

The Tower 123

Chapter 123

Thick black fog enveloped the forest in all directions. Demonic beasts glared at Lee Shin, warning him not to encroach on their territory. He sensed their presence but ignored them.

Lee Shin extended his mana to search for the enemy leader and then dashed toward his goal. As he focused on his task, he heard water drops that grew louder and louder until he realized it was raining.

He looked around in confusion, noticing the darkness had vanished, replaced by a forest filled with trees and dirt. He stopped running and turned his head to look around.

A towering cliff stood in front of him, blocking his path. As Lee Shin leaned back to see the end of the cliff, he noticed something watching him from the top.

Bababam—!

The mountain began to shake, and huge boulders tumbled down from the cliff.

Thud Thump Thump?

Thud—!

The slow drizzle suddenly turned into a downpour, and a thick fog rose, obscuring everything from view.

‘Is this an illusion?’

Lee Shin gave a bitter laugh and smirked. He then quickly spun the mana wriggling inside his body.

[Psychokinesis]

Lee Shin extended his hand toward the object at the end of the cliff, quickly snatching it from the air. The once-distant edge of the cliff now felt much closer.

Lee Shin pulled his arm back, and the small object grew rapidly.

‘Was it you who made people hallucinate?’

Thud—!

Lee Shin slammed the demon into the ground, giving rise to a dust cloud. Once it cleared, he looked at the demon pinned to the ground beneath him with a smirk.

The demon had long, white hair that covered his plump body. And Lee Shin saw bulging veins on his hunched back and thick arms and legs. The peculiar appearance helped Lee Shin quickly identify the demon.

‘Mun...’

Mun could make his target hallucinate. The mountain range, the rain, and everything else were an illusion. And as soon as Lee Shin realized that, he became certain that the demon was Mun.

Hallucination was nothing if the caster was caught, but if the caster remained free, it was a tiring ability. The demons likely set up this trap because they knew the fact.

‘So that's why they're getting impatient.’

Lee Shin turned to the side with a smirk, but then the ground began to shake. He frowned as demonic power approached him, splitting the ground. It seemed like an attempt to save Mun, but it was useless.

The surrounding area was already within Lee Shin’s control. Having roughly estimated the strength of the demonic power, he bound his mana and created a shield.

Bang—!

With a subdued explosion, the demonic power scattered, and the shield disappeared. The surrounding background began to blur, and the cliffs and mountains disappeared. The illusion had disappeared, so only the forest full of darkness remained.

‘Given the situation, what they’ll do is obvious.’

Lee Shin immediately scattered his mana around him.

Swoosh—!

Several thorns flew out of the black fog, flying toward Lee Shin. The enemy seemingly wanted to kill him by any means necessary, which he found pathetic.

While the demons had blind hatred and bloodlust, Lee Shin’s had an utterly calm mind. His mana particles spread like fog before gathering to form a shield.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lee Shin's shield deflected the thorns effortlessly, so the wolf-like demonic beasts lurking in the trees charged toward him. Sensing the danger, he swiftly created mana circles infused with lightning energy in all directions.

[Lightning Field]

Swoosh—!

Lee Shin's field magic expanded to fill a thirty-meter radius around him—something only the sixth-level or above wizards could do. Despite the common notion that using magic in the Demon Realm was almost impossible, he seemingly had no problem manipulating his mana. The lightning energy, split into particles, riddled the wolf-like demonic beasts.

Sizzle! Pizz—!

"Keeeah!" The wolf-like demonic beasts writhed in pain and collapsed.

Lee Shin furrowed his eyebrows and looked around. Demonic power seemed to accumulate and ripple wherever he looked.

'Is that a sorcerer?'

The demons' number indicated that they were part of a massive attack. So, the sorcerer behind the spell had to be here. The demons attacking him from all sides proved that they were trying to prevent Lee Shin from interfering with the sorcerer's spell, but he did not care.

[Lightning Burn]

Pizz— Pizzzz—

His lightning bolts spread in all directions and burned the demons to ashes. Then, he heard a loud noise from where the sorcerer should be.

Bang—!

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Belzark, who had become Lee Shin's knight, was responsible for this sound, fulfilling his duty. The number of his points kept rising; after a while, the battle was over.

"Phew."

Lee Shin took a short breath and turned around to find a sentinel there. About a meter in size, it was made of demonic power and rippled like smoke. The large eye on its head stared at Lee Shin for a while before the sentinel dissipated.

