

The Tower 163

Chapter 163: Versia

There were criminals hiding in the basement of Island 43. Suddenly, with a thud, the basement door flew open.

"Hik!" The criminals were startled, trembling in fear.

"Huh? What are you guys doing here?" Vuela asked, looking at the criminals.

Vuela had shimmering silver hair, a high nose bridge, and impeccably clear skin. By contrast, there were blood stains all over his body, making him appear all the more ferocious.

"Vuela..." one of the challengers in the criminal group muttered.

The challenger, who was sitting further inside the basement, got up. It was Hijra, who ranked 27,212nd in the Integrated Ranking. His towering stature, measuring two and a half meters, made Vuela appear small.

Thud—!

However, as he approached a few steps closer, Hijra fell to his knees in front of Vuela and lowered his head.

"I... I want to live!" said Hijra.

There was a reason why Hijra kneeled before Vuela without even trying to fight.

"Looking at our rankings, aren't we almost evenly matched? Why are you giving up so easily?" Vuela tilted his head with a puzzled look and asked.

Vuela was ranked 13,877th in the Integrated Ranking. At the moment, he was almost among the top of the low-rankers. Therefore, he could try to aim to place among the rankers soon.

"No sir, I'm not as skilled as you are. What do you want? I'll give you anything!" said Hijra.

"Oh, is that so?" Vuela smirked. He swung his sword in a flash.

Swoosh!

Thunk.

Hijra's head fell off very easily. When his subordinates saw Vuela kill him so easily, they shook like a leaf.

"What I wanted was your head, so I took it," said Vuela.

Then, he looked around at the other subordinates and sheathed his blade.

"Who's the second fiddle here?" Vuela asked.

"It's me, sir!" The guy, who seemed nervous the entire time, raised his hand.

Vuela gave a wicked smile, because he could clearly tell what this guy was thinking at the moment. He was thinking, 'Should I betray Hijra?' and 'How can I ensure my own survival?'

Although Vuela did not particularly like such individuals, paradoxically, they are the ones he needed the most now. Those who clearly show what they wanted could be trusted. As long as Vuela fulfilled that desire, there was no reason for these individuals to betray him. That guy seemed like he would be satisfied as long as Vuela could secure his safety.

'If Lee Shin comes up, that problem will be solved.'

For some groups, the linchpin of their power was in their leader, and their stability also varied depending on the leader's ranking. If the leader was a low-ranker, those around that level would try to attack them. On the other hand, if the leader was a ranker, most would not dare to provoke them.

Of course, if the leader was a top-ranker, no one could bother them, but it was difficult for even Vuela, someone who climbed the tower together with Lee Shin, to predict Lee Shin's position. However, he concluded that at the very least, Lee Shin would be a ranker.

Since Lee Shin was in a position that these guys could never reach, Vuela thought they would never even consider betraying him.

"So, what's your name?" Vuela asked the one who referred to himself as the second fiddle.

"My name is Jean, sir!"

"Alright, Jean. From now on, you're the boss here," said Vuela.

Just like that, Vuela granted him the greatest authority there. After all, they were just criminals. If they betray him, he could simply kill them.

'I wonder how Alice is doing.'

Alice finished her preliminary investigations while hiding her identity, at the request of Lee Shin, who had also instructed her to defeat all the criminals of Island 43 if he did not appear on the island a week before the Dimension Gate opened.

With the Eyes of the Wise Man, it was not particularly difficult to uncover some secrets. Indeed, the reason why Lee Shin took care of Alice was also because of this ability—she was aware of it. That was why she actively used this skill to assist Lee Shin.

"Hmm... But there's a bit of a problem here..." Alice muttered.

Island 43 was not as big as the other islands. However, the more she unraveled the tangled web of powers and influences within Island 43, the more complex it seemed. And as she encountered these connections one by one, the hidden mastermind of this place was revealed.

The Platinum Group, which was the infamous group that usually operated above the 50th floor, was secretly operating here. It was a small group consisting of only eight core members. However, there were many underlings under them.

The same structure was true on Island 43. All three major corporations here were funding the Platinum Group, and those on the ground managing this place were all subordinates who blindly obeyed it, as if they were under some kind of hypnosis.

'Well, that's not a problem. The real question is, where is the leader of the Platinum Group right now...?'

Alice wondered. The leader of the Platinum Group was an incredibly skilled individual who ranked 1,830th. Of course, one's ranking was not a complete indicator of their entire combat power; but even so, there was a significant gap between the leader, Alice and Vuela. If she made a wrong move, they could be defeated by the leader of the Platinum Group even before Lee Shin arrived.

