

World Mall 361

Chapter 361 Wake Up

'What is this?' Clovis muttered. 'I feel like I'm inside of water, gradually sinking to the bottom. I can't move any parts of my body. I can let out a sound.'

Clovis tried to open his eyes, but to no avail. However, there was one thing that he remembered. 'What was that glitch? No, did the world just glitch? I saw a screen panel similar to the one that displayed my evolution status, the one planted by the government.'

'Was the government the one responsible for this? But my grandfather would definitely try to stop them. He should have known something like this... or was he? What if my grandfather didn't know about this?

'If that's the case, am I the only person in this world that is able to see that glitch? There are a lot of questions in my mind, but none of them can be answered right away.

'Ah. That screen also conveyed a single message. Mission complete, huh? What kind of mission was it? If I thought about the big things happening, it was either the terrorist organization or Ivan.

'No, why would I even get a mission? Was it because the world is nothing but a simulation?'

Clovis fell into deep thought. The more he thought about what happened, the more questions appeared in his mind.

More importantly, after that glitch, he also felt an indescribable pain that knocked him out. He didn't know whether he was still alive or not, considering he was in this state.

'Still, the biggest question is... why does the world glitch? If this world is just a simulation, then an error can occur. But if that's the case, there should be some large glitches, allowing humans to know about them. I...'

Clovis wanted to explore this possibility, but the pitch-black water suddenly shone brightly as if each water particle were glowing.

Clovis covered his eyes, but he suddenly felt a cold wind brushing his skin.

"Mhmmm." Clovis let out a groan. Surprisingly, he could open his eyes this time.

"Clovis? Clovis?" Kanaria's voice echoed in his head.

"Kh." Clovis weakly reached for his ears, as if the sound were ringing in his head.

Kanaria wanted to call him again but abruptly stopped. Instead, she just pressed the button to call for the nurse.

Clovis gradually adjusted to the brightness before moving his vision left and right, trying to figure out the situation. Inside the room, there were only him and Kanaria, but he saw three chairs that had just been used.

"Where is this?" Clovis asked, trying to lift his weak body.

"We're in the hospital right now. You suddenly went berserk and collapsed," Kanaria explained. "We had called the best doctor in our city, but we couldn't find anything wrong with you."

Clovis remained silent, but he had figured out the situation. He said, "I'm fine... I think."

Kanaria squinted her eyes, as if she didn't believe it.

"How long have I been asleep?" Clovis asked.

"Almost a day." Kanaria pointed at the window, showing the orange sky.

"I see. How is the situation?"

"You're in this condition, and you're still thinking about that?" was what Kanaria wanted to say, but she ultimately chose to reply, "It's going pretty well. The Drake group is in trouble right now. I'll compile the news and show it to you after the doctors check your condition."

"Thanks." Clovis nodded with a serious expression. He tried to open his Another World Mall's inventory to check the situation. And as Kanaria said, he was asleep for a whole day as the number of items increased by one day.

"Excuse me." A deep voice echoed from the outside as he opened the door, bringing two other people with him.

The doctor was a middle-aged man who looked very experienced. In addition, the two people behind him also looked quite old.

"I am the doctor in charge of you, Mr. Clovis. How are you feeling right now?"

"I'm fine." Clovis nodded his head.

"Your complexion has gotten better as well. Do you feel any discomfort in any areas of your body?"

Clovis shook his head. "No."

"In that case, can you share what you experienced before passing out?"

Clovis hesitated for a moment. The glitch didn't seem to be something that he could easily share. Even if he told them about the glitch, they would just think of him as hallucinating or going crazy.

Hence, Clovis replied, "Hallucination, I think? Something like a nightmare."

"Hallucination, huh? Can you describe what you saw back then?"

"Sorry. It was personal. I couldn't afford to share it, and it was something I didn't really want to talk about."

The doctor nodded in understanding, believing that Clovis' nightmare was related to his family. "I see. There aren't any problems with your body or brain. If that's the case, I can make an appointment with a trusted therapist for you."

"It's fine for now." Clovis shook his head.

"I understand. But for now, I'll share his contact information. If the hallucination gets worse, please immediately make an appointment."

