

## **The Tower 146**

### **Chapter 146**

"Huh...? Who are they?" Natasha asked Lee Shin with a confused look on her face.

Suddenly, flames erupted from behind the enemy crowd, and several individuals screamed and fell to the ground.

'We had an ally on that side?'

Natasha immediately understood that Lee Shin had been talking about this.

"Traitors!" The enemies started to panic.

"Darn it! Someone do something quickly!" Inyuu Kogo's voice came from within the enemies.

Park Joo-Hyuk and Baek Hyun-Ah split in opposite directions, drawing the challengers' attention as if they had already planned it. Natasha drew out two daggers, and although they were not her main weapon, she had considerable skill in close combat using daggers.

"I think it will be better for us to spread out," Lee Shin said, looking at Natasha.

"Understood," Natasha replied.

Natasha grasped his intention and started moving. Staying in one place together would make them an easy target. Therefore, they had no choice but to deal with the enemies individually, using the forest terrain and the abundant vegetation around them to their advantage.

"You, come with me," Lee Shin said, looking at Shin Ha-Neul.

"Yes, Sir!" Shin Ha-Neul replied with excitement.

Lee Shin believed the others could manage this situation well alone, but he did not think this way for Shin Ha-Neul.

"Hmph, do you think things will go as you wish?" The female Cyclops smirked at Lee Shin.

Contrary to Lee Shin and the group's expectations, the enemy challengers didn't go after Park Joo-Hyuk and Baek Hyun-Ah; most still stood in place.

"In the end, it's game over once we capture the leader," said the female Cyclops.

Lee Shin, with a determined expression, dashed toward the back.

"Everyone, go after him!" shouted the female Cyclops.

She hadn't expected that Lee Shin would flee alone. Flustered, she followed him with a bewildered expression.

"M-master?" Shin Ha-Neul also found Lee Shin's fleeing behavior very strange.

"Listen carefully. When I give you the signal, slip to the side and keep running. Then join the others," said Lee Shin.

"But what about you, Master?" Shin Ha-Neul asked.

"I'll be fine, so just follow what I say," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin repeated his instruction before taking out the radar.

Click.

Beep— Beep— Beep— Beep—?

According to the screen, he was getting closer to the next slate.

"Now!" Lee Shin shouted.

Shin Ha-Neul ran off to the side without even looking back.

"Only two of you go after him! The rest need to continue chasing Lee Shin," said the female Cyclops.

Lee Shin and Shin Ha-Neul splitting up boosted her confidence in the assumption that Lee Shin felt that he couldn't fight against the alliance.

'I can see that you're trying to reduce the numbers as much as possible, but it's all useless.'

However, contrary to her thoughts, a smile crept across Lee Shin's face.

'We're almost there.'

Lee Shin arrived at Loidula Forest, where the average tree height was dozens of meters. Besides, their branches and leaves spread in all directions, covering the forest and blocking all sunlight. Before entering the forest, Lee Shin had turned around and smirked at the female Cyclops as if to say, 'Can you follow me here?'

"Haha! Do you think I am afraid of this?"

Lee Shin's smirk made her expression harden, and she led the alliance challengers into the forest.

The muddy ground, humid air, and eerie atmosphere made Loridula Forest a place that challengers wanted to avoid entering. Not only was the forest quite large, making it easy to get lost here, but it was also perilous.

‘Thinking it would be fine to enter such an area because they are a big group is surely a mistake.’

Running while looking at the radar, Lee Shin suddenly stomped the ground and jumped backward.

Woong— Crack—!

A thick black branch descended from the sky, shattered a boulder on the ground, and flew up again.

Swoosh— Bang—!

The branch darted toward Lee Shin and failed again.

‘Hmm... they are faster than I expected.’

Lee Shin felt like a doll inside a claw machine. He looked up to see what was above him. However, he couldn’t see anything, as the large leaves and branches had made this the kingdom of darkness.

‘I can’t even imagine how many Loridulas are up there.’

Lee Shin did not need to expand his mana to learn their number, as capturing them wasn’t his goal.

"He’s over there!"

"Go after him!"

Then, the challengers of the alliance rushed toward Lee Shin. When Lee Shin noticed them, he quickly turned back and began running.

"Darn it, he's running away again!"

"What if I use my magic to— Argh!"

A branch descended from a tree, caught the challengers who tried to cast a spell, and lifted him upward.

"Kraaah!" The agonized scream of that challenger echoed through the air seconds later.

"Be careful of the branches everyone—" The female Cyclops tried to warn the alliance members.

