

The Tower 174

Chapter 174

The researchers were busy with their work, and Lee Shin simply watched. Vian tirelessly installed and maintained equipment, while Sevrino, wearing the glasses that Vian had made for him, zealously scribbled things down.

"How much longer do you think it will take to grow?" Lee Shin asked Sevrino.

It had already been four days since they planted the Seed of Ardelgia. However, the trees that they had thought would grow quickly were still showing no signs of growth.

"Well... it's definitely clear that energy is gathering around the tree. If we measure the flow of mana, we can see that the currents from the Ardelgia in Island 1 are gradually getting connected with the currents here," Sevrino explained as he looked at the data.

The next moment, Sevrino showed Lee Shin the measuring device that Vian had made for him and explained the graph on the device display.

"The speed is increasing though, so I think when we reach a certain point, there will be explosive growth..." Sevrino rubbed his chin with a puzzled expression. "But, you see, it's still difficult to pinpoint the exact point right now."

"Based on the case study that I read on the growth of the Seed of Ardelgia, it clearly sprouted quickly in District 3," Lee Shin said.

"Well, it could be due to two reasons. First, it may be because Ardelgia is located closer to District 3," Sevrino explained.

"Hmm... So you're suggesting that closer proximity has a greater impact?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yes, that's what I think. And the second reason is that the Seed was divided into four parts," Sevrino continued.

Lee Shin shook his head. "Huh? What do you mean by that?" he asked Sevrino with a confused look.

"The main Ardelgia and the small Ardelgias that grew from it are known to be interconnected. It's probably the same for the seeds. The seeds seem to sprout faster when all four seeds are planted together," Sevrino explained.

Lee Shin seemed worried because, at the moment, he could not plant the other seeds. Besides, considering the lack of manpower and organization, he was aware that it would be a real disaster if they did things hastily and the seeds were damaged in the process.

"Well, is there any way we can accelerate the process of germination?" Lee Shin asked.

"No, I don't think so..." Sevrino replied with a depressed voice.

There were less than ten days left until the Dimension Gate closed. Lee Shin wondered if the Seed would grow into a tree by then. He had to consider the worst-case scenario.

"Well, then are all the other preparations complete?" Lee Shin asked.

"We're in the final stages. The Mountain Vital Force, or MVF, that you brought, Mr. Lee Shin, complements the Burtgang a lot better than I anticipated. So it turns out that the amplification of the instantaneous power is several times—" Sevrino was talking about the progress when an alarm started to ring suddenly.

Beep— Beep— Beep— Beep—

Startled by the sound, Sevrino looked toward the stairs, and saw that Song Sotar was hurriedly coming down.

"Mr. Sevrino!" Song Sotar shouted in an excited voice.

"What's wrong?" Sevrino was nervous to hear Song Sotar's response.

"The seed has started to sprout!" Song Sotar shouted again.

At his words, Lee Shin's and Sevrino's eyes opened wide in surprise and hurriedly went up. When they arrived, Vian and others were already looking at the seed.

"Contact Genia," Lee Shin said as soon as he saw the seed.

"Yes sir!" At Lee Shin's command, one of the members of the Platinum Group rushed out to inform Genia.

Lee Shin thought that it would be better for Genia to watch this scene with them, if she had the time, since she was the leader of the Defense Force now.

"It's moving!"

The ground began to tremble. After urgently pushing aside the machinery around them, everyone went closer and watched the scene. Soon, mysterious-looking leaves and stems which were colored in a blend of green and white, sprouted.

"Just as we thought, the energy is amplifying rapidly," Vian muttered, observing the sprouts with a detector.

"I think I should go down and check it out," Sevrino said to Lee Shin and went back down underground.

"Doctor Song, how are we doing with the preparations?" Sevrino asked.

"Everything is ready now," Song Sotar replied.

A large device had been set up in the basement. It had a cylindrical glass cover under which was the Burtgang.

"How about we try to instantaneously amplify the Burtgang's power to open the dimension using the MVF?" Sevrino asked.

"I don't think that will be enough. In the current state, it's difficult to open the dimension. If we're willing to take the risk of overloading the MVF, we could try to amplify it, but I don't think we want that," Song Sotar replied.

"What is the speed of growth of the Ardelgia?" Sevrino asked.

"Just a moment, please. I'll take a look at that," Song Sotar replied.

Song Sotar's and the researchers' eyes darted to and fro across a large screen as numbers and letters appeared, and they scrolled up quickly. Then, their eyes finally landed on a single spot, and a satisfied smile appeared across their faces.

"I think it will be today. It seems like it will become a perfect small tree by tonight," said Song Sotar.

"Phew..." Sevrino sighed.