"Alright." Clovis chose to accept it so that the doctor would leave as quickly as possible.

After checking several basic things and confirming that there were no hidden symptoms, they left the room.

Clovis let out a long sigh. "Were there visitors?"

"Jay, Melody, Ragna, my mother, Captain Han, and Mayor Revan. Mayor Revan was concerned about your well-being because you were the pride of this city. My mother... let's just skip about her. Melody was in the room next to us, almost fully recovered. Jay and Ragna are taking turns."

"I see. Thank you, Kanaria. And sorry... it must have been scary back then." Clovis scratched the back of his head.

"As long as you're fine." Kanaria shook her head, implying it wasn't a big deal.

"Anyway, fill me up with everything that has happened in this one day."

"Sure. Please take a look at this." Kanaria pressed her tab a few times and projected the screen.

Chapter 362 Press Conference

The Drake Group's president, Thomas, was standing on the podium. There was a question coming from the audience.

"Mr. Thomas. Was the Drake group involved in the operation of the terrorist group?"

"No. The Drake group wasn't involved in anything. The Drake group had done nothing not beneficial for the city," Thomas shook his head.

"How are you going to explain the involvement of Elina from your Drake group? From the statement released by the government and the body cam, it was clear that she was responsible for placing explosives in that building."

"We haven't been able to reach her in the past few days." Thomas denied the claim.

"How could you not be able to reach her? The Drake group is one of the biggest groups in this city."

"As you said, we're a big group. It's impossible to keep track of every single individual affiliated with our group. However, we promise to increase our efforts so that this incident won't happen again." Thomas just threw out one of the most basic replies.

"Still, Elina was one of your best recruits. Not only did she assist Ivan a lot of times, but she was also one of the winners in the Star Competition. Does this mean that the Drake Group does not place any importance on a person who has contributed a lot to the company?"

Thomas was annoyed, but he still had to reply with all the bullshit he had prepared. "No. It's our belief that the biggest reward we can give is freedom. Looking at a lot of influence, while you may be able to advance through their support, your action will be limited by the company.

However, our Drake group is providing you with freedom so that everyone won't feel as if their necks are chained by us."

"How could we believe what you said this time, President Thomas? The biggest problem here is not their action but their targets. Clovis was among the targets. Looking at your past history with Clovis and the Libation Fiesta, it was hard to not feel suspicious."

Thomas hurriedly replied, "I have been telling everyone from the very start that we have never done anything not beneficial for the city, including burying a talent. As the president of a major group, we always strive to provide the best environment for our talents to grow. And it remains the same to this day."

No matter how he was going to explain it, the citizens were already suspicious of the Drake group. Ivan had repeatedly attacked the Libation Fiesta, and there was no way Thomas would just ignore it if what he said was true.

However, there was no evidence yet. They had no choice but to bite their lips.

Even the government couldn't find anything from Elina, who had been admitting to her crime and refusing to explain any further.

However, there was one thing that could be used to attack Ivan. And obviously, the one who came was the reporter, who had close ties with the Renvolt family. He was the reporter Vania had chosen to attack Thomas.

"We have received the news from the police department regarding the terrorists that have been captured. They confessed that they agreed with Ivan because they were promised to get reinforcement. In other words, Ivan was still being backed by you."

"This is slander. I had cut ties with Ivan before all this happened. There is no proof of my involvement. Please don't make up any stories that suit your scenario." Thomas still managed to avoid that question.

"With this, we'll conclude the press conference. I'll say this again: We're not involved with the terrorists. If we know this is happening, we will send our own experts to eliminate the terrorist organization." Thomas hurriedly left.

"Sir!"

"I have another question!"

The reporters immediately stood up and raised their hands, trying to stop him from leaving. Unfortunately for them, they couldn't get more information than this.

After looking at the video Kanaria showed, Clovis fell into deep thought. "I see. It seems that he is able to dodge the worst-case scenario. How's the public's response to the press conference?"

"It's hectic. Most of them don't believe him. Their stock has been decreasing sharply. According to my mother, there is already a fourth of his force leaving the Drake group. The investors are pulling out one by one. We expect that the damage will worsen with time."

