

The Tower 135

Chapter 135: The Reunion

The challengers gathered at the edge of the Black Zone, the land of demons, preparing for their final battle. From the challengers of Merteng to Lantan, Tetir to Wildes, Bilone to Meldeuren, there were hundreds of challengers with the White Pattern.

Despite the numerous injuries from the constant clashes with the demons, many of the challengers had grown rapidly. In particular, the country that had experienced the most significant growth was Merteng. Not only had the top-ranked challengers of Merteng experienced huge growth, but those ranked below also had grown in their abilities to the extent they were now comparable to the top challengers of other countries.

"Mr. Lee Shin, thank you for your assistance," said Han Sang-Hyun.

Even at Han Sang-Hyun's sudden greeting, Lee Shin smiled and reached out to him.

"You're welcome. Thank you for hanging in there," Lee Shin replied and the two shook hands.

The challengers of Meldeuren, who had arrived first in the Black Zone, approached Lee Shin. Clark stood before Lee Shin as their representative.

"How did a Qualified with the Black Pattern end up here?" Lee Shin playfully asked him.

"I came because I thought it would be difficult to see you in the future. I won't be able to keep up with your speed in climbing the tower anymore," said Clark.

"Even if you could keep up, don't follow me," Lee Shin said, looking at Clark with a serious expression.

Clark had been trying to read his expression.

"I have a question, Mr. Lee Shin. What exactly are you looking for?" Clark asked Lee Shin as if he had seen something amiss about Lee Shin.

"I still don't know who you really are, how you escaped from the first floor, and why someone who used to be the boss suddenly became a challenger."

With each word, everyone started to turn their focus to Lee Shin because they all had the same thoughts as Clark.

"I don't think you make your moves solely for the sake of Korea's revival. Then, what exactly are you looking for? What are you reaching for that is beyond what I can even see?" Clark asked.

This whole time, Clark's tone remained calm and composed. Yet, one could feel the palpable emotions underlying his words.

"..." Lee Shin remained silent.

He almost allowed himself to reveal his convictions, momentarily swayed by the emotions emanating from Clark and those around. However, he could not speak. To be more exact, he must not speak.

Besides the fact that the gods were looking, implicating others in this fight to bring the gods down was something that should not happen. Lee Shin might receive indirect help from them, but he did not want them to be directly involved in this fight.

'Even if they end up helping me, they should remain unaware of my intentions.'

That was the way to divert misfortune from them. Did Clark also sense what he was thinking? For a moment, bitterness lingered in Clark's gaze and then disappeared.

"Is it something that you cannot tell us? Then...please just tell me this. Is it something that will help us... I mean, humans?" Clark asked Lee Shin.

In his eyes was a resolve to hear this answer no matter what.

"I want to avoid making the same mistake twice," Lee Shin replied.

"... Sorry?" Lee Shin asked.

"That's my answer," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin did not respond further, ending with a statement that confused Clark even more. Clark thought that any further questions would be meaningless and closed his mouth.

"But... just remember that it's not the time for us to fight each other." Lee Shin spoke softly before Clark stepped back.

These words were not directed only at Clark. Lee Shin wanted everyone there to hear these words. A familiar-looking man came forward, covering his face with a fan.

"I've come to greet you," said Zhuge Yun looking at Lee Shin.

"All right," Lee Shin replied.

Everyone glanced coldly at Bilone's challengers. However, they stood there unaffected, as if they were used to receiving such looks.

"The person before me said that they could not keep up with you, but I'll catch up soon. Hahaha," Zhuge Yun said.

"..." Lee Shin did not say anything.

"I will cut out the rotten parts of Bilone before I leave to catch up with you. Shouldn't I do at least that much before I meet you, Mr. Lee Shin, on the upper floors?" Zhuge Yun said and laughed.

"Do as you please, and... thank you for your hard work," Lee Shin said.

Lee Shin reached out his arm and placed his hand on Zhuge Yun's shoulder. He flinched at the sudden touch but did not shake the hand away. A complex expression appeared on his face. Receiving encouragement like this was an unfamiliar experience for him.

Challengers from other countries also approached Lee Shin to exchange greetings. After the brief exchanges with everyone, now was the time for Lee Shin to enter the White Zone and deal with the Demon King.

"Let's go," Lee Shin said, looking at Veck Jack.

The challengers entered the White Zone. At its center stood a massive castle that belonged to the Demon King. Normally, demons should be guarding the entrance, but not a single demon was in sight. The challengers proceeded straight into the castle.

It was a vast space—more than spacious even if a crowd of hundreds entered. There were no demons in the lobby. They would need to reach the top of the castle to confront the Demon King.

