

The Tower 120

Chapter 120

The challengers had been waiting at Merteng's Navy Zone base. The negotiations with Bilone saw them receiving the base's infrastructure in exchange for not giving their captives to other countries. After all, using the negotiations to benefit itself without suffering losses was better for Merteng than gaining an enemy.

"Man... they're swarming like bees."

"Yeah, you're right. Their numbers keep increasing with time."

Kanoko, who had come to support Merteng's base, nervously fidgeted with her arm as she observed the approaching third demon force. The atmosphere was tense, and everyone present shared a sense of hesitation about confronting the third demon force.

"The name-class demonic beasts haven't shown up yet," said Park Hye-Won.

Park Hye-Won, observing the enemy's military strength with Kanoko, gulped repeatedly. She had to provide sniper support from a distance, taking out the enemy's main forces. And Kanoko's role was to scout and gather information to relay to Park Hye-Won.

These two had a relatively safe role in this battle, but they could not shake off their anxiety.

"Be sure to keep an eye out for Shadow Archer," said Park Hye-Won to Kanoko.

"All right," Kanoko replied.

Shadow Archer was a demon with the number twenty-one. It was hard to find it even with their eyes wide open because he hid in the shadows. During daylight battles, it was relatively easier to respond to his attacks. However, reacting swiftly to their strikes at night was exceedingly difficult.

Predicting Shadow Archer's movements in total darkness was easier said than done. Moreover, demonic power in the Demon Zone became stronger at night, making it even harder to detect their attacks.

Still, Park Hye-Won was sure that she could snipe down the demon once it appeared.

"Hundreds of people have died at that demonic beast's hands. We have to kill him this time," said Park Hye-Won.

"Do you think you can get him...?" Kanoko asked worriedly.

Park Hye-Won gave a faint smile in response.

"I have no choice," Park Hye-Won replied.

Khaaa—

Kiiik!?Keeiik!

Kyaak! Kyarr!

The enraged cries of the demonic beasts echoed in the air, indicating that they were within range of their attack. The soldiers' expressions darkened rapidly, and the challengers' faces were full of concern.

"Don't worry too much," said Kim Kang-Chun, looking at a worried Shin Ha-Neul.

Because Shin Ha-Neul was still young, he tended to be easily swept away by the atmosphere. However, Shin Ha-Neul was one of the strongest people here and had to show his prowess today.

"Do you think we can win?" Shin Ha-Neul asked Kim Kang-Chun.

"Of course. But if a name-class demon appears, it's your job to take care of it," said Kim Kang-Chun.

"What? No way! I'll die!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

"You said you wanted to become a ranker. So, should this be scary?" Kim Kang-Chun said to Shin Ha-Neul.

"That's different..." Shin Ha-Neul muttered.

"Anyway, when you leave Isocia, you will get all of your accumulated achievements. If you catch a name-class demon alone here, the difference in achievements from other challengers will be huge," Kim Kang-Chun explained.

"Oh... I see," Shin Ha-Neul replied.

Kim Kang-Chun's words reignited Shin Ha-Neul's fading passion. He had once dreamt of becoming the best in the tower, and even though meeting Lee Shin had crushed that dream, he still wanted to become a ranker and return to Earth.

"Leave it to me!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted with confidence.

Kim Kang-Chun turned his head after noticing the tension on Ha-Neul's face disappear. He wondered how many demonic beasts had gathered there. It looked like there were tens of thousands of them already.

They, on the other hand, had two thousand troops at best waiting at the base. Merteng's people had no choice but to rely on the defense and attack power of their base

"They're coming!"

The fastest demonic beasts of the third demon force, referred to as Quricks, charged forward. The cannons at the base fired, and the challengers lying in wait ambushed the enemy.

Wooong— Bang!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The ground shook and exploded. The meaty chunks from the dead demons' carcasses flew around, and their dark red blood painted the battlefield. As time passed, the soldiers found blood and sweat covering their faces. The shouts of the challengers echoed throughout the battlefield.

