

## **The Tower 142**

### Chapter 142

"Considering how the situation has unfolded, I'll take that guy out first and then deal with the rest of you," said the lion-like man, baring his teeth.

"Where did this bastard come from?" said the Elf-like challenger.

"What did you just call me? Did you call me a bastard?" the lion-like challenger glared at her, seemingly offended.

"You will be grilled meat by the time I am done with you," the boy with yellow hair muttered.

Flames appeared on the boy's fingertips, and the Elf pulled back her bowstring in response.

"I'll stay at the back. The winner among the three of you should join me. I am confident that I know more recipes than anyone else on this island. If you travel with me, you can increase your skills and stats much faster. I can guarantee that," Lee Shin said.

"Ha!? I know enough recipes too!" scoffed the lion-like man.

"Do you know a recipe that requires the corpse of a Drosophila?" Lee Shin asked.

The man could not answer the question, but the young boy and the Elf exchanged glances, seemingly in the know.

"I guess you two know something. But... How much do you really know? A recipe or two, I bet. Then do you know how to use it immediately?" Lee Shin asked again.

The duo's expression hardened suddenly.

"Are you saying you know how to cook it so that we can eat it right away?" asked the Elf, glaring at Lee Shin.

"Of course I do. How many people do you think knows how to use a Drosophile as an ingredient and make something out of it immediately? I bet you there are less than five people. Besides, I even know how to make the Drosophiles dried-up peel edible," Lee Shin replied.

"Ha! You really expect me to believe such lies? You don't even know about the paralyzing agent in the peel of Drosophiles, do you?" said the boy, also glaring at Lee Shin.

The Elf seemed to agree with the boy and nodded, and the lion-like challenger looked surprised as if he had just learned about it.

"Of course I do. Apart from the paralyzing agent, the peel also has nutrients to replenish your health points. Here..." Lee Shin tried to show them the way.

"Don't move! Make another move, and you are dead!" shouted the lion-like man when Lee Shin tried to move to the side.

The man seemed ready to employ his grotesquely protruding claws if Lee Shin moved any further, so he stood still and pointed at a small sapling with his finger.

"There, if you crush the leaves of that Red Seed sapling and mix them with its seeds in a ratio of 3:1, and then add crushed Drosophile peel to the mixture, you can neutralize the paralyzing agent," Lee Shin explained the recipe without hesitation.

Upon hearing him talk about the recipe, the trio exchanged puzzled looks, confused by how easily Lee Shin was sharing a recipe that no one else seemed to know.

"It seems like you guys are having trouble trusting my words, but you see, I'm just trying to show you that I have a ton of recipes. This recipe is nothing, so I can share it with you guys," Lee Shin said.

"If so, why don't you make it here and eat it? I will trust you then," suggested the Elf. The other two glanced at each other and nodded in agreement.

Lee Shin skinned the Drosophile, picked the leaves and seeds, crushed them with his hands, and then added the crushed peel to the mixture. Next, he dished it out on a leaf and presented it to them.

"Well, now that you've seen the process, you should all know that the recipe is correct, right?" Lee Shin said.

"Yeah, so stop wasting time and quickly eat it," blurted the boy in an irritable tone.

The lion-like challenger examined Lee Shin with sparkling eyes, curious about the outcome.

"Well, since I have to prove its effectiveness..." Lee Shin muttered.

After saying that, Lee Shin scratched his arm with his fingernails, wounding himself.

"It can increase Health Point. This kind of injury will heal quickly with this recipe," said Lee Shin, consuming the Drosophile peel dish.

[Your Health Point has increased by 300.]

[Your Strength has increased by 1.]

[Your resistance to paralysis has increased by 0.5%.]

The wound began to heal quickly, astonishing the three challengers. Besides, Lee Shin did not even look paralyzed.

"See? I'm fine. What do you think now? You can try it yourself. If you're still suspicious, you don't have to eat it, but the ingredients are limited," Lee Shin said.

He began skinning the Drosophile and cooking again, and the trio didn't stop him. After a while, five servings of Drosophile peel soup were before them.

"I'm going to have one. The first one to step forward to try it will get two servings, and the rest of you can have one each. But if you guys don't want it, I can have it all," Lee Shin said.

Leaving the boy and the Elf hesitating behind, the lion-like challenger spoke up to convey that he would eat first.