“Hah.” Lee Shin chuckled at the sentinel, who had seemingly said, “I’m keeping an eye on you.”

After the sentinel had disappeared, Lee Shin looked at where the Black and White Zones merged. Across it was the Demon King’s castle, but Lee Shin knew that now wasn’t the time to go there.

Lee Shin had been searching for someone ever since arriving in Isocia. Consequently, he couldn’t go there until he eliminated his target.

‘Since Burtgang is now in my hands, I’ll be there soon.’

People had gathered in the conference room located in Merteng’s base.

"I don't think it's going to work. We can't win just by defending," Sonoda Hazuki muttered as she looked at the demon zone on a large map.

She ran her finger over the terrain inside the purple line, then stopped at the location where the base had been marked.

"Over here! Merteng has to defeat this place," Sonoda Hazuki suggested.

"Why is that?" Han Sang-Hyun asked, raising his eyebrows at her words.

"The demons' military strength is increasing too quickly. If we can’t occupy the Purple Zone, the country's combat force will be in danger,” Sonoda Hazuki explained.

"Breaking through forcefully can be dangerous," said Han Sang-Hyun.

More than half of the people in the conference room nodded, agreeing with Sang-Hyun's opinion. Sonoda Hazuki stood up and scanned the Korean challengers in the room.

"Mr. Han Sang-Hyun," Sonoda Hazuki called out.

"What is it?" Han Sang-Hyun asked, looking confused.

"I think I was short-sighted," Sonoda Hazuki replied.

Han Sang-Hyun frowned at Hazuki's heavy voice.

"What are you trying to say?" Han Sang-Hyun asked her.

Instead of answering, she stood up and looked at the Korean challengers.

"I'm sorry. I would like to apologize," said Sonoda Hazuki.

Han Sang-Hyun and the Korean challengers opened their eyes wide and raised their eyebrows. Hazuki sincerely apologized, lowering her head.

"Huh? I mean... Why are you doing this all of a sudden," Han Sang-Hyun muttered.

"I think I have to let it out. It's a bit... I mean, I know it's too late. I should have apologized when I saw your faces earlier," said Sonoda Hazuki.

"It's okay." Han Sang-Hyun replied to her apology.

"What difference does an apology mak—" Kang Sang-Yoon grumbled.

"Kang Sang-Yoon!" Han Sang-Hyun shouted, interrupting him.

Although Hazuki's apology did not make him feel better, the chiding made Kang Sang-Yoon shut up. It was not just him, though. Most Korean challengers who had come to Merteng with Lee Shin were listening to her words with displeasure.

Han Sang-Hyun knew why his team members were reacting that way. However, he also knew that he did not have the luxury of throwing a fit right now. Now wasn't the time for allies to squabble amongst themselves.

Han Sang-Hyun tried hard to speak nicely because he could not afford to sour his relationship with Lantan.

"I understand and accept that Lantan's at fault," said Sonoda Hazuki.

"I'm sorry, but I won't accept your apology yet," Han Sang-Hyun replied with a stern face.

The situation was already bad enough, so he could not let his team's morale drop further.

"Oh... I see. I understand," Sonoda Hazuki replied.

"But, that could change after the war. At that time, please give our members—no, I mean, the Korean challengers deserve a fair chance to get revenge," said Han Sang-Hyun.

Sonoda Hazuki realized that she had made a mistake. She hastily looked at the Korean challengers there. They were not whining childishly about the past—they just wanted a fair fight, regardless of the outcome.

"I guess I'm still very lacking. I understand. I'll ensure they get a fair chance," Sonoda Hazuki said.

"Thank you," Han Sang-Hyun replied.

Only then did the faces of the Korean challengers loosen up a bit. Seeing that, Sonoda let out a big sigh of relief and cleared her throat.

"I'll start the meeting again," said Sonoda.

And this time, the Korean challengers nodded at her words.

"We're going to recapture the Veil Base, considered the watershed of the Eastern Purple Zone," said Sonoda Hazuki.

"Why? It would be safer to recapture the base in the nearest mountain range from here," said Han Sang-Hyun.

Sonoda shook her head at Han Sang-Hyun's opinion.

"That would be true under normal circumstances, but taking that place doesn't help us with the front line much. The demons could still attack from both directions," said Sonoda Hazuki.

"Isn't that the same for the Veil Base located in the gorge?" Han Sang-Hyun asked.

"That's right, but this place is perfect for defending against the demon army because it's located inside the gorge," replied Sonoda Hazuki.