The laughter of the demonized humans irritated the challengers. Thankfully, Merteng and Lantan were currently winning. The allies had suffered no casualties or injuries, but the number of dead demonic beasts in the third demon force had already exceeded four digits.

All of this was thanks to the challengers slaughtering the demons on the front line. However, the demonized humans taunted the allies as if nothing had happened. Belkman, commanding from the base's control room, frowned at the annoying laughter of the demonized humans.

"Snipe the demonized humans. Even though we're winning, the morale of our allies is decreasing," Belkman commanded.

"Understood."

The hidden snipers revealed themselves, and their Hextech weapons spewed fire, abruptly silencing the laughter of the demonized humans. Suddenly, the soldiers fighting on the front line felt like they had awoken from a deep sleep. And the commander who had just given the order felt the same way.

"What order did I just give...?" Belkman looked confused.

As if possessed by something for a moment, Belkman had employed the hidden snipers faster than necessary.

'Wait! How was I hearing their laughter?'

Even though Belkman was in the control room, he had vividly heard the demonized humans' annoying laughter. The soldiers felt the same way. No demonized humans were near them, but they had heard the laughter as if they were right before them.

Seconds after they had discovered this anomaly, the snipers began dying one by one.

"The Shadow Archer has appeared! He's sniping the snipers!"

"Damn it! Order all the snipers to hide! What about Park Hye-Won? What happened to Park Hye-Won?" Belkman asked, looking worried.

Belkman urgently ordered and turned the screen toward Park Hye-Won's supposed location. Kanoko, who was on the same team, was also missing.

Belkman bit his lip and rubbed his forehead with nervousness.

"Find Park Hye-Won! Right now!" Belkman ordered.

"Yes, sir."

The soldier left the control room immediately. Belkman trembled after experiencing what was known as the nightmare of the third demon force, which he had only heard about.

Belkman could not even comprehend the demonic ability, but he felt as if he had been dreaming that whole time, half asleep. He slammed the table angrily, realizing that his people had suffered without even being able to resist.

"Have the name-class demons appeared yet?" Belkman asked.

"Not yet... Ah! There they are! They have appeared!" replied a soldier.

"Who is he?" Belkman asked.

"It's Kakus! It's him—the Giant with three heads!"

Belkman watched the screen as Kakus—a ten-meter-tall demon with the number 18—revealed himself from the darkness.

'He's still manageable.'

Besides being a strong Giant who could spit fire from his mouth, he was not particularly special. Although he was tough and had great recovery power, it was easy to fight against him because he was slow.

"Deploy Kim Kang-Chun and Baek Hyun," Belkman ordered.

"Yes," the soldier replied.

"And what happened to the snipers?" Belkman asked.

"It seems like the Shadow Archer has attacked them. Everyone had black thorns on their foreheads," explained the soldier.

"Tsk." Belkman clicked his tongue.

Belkman knew that regret would change nothing, so the important thing was to not repeat the mistake in the future.

Shadow Archer's location was yet to be discovered. He and the demon that could cause strange hallucinations were hiding somewhere.

‘That means there are at least three name-class demonic beasts here.’

Fortunately, single-digit demons, Solo Digits, hadn’t appeared. And since Belkman had more troops waiting aside, he thought his people could manage this battle.

"What is the current damage situation?" Belkman asked.

"Since the snipers are out of commission, our casualties have rapidly increased. We have 21 fatalities, 20 seriously injured, and 113 with minor injuries. Considering we had not a single fatality in the past, this number will only increase," said the soldier.

They had more fatalities than serious injuries due to Shadow Archer's attack. They managed to hold out until now, but Belkman’s worries weren’t improving.

Whenever Belkman had felt this way on the battlefield, nothing good came. He hoped that this time would be different, that his intuition was wrong. He turned to look at the telecommunication device nearby, which used to ring busily even when it wasn't needed. But this time, it was too quiet, adding to his unease.

‘Please come quickly.’