Sevrino's sigh revealed his complex emotions.

"Finally... By the end of today, the results of this dreadful project will show up," Sevrino muttered.

Sevrino thought that the past few months spent with Lee Shin were more challenging and exhausting than the years he had lived under Sayr's captivity. Sevrino had been tirelessly brainstorming and researching, pouring all his knowledge into this, to the point where it would not be an exaggeration to say that he held more than a 90% stake in this project. Besides, he seemed to have lost quite a bit of hair.

However, it was also true that it had been a rewarding and enjoyable journey for Sevrino. Through this endeavor, his knowledge and abilities had grown to another level, and he had also forged relationships with good people. Therefore, Sevrino had no regrets about following Lee Shin into doing this project.

"I'll have to put in everything I have until tonight," Sevrino muttered.

The auction was now entering its final stage. Only two days remained—today and tomorrow. Challengers who received the mission to notify the Association once Reverse approached them were puzzled by the lack of any developments, considering the auction was almost over.

"What could it be...?" Baek Hyun lay in his bed, lost in thought.

Baek Hyun wondered if Reverse had not contacted him because he had been too nervous and consequently behaving conspicuously. A million thoughts crossed his mind, but he could not be sure of the reason.

'Or maybe... they think my skills are lacking...?'

Now, he felt disappointed that Reverse had not made contact with him, but he quickly shook his head and tried to erase that thought. It was already late at night when the auction ended. There was only one more day remaining—tomorrow.

"Well, it will probably be good for me anyways..." Baek Hyun muttered to himself in disappointment.

All of a sudden, Baek Hyun felt thirsty and got up from his bed to open the refrigerator door.

"Huh?" Baek Hyun was surprised to see a note inside the fridge.

'Who left this here?'

He picked up the note and slowly unfolded it.

[Let's meet at the Third Auction Hall at midnight tonight. We have prepared things that will satisfy you.]

Baek Hyun could immediately tell that this note was sent by Reverse. He looked around hastily, but no one was there. Besides, he could not feel anyone around.

The place he was staying at, Rayered Hotel, was a place that had been allocated to him by the country, and only a few were allowed to stay here during the auction period. Others could not even access it.

'No way.'

Baek Hyun immediately contacted the Association to confirm if one of the staff members was playing a prank on him, but he was told once again that no one could enter the hotel during the auction period.

Gulp.

Baek Hyun thought his mouth was dry, so he grabbed his cup to take a drink. However, he stopped and put the cup back down with a stiff expression.

"Ah... I'm thirsty though..." Baek Hyun muttered.

Biting his lips, he went outside.

At that moment, something similar was happening to many others in different places.

At a club where rough drum beats and bass echoed loudly, there were people dancing and enjoying themselves without a care in the world.

"This is the life of adults, kiddos," Ethan said in an inebriated tone as he took Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon to a bar.

"Man... this place is sick!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

"Ugh... I'm already getting tired of this place!" Kang Ji-Hoon also shouted to get his words across.

They had to shout over the loud music to be heard.

"Huh? Wait a second. Aren't you two Korean challengers?"

Two foreign women who spoke fluent Korean approached Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon.

"Y-yes, that's right! Haha, I'm that Shin Ha-Neul!" Shin Ha-Neul introduced himself with pride.

"Wow, you speak Korean pretty well?" Kang Ji-Hoon commented.

The slightly tired eyes of the two brightened all of a sudden.

"Oh, that's because I'm very interested in Korea!" one of the women replied.

"Yeah right! Korean challengers are so cool!" the other woman also replied.

"Haha...?Then, shall we teach you more about Korea?" Shin Ha-Neul asked.

"Really? Wow! That would be awesome!" The women seemed excited.

"Well, I actually know a lot about Korean culture!" Kang Ji-Hoon replied with pride.

The faces of the two were filled with excitement. The women came up to Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon and started clinging to them.

Ethan, who had been watching their interactions proudly, grabbed a drink that was handed to him, and started chugging it down. As he was chugging it down, he noticed a note on the bar table.

Ethan quickly looked up to see who left it there, but he could not tell who had left the note. When he quickly unfolded the note and read the contents, his face stiffened rapidly.

"Hahaha! Let's get out of here!"

"This place is indeed a paradise!"

Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon were ready to leave with the women they encountered at the bar, but the two were stopped by Ethan.

"What are you doing!"

"Hey, get out of the way. We're busy people, so check out other guys, alright?" Ethan pushed the women aside and took the two guys with him.

Ethan could hear them swearing at him from behind, but he simply ignored their words.

"W-what are you doing!"

"Man! You said we could have fun here!"

Ethan's face was very serious, and the two soon realized that something was off and fell silent too. After taking them to a quiet place, Ethan showed them the note.

