

Last System 346

Chapter 346 Back To The World

"All set," I reported, fixing the straps of the backpack on my shoulder.

If I were to point out the single greatest convenience that this strange city offered, it was the creation room.

Initially, we used it as the forward base for exploring the city, but as Mia now decided to scout the area around the place, the purpose of that place changed.

"That's great," Mia nodded her head. "Let's go," she added, pushing forward.

It took us only a short moment to return to the same place where we entered the underground city of wonders from.

"I wonder if we will be able to open that gate," I muttered under my nose, projecting my thoughts towards the objective ahead.

"Is this a test type of question?" Mia asked, leaning her head to the side and sending me a snickering look.

"Not at all," I shook my head and raised my hands, getting on the defensive. "I'm just not sure if the mechanism behind that gate works two ways," I explained my thoughts before looking towards the end of the street where the passage should be.

"Worst case scenario, we can just bust a hole in it!" Mia exclaimed resolutely before hastening her steps forward.

'Anything but that,' Mathew moaned in his thoughts.

Now that the world outside was basically going through an apocalypse, having a secret, safe, and extremely convenient place like this was an advantage not to be underestimated.

'A god's sent gift,' Mathew thought, clenching his teeth as his girl approached the wall of the underground city.

For something so insanely important, keeping it hidden and hard to access for others was a must!

"You don't look happy with my decision," Mia said as soon as she reached the wall and stood by its side. She then turned her head around and looked me in the face.

"But it's your decision," I replied, shaking my head to the sides. "And who is there to judge whose decision is better?" I then asked.

That was the other reason why I wanted Mia to take the lead. Because her way of thinking was entirely different from how my thoughts worked.

And I dared not to claim to always know the best way to act.

'It feels bad to burden Mia with this kind of responsibility,' I thought, tightening my fists as I refused to explain the reasons behind my worry.

"Arty..." Nadia shook her head, "I'm going along with your wish for me to lead," she stated before turning fully around and resting her hands on her hips. "But that doesn't mean I don't want to hear your thoughts!"

"I..." I instantly attempted to reply. Yet, as soon as I opened my mouth, my small smile froze on my lips.

Because I didn't know how I was supposed to answer. After all, what Mia just said, was perfectly accurate.

"Ah..." I released a small moan of self-loathing. "I guess I overdid it by a lot," I admitted before shaking my head.

I took two deep breaths to regain my cool before raising my eyes back on the girl.

"I believe this place can serve as a core for anything and everything that we might wish to do in the future," I gave my word of advice. "As such, I believe we should keep its entrances hidden from others as much as possible."

"And blasting a hole in its wall doesn't exactly serve that purpose well," Mia nodded her head. "You are completely right," Mia nodded her head as she admitted. "But I believe we still need to get out and check how things are going in the outside world."

"And that's because?" I asked for a clarification. Instead of judging Mia's intentions just from a few words, I wanted to get a better grasp of her reasoning.

"We need to know what's going on to properly prepare for it," Nadia didn't hide her thoughts. "And no matter what preparations will be necessary, we will need more people."

"That's..." I hesitated for a moment.

Because while Mia's reasons were completely valid, and I could stand by them with all my confidence... I actually thought about the solution to that problem.

"Do you remember, back when we watched that recording, the guy mentioning the stuff about NPC?" I asked, suddenly changing the topic.

"A little bit," Mia nodded her head, her eyes filling with curiosity.

She knew me for long enough to know... That this moment was like a bet. I would either tell something new that would open her eyes or would bore her with a long and unnecessary story.

Yet, right now, there was no doubt in Mia's eyes. Because in our recent talk, I already agreed to try to cut on the crap.

"NPC means a non-player character," I explained shortly. "In other words, a fake being that serves as the help for the citizens."

"And what about them?" Mia asked, proving that she actually listened. "I didn't think much of that part because we didn't see a single one in the city," she pointed out, only for a small smile to appear on her lips. "Weren't you looking for one back at the smithy?"

A pleasant feeling moved down my spine.

Even though I knew it already, it was always nice to find out just how closely Mia watched me in such random moments.

"Yes, I was," I nodded my head, only to then shake it sideways. "And just like you pointed out, we didn't see a single one of them anywhere in the city... But!" I raised my hand with my forefinger straightened as opposed to the rest of the fingers.

"Do you remember what the message said about killing them?"

For a moment, my question hung in the air as Mia raked her brains for an answer.

As she disregarded that part a little, just as she admitted, it proved to be a bit more challenging for her to recall the details of that specific part of the past.

Mia raised her eyes at my face.

"The cost of reviving them will be greater than the rewards," she quoted the message from her memory and using her own words. "You don't mean..."

"That's right," I confirmed Mia's guess, nodding my head. "I believe someone already killed every last single NPC in the city. And while I'm curious about the intention behind it..." I suddenly hesitated, not sure if I should go as far as I initially planned.

I didn't intend to keep secrets from Mia. I was also all on board for helping her with advice...

But if I kept on talking, wouldn't my hints practically force my intended way of doing things on her?

"I can see you are hesitating," Mia smiled only to shake her head a little. "If it's really something that hard to say..." she started, only for my hand to gently fall on her lips.

"I thought about reviving the NPC so that we could make them work for us," I explained my plan.

I had no other choice but to leave it to Mia to decide whether to push forth with her own ideas or to listen to my plan.

"I see," Mia nodded her head, "but doesn't that plan have a lot of variables?" she asked, leaning her head to the side. "We don't know nearly anything about this place, so relying on it to somehow do everything for us?" Mia asked, her lips twisting in an ugly grin of discomfort.

"Maybe it's just me, but that just doesn't sit well with my sense of security," Mia admitted, lowering her head.

'Oh, that's right,' I thought, realizing another small difference that separated me from Mia.

For me, automation and robots, not to speak about NPC, were ordinary things. Yet, for Mia, they likely fell deep into the hole of an uncanny valley.

As such, it was only to be expected for the girl to be unwilling to put her trust in those lifeless things.

"I understand," I said, gently nodding my head. "Ultimately, what I want is for you to be happy," I said, raising my hand and resting it on top of Mia's head. "Feel free to follow with whatever your guts are telling you to do," I then added, hoping to encourage Mia to push ahead.

Without asking, I couldn't know what was going through her head. And the exchange just now proved it.

I missed a simple, small element of the puzzle, and I was already unable to understand Mia's intentions, needs, and problems.

"Damn, I feel so stupid right now," I suddenly muttered, lowering my head in self-pity.

"What's wrong?" Mia asked, turning her eyes around after her failed attempt to finally check the gate out.

"I just realized how simple it all is," I explained, a small laugh escaping my lips. "In a relationship, you just need to talk..." I whispered, only to shake my head again. "I heard it a thousand times, yet I never expected how well it would work!" I added, only to then laugh my self-pity out.

"Oh," Mia uttered a small moan of surprise as her eyes returned to the city's wall. Her body shook a little, only for the girl to turn her head around and send me a stiff glance. "I can easily open the gate from this side," she explained.

The smile on my lips suddenly froze.

All the worries, all the talk, all the planning...

It was, once again, all unnecessary.

"I feel stupid now," I admitted, lowering my eyes even further.

"Don't let it bother you," Mia laughed out, just as amused as I was embarrassed.

And then, she pushed the gate open, leading the two of us back to the outer world.