

The Tower 160

Chapter 160: The Bounty

The 50th floor consisted of hundreds of islands surrounding one large central island. All the islands were numbered based on their proximity to the central island. The closer they were, the lower their number. The area was called the Lardel Archipelago.

The most central island in the Lardel Archipelago was Island 1. The towering trees on Island 1, a distinguishing feature, could be seen from even the islands far away. Baek Hyun absentmindedly traversed Island 7 while looking at those trees.

Thunk.

"Ah!" Baek Hyun frowned. He had been quietly walking down the street when a man bumped into his shoulder. He was annoyed but held himself back from cursing.

"Ugh, I'll forgive him. Even kids can forgive and forget," Baek Hyun muttered.

Baek Hyun, content with his newfound maturity and patience, nodded and pressed forward, but seconds later, he felt a jolt.

"Wait a second...!" Baek Hyun remembered something he had heard before.

With a frown, he frantically searched his belongings before turning.

"Hey, stop there right now!" Baek Hyun shouted.

He was aware of the prevalence of pickpockets in the Lardel Archipelago. After all, he had already experienced several attempts to pick his pockets.

'How the hell did he do that?'

Twelve times. That was how many times someone had tried to pick Baek Hyun's pockets in the last two months since he had arrived here. Among the attempts, he had never been a victim even once. Whether they used their hands, magic, or artifacts, it was impossible to deceive his keen senses. The offenders were always caught and suffered the consequences. However, this time was different.

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Baek Hyun did not feel anything apart from their shoulders brushing past each other.

"This is driving me crazy! All my belongings were in there!" Baek Hyun shouted in anger.

His Subspace Pocket was gone, and the person who had bumped into him was likely the one who nicked it. Baek Hyun darted through the crowd of challengers, hoping to catch the culprit before it was too late. The people around recognized Baek Hyun and whispered among themselves.

"Hey, isn't that Baek Hyun over there?"

"Why is he running like that?"

"Didn't you see? Someone pickpocketed him!"

"Wow, even high-ranking challengers get pickpocketed?"

"Tsk tsk, you never know... Then again, Baek Hyun is known to be a bit naive."

"I heard that Earthlings are in danger these days. Would they try to mess with Baek Hyun as well?"

When he heard the comments of the people around him, Baek Hyun gritted his teeth in embarrassment.

'Let's see what I do with you if you get caught!'

As Baek Hyun ran, he used magic to trace the pickpocket's tracks. The thief was speedy and had already vanished from his sight. All he could recall was that the person wore a brown robe and long brown shoes and was slightly shorter than him.

"Damn it!" Baek Hyun shouted.

Even the last of the traces were gone. He wondered if the ground had swallowed the thief or the sky had taken him. After all, tracks and traces didn't just vanish like this. He immediately contacted Park Hye-Won, who had agreed to meet him nearby.

Baek Hyun - Where are you right now?

Park Hye-Won - I'm going from Island 23 to Island 17.

Baek Hyun - I was just pickpocketed. So come quickly and help me find him.

Park Hye-Won - Huh? How did that even happen?

Baek Hyun - I don't know either. I failed to even sense it.

Park Hye-Won - There's no way you didn't notice it. You probably forgot it and left it somewhere, no?

Baek Hyun - I said I didn't! He wore a brown robe and long brown shoes reaching his ankles. Tell this to other people around us, so they can help me find him.

Park Hye-Won - All right. I'll inform the organization, 'United Earth.' Be careful and watch out for yourself too. The pickpocket could be targeting you, not just your belongings.

After ending the call with Park Hye-Won, Baek Hyun quickly contacted others.

'Why did this happen to me now!'

Currently, not only Baek Hyun but also the other Earthlings were doing their best to stay hidden. A wanted notice had been issued for Lee Shin, offering a reward of two million points for his capture.

Vuela and Alice also had a bounty on them of 1,000,000 and 500,000 points, respectively. It was a tempting reward that could catch anyone's attention. However, Lee Shin and Vuela were top-tier fighters, and Alice was no pushover either.

Moreover, the whereabouts of the three were currently unknown. That was why bounty hunters aiming for the reward were targeting Earthlings associated with them. While Baek Hyun, Park Joo-Hyuk, Park Hye-Won, and the few others in the top rankings were relatively safe, the weaker Earthlings had to be careful, as a single mistake could cost them their life.

Crime wasn't a sight on Lardel. However, many islands here were defended by the Defense Force—a group of White Elves. The single-digit islands were well-protected by high-ranking White Elves, ensuring safety and lower crime rates. Even up to Island 30, the Defense Force maintained strongholds, providing a sense of security. However, beyond Island 30, crime became more rampant, and the need for caution grew.

The islands from the 11th to the 30th were sensitive to major crimes but tended to overlook minor ones like pickpocketing due to insufficient manpower to cover the expanded area. Even if Baek Hyun sought help from the Defense Force, he wouldn't receive much assistance.

He had no choice but to rely on other Earthlings, but everyone was preoccupied with their own safety, making it difficult to receive assistance from them. They were all worried that bounty hunters would be around, targeting them.

'Could it be that they're targeting me?'

Baek Hyun could sense the gazes of others, and his heightened nervousness made him hyper-aware of his surroundings. The possibility of bounty hunters targeting him for the reward hanging over his head gave him a headache. Despite searching around, he ultimately could not find a trace of the bastard.

"Haah..." Back Hyun sighed deeply. Then, a message arrived.

Aphzal Tashi: Hey, I think I found him.