Clovis nodded. "In that case, we're slowly pushing him into the corner. He might choose to forsake everything once there's no escape."

"Yes. We need to be at least Tier 3 if we want to resist him. I know that the gap between Tier 4 and Tier 5 is bigger than the gap between Tier 3 and Tier 4. But we should be able to fight a Tier 5 human as a team."

Clovis didn't reply immediately. Instead, he thought about Hana's condition. "Looking at this condition, I know that we can't do much to him. However, your mother should be able to push him to the corner, right?"

"Manipulating the information, huh?"

"Yes. I'm thinking about cornering him a bit faster." Clovis nodded with a serious expression. "For example, if the beast wave that your mother warned us about is artificial, we can force them to speed up by pushing Thomas into the corner. With Thomas joining them, they will have no choice but to speed up their plan. This way, we can go to Hana ahead of schedule."

"I see. I'll ask my mother about it later."

"Thanks." Clovis raised a finger. "While you're at it, tell Melody that we'll depart four days later. It's time to have Erwin join us."

"Alright. For now, you also have to get some rest in the hospital for at least a day. If nothing happens, you'll be discharged. No training for today, okay?" Kanaira looked worried.

Clovis could only smile. "I know, I know."

After getting his answer, Kanaria stood up and left the room to handle all those matters.

As soon as Kanaria left, Clovis leaned on his bed while muttering inwardly, 'Still, a glitch, huh? Should I ask my grandfather about it?'

Chapter 363 Suspicious

"We're finally done with all this." Clovis stretched his arms, feeling a bit tired.

"Yeah. Go get some rest on the way. Jay and Ragna will drive, while Melody and I will be on the lookout." Kanaria nodded.

"Okay. I'll call Erwin first." Clovis waved his hand, telling Kanaria to load the luggage into their car.

"Sure."

However, as soon as Clovis called Erwin, the latter received it with a troubled tone. "You've finally called me. Are you going to this place right now?"

"Yes. It took longer than I expected, but we're about to leave there."

"Mhmm. I don't think you should go to my city."

"Huh, why?" Clovis crossed his arms.

"We're currently facing a big problem right now. Remember that I told you that you should go to my city before trying to recruit me, right?"

"Yes."

"The situation has just gone from bad to worse. It's hard to explain it."

"In that case, I'll go there and see the problem."

"Without your family, you can't solve this problem. This is not me insulting you, as if you can't do anything without your family. In fact, you will understand what I mean if you see the situation. Anyway, I still have a lot of things to do right now. If you don't have anything important to say, I'm going to hang up."

"Alright. I'll call you once I reach your city. The journey should take about six hours."

"Got it. Go through the west gate and mention that you are a guest of Master Genzert."

"Got it. You do whatever you need to do."

"Yep."

Erwin hung up in a hurry.

Clovis then walked toward the group. It seemed that both Kanaria and Melody had heard a little bit of their conversation. Kanaria had a concerned face, while Melody looked annoyed because she didn't want to deal with another mess.

"Good news. We know what to do after this. Bad news, it's going to be annoying." Clovis smirked.
"Anyway, let's depart immediately. Melody, don't sulk."

"I know." Melody let out a long sigh.

Clovis could only smile wryly as he went to his seat. With the amount of their money, they could finally get a minibus for their trip. The minibus had been reinforced with materials that could withstand an attack by a Tier 4 beast. In addition, they could take out some stuff and use the interior as a bed. This way, they didn't need to sleep on the hard ground anymore.

Melody wanted a small bus where they could even put a bathroom, but it would take some time for such a custom order.

Then again, they would most likely not be able to bring it to Hana's place. Hence, he requested that Hana make them a customized bus for their group so that they could use it for exploration. Of course, this was part of the compensation.

As Clovis said earlier, the journey took six hours. Ragna and Jay took turns to drive so as to conserve their stamina in case something happened.

Fortunately, the journey was pretty peaceful. There were some beasts attacking them, but they were just lone beasts. Even Clovis decided not to get their essence since it would slow them down significantly.

When they arrived, they looked pretty shocked when they saw the city.

The wall was even more majestic than theirs. It was as tall as 20 meters and stretched for more than four kilometers in all directions, while their city was only four square kilometers. In other words, this city was four times bigger than their city.

