

The Tower 116

Chapter 116

'If the world ended, would it feel like this?'

Selena felt like she could not breathe properly, and she felt intimidated. However, the light emanating from Misteltein gave her some sense of stability.

'This is dangerous...'

Selena glanced around and saw that the challengers from the United States and China were still dazed. They trembled as they watched the undead rise up all around them. The ferocious energy emanating from the undead bore down on the humans.

The battlefield was filled with the energy of death, and the challengers' bodies could no longer react as quickly as they did.

[Your abilities have decreased by 10%.]

The light attribute was not as powerful as divine power, but it could still do considerable damage to the undead. Although Selena's abilities were reduced, the attribute was still effective.

'First of all, I'll have to deal with them one by one.'

Selena did not expect Lee Shin to break the combat formation like this; but not only Lee Shin got his mana back, now the rest of them could use mana too. Besides, Selena had twenty elite members with her, while Lee Shin was on his own.

'Now that things have turned out this way, we must join forces with China.'

The next moment, Selena infused mana into Misteltein. The light flowing around the sword shot up into the sky.

"Oh light, cover us!" Selena shouted.

A sphere of light formed in the sky and shone down at her allies.

"Don't be afraid. Continue to charge!" Selena shouted.

[Grace of Light], one of Misteltein's powers, prevented those under its influence from damage for a period of time. The challengers from the United States, upon hearing Selena's words, charged toward the undead without any fear of injury.

"Damn it! First, we need to kill the undead! Since we've got our mana back, use it!" Selena shouted.

In an instant, the situation reversed, and the challengers from the United States and China began to attack the undead.

'Damn it.'

Selena could not sustain the Grace of Light for long, because she had already consumed a lot of energy thanks to Zhuge Yun. Therefore, she had no choice but to conserve her power and grip her sword tightly.

"Damn it! Get out of my way!" Selena shouted again angrily.

The undead blocking her path were too strong. There was one with glowing red eyes, another one in a robe firing various elemental spells, one using water magic very skillfully, and one wielding a massive sword. Every single one of them was an incredibly skilled fighter.

'This is insane.'

While dealing with the American challengers, Lee Shin also neutralized Chinese challengers. Selena looked at Zhuge Yun—he was frowning. Selena knew that in order to capture Lee Shin, she had to join forces with Zhuge Yun.

'Did someone purposely manipulate the information on Lee Shin or did we just have a wrong gauge of his abilities?'

Selena could not believe what she was seeing. Lee Shin was controlling such a horde of undead and using an unfathomable level of skill and magic to dominate the battlefield right before her eyes. Anyone who could accomplish a fraction of what he was doing would be considered a monster, yet he was doing all three impeccably.

'The United States and China were mistaken.'

Selena realized that capturing Lee Shin was not a job for a few challengers. The whole nation had to get involved.

"You're too slow," Lee Shin said to Selena.

Lee Shin's black mana spread in all directions. The pressure Selena felt was completely different from anything she had felt before.

'This one is real.'

Selena activated her mana once again—this time, to use her power of a deity. The next moment, a black lightning bolt struck from the sky. The light from Misteltein surrounded her at the nick of time.

Baaamm—!

A pitch-black thunderbolt struck over the barrier made up of light. Although the thunderbolt did not penetrate the barrier made up of light, it split up into dozens of light flashes that scattered and flowed in all directions into the ground.

"Try blocking it until the end," Lee Shin said.

Along with Lee Shin's voice, the sound of thunder echoed through the battlefield once again.

Rumble! Crack—! Bam!

Lee Shin's attack was not over. Lee Shin continued to unleash his dark thunderbolt as if he was taunting, 'Let's see who would win this battle.'

"Keugh...!" Selena gasped in pain.

Selena's entire body trembled. She barely managed to survive this situation by mental strength; groans of pain kept escaping from her mouth. Selena was struggling just to defend herself, let alone attack. Just withstanding Lee Shin's force took all her strength.

"Ha... ha..." Selena was out of breath.

Finally, the sound of the thunder that had been echoing through the sky stopped. Selena collapsed to the ground, drained of energy. The area was filled with black lightning energy.

All the screams of the challengers echoed in Selena's ears. When the dark thunderbolt that covered the battlefield disappeared, Selena slowly looked around. Everyone had fallen to the ground.

There was no one who escaped the disaster. Only she and Zhuge Yun were left.

"Damn it!" Selena shouted.

Curses burst out of her mouth when she realized how powerless she was. Selena thought there was no meaning in being the sole survivor. Despite having borrowed the power of her nation, she had accomplished nothing and was about to lose everything.

