

The Tower 145

Chapter 145

A woman stood at the forefront, seemingly the representative, surrounded by a group of individuals guiding the challengers.

‘Did they ally already?’

Lee Shin nodded as he looked at them, thinking it was a wise choice. The goal of this stage was just to survive for fourteen days. Therefore, challengers did not need to confront and kill one another.

‘Well, the real problem is that they will experience more difficulties on the upper floors if they continue like this.’

It was okay if their goal was only to reach the fiftieth floor or live on a decently high floor. However, things would be different if the goal were to reach the hundredth floor. They could not climb up to the hundredth floor without fierce struggles. That would become evident to them if they climbed higher and higher.

‘Hmm?’

Lee Shin was about to avert his gaze from the alliance, but he abruptly narrowed his eyes. He had seen familiar faces there.

‘Why are they there?’

Among them were Park Hye-Won and Inyuu Kogo. With their skills, they did not need to join such an alliance to survive on the thirtieth floor. There was a high probability they had been forced to join. The stat reset had made it difficult for the minority to overwhelm the majority.

He would’ve considered helping them if ten or so days had passed, but it was still only the fourth day. Lee Shin felt a slight aversion to facing such a large group.

‘They'll handle it well on their own.’

Lee Shin turned away and went around them, entering the inner part of the island.

Crack—!

He tore off a protruding part of a tree, and sap flowed from there. He brought it close to his mouth and drank it.

"Ah," Lee Shin sighed in satisfaction after drinking the sap.

Having had no opportunity to replenish his fluids while in the basement, he felt relieved to be able to do so now. He grabbed some surrounding plants, filled his satiety level, and then moved toward the noise coming from deeper inside.

"Ha..." Lee Shin sighed after finding Shin Ha-Neul there.

Shin Ha-Neul was surrounded by plants and under attack. One of his legs was already bound to the ground. Lee Shin found the mangrove-like monster responsible for bounding Ha-Neul to the ground with its roots and yanked it out.

Thud!

Thick roots and branches followed the creature as it came out.

[Wind Cutter]

Swoosh!

When Lee Shin cut off the creature's roots, he heard Shin Ha-Neul's voice say, ‘Huh?’ from the other side.

[You have killed Mangrove.]

[Your Health Points have increased by 200.]

[Your Strength has increased by 1.]

After throwing the corpse of the Mangrove aside, Lee Shin headed toward Shin Ha-Neul.

[Fire Ball]

A fireball materialized on Lee Shin's fingertips and set the plants aflame.

Boom! Swoosh!

The flames engulfed the plants. They wildly swung their leaves and stems before falling.

"Master!" Shin Ha-Neul expressed his delight at Lee Shin's appearance and got rid of the plants clinging to him.

Thud—!

The dozens of plants could not last long, and all fell.

'I guess I can fill myself with these guys.'

Lee Shin thought using these plants to sate his hunger was a good idea. While he was cutting the roots of the dead Mangrove and peeling off the bark, Shin Ha-Neul spoke up.

"Master, take a look at this! It's a Rare Box," said Shin Ha-Neul.

"Huh?" Startled, Lee Shin turned his head.

Click.

The box lid slowly opened, and a vibrant blue light pierced through the gaps between the trees. It lingered for a moment before vanishing into thin air.

"Wow!" Shin Ha-Neul gazed at the light but soon shifted his attention to the shoes that had appeared in his hands.

"Just when I was bothered by being barefoot, this is great—" Shin Ha-Neul muttered.

"Tsk. What's so great about it?" Lee Shin commented after looking at Shin Ha-Neul.

Pressing his temple with one hand, Lee Shin glanced back and grabbed Shin Ha-Neul's wrist, pulling him along.

"We don't have time to waste here. Let's move on quickly!" said Lee Shin.

"What? Why?" Shin Ha-Neul could not understand.

Confused by Lee Shin's reaction, Shin Ha-Neul ran after him and asked. However, before he could get a response from Lee Shin, a group of people suddenly appeared in front of them.

"Hey there, where are you going in such a hurry— kek!" said a bald challenger.

Lee Shin shoved Shin Ha-Neul toward the bald challenger blocking the way, and Shin Ha-Neul punched him in the abdomen.

"Oops... Sorry, it seems like I hit you. I didn't even realize I hit you." Shin Ha-Neul looked astonished; he couldn't believe he had punched the challenger.

"Ugh...! Kill them! Kill them all and take away their belongings!" shouted the bald and bizarrely muscular challenger.

It was a five-against-two situation. Therefore, Lee Shin chose to act swiftly instead of trying to conserve his mana.

[Thunderbolt]

Rumble—! Crack—! Boom!

"Kraaaaah!" The challengers screamed in surprise after getting abruptly struck by a thunderbolt.

