

The Tower 117

Chapter 117

Kohei's condition, which seemed stable a few minutes ago, suddenly worsened. Seeing how he looked, Kang Ji-Hoon and Shin Ha-Neul frowned.

"What should we do?" Shin Ha-Neul asked Kang Ji-Hoon.

"It's too dangerous to go back inside... and Kohei's condition isn't good either. The Demon Realm looks too suspicious right now for us to attempt to fight the demonic beasts and protect Kohei at the same time," said Kang Ji-Hoon.

Kang Ji-hoon could not shake off the ominous feeling that lingered over him. Anxiety overwhelmed him as he looked up at the forest. Although the forest was covered by thick fog and difficult to see clearly, it seemed as if the fog was telling them to come closer.

"You're right. It seems like escaping should be our priority," said Shin Ha-Neul.

When Shin Ha-Neul agreed, Kohei suddenly opened his eyes.

"Wait a second, are you guys just going to leave me here like this?!" Kohei shouted.

"No, no! We're not leaving you behind—" Shin Ha-Neul tried to explain.

"How can you abandon your comrade so easily? Am I not important to you guys? Is that it?" Kohei shouted at the two.

"Kohei! Calm down and listen to me. We're not abandoning you. If we make a mistake and enter the Demon Realm again, it could put all of us in danger, including you. So we need to first go outside and find a way to break the curse—" Kang Ji-Hoon tried to explain.

"Shut up! Don't give excuses! Are you just saying that because you're afraid you'll get into danger? Fine, be like that! I'll enter the Demon Realm alone," said Kohei.

Kohei, who was looking as if he was about to die just a few seconds ago, was suddenly filled with rage and glared at the two. Shin Ha-Neul was too taken aback by Kohei's outburst to say anything, while Kang Ji-Hoon hurriedly tried to calm him down.

"Okay! We'll help you. So please calm down," said Kang Ji-Hoon.

"Really? I knew you guys would help me! I always believed in you guys."

Kang Ji-Hoon and Shin Ha-Neul stood stunned as they just witnessed Kohei switch from crying, getting angry, and then laughing in the blink of an eye.

"I know where that guy is hiding," said Kohei, referring to the demonic beast that put the curse on him.

"Oh really? That's good," said Kang Ji-Hoon.

"What's the big deal! We just have to kill that damn thing!" Kohei said confidently.

Kohei took the lead and started walking, and the two followed him. Kang Ji-Hoon whispered to Shin Ha-Neul as he watched Kohei's back.

"Isn't he a bit strange?" Kang Ji-Hoon whispered.

"You think so? I mean... he does seem a little odd. But isn't that just his usual personality?" Shin Ha-Neul said.

"Is that so?" Kang Ji-Hoon replied.

Kang Ji-Hoon bit his lip in unease. He had no other choice, even if Kohei was acting strange in this situation. He could not just leave Kohei behind, and even if he did, he did not know the way out. For now, Kang Ji-Hoon planned to follow Kohei and see what happens.

"What are you doing? Hurry up and follow me!" Kohei called out to the two who were falling behind.

"Ah, yes!" Shin Ha-Neul replied.

"Okay!" Kang Ji-Hoon replied as well.

The two caught up to Kohei and walked closely behind him. It was not long before a large clearing in the forest appeared in front of them.

Kruuurrrrr.

When the group approached the clearing, there was the demonic beast that Kohei mentioned, making a noise.

"Shh, it's a giant demonic beast," said Kang Ji-Hoon.

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"I've... never seen this one before," said Shin Ha-Neul.

The demonic beast in front of them was about the size of ten cows combined; its front legs had large hooks and tentacles came up from its mouth, wriggling and sweeping the ground. Its body was covered in sturdy-looking armor that seemed difficult to penetrate. Shin Ha-Neul was terrified at this grotesque sight he had never seen before and frowned.

"We can win... right?" Shin Ha-Neul asked with a terrified look.