While she was lamenting, the thunderbolt that had been crawling on the ground suddenly changed direction and started heading toward her.

'Am I going to die like this...?'

Pizz—

The thunderbolt hit her, leaving her shaking, before she finally collapsed. Until the moment she passed out, she thought she was going to die. However, Lee Shin had no intention of killing her.

"You're quite impressive," Lee Shin muttered as he approached Selena.

Lee Shin was a little surprised as he looked at Selena, who had withstood his dark thunder for so long. He had adjusted his power, but it was still impressive.

On the ground next to her was her Misteltein. Lee Shin picked it up.

Pizz—

When Lee Shin grabbed the Misteltein, its handle started to heat up.

[Misteltein refuses anyone who is not its owner.]

[A radiant flame has ignited.]

[1,230 damage has been done.]

[890 damage has been done.]

[1,570 damage has been...]

[...]

Lee Shin felt the increasing heat, and his Health Point began to drop rapidly. Frowning, he forced Misteltein into his Subspace Pocket. He opened his palm and saw that his skin was red and irritated.

Lee Shin had somewhat expected such a reaction; artifacts seemed to know their owners. Therefore, forcefully controlling these artifacts was not an easy task, especially when the new wielder's mana was the opposite of that of the artifact, just like it was the case for Lee Shin and Misteltein.

Since Lee Shin could not control Misteltein for now, he kept it in the Pocket. The next moment, Lee Shin went to where Burtgang was. Burtgang, in the form of a sword, was stuck into the ground, and its owner had collapsed to the ground. Lee Shin picked Burtgang up.

[Burtgang judges the qualifications of the wielder.]

[Burtgang emits a cold aura.]

Burtgang was a sword that could manipulate dimensions as well as ice. As soon as Lee Shin grabbed the handle of the sword, his hand started to freeze rapidly. He immediately activated his mana to melt the ice that was forming and unleashed a series of strong flames.

[Burtgang laments in pain.]

[Burtgang connects dimensions.]

Suddenly, a dimensional rift opened, and Lee Shin immediately tried to stop Burtgang with his mana. However, Burtgang slipped out of Lee Shin's grip and disappeared into the rift.

'Damn it.'?

Lee Shin cursed in disappointment. Unlike Misteltein, Burtgang did not have a conflicting nature with Lee Shin's mana. Therefore, Lee Shin was planning to suppress the power of Burtgang with his dominance.

However, it ended up escaping into another dimension. As Lee Shin turned his head, he saw Zhuge Yun flinch.

"Are you... going to take away my artifact as well?" Zhuge Yun asked Lee Shin.

Zhuge Yun's face fell in defeat. It appeared to Zhuge Yun that Lee Shin did not think it was important whether he could use the artifacts he took or not, since he had forcibly taken Misteltein anyway. Zhuge Yun assumed that Lee Shin would do likewise and take his artifact.

"Hmm... that depends on how you act from now on," Lee Shin said.

"It's up to me...?" Zhuge Yun asked, looking at Lee Shin.

"Yeah, that's right."

Lee Shin pulled out the contract from his Subspace Pocket and rolled it open in front of Zhuge Yun.

"You do me a favor, and I'll let you and these challengers go free. Plus, I won't take your artifacts," Lee Shin said.

"Are you sure...?" Zhuge Yun asked.

"Yes, of course," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin engraved the contents of the contract and handed it over to Zhuge Yun. The contract was simple. Zhuge Yun had to obey Lee Shin's words from now on. That was it.

"I think this is too lopsided of a contract," said Zhuge Yun.

"The current situation is lopsided too. If you don't like it, I can just leave you to die like this," Lee Shin said.

"Then we won't be able to find the whereabouts of the disappeared challengers forever," said Zhuge Yun.

"You don't have to worry about that. I have a way," Lee Shin replied.

"..." Zhuge Yun could not say anything for a while.

Zhuge Yun seemed to be lost in thought for a moment before he nodded.

"Fine, I'll do it," said Zhuge Yun.

After saying that, Zhuge Yun immediately infused mana into the contract. Lee Shin furrowed his eyebrows slightly at Zhuge Yun's action, because he thought that Zhuge Yun would try some other moves, but the agreement came more easily than Lee Shin had thought.

"First of all, Park Joo-Hyuk, Baek Hyun, and Park Hye-Won are probably here." Zhuge Yun took out a map from his sleeves, unfolded it and pointed to a spot.

"They should be hiding here."

"...What do you mean? Weren't you guys holding them captive?" Lee Shin was stunned by what Zhuge Yun said.