However, Vuela had already started interfering in the matters of Island 43, and Alice was doing the same. They thought that the Platinum Group would not react much at this point, but if they kept poking their nose into their business, they would eventually emerge.

Even their deputy leader was a ranker who was at the 6,280th place. Besides, two other members were also rankers, and four members were the top among the low-rankers. The corporations that Alice and Vuela had been interfering with did not seem absolutely crucial to the Platinum Group; but eventually, those money-minded individuals would not remain passive.

"Vuela!" Alice called out.

"Oh, you're here! So what did you do with the company?" Vuela asked Alice.

"I've captured the head of those bastards. But it seems like we need to change our plan," Alice suggested.

"Huh? Like how?" Vuela asked.

Alice took out a map from her bag and spread it out in front of him.

"Look at this. Here, here, and here. These three companies are all owned by the Platinum Group. If we make a wrong move, they might make their move before Lee Shin arrives," said Alice.

"Well, if they come, we can take them down," said Vuela casually.

When Alice heard Vuela's response, she slapped his arm. Startled by the sudden attack, Vuela could not dodge and glared at her.

"Hey dummy! We will die even if only the deputy leader shows up!" Alice shouted at Vuela, feeling frustrated.

"Tsk, then what do you want us to do?" Vuela asked.

"First, we need cooperation from the Earthlings. We need more information," said Alice.

"Didn't Lee Shin say not to involve the Earthlings? I think he said that because they have to return to Earth soon," said Vuela.

"We just need a few to help us," Alice replied.

"So, you mean all of us are going to attack the Platinum Gr—" Vuela could not even finish his sentence because Alice started yelling at him again.

“Hey! You really need to stop doing this! Do you think we’ll be able to defeat the Platinum Group with a few of these people? Please remember that they’ve only recently come up to the 50th floor. All the members of the Platinum Group are the ones who have climbed up to the 70th floor or higher!” Alice yelled at Vuela in frustration.

When Alice said that, Vuela seemed disappointed.

“Tsk, only if I had a bit more time, my ranking would have been much higher than theirs,” Vuela muttered.

“Well, to be honest, we had no choice. We needed to spend that time to get what Lee Shin had asked us for,” Alice replied.

After devising their plan, Alice and Vuela immediately contacted a few individuals, including Park Joo-Hyuk, Baek Hyun, and Kim Kang-Chun.

"Really? Master had asked for a favor?"

"Yes, but we need to handle this discreetly."

As soon as they received the call, the Earthlings joined forces with Vuela and Alice to formulate and execute the plan. The criminals were caught off guard and started to fall into their hands.

Rumors had already begun to spread on Island 43, and by the time the hidden backers of the criminals showed up one by one to counter the Earthlings, Lee Shin appeared on the rankings and the attention of all the people of Lardel Archipelago was focused there.

The blue sky, towering trees, and beings from countless races were present. All eyes were focused on this place.

‘The rumors will spread pretty quickly.’

Hiding in the fourth realm, Lee Shin finished preparing for the final plan, returned to the third realm just in time and climbed up to the 50th floor. Perhaps the gods, upon confirming his return to the third realm, would send their subordinates here.

Lee Shin checked the torrent of messages that appeared one after another.

[You have cleared the 49th floor.]

[Your achievements will be recorded.]

[Oh my goodness! You have made the highest achievement! Many gods are paying attention to you only!]

[You have achieved 5,310,999 points.]

[You have received 5,310,999 points.]

[...]

It was a kind of achievement that one could make only if they cleared several of the upper floors. Lee Shin wondered whether the achievements he had made in the fourth realm would be recorded; and true enough, everything was recorded. Considering what he had accumulated so far, Lee Shin thought that he might be able to reach and become a top ranker.

[The ranking system has been reorganized.]

[There will be an Integrated Ranking.]

[All your achievements will be added up and recorded.]

[Your Integrated Ranking has been calculated.]

After receiving the message, Lee Shin immediately checked his position on the Integrated Ranking.

999th place - Lee Shin

Lee Shin was able to be ranked as a top ranker in one go. He had been hoping for it, but he still could not believe that he was already a top ranker as soon as he arrived at the 50th floor. There were 998 other top-rankers above him, but many of them had either died or disappeared.

As individuals climbed up higher, their achievement scores grew more quickly than their combat power. Therefore, the ranking did not necessarily reflect one's actual combat power. Although Lee Shin was at the bottom among the top rankers, he still had the confidence to deal with most of the top rankers.

"Hello sir," said a White Elf.

While Lee Shin was lost in thought, looking at the ranking, a White Elf approached him. The White Elf appeared to be in his middle age. Arrogance and calmness were evident in his demeanor. The scene of the White Elf approaching Lee Shin caused a stir among the bystanders.