"It's okay, we can win," Kohei replied.

The next moment, Kohei drew his sword and charged straight toward the demonic beast. However, its tentacles slammed into the ground and shot up from under Kohei.

"Ahhhh!" Kohei screamed.

Kohei was thrown to the ground as a tentacle ripped his side. Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon joined the fight as they watched Kohei's struggle.

"Kohei! You take a rest at the back!" Kang Ji-Hoon said, looking at Kohei.

"Yeah, we'll take care of it!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

The fight between Kang Ji-Hoon, Shin Ha-Neul and the giant demonic beast continued. They slowly but effectively attacked the demonic beast with perfect coordination, as if to prove that they had been working together as a team for a long time.

"Kueeeek!" The demonic beast groaned in pain.

Its tentacles were cut off and exploded into pieces. A painful scream echoed throughout the air. The two felt that they were about to win.

However, a moment later, a strange sound came from the demonic beast. A mysterious high-pitched sound rang, a frequency that people could not normally pick up.

Psss—

Soon, Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon could feel the presence of other creatures surrounding them.

"It seems like this demonic beast is summoning others of its kind," said Shin Ha-Neul.

"We have to finish this quickly!" Kang Ji-Hoon shouted.

"Stall for time. I'll finish it," said Shin Ha-Neul.

"Got it," Kang Ji-Hoon replied.

Shin Ha-Neul planned to use his most powerful technique. He specialized in attack, while Kang Ji-Hoon specialized in defense. Perfect coordination was possible.

Shin Ha-Neul activated his mana without holding back or worrying about his surroundings. He tried to demonstrate the skill of the first fatal strike of the Aeromancer Class.

'It's not perfect yet, but still...'

Shin Ha-Neul was aware that he had no other options now. If he used this skill, he would experience tremendous recoil as he had not mastered it fully yet; but he had no other choice.

Shin Ha-Neul had to focus on the movement of the mana. He detected tiny fissures that were created by the collision of mana particles and started weaving them together.

Pizz—

Sparks flew from Shin Ha-Neul's fist.

[Destructive Punch]

This skill was the strike of an Aeromancer, one who was created to destroy everything. Shin Ha-Neul tried to perform that skill, which required extreme sensitivity to mana.

Swoosh—

Keugh!

However, Shin Ha-Neul failed—a sword had pierced through his body all of a sudden.

"Keuaaughh—" Shin Ha-Neul groaned.

Shin Ha-Neul looked down as he felt the sensation of a cold blade in his abdomen. He could see that a familiar-looking sword was sticking out of his body.

Drip drip drip—

Blood flowed down the blade.

"Keuaughh—" Blood rushed up to his throat, making it impossible for him to speak.

"Shin Ha-Neul!" Kang Ji-Hoon shouted in shock.

Since Kohei came to help them fight off the demonic beast, Kang Ji-Hoon had let him stand next to Shin Ha-Neul. However, Kohei had stabbed him with his sword.

Swoosh— Thump!

As Kohei pulled out his sword from Shin Ha-Neul's body, Shin Ha-Neul collapsed on the ground. Kang Ji-Hoon glared at Kohei, his face burning red with anger.

"You guys were going to betray me too, weren't you? Why can't I?" Kohei said with a sinister smile on his face.

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Lee Shin had returned to the place where the Bridge of Death was located. After rescuing all the Korean challengers who had been captured, Lee Shin handed over the captives of Bllone to the Koreans.

Lee Shin also left Zhuge Yun in charge of cleaning up, with a few requests. Lee Shin knew Zhuge Yun would handle it nicely.

‘The energy of death has grown stronger.’

Lee Shin stiffened, sensing that the power of death within this place had grown stronger than when he first arrived. Lee Shin knew that this was not a good sign. Hoping that the three inside the Demon Realm were safe, Lee Shin dived in.

The energy of the dead was swirling around inside the Demon Realm. As Lee Shin continued walking deeper inside, he saw the dead bodies of the demonic beasts. Seeing the trail of corpses, it seemed like the three missing people had killed them.