In addition, they could see big artillery guns on top of the wall.

"This city is bigger than Stellar City." Clovis muttered.

"Yeah." Kanaria agreed, even though her eyes were glued to the north wall, specifically its gate. She could see a lot of container trucks lining up to enter the city. In addition, the area at the north gate was

also heavily guarded. 'So that's the supply line. But that number... I don't think it's enough for this city. What is the city's condition for the supply line to be disrupted that way?

Does the problem lie with the company or the city?'

Kanaria only observed the situation for the time being, but she seemed to understand the city a bit more from the north gate alone.

Meanwhile, Melody continued guiding them to the west gate. As expected, there was something big happening in this city. Even the west gate was being guarded heavily.

"What is this? Isn't the gate normally guarded by only ten people or less? Why does it look like there are more than fifty people? And it seems they are affiliated with the military." Clovis muttered.

They were stopped by at least four people at once, and a lot of soldiers were staring at their cars.

"Hello. I apologize for the inconvenience, but have you made an appointment to visit the city?"

"An appointment?" Ragna raised his eyebrows.

"It seems that you haven't heard about it. Our city is in an alert state right now. Unless you have an appointment, it's suggested that you not come to this city. We can recommend you go to the Serrest City not far from here."

Clovis hurriedly opened the window and said, "Sorry, sir. We are an explorer group called Libation Fiesta. We come here as guests of Master Genzert."

"Master Genzert?" The soldier took a step back as though he recognized the name. "Please wait a moment."

The soldier hurriedly rushed to his comrades, telling them about it. Before long, a middle-aged man came out of the post next to the gate.

"I am their supervisor, William. Are you sure that you're invited by Master Genzert?" The middle-aged man asked.

"Yes."

The middle-aged man turned solemn as he said, "I understand. We have been notified about guests of Master Genzert as well. We have been instructed to guide you once you arrive." The middle-aged man pointed at the black car not far from them. "Please follow that black car. They'll escort you to meet Master Genzert."

"Thank you." Everyone looked happy that the situation had been solved. However, only Kanaria had a rather grim expression as if there was something suspicious.

Chapter 364 Big Problem

While Ragna followed the black car, Melody couldn't help but notice Kanaria's expression. "What's wrong, Kanaria?"

Kanaria replied with a request. "Can you search Master Genzert on Skynet? Who is he?"

Melody hurriedly searched for the name and said, "Genzert is a master explorer whose work is not in the line of exploration but in the research department. His name is Ryan Genzert. He is a professor in the field of geology. There isn't much that can be found here. He is a clean guy, so other than basic information, I can't find anything. But it states here that Erwin Genzert is his adopted son."

Clovis furrowed his eyebrows. This explained why Erwin told them to mention his name. However, there was something weird about this information.

"Hmm. When I investigate Erwin, his background is that he actually comes from a big family background. Why would such a person adopt Erwin?" Melody frowned.

"No. That's not important right now." Kanaria pinched the bridge of her nose.

"What's wrong?" Melody turned serious, wondering if there was a detail she missed.

"If you think about it, would the soldier have that much respect for a mere professor? Remember that our world respects strength right now. So his name shouldn't be that powerful. Is he a Tier 7 or something?" Kanaria asked.

"No. It's said that he is a normal person."

"See? It's rather suspicious. It feels like he is being highly regarded for no reason. It's not that I'm trying to insult Erwin, but there must be something wrong in this city, to the point where such a person becomes a highly important person."

"Aren't you thinking too much about this?" Jay asked nonchalantly.

"No. If you take a look at the map, you will realize that the supply route is from Serrest City, which is located to the north. There are no other cities that are still standing that can become their supply line. If you think it that way, the number of supplies that are being transported to the city is much lower than what a city needs."

"Wait. Are you talking..." Clovis frowned.

"Yes. If you look at their supply line, you will understand the situation. This is why I love logistics in the first place." Kanaria looked at the city. "Take a look at the citizens around you."

They turned their eyes to the people on the street. They noticed that their expression was quite dark as though they didn't have their energy. Their bodies were not thin, so the only thing that came to their minds was one word. Depression.