"Who is that person? How come the Defense Force approached him as soon as he arrived?"

"Is he a criminal?"

"How can a challenger who just arrived be a criminal?"

"Wait a second, isn't that Elf Versia?"

"Did you just say Versia? Isn't he the leader of the Defense Force?"

"Damn... This is insane... What's going on?"

Versia, the leader of the Defense Force that protects the Lardel Archipelago, greeted Lee Shin.

'Huh...? Versia is talking to me right away? Things are getting more interesting than I expected.'

Lee Shin tried to hide his excitement and looked at the White Elf named Versia.

"So... Why is the Defense Force greeting me like this?" Lee Shin asked Versia.

"Hahaha, because we are the Defense Force. To protect the Lardel Archipelago, it is important to build a good relationship with important figures," Versia replied, smiling at Lee Shin.

The polite and courteous demeanor of Versia surprised those around him. It was completely different from his usual arrogant and cold attitude.

"Why am I considered an important figure?" Lee Shin asked again.

Although Lee Shin already knew, he pretended to be clueless. At Lee Shin's response, Versia's expression became slightly distorted.

'He would probably want to take me away before others realize that I'm a top-ranker.'

That was probably why Versia rushed and appeared in front of Lee Shin to speak to him. Soon, some of the challengers who checked their rankings would contact their leaders and try to get in touch with Lee Shin. Therefore, before that happened, Versia made the first move.

However, now that Lee Shin asked Versia such a question, he had no choice but to speak about how special Lee Shin was directly in front of others. Besides, Versia could try to avoid speaking about it, but it would be futile; because it was quite obvious that Lee Shin was playing dumb.

"Well, we usually refer to a top... ranker as an important figure," Versia replied.

Top rankers were challengers who ranked within the top 1000 on the Integrated Ranking. In other words, these were challengers who were the strongest players in terms of numbers. As soon as the words 'top ranker' came out of Versia's mouth, everyone started checking their ranking windows, and the activity in the community erupted like a volcano at that moment.

* Lee Shin is on the 50th floor.

↳ For real?

↳ Stop lying.

↳ It's true. I just confirmed it myself.

* Versia just welcomed Lee Shin. WTF

↳ What kind of nonsense is this?

↳ Stop lying.

↳ What's with the guy above always saying 'Stop lying'?

↳ It's true. I just confirmed it myself.

↳ Hey, you too. Are you a bot or something?

↳ I'm on Island 1 right now, and seeing Versia's facial expression is the funnest thing EVER!

↳ Why? What's up with Versia? Did Lee Shin do something?

↳ I don't know. I don't think he said anything much.

* Breaking News! Lee Shin has ranked 999th place.

↳ Damn...

↳ This is true. This is really happening.

↳ He's already a top ranker on the 50th floor? Does that even make sense?

↳ Then, that's probably why Versia is trying to get Lee Shin's favor.

↳ What the hell did he do to get that ranking on the 50th floor?

↳ I wondered what was taking him so long to come up from the 49th floor, but did he exterminate demons or something?

↳ Maybe he defeated a Great Devil.

↳ Bro, say something that makes sense.

↳ But actually, there's already a rumor in Isocia that Lee Shin had defeated a Great Devil.

↳ What are you saying! That rumor was proven to be false!

↳ I don't think defeating just one Great Devil would get him that high of a score though.

↳ So then, did he kill an apostle? Or did he manage to kill about three Great Devils?

↳ Do you guys think you can really understand Lee Shin's life? Just let him be. Don't bring it up again.

↳ True that.

↳ LOL you're the wise one here.

↳ I feel like Lee Shin is living in a world different from us.

↳ But BTW who do you think will win if Versia and Lee Shin have a fight?

If the community were a website on Earth, the overwhelming number of posts would have caused the system to freeze. Upon hearing this news, challengers from various parts of Lardel Archipelago began to flock to Island 1. As time passed, the crowds became so large that the White Elves had to impose restrictions on them.

"Oh... So, because I'm a top-ranker, I'm an important figure," Lee Shin replied by asking him the same question once again, and Versia demonstrated extreme patience and nodded.

"Yes, that's right. Will you come with us? Let's have a chat," said Versia.

"Well..." Lee Shin showed a contemplative expression, stroking his chin.

Versia's expression became even more distorted when he saw Lee Shin's response.

"But actually, I'm a bit busy at the moment. I'll stop by later if I have time." Lee Shin smiled mischievously and walked past Versia.

As the clamor of the people grew louder, Versia's face turned redder and redder.