Woong—Thud!

The corpse of the challenger had fallen in front of her, startling her. The corpse looked all dried up and twisted, as if something had drained him of all his liquids. Looking at that bizarre sight, she gritted her teeth and glared at Lee Shin with a frown.

When she looked up again, another branch descended from the sky.

Woong—!?

Baaam—!

As the female Cyclops swung her fist at the branch, it twisted and disappeared as if being sucked back up.

"Chase him. Right now!" she shouted to her people.

Her keen eyes were fixed on Lee Shin, who was growing distant. Lee Shin evaded the Loridulas' attacks while moving further inward. He sensed that the number of Loridulas increased as he went deeper. Avoiding them was becoming increasingly difficult even for him.

'Well, I have a way to avoid them.'

Lee Shin immediately took out the tent and spread it on the ground.

Woong— Bang—! Bang! Bang!

The branches descended from above. However, none of the branches came close to the tent. After confirming its effectiveness, Lee Shin entered the tent, and the attacks from the Loridulas ceased.

Kraaaaah—

"Argh! Help me!"

"No! Stop! Someone, please save me!"

The enemy challengers' screams gradually subsided. However, a scream was getting closer to him. The female Cyclops approached Lee Shin, now looking disheveled, knocking away Loridulas' branches.

"Lee Shin—!" she cried out.

"Why are you calling me?" Lee Shin replied calmly.

Annoyed by Lee Shin's relaxed appearance, she grabbed a rock from the ground and threw it at him.

Bang—!

However, the rock hit the shield and became rubble. Behind her, thirteen challengers also appeared.

‘Man... quite a lot of them survived.’

Although these challengers did not look great, the fact that they had survived until now in Loridula Forest indicated that they had considerable skill.

"Kill him right now! No, wait, bring that bastard to me!" ordered the female Cyclops.

Lee Shin noticed that her anger augmented her strength and mind-manipulation skills.

‘Her mana also seems... more intense.’

Her mana flow had also become stronger, and he could clearly sense her anger increasing.

"I will definitely kill you." The female Cyclops glared at Lee Shin.

"Do it if you can," Lee Shin mocked her.

The branches of Loridulas, in the meanwhile, hadn't stopped slamming down relentlessly.

Woong—! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The incessant attack of the branches was becoming a pain; the challengers trying to protect the female Cyclops frowned in surprise. They had endured great hardships to come this far, but this place was even more violent.

"Kraaah!" The challengers' screams came one after another.

The adhesive force of the sticky branches was so strong that even the slightest contact with them was enough for them to pull the challengers up.

"Damn it! Why are there so many of them!" The female Cyclops felt frustrated.

However, the enemy forces were not to be underestimated. As the resistance of their prey grew stronger, the frequency of Loridulas' attacks began to decrease. The female Cyclops soon pulled in a branch that had descended.

"Huaaaaah!" she shouted and yanked the branch down with force.

The veins in her forehead popped up, and the muscles in her right arm swelled as if they were about to burst. She had yanked the branch with so much force that she brought the creature to the ground.

'Damn... How strong is she?'

The Loridulas embedded themselves in the trees. Also, they held onto each other, not letting go, to support each other. However, the female Cyclops still managed to yank one down. Thinking about this, Lee Shin clicked his tongue, slowly left his tent, folded it, and placed it on his back.

"You seem quite exhausted, so why don't you stop?" Contrary to his thoughts, Lee Shin mocked her again.

The female Cyclops furrowed her eyebrows and tore off the branch of the fallen Loridula with both hands, then chewed on it with her teeth.

"You're the first human to make me this angry," she said, glaring at Lee Shin.

Now, the enemy side only had seven challengers left, apart from the female Cyclops. They had dealt with most of the Loridulas here, so their stats had increased significantly, but they had also lost a good chunk of their health and mana points. So, the situation could have been more favorable for them. And the same was true for Lee Shin.



‘Ugh, I tried to conserve my mana as much as possible to activate the slate, but...’

Lee Shin also had to deal with the Loridulas, and he still had to face eight enemy challengers before going to the slate. The female Cyclops' abilities were much greater than he had anticipated. While he was considering whether to scout the nearby area before heading to the slate, he heard some other challengers approaching.

‘Who could they be?’

Keauhhh—!

A fierce roar echoed as someone darted toward Lee Shin. A challenger soon revealed himself through the bushes. He was massive, covered in blue fur, and had sharp claws.

‘They are...’