"What is this note?"

The faces of the two became serious as they read it. Then they hastily looked around.

"Who gave this to you?"

"I don't know that either. I did not even realize that this note was in front of me for a while. And when I came to my senses, it was just there in front of me," said Ethan.

"Hmm... the Third Auction Hall..."

"Are you gonna go there?"

The three looked at one another.

"Well, I think I should go."

"Ha..."

"It feels like we're being led to the slaughterhouse."

"Well, first, let's contact the Association. And we should also let our colleagues know about this," said Ethan.

At Ethan's words, the two nodded.

"Joo-Hyuk Hyung! Yeah... Huh? You received one too, already...?"

"Noona, did you receive a note...? Really? You already did?"

"Huh? What the hell, Clark? Oh, I was planning on doing that anyway... Huh? Did you just tell me not to do stupid things and come back to the accommodation quickly?"

The next moment, the three looked at one another with blank expressions, then nodded and went their separate ways.

As it turned out, challengers from numerous countries—not only Korea and the United States, but also Japan, China, Germany, and the UK—had received these notes. They had received the notes almost at the same moment.

Therefore, the Challengers Association of each country declared it an emergency, and the challengers of the Associations began to secretly gather around the Third Auction Hall.

The invited challengers cautiously entered the place, observing what was inside.

Night fell, and the challengers of Island 43 gathered together and watched as the Seed of Ardelgia germinated and grew into a tree in no time. The tree had grown to dozens of meters in just one day, and it could now be seen from any point on the island. Although it could not compare to the Ardelgia on Island 1, which was hundreds of meters tall, it was still very impressive.

"I'll start the device!" One of the researchers pulled down a lever by force.

With a metallic clanking sound, energy gathered, and energy waves began to ripple.

"Increase the output! And activate the MVF output amplification device!" Vian shouted. "Confirm the location as well!"

"Location is confirmed, the Dimension Gate on Island 5 leads to Earth," Sevrino replied.

"Is the output ready?" Vian asked.

"Yes, we have enough," Sevrino replied

"Man... Sevrino, your voice is shaking!" Vian shouted.

"I will begin right now," Sevrino replied.

Sevrino grasped the handle of the Burtgang. Unlike before, when Lee Shin had grabbed it, the Burtgang did not open a dimensional rift and disappear. It seemed that it acknowledged Sevrino as its master, because it only unleashed its true power for masters it recognized.

"Establish the connection!" Sevrino shouted.

As Sevrino shouted, light started emanating from the Burtgang and soared above him.

Woong—

Space opened up near the small tree of Ardelgia, and a circular gate rippled into existence.

"Oh my! I-it's working!" Sevrino shouted in excitement. "We did it! It's really connected!"

"Dr. Song! Confirm it! Does it match with the Gate on Island 5?" Vian asked.

"I-I'm checking right now!" Song Sotar replied nervously.

Cold sweat started trickling down his forehead. The sweat dripping down his nose fell, and a smile appeared on his lips.

"Yes... it matches perfectly. This gate... is indeed connected to Earth," Song Sotar confirmed.

Everyone who was present there seemed as if all their energy had been drained from them, and the next moment, they just sat down.

"What about the destination?" Vian asked.

"Well... We'll have to go inside to find out," said Sevrino. "Since this Dimension Gate was made by only stealing the coordinates of Earth, unlike the Dimension Gate created on Island 5, it will not transport each challenger to a different country."

He stepped out, leaving the Burtgang inside.

"This was the ultimate goal. We just need to confirm it one last time."

With this Dimension Gate, challengers from other dimensions could go to Earth. Lee Shin, trying to suppress his overwhelming emotions, took a step forward.

"...Mr. Lee Shin?"

"Hey, where are you going?"

"Lee Shin, we still need to go through the final check—"

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"No. I think this is enough," Lee Shin replied.

Ignoring their words, Lee Shin looked at Sevrino.

"Is it certain that this Gate will take me to Earth?" Lee Shin asked.

Sevrino, looking straight into Lee Shin's eyes, understood his intention and nodded.

"Yes, I am certain," Sevrino replied.

"Alright then. From now on, I can manage it," Lee Shin said.

After saying that, Lee Shin stood in front of the Dimension Gate.

"Ms. Genia," Lee Shin called out.

"Yes?" Genia replied.

Genia, who had been watching the scene with Lee Shin, responded absentmindedly.

"I entrust this place to you while I'm gone," Lee Shin said, looking at Genia.

"Alright, I got it. Please take care," Genia replied.

"Thank you," Lee Shin said.

Having heard a satisfactory response, Lee Shin entered the Dimension Gate with a big smile.