It had been four days since they received word that Dier had departed. However, there was still no news. Where were they, and what were they doing? Belkman didn’t think that they were in danger; he just wanted them to arrive here quickly. The front line was truly a chaotic place.

Swoosh! Clang!

Black blood flew in all directions. It was difficult to distinguish whether the darkness here was a fog of blood or demon power. Baek Hyun calmed his pounding heart and stepped back after hearing a soldier urgently calling him out.

"Belkman has ordered you and Kim Kang-Chun to deal with Kakus together," said the soldier.

Baek Hyun wiped the blood near his eyes and furrowed his eyebrows. In the distance, he could see a Giant with three massive heads.

"Don't we need three people to take down all that?" Baek Hyun asked the soldier.

"Belkman said there's a lack of manpower," said the soldier.

"Tsk." Baek Hyun clicked his tongue.

While Baek Hyun was still talking with the soldier, Kim Kang-Chun arrived.

"Hyung, did you hear that?" Baek Hyun asked Kim Kang-Chun.

"Yeah. Let's try it on our own," replied Kim Kang-Chun

"If it's number 18, honestly, I could do it alone," Baek Hyun said.

"Stop showing off," said Kim Kang-Chun.

Kim Kang-Chun smirked as he noticed Baek Hyun's eyes shake slightly, betraying his words.

"Hey, you seem calmer than I expected," said Baek Hyun, looking at Kim Kang-Chun.

"Really? You think so?" Kim Kang-Chun replied.

Kim Kang-Chun's facial muscles twitched for a moment. He slowly touched his face with his fingertips and noticed that the corners of his mouth had lifted slightly. He quickly lowered his lips and turned his head.

"Let's get going. Do you want to bet who'll cut off more of that guy's necks?" Baek Hyun suggested.

"Okay, let's do it," Kim Kang-Chun agreed.

Baek Hyun ran toward the demonic beasts, and Kim Kang-Chun followed him, lost in thought.

‘Why am I like this?’

Kim Kang-Chun felt strange. Perhaps he had become numb from spending too much time in the tower. He was seemingly becoming indifferent to death, or maybe he was even welcoming it.

‘For now, I should concentrate on the fight.’

As the two approached Kakus, their allies cleared a path for them. Kakus noticed them and breathed fire from his mouth. The flames had come out from his middle head, targeting Baek Hyun. However, Baek Hyun quickly dodged the attack and slid into the gap between the demonic beast’s legs.

[Wind Drill]

Air amassed and revolved on the tip of Baek Hyun's sword before a sword aura strike flew straight toward Kakus. But Kakus evaded the attack and countered with a swift kick.

Thump— Bam!

The attack sent Baek Hyun flying hundreds of meters with a resounding crash. Seizing the opportunity, Kim Kang-Chun struck Kakus' right leg with his greatsword, making him lose balance and fall, crushing the countless demonic beasts behind him

Kim Kang-Chun climbed Kakus’ body to reach his head. Kakus had a strong physique, but he was not smart.

‘This is it.’?

Kim Kang-Chun's sword swung, but a sharp thorn abruptly pierced his abdomen.

"Keugh..." Kim Kang-Chun groaned in pain.

Kakus lifted his foot to crush Kim Kang-Chun, who had fallen to the ground.

Whooong! Bam!

Shin Ha-Neul suddenly appeared next to Kim Kang-Chun and struck Kakus' foot. And Kakus consequently fell again.

"Hyung, are you okay?" Shin Ha-Neul asked, looking worried.

"Thanks, man," Kim Kang-Chun said.

Shin Ha-Neul supported Kim Kang-Chun. If not for Shin Ha-Neul, Kakus could've had fatally injured Kim Kang-Chun.

Kim Kang-Chun stood up and yanked out the black thorn in his abdomen. He then glanced in the direction where the thorn had come from and saw a demon with thorns all over his body.