The newcomers were the top-tier American challengers from the lower levels, the same ones he had in the Valley of Despair on the previous floor. Their appearance brought a smile to his face.

Bang—!

"Keugh...!" Cyclops gasped.

Then, she glared at the bear-human with blue fur who had attacked her.

"Finally, my time to shine has come!" Ethan shouted in excitement.

"Ethan! I told you not to get too excited!" Shannon had arrived soon after him.

"Who are you guys?" Cyclops growled and asked.

"We are just here to repay a favor. We have a lot to make up for." Shannon sneered at her and then looked at Lee Shin. "We'll take care of this place, so please go."

"Thank you," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin left the scene, leaving Shannon and Ethan to deal with them.

"You're quite impressive, considering you have such delicate arms. I can't believe you withstood my attack with those arms," Ethan muttered, blocking Cyclops, who was trying to run after Lee Shin.

"Hmph, your words are meaningless. If you choose to help Lee Shin, I'll have no choice but to kill you all," the Cyclops replied.

"I don't have any intention of intimidating a fragile woman. So why don't you quietly step aside?" Ethan said.

"Do I look fragile to you?" the Cyclops asked Ethan.

"You look fragile on the outside, but internally, I don't think so. You're charming," Ethan replied.

The female Cyclops trembled slightly at Ethan's unexpected words.

"S-stop talking nonsense!" Blushing, she punched Ethan with all her might.

Ethan was startled and tried to activate his mana, but he was pushed back and slammed into a tree.

"Ugh... Your strength is no joke," said Ethan.

"Ethan! Are you okay?" Shannon exclaimed in surprise.

She could not help Ethan as she was busy dealing with the other seven challengers.

"Don't worry, I'll take care of this," Ethan replied.

He dusted himself off and stood up. With that, every muscle in his body became more pronounced. Ethan and the female Cyclops' palms met midair and the duo tried to each push the other back; it was a battle of strength.

"I don't want to lose to you now," said Ethan.

"Hmph! Do you think you can defeat me?" asked the female Cyclops.

"What's your name?" Ethan asked her.

"Are you serious? Why are you curious about that now?" Cyclops asked, confused.

"Of course, it's because I like strong women like you. You're muscular, powerful, and above all... you're beautiful," said Ethan.

Crack—! Bang!

The female Cyclops' mana surged abruptly, and she hit him with consecutive kicks. The attack twisted Ethan's hand, sending him flying again before he crashed into the ground.

"Keugh..." Ethan groaned in pain.

Scraping the ground, he pushed against the ground and regained his position.

"Well, it's too bad for me. It took me so long to find my ideal type... To get rejected by her is so disappointing. It feels horrible," Ethan muttered.

His expression, seemingly hurt, distorted slightly. Shannon looked at him with a bewildered face and exclaimed.

"Ethan! Are you kidding me? That woman is an enemy! What are you trying to do?" Shannon shouted.

"Yeah, I understand. I got rejected anyway... I thought that if I could resolve her hostility toward Mr. Lee Shin, it would all work out," said Ethan.

"Ugh..." Shaking her head in frustration, Shannon returned to what she was doing.

"Aphzal Tashi." The female Cyclops abruptly joined the conversation.

"Wait... Did you just tell me your name?" Ethan looked at her with surprise.

"I'm just telling you my name, but that's it. I'm not interested in a man weaker than myself," she replied.

However, betraying her words, Tashi's cheeks had turned slightly red.

"What the hell is going on..." Shannon looked at the two with an incredulous expression.

"Hahaha! Of course! Shouldn't I be able to protect my woman? Let's have a good fight!" Ethan laughed heartily and activated his mana, looking like he had won the war.

"The fuck are they doing over there?" Shannon felt her fighting spirit diminish.

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Arriving at the stone slate, Lee Shin activated his mana, looking at the plant guarding the slate. The plant was several times the size of Lee Shin. Also, there were small fruits at the ends of the branches that spread in all directions.

As the branches swung, the fruits flew toward Lee Shin. He used his shield to partially block them and twisted their trajectories with Psychokinesis.

‘Each fruit has a different power.’

Some fruits froze upon contact with the shield, while others exploded. A fruit got through the shield and exploded before Lee Shin. He extended his left hand, sucking in the explosion's flames with his gauntlet.

[You now have 400 mana points.]

[The durability of Palthaeon's Gauntlets has gone down by 0.8%]

As the explosion did not affect Lee Shin, the plant faltered.

"Don't be surprised. Let's finish this quickly." Lee Shin smirked.