

The Tower 95

Chapter 95: The Negotiation

With the arrival of Lilian, the battle quickly came to an end. Lee Shin brushed his fringe aside and let out a sigh. Lee Shin could have ended it much earlier if he wanted.

However, Lee Shin had been dragging the battle out to gather more information about the enemy.

‘Well, at least I got something.’

One of the challengers came into Lee Shin's view. The last shot that Lee Shin had confronted was somewhat threatening. Even someone like Lee Shin could have received considerable damage. Thankfully, he had felt the distortion in space and summoned Lilian in time.

The combat strategy of the enemy had been planned down to the second, and was executed perfectly by skillful individuals who possessed unique abilities that could deliver critical blows.

‘I never thought I would meet a person who is skilled in Space Distortion here.’

Since Lee Shin had discovered a great skilled person here, he could not help but smile.

“It feels good to have some fresh air after all this time,” Lilian muttered.

"Yeah, sorry I don't call you out more often," Lee Shin said.

"I know! I won't be going in for a while, so deal with it," Lilian replied.

Due to the strain on Lee Shin's mana, Lee Shin had not summoned Lillian for a long time, which made her really want to come out. With Lee Shin's level of Mana and Dominance increasing, it became relatively easy for Lee Shin to take Lilian around in her bat form. However, there was another problem.

"Mr. Lee Shin, who is that person?"

"Wow... I never knew there was such a beautiful person in this world..."

"She must be the most beautiful woman in Merteng!"

"And don't forget to mention her powerful abilities... She has everything, doesn't she?"

Not only the soldiers but also the knights were captivated by Lilian's beauty. Lilian's appearance alone was enough to draw attention, but with her charm, it was even more so. If people found out that she was a Vampire Queen, she could become even more attention-grabbing and things would be more troublesome, so Lee Shin did not want to reveal her true form if possible.

'Tsk. There's nothing I can do.'

Lee Shin turned Lilian back into her bat form and walked toward the captives. They were unable to fight back like before because they were wearing mana-blocking handcuffs.

"Take off their masks," Lee Shin ordered.

"Yes sir," the soldier replied.

As their masks were removed one by one, a slight smile appeared on Lee Shin's face and then disappeared.

"Who are you?" Lee Shin asked.

"..." They did not answer.

"How did you break through the Demon Realm?" Lee Shin asked.

"..." There was still no response from those challengers.

"Are you going to keep ignoring me?" Lee Shin asked again.

"..."

The five challengers remained silent, although Lee Shin kept asking questions.

Seeing their behavior, Lee Shin laughed and started to walk away.

"Alright then," said Lee Shin.

"What should we do?" the soldier asked.

"Well, I don't know if they can still keep their mouths sealed when they see their comrade die," said Lee Shin.

At Lee Shin's words, the challengers' faces instantly froze. Lee Shin noticed that and tried hard not to laugh.

Rip—

Lee Shin tore the sleeve on one of the challenger's arms and saw the pattern underneath.

"A Navy Pattern," Lee Shin muttered.

Rip—

"Another Navy," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin tore the clothes of the next person and checked everyone's Patterns, one by one.

"Navy, another navy... and purple," Lee Shin muttered.

The female challenger who could threaten Lee Shin's life and had pointed a gun at Lilian was the only one with a Purple Pattern.

"Are you the leader of this group?" Lee Shin asked.

"..." But of course, she did not answer again.

"Hmm... no answer again?" Lee Shin said.

Lee Shin stretched out his hand to the soldier who was standing next to him.

"Hand me the sword," said Lee Shin.

"Ah, here it is," the knight replied.

Lee Shin received the sword from the knight and swung at her.

"No, wait!" shouted another challenger.

The sword stopped right in front of her neck. Her body was shaking.

"What is it?" Lee Shin asked.

The man who had shouted just now glared at Lee Shin and gritted his teeth.

"Is it okay to kill the captives like this?" the man asked.

The man tried to speak calmly, but they were in a situation where they were at the mercy of Lee Shin. Seeing the challenger trying desperately to save this woman, Lee Shin could only laugh.

"Well, if I don't kill the captives, is your country going to help Merteng or something?" Lee Shin asked back in a cold voice.

"...Well, we could at least negotiate," said the man.

"Many countries have already formed a Cartel to crush Korea. What kind of negotiation can I have with them?" Lee Shin asked.

"Don't make rash judgments," said the man.

