

The Tower 167

Chapter 167

The situation on Island 43 was quickly resolved. Although numerous parties were involved, the three main businesses were all subsidiaries of the Platinum Group, and since they knew the internal affairs on the island the best, there were no issues ironing them out.

The reason the Platinum Group could not have control over the entire Island 43 from the start was due to the lack of combat force and the significant risks involved. However, with Lee Shin's presence, all those risks were significantly reduced.

Lee Shin was a top-ranker. Though he was just barely a top-ranker, it did not matter—he was the first one to become a top-ranker on the 50th floor.

Besides, Cain believed that if Lee Shin started climbing the Tower again, he would undoubtedly be ranked within the top 100. Lee Shin's potential, as Cain had personally encountered, was at that level. Other top-rankers who met Lee Shin would likely have the same thought.

Based on this reason, Cain thought that other top-rankers would not easily antagonize Lee Shin either. Cain, the leader of the Platinum Group, was a top-ranker who had already reached the 89th floor. Cain was well aware of his limits. He knew that he would not be able to go up in ranking that much through the remaining floors.

Therefore, when Cain directly faced Lee Shin, he could feel Lee Shin's greatness. Cain even thought that perhaps joining forces with Lee Shin was one of the best choices he had made up to this point.

'It will take some time to fully organize everything.'

Cain thought as he entered Island 43. They were quickly cleaning up the place using the manpower of the organizations under the Platinum Group and were currently on the 50th floor. However, with so many parties with intertwining interests, no matter how quickly they worked, he thought it would take about two or more weeks for the situation to stabilize.

"Follow me," said Cain, looking at Lee Shin.

Cain met Lee Shin again on Island 43. The island, which had been turbulent until the day before, was now considerably calm. That was because the Earthlings who had gathered here had all disappeared through the Dimension Gate.

Cain and Lee Shin entered a building together and descended the stairs that led them to the underground level. When they arrived at the basement, they saw a space larger than the area on the ground floor.

"This way," said Cain, leading Lee Shin.

Inside, several people were busily moving around in white robes.

"Oh! Mr. Cain! You are here?"

One person spotted Cain and greeted him. When he saw Lee Shin standing beside him, he widened his eyes and looked back at Cain.

"Is he... by any chance...?"

"Yes, that's right. He is Lee Shin," Cain replied.

"Nice to meet you! I'm Dr. Song Sotar. You can also call me Dr. Song."

Dr. Song was a name that sounded like Korean, so Lee Shin thought he could get along well with this man.

"He is the big shot here who will help you from now on," added Cain, looking at Lee Shin.

"Hello, my name is Lee Shin," Lee Shin introduced himself to Dr. Song.

After shaking hands, Lee Shin followed Cain and descended another floor. The place was not significantly different from the floor above, except for the presence of a few pieces of equipment, giving off a feeling of emptiness.

"Since you told us that you need a lab, we left only the necessary equipment in the lab and got rid of everything else. If you need something, just let Dr. Song know," Cain said.

This secret research facility was originally where Cain secretly studied the items for his businesses. However, he decided to hand the area over to Lee Shin, because with the Platinum Group's organizations now able to control most of the businesses on Island 43, they could already generate much larger profits than before.

Of course, they would distribute a portion of the profits to Lee Shin, but even considering that, it was a lucrative business. Most importantly, establishing a good relationship with Lee Shin was the biggest benefit, and the rest were secondary.

"Wow..." Lee Shin scanned a few pieces of equipment in the room.

[You are analyzing the equipment's performance using 『Hextech Lv. 2』.]

These items were more decent than Lee Shin had expected, though some equipment were difficult to assess even with Lee Shin's Hextech skill.

"They are good. Thanks," Lee Shin said to Cain.

"No problem. I'll leave first, so check everything you want and come up as our members want to see you," Cain replied.

"Okay," Lee Shin replied.

Cain left first, and after he left, Lee Shin summoned Sevrino and Sarzago from his bracelet and necklace. Sevrino, who exclaimed as soon as he came out, carefully looked around the laboratory.

"This place looks excellent! The equipment is better than I thought!" Sevrino seemed excited.

"Yeah that's right! There are things that we have not seen even in Mr. Sayr's castle." Sarzago seemed amazed too.

Seeing their reactions, Lee Shin had a strong feeling that things would go more smoothly than he expected.

