

## **The Tower 171**

### Chapter 171: The Ambush

No matter how powerful Lee Shin was, he was inside the headquarters of the Defense Force.

Lee Shin's worth was solely based on his incredible potential that he demonstrated by becoming a top-ranker on the 50th floor. Anything beyond that remained to be seen. If the White Elf officers and Versia decided to go against Lee Shin, he would not have the ability or skill to handle them on his own at this moment in time. Versia would know that.

The officer who stood up in anger did not do it without reason. If they were to let Lee Shin slip like this, a significant portion of the Defense Force's power structure would shift to Genia, and even the Seed of Ardelgia would have to be handed over to her.

Moreover, although the officers were not sure how Genia managed to hit it off with Lee Shin, it would still be a significant thorn in the flesh if the top-ranker Lee Shin ended up siding with Genia. That was why the officer on Versia's side tried to start a fight.

If the officer were to get into a face-off with Lee Shin, Versia would have no other choice but to side with the Defense Force and attack Lee Shin. In short, the officer wanted to give Versia a reason to fight Lee Shin.

Versia, who was quick-witted, immediately realized that the officer's intention was to provide a pretext, but there were too many risks involved in the officer's plan.

Versia was worried about losing a grasp on Lee Shin. Versia thought that the chances of losing Lee Shin here would dramatically increase, if Lee Shin had prepared reinforcements, or if Genia were to help him. Of course, if Genia were to assist Lee Shin, it would be a pretext to punish her, but that was all he would gain. If Lee Shin were to escape and prepare for another attack on the Defense Force again, the problem would become bigger.

'Tsk, he made a hasty judgment.'

Versia believed that this pretext to fight could have been created any time. Therefore, from Versia's perspective, the officer's action was too rash, though it was not completely bad, because he could still try to eliminate the risk factors.

'Even if he is a top-ranker, it would be impossible for him to escape from here unless he has support.'

Versia knew of a way to prevent Genia from intervening and helping Lee Shin.

'I guess there's no other way.'

Versia smirked as he made up his mind. He wanted to warn Lee Shin that if he acted recklessly like this, they could easily eliminate him without worry of repercussions.

'No matter how much potential he may have, he is only a greenhorn at the moment.'

Versia thought that forcing Lee Shin into submission was the last resort. Before doing that, they wanted to instill a sense of crisis in Lee Shin and turn the tide for their negotiations.

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"Do you think such an unreasonable excuse will work on us?" Versia accused Lee Shin.

"Well, can you promise that you weren't going to oppose us from the beginning?" Lee Shin retorted.

After realizing Versia's decision to overpower them by force, Lee Shin looked at them with cold eyes. Lee Shin thought that there was no need to show further respect.

"You are making a foolish judgment," said Versia, glaring at Lee Shin.

"And so are you," Lee Shin replied.

Genia, who sensed the unusual atmosphere between Versia and Lee Shin, gripped her sword tightly. She had to make a judgment on what to do if a fight were to break out.

‘No, this is not right. No matter how absurd the reason may sound, openly overpowering someone by force is definitely wrong...’

At that moment, the officer who had stood up pulled the string of a magical bow he conjured in the air.

"Well, Lee Shin, it seems that due to your arrogance, you may go through some hardships while climbing the Tower. I'll teach you a lesson today," said the officer.

"You know you're crossing the line right now," Lee Shin replied.

"Maybe you aren't aware, but in Lardel Archipelago, the will of the Defense Force is law," said the officer.

The Elf's arrow was released and charged toward Lee Shin. The officer thought that Lee Shin would block the arrow easily, because it was not an all-out attack—just a threat. However, Lee Shin had a different thought in mind.

Lee Shin thought of a saying that he heard on Earth, which was "Lose the battle to win the war." Although it had little value in the world of the Tower, there were still times when one should take a hit.

The magic arrow extended straight toward Lee Shin, who was defenseless, and he was hit.

"Keugh...!" Lee Shin groaned in pain.

Lee Shin was hit directly and fell backward, crashing into the wall along with the chair.

‘Ugh man... This is quite painful...’

Lee Shin coughed up blood after getting hit. Startled by his condition, Genia rushed to him and her forces immediately drew their swords, glaring at Versia's side.

"What the hell are you doing!" Genia frowned and shouted at the officer.

At the same time, the Elves on Versia's side gnashed their teeth. It was because they expected that Lee Shin would block such an open attack.

'Damn it! He got us!'

For the first time in a long time, Versia felt that things were not going his way. It was not pretty for a top-ranker to be seen struck like this when they were held with such high regard.

'Now that things have turned out this way, we're done the moment we lose Lee Shin...!'