Shin Ha-Neul punched a challenger, hurling them toward another challenger, and Lee Shin struck them both with a single thunderbolt. They both trembled and collapsed.

'Even if I control my power, I would've to spend at least 3000 mana points to knock them both down with a single lightning bolt.'

He currently had a little less than 70,000 Mana Points remaining and three enemies to deal with. If these enemy challengers were able to react and defend against the lightning bolt, he would have to spend even more mana points.

'I have to finish them all together.'

Having finished his calculations, Lee Shin directed his mana to the sky.

[Thunderbolt]

Rumble—! Crack—!

"Kaaak!" screamed an enemy challenger in panic.

Rumble—! Crack—!

"Keugh!" Another enemy challenger gasped.

Baaam—!

"Tsk! Do you think I'll fall for the same trick?" The challenger, the one Ha-Neul had hit, defended himself from the thunderbolt, and countered it.

'Tsk.'

Lee Shin clicked his tongue. Just as he was about to use magic again, an arrow flew out from nowhere and lodged itself in the enemy challenger's side.

Woong— Thunk!

"Kraaaaah!" screamed the enemy challenger.

Seeing this attack, Lee Shin's pupils slightly widened.

'Is this space... distortion?'

The arrow contained deep mysteries of space distortion. The challenger who had reacted to the thunderbolt had failed to evade this arrow.

Woong— Baaam—!

"Khaaak...!" Two more arrows flew toward and struck him.

He fell to his knees and finally died as the last arrow had pierced his throat.

"Mr. Lee Shin!" Natasha ran out of the woods. She was not alone.

"Master!" Park Joo-Hyuk shouted.

"Ha-Neul!" Baek Hyun-Ah shouted.

Park Joo-Hyuk and Baek Hyun-Ah were also with her.

"Are you all right?" Natasha asked.

"Yeah, thanks," Lee Shin replied.

Natasha's voice lacked emotion, but Lee Shin could feel her sincerity.

"We need to leave quickly—" Natasha said urgently.

"It's already too late," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin's expression hardened after he sensed the numerous approaching enemies. They had already surrounded this place.

"You're Lee Shin, right?" A female challenger with long white hair stepped forward and looked directly at him.

"Do you know me?" Lee Shin asked.

"Of course. You defeated Jack," the woman challenger replied.

Her words caused a stir among the others nearby.

"It seems like you're quite good at gathering information," Lee Shin muttered.

"Well, it's not too bad. I knew quite a bit about you, Mr. He Who Knows Death, even before you defeated Jack." She smirked and raised her eyebrow.

"So, what's your point?" Lee Shin asked.

"I see that you have no sense of humor. I'll be direct then. Join our alliance," said the female challenger.

"Is that the best you can do?" Lee Shin replied.

"If you join, we can offer you a better deal. How's that?" asked the female challenger.

She stared intently at him, and Lee Shin's gaze shifted from her to the others between them.

The female challenger was a Cyclops. Unlike male Cyclopes, female Cyclopes could manipulate minds.

'They're not the type to reveal themselves easily, yet she seems like the leader of this group.'

Lee Shin knew little about female Cyclopes since he had never encountered one directly. However, compared to their appearance, male Cyclopes had a clear passive demeanor.

"What if I don't want to?" Lee Shin asked coldly.

"Don't be like that. Think it over," said the woman Cyclops as she confidently approached Lee Shin, sure he couldn't evade her abilities.

However, Lee Shin just sneered at her reaction. Perhaps it was surprising to see his response, so her expression stiffened slightly.

"Don't you think I'm pretty?" She smiled, brushing her hair behind her ear as if trying to seduce Lee Shin.

"You? Pretty?" Contrary to her expectations, Lee Shin smirked, mocking her.

"W-what did you just say?" The female Cyclops got offended.

'Ha... That's funny.'

Lee Shin chuckled inside after recalling the vulnerability of female Cyclopes he had heard about.

- Hahaha, do you know why we're so passive? Because we're ugly.

- Huh? Is that right? You guys are passive just because you're ugly?

- Yeah, it's true. Males are somewhat okay with hearing these comments, but our females are different. If you happen to meet them, it's better not to casually mention their ugliness. Otherwise, you'll face serious consequences.

Remembering a Cyclops' words from back then, he said, "I don't understand what this ugly face is saying to me right now."

Lee Shin's provocative words distorted her face. Her cheeks trembled, and the corners of her mouth twitched.

'Why is he acting like this?'

'Man... I never expected him to say that to someone's face.'

Those from Lee Shin's group, standing behind him, were shocked by his unexpected words and exchanged glances.

"I... am... ugly? Am I ugly? Huh?" she asked Lee Shin.

The female Cyclops' head jerked back like a malfunctioning robot.