"Lilian, May, Warrie," Lee Shin called his subordinates.

The next moment, a pool of blood appeared in the air and Lilian emerged from it, brushing her purple hair aside.

"You are way too late in calling me," Lilian grumbled as she appeared in front of Lee Shin.

"I'm sorry," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin had a lot to take care of as soon as he arrived here, so he ended up calling Lilian a little too late. Soon after, May and Warrie also revealed themselves from the shadow space.

"Did you call us, Master?" May and Warrie stood in front of Lee Shin.

"Make sure you guard this place for a while with Lilian," Lee Shin ordered, looking at the three of them.

"Understood," May replied.

"Yes sir! Just trust me!" Warrie replied as well.

"Well, fine... But can you promise me that you will at least show me around outside?" Lilian asked Lee Shin.

It had only been a while since Lee Shin reached the 50th floor, so it was still a busy time for him. He had a lot to do. Also, while doing his work, he had to make sure that Sevrino and Sarzago were safe.

Sevrino and Sarzago were manpower that Lee Shin had to protect. Besides, he felt a little uneasy about leaving them alone with only the Platinum Group to rely on.

‘They should be fine, especially with Lilian here.’

Also, now Lee Shin had plenty of mana. Even if Lilian were to maintain her original form, it would be fine for a while. Besides, it was now easier for him to respond to any emergencies that happened to them, because he could immediately know.

"Mr. Lee Shin, then where should we establish the dimensional connection?" Sevrino approached Lee Shin and asked.

"Right above here," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin pointed at the ceiling with his index finger.

"We will connect the Dimension Gate to the first floor of this building," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin seemed excited to proceed through his plan. He had a look of determination.

Lee Shin went outside the building and met the members of the Platinum Group who had been waiting for him.

"You're finally here," said Cain.

"Are these the ones?" Lee Shin asked, looking at the members.

The Platinum Group was composed of eight members. However, only four of them, including the leader, were present at the moment.

"Yeah, the rest of them seem to be still occupied with the Tower conquest," Cain replied.

The members looked at Lee Shin with curious eyes, as if he were a strange animal. Three of them were dressed similarly to Cain and had a similar aura, although their appearances were slightly different.

"I thought you would look hideous... but actually, you are unexpectedly handsome." The deputy leader, Pleta, seemed interested in Lee Shin.

However, Lee Shin ignored her comment.

"The Dimension Gate has opened. So why aren't you guys going back to your homeland?" Lee Shin asked the members of the Platinum Group.

When he asked that question, Lee Shin's words brought their mood down a little bit.

"Well... We forgot about our homeland. This place is our homeland."

They were referring to the Tower. Lee Shin could understand, because there were quite a few of them in the Tower who thought this way.

"I see," Lee Shin muttered.

"Since you've seen their faces, I think this is enough for today. If the others come by later, I will introduce them to you again," Cain said.

"Okay," Lee Shin replied.

"And speaking about the one who had set up the bounty who we talked about last time, we agreed to meet on Island 100 a week later," Cain said.

After hearing Cain's words, Lee Shin looked at the members' faces. Their faces were filled with nervousness.

"Got it. See you then," Lee Shin replied.

Cain nodded, and at the same time, he and the other members disappeared from where they were standing.

The Dimension Gate had been open for a day already. The cycle of challengers entering and leaving the Tower from the outside dimension was taking place. This Gate only opened for a month, but Lee Shin still had no interest in leaving.

Numerous people from Earth were wandering around the Dimension Gate in the Eastern Square of Island 3. As Lee Shin saw that, a thought suddenly appeared in his mind. This body belonged not to the human Lee Shin but to Gene Ebrium, the Necromancer.

Lee Shin wondered if he would be able to actually use that Dimension Gate. He briefly considered sneaking past, but he did not follow through with that idea. There might be unforeseen circumstances, so he did not really feel like venturing out.

"You are here," said a voice toward Lee Shin.

When Lee Shin turned his head at the soft voice, Genia was there.

"Did you talk to Versia?" Lee Shin asked Genia right away.

He went straight to the point since he had no interest in engaging in idle chatter with Genia. Besides, she was not the type who wanted small talk anyway.

"Not yet. If I bring it up to him so soon, it feels like we've planned it. So, I'm waiting for the right moment," Genia explained.