"Actually, we lost those three during the capture. I didn't expect them to break through all of our forces and escape when Park Joo-Hyuk was weakened," Zhuge Yun explained.

Despite having lost them, Zhuge Yun seemed completely unconcerned, which Lee Shin found strange. Lee Shin also felt there was something amiss in his words.

"But then how would you know where they are?" Lee Shin asked.

"The only place where three people can escape and hide is there," Zhuge Yun explained.

"So you knew that, but you still haven't caught them yet?" Lee Shin asked.

"Well... I didn't think I would have to be in a hurry when I already know where they are—" Zhuge Yun tried to explain.

"No, I don't understand how you could have lost them when you already knew they would escape to that place. Especially since you were the one who anticipated my arrival and set up this combat formation in advance," Lee Shin said.

As Lee Shin threw him a suspicious look, Zhuge Yun looked back with a faint smile.

"You overestimated me too much," said Zhuge Yun finally.

"Are you sure you didn't intentionally let them go?" Lee Shin asked.

"...No, I didn't," Zhuge Yun replied.

Lee Shin was curious as to what Zhuge Yun was thinking, but it seemed like Zhuge Yun did not plan on revealing his intentions.

"Alright then, but do you think you can secretly bring those three people out?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yes, if we send some people there, it should be enough because Bilone still doesn't know the exact location," said Zhuge Yun.

"So, you're saying that Bilone doesn't know and you're the only one who knows?" Lee Shin asked to clarify.

"Well yes, because there is no need for everyone to know all the information," Zhuge Yun replied.

"Okay, well... I'll listen to your reasons later on. What about the rest?" Lee Shin asked.

"Kim Kang-Chun, Baek Hyun-Ah, Inyuu Kogo, and Miura Kanoko are captured in a nearby cave," said Zhuge Yun.

"And what about the others?" Lee Shin asked.

"The others... will be somewhere in the Demon Realm," said Zhuge Yun.

"Did they fall off the Bridge of Death?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yes, that's right," Zhuge Yun replied.

Lee Shin sighed and grabbed his throbbing head.

"I had a feeling but didn't think it would have actually happened..." Lee Shin muttered.

"They will be alright. Besides, looking at their skills, they won't be affected by the Origin Demon Realm in the Blue Zone," Zhuge Yun spoke calmly.

"Do you really think so?" Lee Shin asked.

Lee Shin was not completely ignorant of that, but his expression still did not ease up as he still had some worries.

"...To be honest, the demons in this world have been getting stronger and more irrational," said Zhuge Yun.

"What do you think is the reason for that?" Lee Shin asked.

"I'm not sure of that yet. There's a saying that the demons get stronger as the Demon King lives longer... but even if that's true, it's still strange," Zhuge Yun explained.

Zhuge Yun smiled bitterly.

"The high-ranking officials of Bilone and Meldeuren would probably know the reason," said Zhuge Yun.

"Oh, really? Then I guess you'll have to become one of those high-ranking officials," said Lee Shin.

"...Me? Are you kidding me?" Zhuge Yun said.

"Yeah, take down Bilone's corrupt leadership and take control. I'll help you," Lee Shin said.

Lee Shin thought that it would not be difficult for Zhuge Yun to achieve that status considering his abilities. Besides, since Zhuge Yun was bound by contract, there was no way he could betray Lee Shin.

"Ha... hahaha! Hahaha!" Zhuge Yun suddenly laughed like a maniac. "As expected, truly talented people recognize their own kind. Of course, you're different from those idiots."

Zhuge Yun's expression, which had been in despair, changed to a confident look. "Understood."

His cold gaze swept across the Chinese challengers who had fallen on the ground.

Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon, who had fallen into the Demon Realm, were lucky enough to run into each other. It was because they fell in the same direction.

"Do you think everyone is okay up there?" Kang Ji-Hoon asked.

"They should be okay. After all, they have Hyun-Ah and Kang-Chun," Shin Ha-Neul replied.

"We should hurry and get out of here since they will be worrying about us," said Kang Ji-Hoon.

"But where is Kohei?" Shin Ha-Neul asked.

Shin Ha-Neul wondered whether they would be able to find Kohei in this dark Demon Realm. If Shin Ha-Neul were to be honest, he was not even sure if they could escape from here, let alone find Kohei.

Khaaaak—!

A chilling scream could be heard. The leaves on the trees shook vigorously.

Psss—!

It was clear that the demons were moving around, jumping from one branch of the tree to another.

"Be careful!" Kang Ji-Hoon shouted.

