

The Tower 113

Chapter 113

"This is a combat formation," said Inyuu Kogo.

Kanoko and Kohei nodded in agreement, exclaiming softly at his words.

"A combat formation?"

"Yeah, I learned it in Japan before. So I am sure our enemy is using a type of combat formation," said Inyuu Kogo.

"That's a skill that many challengers from China use."

"Is this really a combat formation?" Baek Hyun-Ah asked.

Baek Hyun-Ah was aware of combat formations but could not grasp them immediately because it was her first time seeing one.

"Do you really think our enemies set up this combat formation? How did they know we would come here?" Baek Hyun-Ah asked.

"How would I know? But the important thing is how are we gonna get out of here," said Kogo.

"Do you know how?"

"There are two ways to break through the combat formation: Either find the living gate made by its sorcerer or deliver a strong blow to the formation," Kogo said.

The challengers knew that the former was impossible. If this sorcerer could install such a high-level combat formation, they must be skillful. For those unfamiliar with the combat formation, finding the living gate would be an arduous task—like searching for a needle in a haystack.

"Looks like we'll have to hit the formation."

The only other option would be to use brute force and break apart the combat formation.

"Usually, the combat formation requires a medium. It uses objects like rocks or trees as a medium. We have to break that medium," said Kogo.

"But how do we know where it is?"

"Applying an overwhelming amount of force to the combat formation will cause it to break, as the medium can't withstand such pressure," Kogo explained.

Kogo could sense that the combat formation was becoming slightly unstable due to the flame.

"But we have to exert all our strength at once," said Kogo.

"Okay," Kim Kang-Chun replied.

Kim Kang-Chun called Shin Ha-Neul.

"I think the two of us should do it," Kim Kang-Chun said, looking at Shin Ha-Neul.

"Why? Wouldn't it be stronger if more of us did it together?" Shin Ha-Neul asked.

"No, we have to synchronize our powers. If we mess up, the situation could get worse with the combat formation. Besides, I think only we can unleash a strong force at once—" said Kim Kang-Chun.

"Wait a minute. I have confidence in my power too." Kohei interrupted Kim Kang-Chun with a frown.

His pride in his ability was clear in his eyes, so Kim Kang-Chun nodded.

"Okay, the three of us can do it then," said Kim Kang-Chun.

The trio synchronized their timing and extended their mana in different directions.

Kwaaaah—!

The space began to shake as they used their strongest skills on the formation.

"It's breaking!"

The space wavered, and the formation shattered, returning the challengers to where they were before.

"Oh! Great! The combat formation is gone," Inyuu Kogo said with a satisfied expression.

Everyone looked relieved, but Kim Kang-Chun's expression was subtly different.

'My power has definitely decreased.'

Lee Shin had resurrected Kim Kang-Chun after his death, but Martyr was not all-powerful. Kim Kang-Chun could tell that some of the achievements he had built up had evaporated in death.

Kim Kang-Chun felt as though his overall ability had decreased by roughly 10%. His stats were still the same, but he couldn't use them all. Therefore, a bitter expression appeared on his face.

Zhuge Yun, who had been transporting the captives to Stan, abruptly stopped.

"What's wrong?" a comrade next to him asked.

"Hmm..." Zhuge Yun unfolded his fan and covered his face with it.

'Have the trackers caught up to us already?'

It was faster than Zhuge Yun had expected. He had erased almost all traces of their movement on their journey. And since Windsor was under heavy attack, the enemy didn't have the luxury of time.

This indicated that the individuals were likely newly dispatched to Windsor. Additionally, they had seemingly abandoned Windsor to rescue the captured Saviors, so they are bound to be skilled.

Zhuce Yun's mind conjured up the names and faces of several highly skilled individuals from Merteng.

'Kang Ji-Hoon, Shin Ha-Neul, and Baek Hyun-Ah.'

Tetir's plan had failed. And if Zhuge Yun had guessed the individuals correctly, then it was reasonable for him to assume that they had rescued Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju. If the two had died, the two countries would have taken longer to sign a peace treaty.

Moreover, the individuals dispatched from Aman and Cormir were also missing. The question remained: Who could escape from Narden and rescue them? It seemed implausible that only a few individuals could have captured all the forces of Aman, Cormir, and Tetir.

'That means Lee Shin got involved in that fight by appearing in the yellow zone.'

Zhuce Yun had received news that Delbet had fallen without a clear cause. Delbet was not the kind of place that could collapse suddenly when there wasn't even a sign to indicate that before. Lee Shin was the only person who could make such an implausible thing possible.

Lee Shin's involvement had enabled effective negotiations with Wildes and a gradual recovery of Merteng. It was a plausible story based on his achievements in the tower.

"But, this is too fast..." Zhuge Yun muttered.

"What do you mean?" one of Zhuge Yun's comrades asked, hearing his muttering.

"Leave him alone. It seems like he is lost in his thoughts again," said another person beside him.