After replying, she smiled brightly at Lee Shin. Unlike the somewhat rigid atmosphere during the first meeting, Genia seemed quite friendly now. Lee Shin was not sure if it was a pretense coming from a cooperator or if she genuinely felt comfortable.

"Do as you please," Lee Shin said.

What Lee Shin wanted in this negotiation was to establish a perfect alliance with Genia. Also, he wanted to increase Genia's influence within the Defense Force and expand the scope of their management of the islands. This was Lee Shin's plan, and it was in the direction that Genia also wanted.

Lee Shin had already thought through all the possible methods for implementing this, but he no longer needed them. That was because Genia told Lee Shin about Versia's proposal, which completely changed Lee Shin's. If negotiations were successful, Versia promised to Genia that he would give up the ownership of the 'Seed of Ardelgia.'

The Seed of Ardelgia was one of the two remaining puzzle pieces to connect the Dimension Gate, which had to be obtained from the Lardel Archipelago. It was the final part of the plan that Lee Shin had been thinking about and preparing diligently since his return.

Obtaining the Seed of Ardelgia was something Lee Shin thought would be the most difficult, along with Sevrino's rescue. However, interestingly, Versia had wagered the Seed of Ardelgia.

The Seed of Ardelgia was a rare seed that appeared once every hundred years. It was an item that even Versia, the leader of the Defense Force, could not easily touch due to its rarity. However, its acquisition seems near, thanks to a serendipitous turn of events.

Hearing the backstory, Versia's plan seemed to be an attempt to weaken Genia's power by giving her an outrageous proposal that Lee Shin would most certainly decline. It was too bad for Versia because luck was on Genia's side since she was dealing with Lee Shin.

He thought that even if he were to accept this negotiation proposal, Versia would do anything to not hand over the seed to Genia. However, Lee Shin was determined not to let things go that way. He was determined to influence opinions so that she could receive the Seed no matter what.

"I will soon have contact with a top-ranker," Lee Shin said to Genia.

"Sorry? With whom...?" Genia asked in surprise.

To be honest, this meeting was not certain yet, but that was the plan. Lee Shin had to make it happen somehow.

"Well, there is a top-ranker that I will be meeting. I'll let you know soon, so please be prepared," Lee Shin replied without giving her the details.

"Hmm... okay then. But then, why are you telling me so soon?" Genia asked.

"I thought it was better to let you know soon, so that you won't be too surprised when you find out," Lee Shin explained.

"...Huh?" Genia seemed confused after hearing Lee Shin's explanation.

Lee Shin knew of a top-ranker who was hiding in the Lardel Archipelago. Since he had already identified the top-ranker's location through Alice, it should not be difficult to meet him.

He was going to ask the top-ranker to attack the headquarters of the Defense Force. When that happens, unless all the officials in the headquarters of the Defense Force come out and fight back, there would be considerable damage.

"All you need to do is to act well and pretend accordingly," Lee Shin said to Genia.

"Huh...? I need to act well...?" Genia seemed surprised.

Her frowning face clearly showed her surprise and embarrassment. He wondered if she lacked confidence in acting.

Woong—

The next moment, a circular portal appeared in the air. The portal's color was a mixture of white and blue that blended in a mysterious manner.

It was midnight already, a time when many people would be asleep from the exhaustion of everyday life. Yet the number of people gathered there was beyond count. Hundreds of camera lenses were focused on one spot.

The bustling chatter of the crowd abruptly ceased as the Dimension Gate opened. As the enigmatic Gate distorted the space, challengers revealed themselves from within one by one.

"There they are! They are finally coming out!"

"Where is Lee Shin?"

"Look closely for him!"

"Isn't he hiding somewhere?"

"Are you dumb? How can he hide? As soon as they come out of the Dimension Gate, their mana dissipates immediately."

"Didn't people say that he has purple hair? I don't see anyone with purple hair!"

"Excuse me sir! Where is Lee Shin?"

Countless people anxiously called out the name, Lee Shin. However, contrary to their expectations, Lee Shin's figure could not be seen, not even until the very end. However, even if he was not around, there were plenty of people who could draw their attention.

"Hey, who is that person?"

"It must be Baek Hyun! It's Baek Hyun!"

"Look at those fierce eyes! Oh my! Could that be Park Joo-Hyuk? He is really here!"

"Wow! Please take a look over here!"

The cheers of the people calling out to them spread through the air. This was another day since the birth of the Tower when a wave that would consume the Earth was about to strike.