"Then answer my question so that I don't make rash judgments," Lee Shin replied.

Swish—

Lee Shin threw the sword behind him and approached the man, looking into his eyes. The look on the challenger's face was cold. He could not tell what Lee Shin was thinking.

"First of all, where are you from?" Lee Shin asked.

"..." The challenger still did not answer.

As Lee Shin watched him, determined to keep silent until the end, a corner of Lee Shin's lips lifted, smirking. At the same time, Lee Shin lifted and clenched his left hand, and then, the female challenger with the Purple Pattern, who was on her knees, began to choke.

"No!" the man shouted urgently.

"I'm asking you for the last time, okay? This is the last time I'll ask nicely," Lee Shin's low voice penetrated the man's ears.

"How did you break through the Demon Realm?" Lee Shin asked the man.

Eltse was the name of a castle in the country of Merteng, which was located in the Red Zone. This castle had seen a great deal of development, just like Merteng had.

'Wow, they've used a lot of merit points.'

Each lord of the castle could visit the store with the merit points they had. In this world, not only the challengers but also lords could use the point system, so they could develop the castle and the country with merit points.

'I can tell how much the Korean challengers would have struggled.'

Since Merteng was once destroyed and then reactivated, the castles had not managed to gather many merit points. All the developments in the ten or twenty years before the destruction of Merteng were nowhere to be seen now. If there were any notable developments at all, it would be solely the work of the challengers who came up this time.

Lee Shin, who had followed the flat road leading to the castle of Eltse, was able to meet the lord of Eltse.

"You are Lee Shin, aren't you?" the lord of the Eltse castle asked, looking at Lee Shin.

"Yes, that's right," Lee Shin replied.

"I'm Jaden Compton. I've heard of you. You almost got into big trouble, didn't you?" Jaden asked.

Lee Shin, who was sitting in the reception room, looked at Jaden. When Lee Shin first encountered Jaden Compton in his previous life, Lee Shin felt an immense sense of intimidation, but the current Jaden was far below that level. It was probably because Jaden had already died once and it had not been long since he started to grow as Eltse was reactivated again.

The growth of these beings also had its limits, but it seemed that Jaden had not yet reached that state yet.

"They were the Qualified from Wildes," Lee Shin said.

"Yes, I've heard that. They were all exceptionally skilled people. It seems Wildes had invested a lot, seeing that there's even a Qualified with the Purple Pattern," Jaden said.

"That's correct. I heard that not only Wildes, but also Tetir and Aman had supported them with troops. They poured in manpower to forcibly break through the Demon Realm, where many people struggled to find their way. This is a method that would be impossible under normal circumstances," Lee Shin explained.

Wildes of Germany, Tetir of France, and Aman of Russia—the three countries that were closest to Merteng's Red and Orange Zones—had poured in their troops to break through the Demon Realm. They probably thought that if even just one team could enter, it could deal a fatal blow to Merteng during such a chaotic situation.

"Narden Castle is still under attack. Durem is supporting Narden, but if the same situation occurs in the Orange Zone, there will still be problems with that support," said Jaden.

"I think we will need to strengthen the border guards. I think there are still a lot of enemies wandering around the Demon Realm even now," Lee Shin suggested.

"That's right. But we can't invest a lot of personnel on something that is not very likely to happen. Unfortunately, we don't have such a luxury right now."

Lee Shin was also aware that the country Merteng was just a candle in the wind.

Due to the forced activation of Windsor Castle in the Blue Zone, the whole battle line was extended and the number of troops required increased rapidly. However, activating Windsor was not the wrong choice. If they had not done so, Merteng would have remained trapped and suffocated.

Activating Windsor was arguably the best option as there was no other way to significantly increase the national power.

"What is the current overall situation?" Lee Shin asked.

"Windsor is under attack by Bilone, Stan, Cormir, and Aman, and Narden is under attack by Wildes and Tetir. If necessary, we can abandon Windsor, but the problem is that there are many saviors there," Jaden explained.

Saviors were the ones who first activated Merteng and, from Lee Shin's perspective, they were the ones who needed to be saved more than anyone else. As their names were mentioned, even Lee Shin had difficulty controlling his expression.

Going to support Windsor in the situation where Aderta had fallen was a very difficult task, and it was also difficult to bring out only the key figures from there.

"Why did the Aderta Castle fall like that?" Lee Shin asked.