Dozens of fruits suddenly rained down from the trees onto the two of them. Water droplets dripped onto Kang Ji-Hoon's sword. The fruits were enveloped by water droplets and fell to the ground.

"It's a venomous monkey, don't let even one hit you," said Kang Ji-Hoon.

"I know!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

Shin Ha-Neul stretched out his fist and fired mana toward the top of a tree.

Psss—!

As the leaves fell, venomous monkeys could be seen on the tree branches. The monkeys mixed poison with their saliva, covered the fruit with it, and threw them at Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon. These monkeys were among the difficult demonic beasts to deal with in the Demon Realm.

With their teeth clenched, Kang Ji-Hoon and Shin Ha-Neul began to knock against all the surrounding trees. The venomous monkeys screamed and jumped from one tree to another, but eventually they fell to the ground.

"Ha... You bastards, did you guys have fun?" Shin Ha-Neul punched the venomous monkeys with a face of disgust, while Kang Ji-Hoon stopped them from escaping.

"Ha..." Kang Ji-Hoon sighed.

"Why are there so many of these guys coming out in groups in the Blue Zone?" Shin Ha-Neul asked Kang Ji-Hoon.

"I don't know... Don't they usually appear starting from the Demon Zone? Why are they here...?" Kang Ji-Hoon replied.

The two of them took a break and tried to catch their breaths. While they were wondering and muttering if the Origin Demon Realm was always like this, Shin Ha-Neul flinched.

"What's wrong?" Kang Ji-Hoon asked.

"Don't you hear people's voices from somewhere?" Shin Ha-Neul asked.

"You hear people's voices?" Kang Ji-Hoon asked.

At Shin Ha-Neul's words, Kang Ji-Hoon also held his breath and listened carefully to the sound.

Keugh...

The two could hear someone groaning in pain. The two looked at each other at the same time.

"Could that be Kohei?" Kang Ji-Hoon said, looking at Shin Ha-Neul.

"I think it is!" Shin Ha-Neul replied.

The two got up immediately and headed toward the direction of the sound. When they arrived at that place, they found Kohei tied up on a demonic beast in the form of a tree, hanging helplessly.

"Kohei!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

"Shit!" Kang Ji-Hoon shouted and rushed toward the demonic beast that looked like a tree.

Chop! Chop! Chop!

Swoosh—!

Kang Ji-Hoon cut down the tree trunk, and Shin Ha-Neul popped open the body of the demonic tree beast.

"Kohei! Are you okay?" Kang Ji-Hoon propped Kohei up, who had fallen to the ground.

Kohei looked very pale, and black spots were all over his face.

"Something's wrong with him," Kang Ji-Hoon muttered.

"Kek! Kek! Ugh..." Kohei coughed repeatedly and then opened his eyes.

"What's wrong? Are you okay? What happened to you? And what's with your face?" Kang Ji-Hoon asked Kohei.

"I... I... got attacked by a demonic beast..." Kohei replied.

"A demonic beast? What kind of demonic beast?" Shin Ha-Neul asked Kohei.

"Let's get going, because we don't have the time for this right now! We need to get out of here as soon as possible!" said Kang Ji-Hoon.

As the two Korean challengers struggled to support Kohei and get up, they felt a strong vibration from the ground.

Creek— Thud!

"W-w-what's going on?"

Suddenly, black tentacles rose from the ground and attacked the three of them. Kang Ji-Hoon, clenching his teeth, cut the tentacles and blocked them by spreading his water droplets. Some of the tentacles pierced through the droplets, and some hit the droplets and rebounded.

"Run!" Kang Ji-Hoon shouted.

Dozens of tentacles came after the trio and it was difficult for them to even identify what kind of demonic beast was attacking.

'Something's not right with the Demonic Realm here.'

Kang Ji-Hoon could quickly realize that the demonic beasts here were too strong for the Blue Zone. The only thought he had was to escape from this place as soon as possible.

"Ha... ha..." Shin Ha-Neul was out of breath.

"Ha... They're not chasing us now," said Kang Ji-Hoon.

Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon gasped for breath.

"Kohei, are you okay...? Kohei!" Kang Ji-Hoon shouted.

When the two of them looked at Kohei and checked his condition, they realized that something was wrong with Kohei. His eyes had turned black and there were more dark spots on his skin than before. Kohei, who was losing his consciousness, opened his eyes and looked at the two of them.

"Please... please save me..." said Kohei, struggling.

"What happened to you?" Kang Ji-Hoon asked.

"I was cursed by the demonic beast... I'll die if you don't kill that demonic beast..." Kohei muttered.

"A curse?" Shin Ha-Neul asked.

"Please... Please help me..."