Lee Shin tried to make sure that there was no way out of this problem, preventing them from even preparing minimal backup measures. This meant that Versia could no longer calmly observe the situation.

"You are still foolish. Sometimes it's better for yourself to leave a path for the opponent to survive," said Versia.

After saying those words, Versia's sword glimmered. The ghostly aura of his sword as well as Versia's aura gave Lee Shin the impression as if he had encountered an assassin.

"You're quite audacious..." Versia muttered.

Lee Shin slowly got up. His left shoulder, which had earlier been hit by Laurent's attack, hurt even more than the magic arrow.

"Ptui!" Lee Shin spat out blood and wiped his mouth with his fingers. Then, he smirked.

Seeing that smirk, Versia felt his sense of unease heighten. How many challengers could laugh like that in such a situation? Surely if they could laugh in a situation where they might die, they were truly insane.

"I never knew that the Defense Force was an organization that intimidates challengers with violence," Lee Shin said, looking at Versia.

"Don't try to put on a show. Do you really think I wouldn't know that you're pretending to have gotten hit like this?" Versia asked.

"Then, do you think the officer who just shot that magic arrow at me is also putting on a show?" Lee Shin asked back.

The next moment, Versia stopped talking because he realized that engaging in further conversation would only justify Lee Shin's action. Versia was aware that, in a situation like this, it was useless to engage in dialogue; he had to assert his truth by force.

"Grab Lee Shin, everyone!" Versia demanded.

Words that could not be taken back in came out of Versia's mouth. Genia looked at Versia with a shocked expression. That was because it was the first time Genia saw Versia reveal his true intentions like this.

"Mr. Versia!" Genia shouted in shock.

"Be quiet, Genia! If you try to help Lee Shin here, you will become a traitor to the Defense Force from this moment. Do you understand?" Versia shouted at Genia.

"What are you talking about! What crime did Lee Shin even do?!" Genia shouted.

"Don't forget that your followers are in my hands," said Versia, threatening Genia.

"Are you using that as a threat? Are you saying that you're going to take fellow White Elves hostage?" Genia shouted.

Genia could no longer hide her anger. She was already aware that Versia was a calculative Elf. Besides, she knew that Versia would not hesitate to use any means for his goals, but she did not know that Versia would go so far as to use his own kin as hostages. At this moment, Genia felt all her remaining respect for Versia disappear.

Clang—

However, Genia let go of her sword. She could not step forward because if she did, all those who followed her would be utterly defeated. She trembled in anger, and tears that she had never shed in her life began to well up in her eyes.

"I am sorry..." Genia apologized to Lee Shin.

"That's okay. We haven't known each other for a while. So, it's right for you to take care of your followers."

Genia thought that Lee Shin would blame her, but instead, his words consoled her even more, drowning her in a sense of guilt. In her mind, she thought that Lee Shin would not be able to escape from this place. The Elves who had already heard the commotion would probably be on their way here.

Moreover, the Defense Force headquarters was well prepared for any potential attack. Previously, there were numerous challengers who looked down on the Defense Force just like Lee Shin did. The Defense Force had specialists who were equipped to capture challengers like these.

"It was the start of your downfall from the moment you entered this place, Lee Shin," Versia said.

As Versia gave a signal, unknown currents began to sweep through the conference room.

'This is Mana Suppression B... no, wait, it's made up of circuits that are two levels higher than the [Mana Suppression Bomb].'

This skill was different from the Mana Suppression Bomb, which suppressed mana on a small scale. Instead of scattering particles that temporarily suppressed mana, the circuits in this device complemented each other from the moment they were activated. This skill involved compression, expansion, and rotation. The particles of mana intertwined in their own ways, blocking and interfering with the flow of mana.

At the same time, Lee Shin's gaze turned to the bracelets worn by the Elves. These bracelets were interconnected with the device that was activated, and at the same moment, these bracelets were all synced.

'Are these bracelets that can resist this mana suppression device?'

Although Lee Shin had the skill of Hextech Lv. 2, it was still difficult for Lee Shin to find a way to break free from this mana suppression. If he had a little more time, maybe, he could have come up with a way to break free on his own. However, it was impossible for him to overcome it on the spot. When he heard from Genia in advance that there was such a device, Lee Shin thought he would be able to solve it on his own, but it was just arrogance.

"You seem a little surprised there," Versia said in a voice mixed with anger and ridicule.

"Indeed, it's not easy," Lee Shin muttered.

"That's it for your showing off," said Versia.

However, Versia did not ignore the uneasiness that he was feeling. Sometimes one's intuition was more accurate than the objective judgment. Therefore, he was determined to launch his best possible attack immediately at Lee Shin.

'There's nothing else that I can do, even if he may die in the process.'

