while cheering.

"This is unbelievable, especially with Clovis, Kanaria, and me holding back most of our power." Ragna gasped. Even though he had known this group for a month, it was still shocking to see the comparison with other groups.

Still, they were pretty lucky since they managed to encounter three groups and steal their points... even though the first one didn't have much because the competition had just started.

Kanaria smiled. "This should be enough to satisfy Mayor Revan. I'm going to negotiate more rewards from him."

Jay yawned as if he were not interested in the result.

Meanwhile, Clovis scratched the back of his head, thinking that he should aim a bit higher. "Well, whatever. The main competition is the place anyway."

Chapter 270 Response

The helicopters then picked up the participants.

Clovis didn't know whether he was lucky or unlucky. After all, the two groups that were being picked up together with him were Imemine and Bloody Rose.

"Wahahaha! You're good, Clovis. To think that you are able to surpass my group! It seems that I need to get more serious." Erwin grinned.

Clovis just looked away while covering his ears. Erwin simply talked too much, and his voice was so loud that it began ringing in his head. The worst part was his sky high self-esteem.

Surprisingly, Aileen was staring at him with mixed expressions. On the one hand, she sympathized with him for catching Erwin's attention. She fully knew how annoying it was. On the other hand, she couldn't believe that one wrong move would actually allow this group to surpass them.

And the most amazing thing was that three of them were Tier 2 humans. Even in her group, all her party members were Tier 3, while she was a Tier 4 human. If they could actually bring forth a strength that surpassed their tiers, this might stir up the competition a bit.

Kanaria glared at her as if trying to tell her not to get any funny ideas.

Clovis just rolled his eyes, wanting to reach the city as quickly as possible.

When they came back, the cheers erupted as Shion announced, "Here it is, everyone! These are the top 16 groups that are going to advance to the main tournament! Let's welcome them with a big applause!"

The stadium shook from the cheers.

"Uoohh!" Mayor Revan was applauding so hard that his tears were leaking out of the corner of his eyes. He was just too happy. There were two groups from his city that managed to reach the main tournament, even though the other group was ranked 14th.

At the very least, they managed to do it, even though their city was one tier below this city or any other city.

This was a huge achievement.

With such outstanding people, it wouldn't be easy to offend the people behind them. The Renvolt and Havenson families would reap a lot of benefits from it.

Obviously, Lovelia and her Rusth family would be gritting their teeth because they let their rival family find Clovis first.

Clovis just took a glance at Mayor Revan. Since he was satisfied with the performance, it was good enough.

"Hahaha! We shall meet again in the main tournament, Clovis! Don't you lose to others before losing to me, my rival!" Erwin laughed out loud.

Clovis simply stepped away, not wanting to hear any words from him anymore. He started regretting shaking his hands during the test.

As expected, there were a lot of reporters waiting for them.

Even though he managed to escape from Erwin, he got caught by a reporter.

"Please wait, Mr. Clovis. We'd like to interview you. We'd like to know how you feel about getting 3rd rank in the preliminary match."

Clovis scratched the back of his head. When he was asked this question, he thought he really needed to answer it as payment. This was what it meant to take the 'sponsorship' after all.

Clovis replied, "I'm just glad that I didn't disappoint my city as well as the mayor who supported me."

"!!!" The reporter looked surprised for a second before asking, "The mayor? If I'm not wrong, you are actually participating as an independent group! You're not affiliated with any companies or families."

"Well, let's leave it at that. We're indeed not affiliated with anyone, so I just want to take this opportunity to thank the person who has helped us." Clovis chuckled.

"What do you think about other competitors? As the dark horse of the competition, how confident are you to defeat them?"

"I don't really like to discuss uncertain things since there are a lot of factors. So, I'll answer you with something certain. We come here to win."

The reporter was amazed by that confidence and proceeded to ask the next question. "How about—"

Unfortunately for her, before she finished her question, Clovis caught Kanaria, who was about to leave the stadium, placing her in front of the camera. "If you have another question, you can ask her. She is the most reliable person in our group. She'll definitely answer you to the best of her abilities."

"Yo, wha—!" Kanaria was dumbfounded, but Clovis had already slipped away, escaping from them.

Kanaria's eyebrows twitched. If she also left, the group's reputation would definitely take a hit. She could only give them a polite smile while saying, "I'll take over for him."

The other groups were also caught by some reporters about the result. However, each of them was asked the same question.

What do they think about the dark horse, Libation Fiesta?

Their reactions varied.

As one would expect from Erwin, he actually answered them with, "I found him before he registered. This must be fate. I considered him my rival and would like to fight him in the main competition! Of course, I'll definitely win. Hahahaha!"

Unlike him, Aileen was a bit cornered because she had encountered Clovis's group and decided to pull back. So she had to change her wording a little bit in order to avoid her group being looked down upon.

"We will defeat everyone in the competition when the time comes. Besides, it would be unfair if we attacked them after they fought against another group." She escaped with that answer.

Rafael maintained his pride by simply stating, "We'll take the champion, no matter who our opponents are, including Libation Fiesta."

The people had mixed reactions, but all of them knew one thing. They didn't have a lot of information about Libation Fiesta for two reasons.

It had only been a few months since they had been created, so there was not a lot to dig. The second reason was that it was a group that came from a lower tier city.

The most they could study was the preliminary match's footage.

But they would soon notice the trap Clovis had set up inside that footage.