As he went further in, he saw a hairy tentacle lying on the ground. Lee Shin lifted the tentacle with his psychokinesis and examined it carefully. On the ground were holes that were left behind by tentacles that had stabbed through it all over the place.

“Could it be the Pestilence King...?” Lee Shin muttered.

The expression on Lee Shin’s face became grim. Lee Shin was only in the Blue Zone's Origin Demon Realm, and the Pestilence King was not the type of demonic beast who should be here.

Lee Shin dashed forward and he could detect familiar traces of mana. They were the mana waves of Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon.

‘Something’s off with their mana waves...’

Their mana waves were not flowing properly, and Lee Shin was sure that something bad had happened to those two. If the two had indeed been facing the Pestilence King, they could be in a difficult situation.

After walking further, Lee Shin saw Kang Ji-Hoon and Shin Ha-Neul. The two were hung on the demonic beast, which was in the form of a tree, unconscious and bleeding profusely, their arms and legs tangled up in the branches.

Lee Shin cut the tree branches with magic and gently laid the two on the ground using Psychokinesis. Lee Shin opened their eyes to check their pupils and checked their skin for any black spots.

"Ha..." Lee Shin breathed a sigh of relief.

Fortunately, the two were more or less unharmed. They were lucky. Even though they were attacked by the Pestilence King, they were not yet infected. Lee Shin used his divine power to heal the two little by little. After a while, Kang Ji-Hoon began to stir awake.

"Uh..." Kang Ji-Hoon groaned and slowly opened his eyes.

"Are you awake?" Lee Shin asked, looking worried.

"Am I... dead or something? I see my master's face..." When Kang Ji-Hoon saw Lee Shin's face, he mumbled.

"You're not dead," said Lee Shin.

"I'm not dead...? Huh?" Kang Ji-Hoon finally came back to his senses and glanced around. He found himself in the Demon Realm, and it was really Lee Shin standing before him.

"Master!" Kang Ji-Hoon cried out.

"What happened?" Lee Shin asked Kang Ji-Hoon.

"Well..." Kang Ji-Hoon explained what had happened so far to Lee Shin.

Lee Shin nodded.

"You guys were lucky. You were caught during its rest period. Since the Pestilence King had spent a lot of energy infecting Kohei, the demonic beast didn't infect you guys right away," Lee Shin explained.

"But, Kohei..." Kang Ji-Hoon could not hide his mixed feelings when he thought about Kohei.

"Let's get out of here first," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin summoned his Skeleton Crows and placed Kang Ji-Hoon and Shin Ha-Neul on top of them.

"We're going to get out of the Demon Realm," said Lee Shin.

Kang Ji-Hoon supported Shin Ha-Neul, who was still unconscious. Since the Skeleton Crows could fly, it did not take them long to get outside of the Demon Realm. There were still attacks from the demonic beasts, but Lee Shin's magic took care of them all.

"Take a rest, then go to Windsor once Shin Ha-Neul wakes up," said Lee Shin.

"What happened to the others?" asked Kang Ji-Hoon.

"They're all safe now. Baek Hyun, Park Joo-Hyuk, Park Hye-Won are all safe. They're moving with the captives, so if you hurry, you'll be able to catch up with them," Lee Shin explained.

"But, what about you master?" Kang Ji-Hoon asked.

"I'm going to go rescue Kohei," said Lee Shin.

"Do you... have to...?" Kang Ji-Hoon hesitated for a moment, but decided to say what was in his mind.

Shin Ha-Neul was now unconscious because of Kohei, and he himself almost died. Kang Ji-Hoon did not like the fact that Lee Shin was heading into that dangerous place just to rescue a challenger from Lantan, whom Kang Ji-Hoon originally considered an enemy.

"Don't worry. I'm not going just to rescue Kohei," Lee Shin said.