Creak—

With a creaking sound of an old latch, a gate opened, revealing the Demon King sitting on a chair, waiting for the challengers. Standing beside him like a guard was the demonic beast number one named Carno.

Carno was a corrupted dragon. Many challengers flinched at the fierce presence from his gigantic build. The Demon King, Derpin, scanned the challengers with a calm look and wiped the corner of his mouth with his hand.

"Welcome, dear Qualified," said Derpin.

He adjusted his round glasses and got up from his seat. Most of the challengers paid close attention to every move Derpin made and flinched. However, they did not make any moves as they watched Lee Shin.

"I am Derpin."

As Derpin said that, the corners of his mouth rose up. The big smile sent shivers down the challengers' spines.

"I don't think we're supposed to be on friendly terms?" While retorting, Lee Shin slowly activated his mana.

"So, you must be Mr. Lee Shin. I've been wanting to meet you so badly," said Derpin.

"You've been wanting to meet me...? Why? Didn't you think you'd die if you met me?" Lee Shin asked in a mocking tone.

The atmosphere around them quickly grew colder. Soon, Derpin's gaze was filled with anger, flickering with madness.

"...I can revive, but you guys are different," Derpin said, with a voice that hinted at suppressed anger.

Yet, one could also hear a gleeful madness in the voice, as if Derpin found something amusing and was barely holding back his laughter.

"This is strange..."

"W-What should we do? Someone do something about it! Something's fishy with that smile!"

"Shit... Look at how he's holding back his laughter. He is clearly trying to do something."

Challengers who witnessed Derpin's behavior sensed something odd and started to murmur among themselves. Their unease skyrocketed. However, Lee Shin still remained calm and his eyes scanned Derpin. At the same time, his mind started to process his thoughts in double quick time.

'...' Lee Shin did not say anything.

The challengers' hearts were beating rapidly, and the sound of their hearts pounding resonated clearly in Lee Shin's ears. People's voices became stretched out and the sensation of the faint breeze brushing against his skin became more pronounced.

'Qualification of an Adversary.'

Dozens of images quickly flashed through Lee Shin's mind. He could vividly see the various tragedies that would unfold before him, and the results were shown in his mind, as if he had experienced them already.

"C...a...r...n...o..." said Derpin.

However, Derpin's voice reached Lee Shin very slowly. His mind was in turmoil, but time passed by in an instant.

The next moment, Lee Shin's gaze shifted from Derpin to Carno. He could tell that Carno's heart was pounding like crazy. The demon power engine in his heart was overheating, reaching the state just before exploding.

It seemed like a tremendous mass of demon power, tightly compressed inside, was roaring to explode. The intertwining strands of demon power inside his heart were all tangled. They were so tangled that at a glance, they appeared to be a single mass.

If all those threads of demon power could not be untangled, that bomb would soon explode. The next moment, Lee Shin's gaze returned to Derpin. His accelerating mind returned to normal.

"This one here is the dragon that I cherish the most, hahaha. As you all know, it's the noble race, the dragons," Derpin introduced the number one demonic beast with pride.

Derpin's attitude remained calm and relaxed throughout the whole conversation. There seemed to be no trace of regret about life on his face. Such a demeanor only further unsettled the challengers.

"Lee Shin, He Who Knows Death, what do you see right now? Can you see death in this place?" Derpin mocked Lee Shin and asked.

"Yes, that's right," Lee Shin replied.

"Is that so? Then, how many deaths do you see? Dozens? Hundreds?" Derpin continued to ask.

The challengers' gazes began to waver at the numbers he mentioned, because those numbers clearly represented the deaths of the challengers. However, with a sneer, Lee Shin answered the question with one word.

"One," Lee Shin replied.

For the first time, a frown appeared on Derpin's face.

"Just one...?" Derpin asked.

"Yes, Derpin, it's just you," Lee Shin replied.

As he said that, Lee Shin clenched his lefthand mid-air and pulled downward.

"Keurgh!" Derpin gasped.

Derpin, who was a little distance away, was drawn toward Lee Shin's left palm as if being magnetically pulled. With his neck grasped, Derpin gnashed his teeth and glared at Lee Shin.

"Everyone... will die... here..." said Derpin.

"Do you trust the heart of a dragon? It's such a pitiful imitation," Lee Shin said in a mocking tone.

The next moment, Lee Shin's black mana extended toward Carno. The black mana that infiltrated the heart of demon power, squeezed the heart tightly and pierced through one of the intricately interwoven flows.

Snap!

"...What just happened...?" Derpin asked Lee Shin with a puzzled look.