Although it was best to capture Lee Shin alive, Versia believed that if he tried to limit his output now, there might be no solution in the end.

"Die!" Versia shouted at Lee Shin.

A sinister white aura shot from Versia's sword toward Lee Shin. Then a massive vibration spread throughout the headquarters.

Babababam—!

A fierce explosion resounded, and all the mana suppression and equipment in the headquarters became nonfunctional.

"Huh? What's going on?" Versia seemed confused and looked to the side.

When he took a close look, one side of the wall was crumbling into pieces.

"What the hell is happening right now!" Versia shouted in panic.

"There was an artillery attack from the outside!"

"What do you mean! How can the wall collapse when we have a mana barrier?" Versia could not understand.

"Well... that's because all the hextech devices just stopped working instantly."

"What did you just say...?" Versia could not believe what was going on.

On the other hand, Genia rushed to Lee Shin, worried that he might have been hit by Versia's attack. However, Lee Shin was unharmed. That was because the mana suppression was released right before the aura struck him.



"How did you manage to stop it?" Genia looked at Lee Shin with her eyes wide open.

Genia knew that it was difficult to block Versia's aura through conventional means, let alone when the mana suppression was lifted when the aura was right in front of Lee Shin's face. She thought unleashing mana to block the attack in that split second was almost impossible.

"Just well," Lee Shin replied.

"...Sorry?" Genia asked again.

Lee Shin responded to Genia quickly and approached Versia.

"You seem unfit to be the leader of the Defense Force," said Lee Shin, looking at Versia.

Crack—

Gritting his teeth, Versia tried to maintain his composure and stood eye-to-eye with Lee Shin.

"Do you think you've won?" Versia asked Lee Shin.

Although he was not sure what Lee Shin just did, there was still a way to capture Lee Shin. If the entire Defense Force were to join forces, they could nab a single individual.

Swoosh—!

Suddenly, a gray bullet shot through Versia's shoulder.

"Keaugh!" Versia groaned in pain.

Startled by a sudden premonition of danger, Versia had managed to turn his body at the right timing, causing the bullet to pierce through only his shoulder.

"It's a sniper!"

"Mr. Versia has been hit! Defend him and get the sniper immediately—"

"Stop—!" Genia shouted loudly.

Genia then picked up the sword she had dropped on the ground earlier. At the same time, the other Elves under her also armed themselves. Then, the next moment, their weapons were not aimed at outside enemies, but at the Elves within the same space.

"You have violated the regulations of the Defense Force," said Genia, looking at Versia.

Genia then approached Versia, who had fallen and pointed her sword at his throat.

"Hey! What are you doing?"

"How dare you, Genia...!" Versia shouted at Genia.

"Shut up!" Genia shouted back.

Swoosh—!

Thump

Without giving others a chance to react, Genia swung her sword, slashing one of Versia's arms. Versia tried to evade her attack, but the gray bullet that struck him earlier and Lee Shin's Psychokinesis did not allow him to move. He had no choice and could only watch helplessly as he lost an arm.

"Kraaah—!" Versia shouted in pain.

He quickly grabbed his severed right arm with his left hand. Then, his bloodshot eyes glared at Genia, but she did not even flinch.

"Versia had violated the regulations of the Defense Force and tarnished its honor. As the interrogator of the Defense Force, I hereby strip you of all your authority," said Genia with a determined voice.

Genia held the position of an interrogator. Although she only had authority over those below the rank of officer, when she was at the scene of unmistakable crimes like this, she had the power to administer punishment as an interrogator.

To be honest, as a power that mostly applied to Elves below officer rank, it was not something Versia and his faction had to worry about, which was why Versia allowed her to wield such authority.

However, when faced with this situation, there was no justification or countermeasure left for Versia. If the target of punishment was someone else, he might have found a way to escape, but since the target was Versia himself, there was no way out.

"From now on, anyone who picks up their weapon will be considered a traitor," said Genia.

Her cold voice reverberated through the room.

"Capture all those who have joined forces with Versia and search for the sniper who attacked this place! They must be a highly skilled individual capable of landing a fatal blow on Versia! So take into account the high probability of them being a top-ranker and act accordingly!"

"Yes mam!"

At Genia's command, the Elves moved swiftly. The officers glanced at each other, but eventually complied with the Elves. They had no excuse.

"Don't even think about playing tricks on me, you understand?" Lee Shin threatened them by activating his mana.

The officers did not think of going against Lee Shin at this point because they had other excuses up their sleeves, and Versia had been disarmed already.

'Things will be noisy for a while.'

Since this great commotion occurred in the middle of Island 1, it was clear that Lardel Archipelago would undoubtedly be in chaos for a while.