"Hand it over. Let me taste it first. But you should start making more of them now! If it has an effect, I'll drink it all," said the lion-like challenger.

Lee Shin could have concealed some effects or taken unknown measures during the preparation, but the man had decided to take such risks for the potential benefits. The young boy and the Elf watched him eat, unable to dispel their doubts completely.

"I'll have a single serving first," said the lion-like challenger.

The lion-like challenger took the leaf and put it in his mouth; then, he soon glared at Lee Shin. The Elf grumbled and clenched his arrow tightly after witnessing that.

"So it was real! And... it even increased my resistance to paralysis! This is unbelievable!" exclaimed the lion-like challenger.

"It even increased your resistance to paralysis?"

"What? Are you sure about that? So he wasn't lying?"

Unlike the increase in Health Points or other basic stats, resistance to paralysis was a handy stat on Growth Island. Deeper inside the island, the carnivorous plants had a basic trait that caused paralysis, so resistance to that played a major role there.

"Ahem, then I guess I'll eat them al—" The lion-like challenger tried to grab the remaining ones.

A wooden arrow flew fiercely toward him before he could touch the other leaves with Drosophile soup.

Swoosh!

A fireball had also been launched near simultaneously at him.

Baaam—!

Flames began to spread around Lee Shin, who was holding the Drosophile Juice.

"Be careful! The Drosophile is on fire!"

"Hmph! So what! It's all mine anyway."

"These damn idiots! You revealed your true self the second you realized its benefits!"

The three abruptly started to fight. All three kept Lee Shin's presence in mind and refrained from attacking him.

Bang—! Boom—! Swish—!

The flames spread, and sharp sonic waves echoed throughout the air. They continued their tense confrontation, but reaching an outcome would be hard as they each had countermeasures against the others.

'Hmmm... They all have similar skill levels.'

However, out of the three, Lee Shin thought that the Elf Archer was the strongest. If things continued this way, the Elf Archer would eventually win the battle, but none were willing to go all out.

‘Going all out means tiring yourself and gaining wounds. Even if they won, they would become an easy target for others.’

They were constantly mindful of Lee Shin’s presence. Besides, they did not feel comfortable revealing all their skills and abilities because Lee Shin could betray them at any moment and strike them from behind.

"Ha... ha..."

"Your skills are not too bad."

"What are you saying! I haven't even shown you half of my skills yet."

The trio stopped fighting for a moment to catch their breaths. They were already all covered in wounds, cautiously watching each other. Lee Shin intervened.

"Since it has come to this, why don't we stop fighting and form a team of four?" Lee Shin asked.

At Lee Shin’s suggestion, they quickly glanced at each other. They had all considered the idea to some extent but had not voiced it due to their pride.

‘Well, if we keep fighting like this on the very first day, it will be difficult to get past tonight.’

‘Hmm... These guys are more capable than I thought.’

‘Well, I think it’s not a bad idea to pretend to cooperate, extract the recipe, and then regroup with the others.’

Their eyes met in the air, and they all turned their heads in displeasure, but they no longer intended to fight.

"All right! Let's celebrate our alliance by eating the remaining Drosophile branch, shall we?" Lee Shin said.

The trio's gazes turned toward the Drosophile again. There were still a considerable amount of branches left.

"Sure, that's not a bad idea."

"All right, we can take a short break."

"Actually, on my way here earlier, I saw 'Terrapla.' I think it was hanging on that tree up there. Do you mind getting it for me?" Lee Shin asked the Elf.

"Huh? Why are you asking me?" the Elf asked Lee Shin.

"You're an Elf, so you're good at climbing trees. I can't climb trees that well. It would be good to have Terrapla because mixing it with the Drosophile branch will enhance the effect," Lee Shin explained.

"Fine." The Elf did not look so happy.

Having witnessed Lee Shin's abilities, she had no choice but to trust his recipe. Enemies once but now allies, they had to cooperate to reap benefits from each other until one of them revealed their true intentions.

'If anything suspicious happens, I'll leave the group immediately.'

The Elf, cautious of the others, reluctantly moved in the direction that Lee Shin had pointed to.

'Her instincts are sharper than I thought.'

Lee Shin had watched the fight among the three and noticed that the Elf's senses were exceptional. That was why he had sent her. As the Elf swiftly moved along the trees, she sensed something was off and stopped in her tracks.