"The city looks like they are grieving. Then, if we take the alert state as well as the low number of supply containers, there might be a serious problem in this city. Something that even high-tier people can't do anything about."

"!!!" Everyone inside the car gulped. They didn't think Kanaria could reach that conclusion by only observing the city.

"And that problem is..." Clovis paused, wanting to know the root of the problem.

"I can speculate. It's probably something related to the hole leading to the underground city. This is the only reason why the city doesn't have a lot of supply trucks going in and out. In other words, you can say that those trucks are most likely food supplies."

"Food supply? How do you know?"

"It's just speculation. Besides, it'll explain everything. You know that the underground city is the main source of food, right? The meat is being brought from the underground city. If somehow the tunnel can't be accessed, they have no choice but to import food. And the tunnel is made of stone... A person like Professor Genzert would definitely be respected in this situation.

It can be said that he is one of the most important people right now."

Clovis looked down, falling into deep thought. He fully understood the current situation because of Kanaria. While they didn't know the exact details, they already got the gist of it. Still, he was a bit surprised that Kanaria was able to deduce all of this from logistics alone. It seemed that he had underestimated her talent.

"I will call Erwin first since we have arrived at the city." Clovis immediately called Erwin since it would be awkward if they ended up meeting his father first.

"Clovis? You've arrived?" Erwin's voice sounded even more hurried. He could clearly hear the sign of shortness of breath.

"Yeah. We're currently being guided by the soldiers to, I don't know, maybe you have specified the location."

"Oh. That's great. I'll be standing outside the building when you arrive."

"Sounds good."

Once they got confirmation, the car became silent once again as Kanaria kept observing the city. It took them about ten minutes before they reached the heart of the city.

They were guided to a tall building not far from the Explorer Association. Erwin was already waiting for them as well.

"Yo. You're here." Erwin waved his hand while they were opening their windows. "Just park here."

"Okay." Clovis and his team exited the car as Kanaria couldn't contain her curiosity anymore and asked, "Erwin. I'm sorry if this is rude, but is the underground tunnel not accessible right now?"

"Mhmm?" Erwin raised his eyebrows, looking shocked. "Did someone leak the news?"

"No. I just reached that conclusion from what I found so far." Kanaria shook her head.

"I see. I thought we had been hiding it well. I guess it's fine to show you what's currently happening in this city, which is why I'm unable to join you right now. Of course, if you can solve that problem, I will join your group right away. Anyway, please follow me." Erwin sighed.

The atmosphere between them turned serious as soon as they arrived. Erwin guided them toward the Explorer Association.

There were a lot of soldiers and workers that weren't supposed to be here filling this building. They all appeared to be rushing something.

"As I said earlier, the city's situation has changed from bad to worse. I don't know how you are able to reach that conclusion, but you're right. The underground is inaccessible, and there are numerous problems due to it. Anyway, this is what's currently happening to the underground tunnel." Erwin pointed at the tunnel inside the building, showing the true state of the problem.

All of them widened their eyes in shock. Clovis gasped. "This is..."

Chapter 365 Cause

The underground tunnel was basically a hollow pillar of stone that shot up from the underground world to the surface.

Their size could reach as far as two hundred meters in radius.

However, the hole this time was only about forty meters in radius. It was used to create several elevators that could bring a lot of things to the underground world.

But the truly shocking sight was not the fact that the hole was huge or had majestic equipment. It was the fact that the tunnel was actually being filled with rubble.

"This is..." Clovis gasped. "The tunnel has collapsed?"

"No. It's impossible for the tunnel to collapse. With all the tunnels in the world, we have no record of them collapsing." Kanaria shook her head.

Jay raised his eyebrows. "Artificial?"

Erwin nodded his head with a grim expression. "Exactly so. That's what we currently believe to be the case."

"What? Can you just blow this up? I mean, if the tunnel won't collapse, you can just use explosives." Ragna pointed at the rubble.

"There are a lot of uncertainties, such as the fact that all these rubbles will fall to the bottom, causing a lot of destruction. And what will happen to the underground city?" An aged voice echoed from behind.

"!!!" Everyone turned around and saw an old man in his mid-fifties walking toward them. He had a thin frame and didn't exude any aura that reflected his identity as an explorer.