"Am I really ugly? Tell me straight," she asked, grabbing the shoulder of the challenger next to her.

"Aaah! No, no, you're not ugly! Y-y-y-you're pretty! Y-y-you're beautiful!" replied the challenger.

Crack—!

"Aaahhh!" With a bone-cracking sound, the challenger screamed and collapsed.

'She's out of her mind.'

Lee Shin observed her. Even though she was a female Cyclops, she was still a Cyclops. The stat reset hadn't taken away the skills and abilities unique to Cyclopes. Therefore, he could not let his guard down.

"Prepare for a battle!" ordered the female Cyclops.

"Yes, mam!"

"Damn, I knew this would happen," Lee Shin muttered.

"Why did you provoke her then?" Shin Ha-Neul looked at Cyclops and shook his head.

Although the female Cyclops had seemingly lost her composure, questioning whether she was ugly, it did not last long.

'She's gradually regaining her composure.'

She had regained her composure faster than Lee Shin expected. After losing her composure, she had wasted a bit of her mana, but that was it. Lee Shin was still at a disadvantage.

"Yeah! Everyone here is praising me and saying that I'm pretty... but why do you call me ugly?" Her gaze returned to Lee Shin.

She charged toward Lee Shin, but Park Joo-Hyuk blocked her way. She grabbed his sword and glared at him.

"Do you think I'm ugly too?" she asked Park Joo-Hyuk.

"Keugh!" Park Joo-Hyuk gasped.

Feeling her power through his sword, he groaned.

'Man... She's so strong...'

Hunting plants had increased his strength considerably, but it seemed insignificant before her. Park Joo-Hyuk could not let his guard down.

Woong— Bang—!

She lifted her arm holding the sword, abruptly lifting Joo-Hyuk in the process and slammed him to the ground.

"Keugh!" Park Joo-Hyuk gasped.

"I'm asking you if I'm ugly!" shouted the female Cyclops.

It seemed like she had lost her mind. She grabbed Joo-Hyuk's head, pinned it to the ground, and asked.

"Yes, You're ugly, you monster!" replied Park Joo-Hyuk.

Baam—!

Shin Ha-Neul had been hiding behind her and tried to launch a surprise punch, but her reaction was lightning-fast.

'Huh? How can she react to this?'

She had effortlessly and instantly blocked Shin Ha-Neul's powerful mana-filled attack.

"Did you say... that I'm ugly?" The muscles on her face twisted and contorted as if they were damaged.

Her unfocused pupils stared directly at Shin Ha-Neul.

"Just die." Her mouth opened wide, now as wide as Shin Ha-Neul's head.

Rumble—!

Bababam—!

However, a golden flash poured from the sky and engulfed the Cyclops.

"Keugh...!" The female Cyclops gasped.

Shin Ha-Neul barely managed to escape and groaned; her wide-open mouth would haunt his dreams forever.

'I almost died for real.'

When he looked at her dilated pupils, he felt a genuine sense of fear and death. It was now etched in his mind.

Crack—!

Shin Ha-Neul clenched his teeth and stepped back. He then stared at her.

Pizz—!

Hot smoke floated up from all over her. Even though she had been struck directly by Lee Shin's thunderbolt, she still stood tall, refusing to give in.

'I didn't expect her to stop that attack.'

Lee Shin clicked his tongue. Male Cyclopes had superior physical abilities, but it was different for females. They did not have the same physical strength as the males. However, they could reduce the power of magic.

- Actually, our females can be even more dangerous. While we recklessly rely on our physical abilities, they have exceptional resistance to magic and still try to avoid getting hit by spells.

Lee Shin watched her gasping for breath with interest.

‘Only about half of my power landed, but it definitely hit her.’

Recalling what the Cyclops had said to him, he had paid attention to his first attack, and although it hadn’t landed perfectly, this wasn’t a bad situation. She soon regained her composure and looked at Lee Shin with fiery eyes.

"You are arrogant... human," the female Cyclops muttered.

"You're holding up well," Lee Shin replied.

"Kill him, everyone! If you kill Lee Shin, your accomplishment on this stage will be greater than anyone else's!" shouted the female Cyclops.

The atmosphere among the challengers changed with her shout. In the tower, achievement meant power and ability.

‘She's surprisingly composed, isn't she?’

Provoking her had clouded her judgment, but even after getting hit by his lightning, she had quickly reined in her anger and regained her calm. Lee Shin quickly scanned his surroundings. There were dozens of challengers here, but only five were on Lee Shin’s team.

"What do you think about us withdrawing?" Natasha approached Lee Shin and asked.

Lee Shin nodded in response.

"Why don’t we call it a tactical retreat?" Lee Shin replied.

"Then we should find the right timing," Natasha said.

"No, there's no need for that. They will take care of it from their side," Lee Shin smirked.