"But, at the same time, it's also an easy place to get trapped in. If a name-class demonic beast comes, it'll be impossible to escape," said Han Sang-Hyun.

Han Sang-Hyun thought it was a risky strategy. Its good defense only mattered as long as they didn't have to face a name-class demon. The narrow path of the gorge would spell disaster for them if a name-class demon appeared.

"Name-class demonic beasts won't come for a while," Sonoda Hazuki said confidently.

"What? Why? What do you mean?" Han Sang-Hyun asked with confusion.

The people in the conference room were skeptical.

"The only demonic forces that can affect the Purple Zone in the southeast side are the third and seventh demonic forces. The seventh demonic force has little influence, and the third demonic force recently lost several name-class demonic beasts. They even lost a Solo Digit," said Sonoda Hazuki.

Sonoda picked up the glass beside her and took a sip of her water.

"Do you get what I'm trying to say? A single battle has changed the relationship between the demons and the humans. Now, the ones running away are the demon armies, especially the name-class ones," Sonoda Hazuki continued.

A bit too parched, Sonoda Hazuki drank all the water in the glass.

"Do we need to be passive when we have a monster like Lee Shin on our side? The enemies can only send demonic beasts to our base. In this sense, no reason not to take Veil," said Sonoda Hazuki.

"I forget about the existence of Mr. Lee Shin... All right then, I understand." Han Sang-Hyun nodded in agreement.

"As you know, there are mana stones at the demon base. As the danger level in the gorge is high, a large mana stone is located there. The longer it takes to recapture, the faster the country's merit points and our alliance will grow," said Sonoda Hazuki.

"But won't the name-class demonic beasts attack us when Mr. Lee Shin leaves?" Han Sang-Hyun asked.

"The Demon Corps are smarter than you think. The Demon King would not want to lose more name-class beasts. Even if Lee Shin leaves openly, the suspicious third and seventh demonic forces will never invade this place," said Sonoda Hazuki.

The people in the conference room nodded in agreement.

"Rather than attacking a place Lee Shin might return to, attacking other countries' bases is a much safer option. Moreover, we can easily block the demonic beasts here with the Merteng challengers, as long as we don't encounter Solo Digits," Sonoda Hazuki suggested.

"Well, since Belzark is dead, any other Solo Digits can hardly come here," Han Sang-Hyun added.

"Yes, that's right. Other Solo Digits are supervising other countries from different places," said Sonoda Hazuki.

Sonoda Hazuki then gave detailed instructions for the operation.

"Recapturing Veil Base is our mission. Let's get ready immediately. We'll invade the place secretly," said Sonoda Hazuki.

Lee Shin, who had just finished a battle, returned to the base and contacted someone.

- I've been waiting for you.

The source of the voice was the person on the screen—Zhuge Yun, holding his trademark fan before his mouth.

"Yeah, I just finished dealing with half of the third demon force. I also retrieved Burtgang from the place you mentioned," Lee Shin said.

- That's good. What are your plans now?

"After removing some risks here, I'll head to Meldeuren," Lee Shin replied.

- Could you stop by our base before going to Meldeuren?

"To your place? Why?" Lee Shin asked.

- Because Wang Zhaoren is here.

Lee Shin nodded as the name had caught his attention. Wang Zhaoren had a lot of influence and power over Bilone. Zhuge Yun was currently trying to expand his influence, but he thought it would take some time to seize power from Wang Zhaoren, who had a tight grip on it.

- If we can catch Wang Zhaoren, everything will be much easier.

Wang Zhaoren believed that China was the best and the most powerful country in the world. Therefore, he wanted to drive out Lee Shin. Furthermore, he hated Korea to the extreme and had severely tortured the captured Koreans in Bilone.

Currently, Zhuge Yun was caring for all the captives, but that had put him in a tight spot. Lee Shin realized that Zhuge Yun had asked him to wait for this.

- As you said, Mr. Lee Shin, to keep people united, we must be selective and only kill figures like Wang Zhaoren.

"So what's the plan?" Lee Shin asked Zhuge Yun.

- Soon, the Demon Corps will come. The people here have already lost a lot of the troops while performing a reckless mission on Wang Zhaoren's orders. If Wang Zhaoren makes another big mistake here, the public's trust in him will drop rapidly. With your ability, Mr. Lee Shin, it won't be difficult to kill Wang Zhaoren. We can kill him now, but that would result in a backlash from the Chinese population.

"So, you want to make an excuse to kill him?" Lee Shin asked.

- It is a rational and practical solution.