"There was a traitor. They were betrayed due to the deactivation of the Coordinate Interference Mana Circle. And that was how Kim Kang-Chun, Ji Eun-Ju, Kang Ji-Hoon, and Shin Ha-Neul were hit," Jaden explained.

Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju were imprisoned in Tetir, and Kang Ji-Hoon and Shin Ha-Neul were deployed to the defense team because they were suffering from the injuries they had sustained at Narden.

"Is there no way to rescue Windsor?" Lee Shin asked.

"To be honest, there is no way unless you take action yourself," Jaden said.

At those words, Lee Shin gulped, trying to hide his disappointment. Only if he had just the Pattern, he would have gone to protect Windsor himself. However, obtaining the Blue Pattern required a considerable amount of time, making it practically difficult for Lee Shin.

"How long do you think it will take for Windsor Castle to fall?" Lee Shin asked.

"I don't think it will fall that easily. We've still invested quite a lot in Windsor. Maybe it might take a month... no wait, I think three weeks at most," said Jaden.

Lee Shin was lost in thought and touched his lips.

'Hmm... about three weeks...'

The enemy attacking Narden was Wildes and Tetir. They were two countries adjacent to Merteng. If Lee Shin could stop those two countries, he might be able to aim for Aderta's recapture from Narden.

"Which country has captured Aderta?" Lee Shin asked.

"It's Aman," Jaden replied.

To recapture Aderta, Lee Shin would have to break through Russia. Ultimately, Lee Shin had to capture France, Germany, and Russia in order to save Windsor. After pondering for a while, Lee Shin had made up his mind.

"Contact Wildes immediately. Tell them that if they don't withdraw their troops immediately, we will kill all the captives," Lee Shin said.

"We're going to kill all the captives? I think that's too severe. It could lead to an extremely hostile relationship with other enemy countries," Jaden said, looking worried.

"We won't actually kill them," said Lee Shin.

"But Wildes won't do anything foolish like withdrawing his troops because of such a threat," said Jaden.

"I don't think so. Wildes will definitely withdraw his troops," said Lee Shin, smiling.

At Lee Shin's confidence, Jaden frowned for a second.

"What do you mean?" Jaden asked Lee Shin.

"Because there is a key figure from Wildes among the captives that we have captured this time," Lee Shin said.

There was Natasha Polly among the captives. Natasha Polly was the daughter of the Chief of the German Intelligence Agency and a member of KSK, the elite special forces of Germany.

Besides, she had an incredible unique ability of space distortion. Therefore, from Germany's perspective, they could not afford to lose her under any circumstances. It was easy for Lee Shin to tell that she was a person who could not be lost, given her remarkable achievements in Lee Shin's past life.

Since the Wildes would think that they had already won the battle with Merteng, they would not think that stepping out of this battle would lead to a complete reversal of the situation.

"Please treat the Qualified with the Purple Pattern very well. She will be our secret trump card in this negotiation," Lee Shin said, looking at Jaden.

Windsor Castle was located in the Blue Zone. The lord of the castle, Juan Byron, turned to the Savors, a face full of worry.

"The situation is very serious right now. We can't even predict when and how the enemies will attack," said Juan.

"Now, a defensive play seems to be inevitable," Park Joo-Hyuk said.

"No matter how many we kill off, the enemy forces never seem to be decreasing. Damn it!" Park Hye-Won barely held back her urge to swear again. Ever since she came to Merteng, she felt like swearing all the time.

"We have reduced the number of soldiers of Stan and Bilone on the frontline to the minimum, but that became meaningless because of the reinforcements from Cormir and Aman," Park Joo-Hyuk explained.

"If we embark on a defensive strategy like this, the downfall of Windsor will only be a matter of time," said Juan.

"Even the Void Shield has its limits. We need reinforcements," The wizard responsible for the protection of Windsor Castle's shield had a gloomy expression as he spoke.

"I will assassinate the commander of Bilone," said Park Joo-Hyuk with determination.

"Don't be foolish," said Juan.

Juan shook his head at Park Joo-Hyuk's ridiculous proposal. Juan knew why Joo-Hyuk had made such a reckless suggestion. There was no other way to recover from the loss if their original, foolish plan failed; and so, Joo-Hyuk was willing to sacrifice himself.

"If only it weren't for these chains that bound me, I would like to step forward," Juan said.

"No, don't say that. You should be protecting the 'Stone of Life,' no?" Baek Hyun replied.