When Clovis glanced at Erwin's face, he immediately extended his hand. "Thank you for inviting us here, Professor."

"Oh my. I've heard that Erwin has made a lot of unique friends. It seems that the rumor is true. To think that my egoistic son will have a lot of friends. It's like a dream come true." That was right. The person that approached them this time was none other than Erwin's adoptive father, Professor Genzert.

"Father. You're making your son look bad, you know." Erwin sighed.

"Haha. If they're people who consider that kind of lighthearted joke to look down on you, you won't consider them your friends." Professor Genzert smiled while shaking Clovis' hand. "Welcome to the city. My son must have troubled you, but I hope you can help him."

Clovis only smiled, not denying what he said.

"Clovis. That's when you're supposed to say, 'That's not true. He has been taking care of us,' you know." Erwin commented, his eyebrows twitching.

Clovis and Professor Genzert chuckled.

Clovis ignored him and asked, "What do you mean by we're unable to use explosives to blow it up? No, I think I should ask this question first. How is the underground city's condition?"

"Oi!" Erwin facepalmed.

Professor Genzert nodded. "Follow me."

While walking, Professor Genzert began his explanation. "I guess we should start with that event six months ago. This underground tunnel has a total of four elevators.

"In the beginning, an elevator suddenly broke. It was a huge blow to the city, but it didn't cripple the city since the other three elevators were still enough to take care of the job.

"However, this situation didn't last long. One more elevator broke down, which was weird. While trying to repair these two elevators, the remaining two were used at full power.

"During that time, we finally found the cause of the problem. In both broken elevators, we found out several bite and scratch marks, from the steel that was used as the foundation of the elevator itself to the cables."

"!!!" Clovis raised his eyebrows. "Bite and scratch marks? Beasts? But how? Has the underground city fallen?"

Professor Genzert shook his head. "We don't know, but the last time we made contact with them was three days ago. A few hours after that, we were unable to contact them anymore. That was also when those rubbles appeared."

"Why would we lose contact?" Kanaria looked down. "There are three ways of connecting the underground city and the surface. Physical contact, which is the elevator itself, but looking at the rubble, it seems that none of them can move anymore. Cables must have been cut if we follow the same pattern. But we still have wireless connections."

"As expected of Erwin's friend, you're pretty clever." Professor Genzert nodded in approval. "However, those rubbles are not ordinary rocks."

"Don't tell me." Kanaria gasped. When they visited the hot spring, they noticed that there was a rock formation that could block the 'suppression' that the underground tunnel gave to the surrounding beasts.

It wouldn't be weird if there was a rock that could block signals. In fact, a normal rock alone could weaken the signal, so if they had a specific rock, it could create a barrier. And this might be the reason why Professor Genzert became an important person.

"Indeed. Those rocks are the reason we're unable to contact the underground city. Still, we haven't received any reports that showed the underground city being attacked from the outside."

"From the outside? Are you saying that they have been attacked from the inside? That's the only explanation for those rubbles." Clovis frowned.

"Exactly." Professor Genzert nodded.

Erwin continued his father's explanation, "There are two ways to attack a city from the inside. First, the flying beasts will approach the base from up high before landing directly on the inside. However, the soldiers have confirmed that there are no flying beasts. It means it's going with the second scenario, underground!"

Clovis nodded in agreement. "Indeed. If there are beasts that can dig a tunnel underneath the base, it's possible. Does that mean the city is fighting right now?"

"Yes." Professor Genzert answered without hesitation.

"According to our information, beasts are emerging from a spot near the pillar and spreading in all directions, causing a lot of commotion and deaths. They are still fighting right now, but the situation is a bit dire because the water supply to the underground city has been cut as well.

In other words, they're resisting those beasts with a limited amount of supply." Erwin explained the biggest problem.

Clovis couldn't help but furrow his eyebrows. "In that case, have you identified the mastermind of this incident? At least, the beast that has commanded them."

"We are not very sure right now. However, there is something bugging us. It seems that a spider is involved in creating a web to withstand all those rubbles, but the problem is that... the underground city has never found any spiders in all explored areas."

"!!!"