Zhuge Yun indeed did not respond to his question and continued to walk.

'You think too highly of yourself, you arrogant brat!'

Zhuge Yun's comrade, who had been ignored several times, muttered as he walked away. Unaware of it all, Zhuge Yun looked up at the sky and noticed that the clouds resembled a flock of sheep.

Zhuge Yun heard the sound of wind blowing and leaves rustling. These sounds seemed to be stronger than usual.

'It's going to rain.'

The sky was getting darker. They were close to reaching Stan's Blue Zone as they had planned. Despite everything going according to plan, Zhuge Yun's expression remained the same.

'This is interesting...'

Even if he took Lee Shin's magical abilities, judgment, and drive into account, Zhuge Yun felt impressed by Lee Shin's rapid growth. It had been a while since Zhuge Yun encountered such a hard-to-understand and challenging individual.

'If Lee Shin is a skilled individual capable of destroying Delbet alone...'

If Lee Shin really had such strength, they were bound to meet in Serpell. He wondered which would prevail: Lee Shin's magic or his own intelligence. As he contemplated this, a smile crept onto his face.

Zhuge Yun believed that the skills of Park Joo-Hyuk, Baek Hyun, and Park Hye-Won were quite disappointing to be called the rising stars. However, he felt that Lee Shin could meet his expectations, so he considered preparing a great show to welcome Lee Shin.

The Korean and Japanese challengers, who had become a tracking team, finally crossed over the land of Merteng and moved on to Stan's Blue Zone. They found themselves surrounded by a vast and expansive Demon Realm on either side, with a road running through the middle.

In the Blue Zone of Stan, there was a famous place called the "Bridge of Death." It was a very long bridge, essentially part of a massive Origin Demon Realm covering an equally vast area.

The bridge seemingly floated in the Demon Realm. And although not narrow, one could still fall off the bridge if they made a mistake or stumbled. And falling meant jumping into the Demon Realm.

The tracking team stopped in front of the bridge. Kanoko searched for tracks with a stern expression. The enemies had passed through here, so the tracking team had to use the bridge too.

"This doesn't look too good," Kim Kang-Chun said.

"What if there is a trap or something?" Baek Hyun-Ah muttered.

Kim Kang-Chun and Baek Hyun-Ah spoke uneasily.

"We have no choice. We have to go this way to catch up to them," said Kanoko.

"Ugh..." Kim Kang-Chun sighed.

Kim Kang-Chun could understand what Kanoko was saying, but his intuition told him that something bad would happen if they crossed this bridge. He looked at the Demon Realm around them; it seemed like the Demon Realm was waiting for someone to fall into it.

Even someone like him, who wasn't particularly clever, could see that this was an excellent place to set up a trap. So, why wouldn't the enemies think the same?

"Oh well, sometimes you just have to walk into a lion's den," Baek Hyun-Ah said with determination.

"Wait a second. This doesn't seem right. If there's a trap here, there's no way out," said Kogo.

"Right, this is a bit too much..." Shin Ha-Neul muttered.

Inyuu Kogo and Shin Ha-Neul opposed.

"We must go through here. Taking another route will only delay us," said Kanoko.

"Let's go. Plus, we can think about how to prepare for the trap." Kang Ji-Hoon agreed with Kanoko's words.

"Besides, it's okay if we fall into the Demon Realm. Since this is the Origin Demon Realm, we can get out of it with no problem," said Kanoko.

"We really have no time to waste! The enemies are moving while we're standing here."

"Ugh, fine! Let's go! We can't see the enemies anyway, so we can just pass quickly."

"Right, let's just go. What's the worst that could happen!"

Inyuu Kogo and Shin Ha-Neul reluctantly agreed.

"Then I'll go first. Kang-Chun, you take the rear," said Baek Hyun-Ah, looking at Kim Kang-Chun.

"Okay," Kim Kang-Chun replied.

The tracking team stood in front of the bridge and took their positions. Fortunately, the bridge was wide enough for about five people to stand side by side.

"Here I go," Baek Hyun-Ah said.

Baek Hyun-Ah led the way and walked slowly, feeling tense. Nothing happened, so she signaled to the rest of the group to follow her. And just like that, they had walked about halfway across the bridge.

They hadn't found the trap yet. However, that only made Baek Hyun-Ah more uneasy. After all, this place was excellent to shake them off.

Woong—

Suddenly, Baek Hyun-Ah and the group heard a strange noise. Baek Hyun-Ah's face turned serious, and she shouted, "Run!"

Baek Hyun-Ah started to run with her sword in position.

Swish— Clank!

When a sharp arrow aimed for her temple, she swung her sword and cut the arrow in half.

Crack—!

Suddenly, with a loud noise, the bridge started to rise up.

"Oh no!"

"Aaah!"

"Help me!"

Baaam—!

The bridge suddenly rose and exploded, sending the people atop flying.