"..." She stayed calm momentarily before quickly nocking an arrow.

"Who's there?" the Elf asked.

"Tsk, how did you know that I was here?" A challenger who had been hiding behind the tree revealed himself.

"Were you hiding here all this time, waiting for an opportunity?" the Elf asked the man.

"You annoying brat. You seem quite exhausted. Will you be able to block my attack? Hahaha!" The man started to laugh at the Elf.

Laughing sinisterly, the man charged toward the Elf. His hand transformed, now resembling a snake. It slithered next to the Elf, but its fangs only managed to bite the tree.

"That was a nice dodge," said the man.

The Elf shot the remaining wooden shards before retreating. The boy and the lion-like challenger went there to support her. The situation was now three against one.

The trio was exhausted, whereas the snake challenger remained calm. Perhaps he was confident that he could win.

The fight resumed after the brief pause. They exchanged fierce blows for a while, but then the trio began getting pushed back. The lion-like challenger could not fully exert his strength after the venom from the Naga's fangs had poisoned him.



"Hehehe! You pathetic fools. I'll kill you all—"

He had been confidently boasting until now, thinking he had won, but he had suddenly flinched, almost falling on his butt. Not missing the opportunity, the Elf shot the last few wooden shards toward the challenger's heart.

"Keugh...!" The Naga gasped.

"Ha... ha..." The Elf was also out of breath.

The Naga moved his bloodshot eyes toward Lee Shin, noticing the wicked smile on Lee Shin's face.

'That... bastard...'

However, no words could come out of the Naga's mouth because an intangible force was choking him. Lee Shin used Psychokinesis; a system message appeared before him not long after, and his stats increased.

The exhausted trio also fell in their places after the Naga was gone. Lee Shin approached them and handed them food.

"This antidote will remove the poison. You should all drink it, as that guy injured all of you. Gulp it down," said Lee Shin.

"Thank you," said the lion-like challenger.

"Ha... thanks for saving my life," the boy said.

"Is this really an antidote?" the Elf asked, suspicious.

The lion-like challenger took it from Lee Shin and immediately consumed it. However, the boy hesitated, also looking at Lee Shin after hearing the Elf's words.

"Yes, it is an antidote," Lee Shin replied.

"Then you won't mind me keeping an eye on that guy to see if he's okay," said the Elf.

The Elf thought she had killed the snake challenger, but she hadn't heard a system announcement yet. Therefore, she suspected that Lee Shin had killed the man. After all, he had glared at Lee Shin before meeting his end.

"You're quite suspicious," Lee Shin commented.

The expressions on the faces of all three of them changed after hearing the cold comment.

[Stone Edge]

Sharp stone spikes erupted from behind the boy and the Elf. They tried to escape, but the spikes struck them before they could.

"Keu...gh...!" The lion challenger fell, unable to open his mouth due to the paralyzing poison.

The young boy had also failed to react properly, so he was now vomiting blood. The Elf had quickly dodged, but Lee Shin immediately grabbed her head and slammed it into the ground.

"Keugh...?You t-t-t-traitor..." muttered the Elf, glaring at Lee Shin.

However, Lee Shin only sneered. How was this betrayal? The trio's initial purpose had been to kill him. Therefore, there was no reason for him to show them mercy. He had simply added a bit of acting for efficiency's sake.

With the Elf succumbing to Lee Shin's Wind Cutter his stats increased significantly instantly. He suddenly sensed something in the air. A chilling sensation brushed past him.

"You managed to avoid this?" said a challenger who had appeared before Lee Shin.

As the air rippled, a challenger emerged, revealing half his face covered by long white hair and his hunched back. The old man, much older than Lee Shin, fixed his gaze upon him, glaring at him.

"You... Indeed, you're not an ordinary wizard," said the old man, looking at Lee Shin.

Looking at the old man, Lee Shin narrowed his eyes. Lee Shin hadn't expected one of the figures hiding nearby to be someone this important.

'Wow... I didn't expect to meet the old Hunchback here...'

He was the Genius of the Dagger, the madman with the hunched back. There were rumors that none of the targets of this legendary assassin had survived to tell the tale.

'Was he really on the 30th floor all this time?'

He seemed confused. Was it truly a coincidence that Lee Shin met him here? Well, Lee Shin did not think so.

"Well, you don't seem ordinary either," Lee Shin replied.