"Then why...?" Kang Ji-Hoon could not understand Lee Shin's intention.

"I'm going to catch the one who made you all like that," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin got on the Skeleton Crow and quickly disappeared into the Demon Realm.

Watching blankly as Lee Shin left, Kang Ji-Hoon muttered to himself, "Who did I think I was worrying about...?"

Kang Ji-Hoon laughed bitterly, leaned against the tree, and closed his eyes. He felt the exhaustion of the past few days wash over him as he thought about how he was finally returning alive.

At the same time, Lee Shin had entered the Demon Realm. He summoned the undead.

"Find the guy with the tentacles," Lee Shin ordered.

"Should we fight the demonic beast if we encounter it?" May asked Lee Shin.

"Avoid direct confrontation as much as possible. If you're careless, you might get hurt," Lee Shin said.

"Oh, I'm curious, though. How strong is that demonic beast? Can I just get a feel for his power once, Master?" May asked again.

"This place exudes a strong sense of malicious energy," said Lakers.

"You also exude malicious energy, dummy," replied Ahn Jin.

"Enough, I don't want to fight with you in front of Master," said Lakers.

Lakers and Ahn Jin bickered for a moment and disappeared to find the Pestilence King. Lee Shin spread his mana as wide as possible and searched for where it might be.

The demon power surrounding the Demon Realm was growing thicker and thicker over time. The Demon Realm in the Blue Zone that Lee Shin used to know did not have this much demon power.

'Hmm... this is strange. The Pestilence King is a Name-class demonic beast that operates in the Black Zone and beyond.'

With Arbon appearing in the Demon Realm of Aderta and the Pestilence King showing up here, it was evident that something was changing.

'Found it.'

Warrie began to draw in a lot of mana. As Lee Shin spread his mana power toward the place Warrie found, he could feel strange mana emanating from the area.

Lee Shin immediately moved towards the location. Upon arrival, he saw that the Pestilence King, Warrie, Ahn Jin, and Lakers were engaged in a fight. Demonic beasts under the control of the Pestilence King were rushing in toward the undead from all directions.

Lee Shin raised more undead to match the demonic beasts.

"Block it," Lee Shin ordered.

The Pestilence King was a demonic beast that had to be dealt with. Seeing it had come all the way here to the Blue Zone, it was impossible to gauge for Lee Shin how much stronger the demonic beast had become.

[Thunderbolt]

Rumble— Crack!

The thunderbolt was aimed at the head of the Pestilence King. However, it put his head inside the hard gloves which were part of the armor and were placed on his back to avoid the thunderbolt. As if Lee Shin had predicted this, he smoothly prepared the next spell.

It was difficult for any ordinary lightning spell to penetrate the Pestilence King's gloves.

'I'll break the gloves with one strike.'

The mana that had been spread out like fog froze, lowering the temperature of the forest sharply.

Crack— Crack—

Frost began to form all over the Pestilence King's body and the gloves on it started to freeze. At the same time, a huge steel spear appeared in the air. Wind swirled around the surface of the spear as it rotated.

[Georg's Spear]

The giant spear spun vigorously and headed toward the Pestilence King.

Swoosh—

The glove started to tear apart as it collided with Georg's Spear.

"Keyeeek!" The Pestilence King screamed and its tentacles began to thrash in the air in all directions.

Crack!

The glove broke. The Pestilence King was flung away, screaming, and it tried to stabilize its breathing as blood oozed out from its body. The pieces of the tentacles that had been sliced were wreaking havoc, as if they had minds of their own.

"How many people did it infect already?" Lee Shin muttered.

Lee Shin did not expect the Pestilence King to be alive and breathing after taking that attack. He activated his mana with a stiff expression.

"Just die—" Lee Shin said.

However, while Lee Shin was trying to attack the Pestilence King, black fog surged from the ground. The red eyes of a creature darted back and forth between Lee Shin and the Pestilence King.

'Shit!'

When Lee Shin saw those red eyes, he frowned.