"Shin Ha-Neul!"

"Kang Ji-Hoon!"

"Kohei!"

The sudden explosion threw Shin Ha-Neul, Kang Ji-Hoon, and Tadashi Kohei into the Demon Realm. And ahead of them were the soldiers from Bilone, blocking their path.

"Darn it! Let's go back—"

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" Zhuge Yun asked.

Zhuge Yun, still holding his fan to his face, blocked their path of retreat. Kim Kang-Chun and his party quickly realized that the people blocking their path were the ones who had captured Park Joo-Hyuk and the group.

"You must be idiots. If we could capture those three, what made you think you were special? Hahaha." Zhuge Yun started to laugh at Kim Kang-Chun and his group.

Kim Kang-Chun glared at Zhuge Yun, who was blocking his way. Even his laughter felt insincere. It did not seem like Zhuge Yun was laughing because it was funny.

Zhuce Yun was looking down on his opponents, treating them as insignificant. Kim Kang-Chun felt exposed and vulnerable under his scrutinizing stare.

"Follow us quietly. You all are sacrifices for my meeting with Lee Shin." Zhuge Yun's eyes contained madness as he rambled on.

Lee Shin interrogated the wizard who he had captured. Missing an arm, he struggled to stand up and control his body. He used his remaining arm to stand up and looked at Lee Shin with a complex gaze.

"A-are you... Lee Shin...?" the wizard asked.

"Yeah, that's right. A wizard with Black Pattern should know what Bilone is up to, right?" Lee Shin asked back.

"Yeah, I don't know the details, but I have a general idea," the wizard replied.

"Tell me," said Lee Shin.

"Keugh..." The wizard gasped.

Instead of answering, the wizard only laughed at him, so Lee Shin pulled him closer with Psychokinesis and grabbed him by the neck.

"Kk...ugh...!" The wizard struggled.

"I'm not a patient person," said Lee Shin.

"Y-y-you're lying... How can a wizard like you... have no patience... Keugh!" said the wizard.

Thud!

Lee Shin narrowed his eyebrows, squeezed his neck with more strength, and then threw the wizard toward a wall.

"Keh... Keek...!" The wizard started coughing, struggling for breath.

"If you don't speak, you'll die," Lee Shin said.

"Kehh... It doesn't... matter whether I die or not. But, there's a condition," said the wizard.

The word "condition" helped Lee Shin deem this conversation a dud, so he activated his mana. He had decided to kill this wizard and talk to his demon soul instead.

"Teach me... Teach me magic..." said the wizard.

"What did you say?" Lee Shin asked.

"I want to learn from a wizard like you. If you can teach me, I will defect to Merteng and give you all the information you need," the wizard replied.

Lee Shin wondered if this wizard was sincere. He thought it was insane to ask for a lesson in magic from an enemy wizard.

Lee Shin had seen some crazy humans among wizards before. In the past, he had also done everything he could to learn magic, so it was not incomprehensible. He could understand the wizard to some extent.

Lee Shin changed his mind after seeing the wizard's passion for magic.

"Okay, fine, I'll teach you," Lee Shin said.

"I don't trust your words alone... Let's make a contract," said the wizard.

"Make a contract? Are you crazy—" Lee Shin said.

Meanwhile, the conditions of the contract appeared in front of Lee Shin. The wizard's contract granted Lee Shin various benefits, except for one condition: the wizard could learn magic from Lee Shin. After looking at all the conditions, Lee Shin thought it was not a bad deal for him.

"..." Lee Shin was speechless in amazement.

Lee Shin looked at the wizard. The wizard's eyes were boiling with a desire to learn magic.

"Well, okay," said Lee Shin.

As Lee Shin poured mana into the contract, the mana seeped into the surroundings of the two, and the contract was complete. Finally, with a satisfied expression, the wizard opened his mouth.

"There is a strategist named Zhuge Yun in Bilone. All the situations so far have gone exactly as he had envisioned. He has also likely captured all the missing Qualified and taken them to Serpell," said the wizard.

"Zhuge Yun?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yeah... be careful of him because he has a special ability. Go to Serpell," the wizard said to Lee Shin.

"Thank you," Lee Shin replied.

"If you're grateful, teach me magic when you return," the wizard said.

Lee Shin was about to laugh, looking at the wizard's face full of anticipation. The old man seemed to have nothing but magic in his head. For a second, Lee Shin wondered if it would be okay to trust the wizard because he had easily betrayed his comrade.

With this thought in his mind, Lee Shin closed the iron bars of the prison and left the castle. Juan, who was waiting outside, went up to Lee Shin.

"Did you find out anything?" Juan asked Lee Shin with hope.

"Yes," Lee Shin replied.

Juan looked at Lee Shin with a desperate gaze.

"Please wait. I'll be back," Lee Shin said and left.

"Thank you. I'm counting on you," said Juan, sending Lee Shin away.