Derpin could not understand this phenomenon. Right after then, Carno was collapsing. The heart that had been beating madly inside him came to a sudden stop, as if Carno had consumed all its energy and had nothing left.

"There's a cause behind every effect. If you find the cause, the effect will naturally follow," Lee Shin tried to explain.

However, even with Lee Shin's explanation, Derpin still could not understand. To be more exact, he did not even want to know because he would die very soon.

"...I lost," said Derpin.

"It's good that you acknowledged your loss that fast," Lee Shin replied.

After saying that, a gust of wind blade flowed from Lee Shin's fingertips and slit Derpin's throat.

Thud.

Derpin's head fell off. At the same time, the Demon King's Castle started to shake and the world began to change. All the challengers with White Patterns left Isocia.

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On the 30th floor, there was a pub called "The Tune of the Drunkard." In the lobby alone, there were hundreds of creatures of different species drinking and chatting.

"Wow! This is great! This is the reason why everyone come all the way here to drink, even though it's expensive!"

"Hell no! What are you saying!? Their drink is just ordinary. They manage things well here, so those show-offs can't flaunt their strength. That's why this place is expensive, you know?"

"Hey! The taste of alcohol changes depending on the atmosphere! Since they manage the place well, the drinks taste like this!"

"Yeah, that's right! You actually know what you're talking about."

One had a long snout, sharp teeth, and thick skin, resembling an alligator. He belonged to the Dile-race. Another had a large head and mouth, and long protruding teeth, resembling a hippo—the Hippo-race. Yet another had sharp eyes, a short snout, and soft fur, resembling a wolf. He belonged to the Merang-race.

Creatures of different races gathered together at a table, conversing amiably. Not just this one table alone, but most of the tables in this pub were occupied by different races, creatures drinking and exchanging stories.

Starting from the 30th floor, each floor saw challengers from various dimensions gathered. There might not be great diversity considering the countless dimensions in existence, but there were many different species that were not commonly seen on the lower floors. Still, there were quite a few humans here.

"...You are truly remarkable. The more I hear your story, Mr. Swordsman, the more fascinating it becomes."

"Is that so? Hahaha! I have some business here so that's why I'm still on this floor, but once that's done, I'll quickly climb the Tower," the swordsman replied and laughed.

"Of course! An expert like you is top tier even in this city, Redcon."

"The top tier, huh? If I can remove the two I know, then I'm the best here," said the swordsman.

The swordsman said while brushing aside his long silver hair. The two humans, a man and a woman, who sat in front of him stared at him in a daze.

"But it's really amazing. I've seen many Elves before, but an Elf as handsome as you is the first."

"Oh, come on! He is beyond handsome, isn't he just beautiful?"

The two people's praises made the Elf swordsman smile and nod.

"But who are the two individuals you mentioned just now? Who are they exactly, that you could not defeat, Mr. Swordsman?"

"Yeah, I'm curious to know that too! How powerful are they..?"

"One of them is a heartless individual born with the bloodline of a dragon. And the other is..." The Elf Swordsman paused for a second and trailed off. He shook his head, looking at the two people in front of him.

"You guys probably would not know because you are not from Earth, but his name is Lee Shin. Have you heard about his name?" The Elf Swordsman asked.

"Umm... I think I've heard of him before from the Earthlings."

"Oh! I have! I know that he is quite famous among Earthlings. People say that he is quite strong, no?"

At her words, the Elf Swordsman smirked.

"Did you just say he was quite strong? If he is just 'quite strong,' then everyone here must be a bunch of fools and idiots," said the Elf Swordsman laughing at the woman in front of him.

"Huh? Is he really that strong?" the woman asked.

"Yeah, well, there's no need to worry about that weird guy, because he is a mutant among humans. Well, but he's the one I've been waiting for, though," the Elf Swordsman replied.

"Why? Why are you waiting for that person?"

"We have a secret that you guys would never know about. Well... when that guy comes, I'll at least introduce you guys to him," said the Elf Swordsman.

"Wow...! Really?"

"Are you sure? We get to talk to someone strong like—"

Bang—!

Suddenly, there came a loud noise. The noisy pub fell silent in an instant as a nearby table exploded and burst into pieces. A man wearing a red robe caused the table to explode with his magic, stood up and then walked to where the Elf Swordsman was.

All eyes immediately turned to them. The Elf Swordsman remained seated, furrowing his eyebrows and glaring at the man. The wizard standing in front of the Elf Swordsman raised his wand and aimed it at him.

"You better introduce me to that Lee Shin as well," said the man glaring at the Elf Swordsman.

"Huh?" The Elf Swordsman looked puzzled.