Juan gave a bitter smile at Baek Hyun's words.

"Do you know how the previous Juan Byron was?"

The current Juan Byron was asking about the Juan Byron who had lived for a long time before the destruction of Merteng.

"I've heard that he was capable of holding off a thousand soldiers alone," said Baek Hyun.

"It's a pity that I don't have that kind of power now," Juan said, looking discouraged.

The high-ranking humans who were created by the system here knew their fate. Each lord of the castles had to protect the 'Stone of Life,' which was considered the source of the castle.

If it was destroyed, everyone associated with the castle would disappear, and they could not leave the castle. They were born with such a destiny.

"We will get through this," Joo-Hyuk said.

That was all Joo-Hyuk could say. They all knew that Windsor Castle would eventually fall, and the current Juan Byron would not live long. It was something that not only he but the others could also sense.

At that moment, they heard a knocking sound on the door of the conference room.

"I am here! I have some urgent news to deliver!" said a soldier.

As the soldier came in, everyone in the conference room turned toward him. If the soldier had entered midway in a meeting, it must have been something very important.

"What is it?" Juan asked the soldier.

"Mr. Lee... Mr. Lee Shin has arrived," said the soldier.

"Huh?"

"Mr. Lee Shin came?"

"Oh my gosh! Our master came?"

"Holy!"

The four people who were referred to as Savors were louder than anyone in the conference room.

"Damn it! Why did our Master come so late!" Park Hye-Won shouted.

"Now, we will finally put an end to this tedious war," said Baek Hyun.

"Heh.. I've told him not to make this old man wait long," Hwang Kang-Woong muttered.

"Yes! We'll have a way now," Park Joo-Hyuk muttered.

Park Hye-Won, Baek Hyun, and even Hwang Kang-Woong finally looked relieved. Park Joo-Hyuk clenched his fist, as if he had finally found a way to resolve the issue. Meanwhile, Juan was curious about Lee Shin as he had heard a lot about him from these Savors.

If these people—who had such great prowess—were showing such an attitude toward Lee Shin, how great was Lee Shin? However, such thoughts did not last long, and he eventually reached the conclusion that even his appearance was meaningless.

After all, Lee Shin was just one human being. Even when such great individuals gathered, they could not resolve this war. How big of a miracle would this Qualified called Lee Shin create alone?

Juan's expression darkened as he thought that perhaps these people referred to as Saviors, relied too much on the guy named Lee Shin.

"Even if Lee Shin comes, nothing will change dramatically," Juan said coldly.

The atmosphere in the meeting room, which had been heated, suddenly cooled down with Juan's cold words.

"Sorry, I think I made you guys dejected," Juan muttered.

"Hahaha... It's okay. Well, that's a realistic response, isn't it?" Park Joo-Hyuk started to laugh.

Juan looked at Park Joo-Hyuk with a bewildered expression as Joo-Hyuk laughed for no reason.

"You guys are putting too much emphasis on that Lee Shin guy. He's just a human after all," said Juan.

"Lord, do you know about the 'One-Man Army'?" Baek Hyun asked Juan.

When Juan saw Baek Hyun's serious face, Juan was a little surprised. There was no hint of doubt in Baek Hyun's eyes about Lee Shin. It was a reaction that could only come from blind faith.

"The One-Man Army?" Juan clarified.

"Yes, that's right. Earlier, we said that the previous Juan Byron could face a thousand soldiers on his own, right?" Baek Hyun said, looking at Juan.

"Yes, that's right," Juan replied.

"I think this man, Lee Shin, can face a thousand knights, or maybe even more," said Baek Hyun with confidence.

Juan thought it was absurd. He thought that was too much of an exaggeration. A thousand knights were a number that could be considered a national force, so how could one individual face an entire country?

If others had said it, it wouldn't be strange to send them to prison, but because of the achievements these Saviors had made so far, their opinions could not be easily dismissed.

"Do you really...think so?" Juan asked.

"Yes. So, we will need to change our plan," said Park Joo-Hyuk.

"Change the plan?" Juan asked, with his eyes widened.

Park Joo-Hyuk smiled at Juan's question.

"Let's hold out as long as possible until reinforcements arrive at the castle. That's all we have to do," said Park Joo-Hyuk.

"What did you just say?" Juan could not believe what he just heard.

"We'll fight to the end without moving from the castle until the reinforcements come. That's all we need to do," said Park Joo-Hyuk.