The demon quickly hid under the ground. Shadow Archer was intelligent and could skillfully predict his opponents' moves. He usually aimed for the head to kill the opponent in one shot, but this time, he hadn't because he had assumed that Kim Kang-Chun could dodge the headshot.

'Demons are becoming stronger and smarter as well.'

Kim Kang-Chun frowned and clicked his tongue.

"Tsk. Where's Hye-Won?" Kim Kang-Chun wondered about Hye-Won's safety and asked.

"She's probably somewhere out there, targeting that demon."

Baek Hyun then returned to the battlefield, gritting his teeth.

"I'll kill that bastard! I'm going to chop his head off!" Baek Hyun glared at the demonic beast.

"Be careful. Shadow Archer is still targeting us," Kim Kang-Chun warned him.

"Hye-Won will protect us from somewhere," said Baek Hyun.

Baek Hyun charged toward Kakus again, and Shin Ha-Neul followed him, pushing aside the surrounding demonic beasts to protect him. Kim Kang-Chun scanned the area and spotted Shadow Archer aiming at Baek Hyun with a thorn in his mouth.

"Watch out!" Kim Kang-Chun cried out.

Woong— Bam!

Suddenly, a light beam flew toward Shadow Archer. He frantically dug into the ground, but the beam relentlessly pursued him until it struck him.

The light beam disappeared, leaving only a trace of black blood behind. However, Shadow Archer could not be seen. They had missed their chance to take it down.

Kim Kang-Chun looked toward where the beam had come from and found Park Hye-Won.

"Good," Kim Kang-Chun muttered.

They had Park Hye-Won here to counter Shadow Archer. Kim Kang-Chun thought that he could leave Shadow Archer to Park Hye-Won.

Kim Kang-Chun returned to the battlefield, where the fight grew fiercer by the minute. The fight had already taken countless lives, so he desperately hoped for a miracle amidst the despair; he decided to make room for that hope to come in.

Kim Kang-Chun tightened his grip on the greatsword and darted toward Kakus.

The blue sky had turned black. The two worlds looked utterly different along a line, and it seemed that someone had forcefully put them together. This was the boundary line of the Demon Zone.

Lee Shin's party had entered the Demon Zone from the Blue Zone. And the sense of looming death made Lee Shin's expression stiffen.

"Mr. Lee Shin?" Han Sang-Hyun asked.

"It seems like it won't be a good homecoming," said Lee Shin, looking at Han Sang-Hyun.

"It's okay. I've been through worse," Han Sang-Hyun replied.

Han Sang-Hyun answered with a forced smile.

"Merteng's base is in danger, so I must go first. Follow me but take your time," said Lee Shin.

"Would it be... that dangerous?" Han Sang-Hyun asked.

"Yeah, so hurry up if you want to return to your hometown. I'll provide you with transportation," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin then fell into thought with a stern expression. He had found Burtgang's whereabouts thanks to Zhuge Yun after searching for it for a long time. But he was already behind schedule to acquire it.

Lee Shin had not expected to obtain the sword here, but now that he knew of its existence, he had to take it at all costs. With just this sword, he could significantly accelerate the plan he had set in motion.

'Anyway, I have to go quickly.'

The situation was turning urgent. Lee Shin summoned his Skeleton Crows from the shadow space and left alone. Those who remained trembled at the sight of Lee Shin's Skeleton Crows.

"Commander, this is..."

"Stop talking nonsense and get on quickly!" Han Sang-Hyun shouted.

With a gulp, Han Sang-Hyun climbed onto the Skeleton Crow.

"Commander, we've never ridden this before!"

The Skeleton Crow with Han Sang-Hyun on flapped its wings and rose to the sky.

"Me neither—!" Han Sang-Hyun screamed as the Skeleton Crow accelerated.

The other members, watching with their mouths agape, quickly climbed on the Skeleton Crows.

"Ahhhh!"

"Wow, this is actually pretty fun!"

"I'm scared of heights!"

"Save meee!"

As the crows took to the sky, only the members' screams rang in the area.