Back Hyun exclaimed with relief and asked for her location.

Back Hyun: Where are you right now?

Aphzal Tashi was on Island 16, attached to the east side of Island 17. She was walking down the street, searching for ingredients to make something healthy for Ethan. That was when she received a message from Park Hye-Won.

Park Hye-Won: Someone wearing a brown robe and long brown shoes stole Back Hyun's Subspace Pocket. Contact Back Hyun immediately if you find the thief.

Tashi saw the message but did not reply to the message, focused on searching for the ingredients. To be honest, she was not particularly interested. She did not think losing one's Subspace Pocket was a big deal.

Besides, she doubted that the pickpocket would be here. While pondering this, she noticed someone in the distance, desperately running.

'Could that be him...?'

The guy was wearing long brown shoes and brown clothes. That could have been a coincidence, but his appearance and behavior indicated he was someone on the run. Tashi briefly considered pretending not to notice him. Still, she put down the ingredients and walked toward him. Coincidentally, the guy was also running toward her through the crowd.

'Whoa...?'

She tried to focus on the pickpocket, but her gaze kept slipping away in a different direction. Therefore, she immediately opened her third eye, as female Cyclops could nullify magic. She quickly grabbed the pickpocket by his collar and lifted him.

"Ugh...!" The pickpocket gasped.

Startled by the sudden turn of events, the pickpocket looked at her. Tashi promptly slammed him to the ground.

Thud!

The bustling market suddenly fell silent; soon, the others around started to flee. They were quite familiar with such situations because it was a frequent occurrence. Once every two days or so. And this was actually mild compared to the outer islands.

"Keugh!" The pickpocket shouted in pain and writhed, but it was meaningless. There was no way he could escape a Cyclops' grasp.

"It's you, right?" Tashi glared at him and asked.

The face of the pickpocket, pinned to the ground, came to light. The pickpocket wasn't even an adult, but Tashi wasn't interested in his appearance. She roughly tore open his robe. The torn robe revealed Baek Hyun's Subspace Pocket.

"Is this the Subspace Pocket?" Tashi muttered.

The item was in Tashi's hand, but a cannonball from afar struck her, and she was sent flying.

Thud—!

"Ugh...!" Tashi groaned in pain after being smashed into a wall.

She quickly brushed off the rubble and looked in the cannon's direction.

'He's still there.'

After noticing that her opponent was still there, Tashi immediately activated her mana. Just as she was about to crush the one who had shot her, a human figure abruptly approached her, cutting through the settling dust.

"Tashi! Are you okay?" said the man.

The man removed the robe covering his head, revealing that it was Ethan.

"No! Don't come here—" Tashi shouted.

Woong— Baaam—!

Another fierce barrage erupted, with firepower twice as strong as before. This time, the cannonball was aimed directly at Ethan and Tashi. However, Tashi, determined, poured out her mana and blocked the attack.

"Haa... Are you... all right...?" Tashi asked.

When she turned around, she couldn't find Ethan, so she opened her eyes wide in panic.

"Ethan!" Tashi called out his name.

The area actually had three enemies: the pickpocket, the one with the cannon, and the last one who had been hiding around, looking for an opportunity to abduct Ethan.

Tashi soon realized that, and her mana bubbled with rage. The pickpocket had also vanished at some point, and the one with the cannon had disappeared after the last attack, having completed his task.

"Stop hiding and get out right now!" Tashi shouted as loud as she could.

The White Elves hiding everywhere revealed themselves.

"Withdraw your mana immediately, or we will take you down," warned a White Elf.

Tashi, blind with rage, was about to clash with the White Elves. However, Baek Hyun and Park Hye-Won arrived just in time to stop her.

"Tashi! You cannot clash with the Defense Force!" Baek Hyun tried to stop her.

"Yeah, that's right! So stop and calm down," Park Hye-Won added.

"Ethan was... Those bastards kidnapped my babe," Tashi told Baek Hyun and Park Hye-Won.

"Huh? Ethan? Mr. Ethan was kidnapped?" Baek Hyun was shocked.

Baek Hyun and Park Hye-Won exchanged glances.

"But still... You have to stop now. If you cause a commotion and get captured by the Defense Force, we wouldn't be able to do anything. You won't be able to find Ethan, you understand?" Baek Hyun tried to explain, hoping that she would calm down.

"Yeah, that's right. Let's calm down for now," said Park Hye-Won.

Thankfully, they successfully persuaded Tashi to calm down and withdraw her mana. The tense White Elves realized that the situation had been resolved, so they promptly left. Then the trio decided to look for the thugs from before, but they could not find any traces of them anywhere.

Eventually, they decided to take a short break, and Tashi used it to hand Baek Hyun what she had snatched from the pickpocket.

"Here you go. This is your Subspace Pocket," said Tashi.

Fortunately, Tashi had snatched the Subspace Pocket from the pickpocket. And considering how easy it had been to retrieve it, they felt certain the thugs' real intention was not to steal the Subspace Pocket.

"They must be the bounty hunters," Park Hye-Won stated with certainty.

"This is all because of that Lee Shin, no? Why hasn't that person shown up yet? What is he up to?" Tashi asked, frustrated.

"I'm not sure... I don't know what our Master is up to right now," Park Hye-Won muttered.

"But didn't Vuela and Alice come up to the 50th floor a few months ago?" Baek Hyun asked.

"Yeah, I know! I'm not sure what's going on anymore," said Tashi.

The three of them sighed and started walking again.

Dantalion, a Great Devil and the owner of the seventy-first throne, was in charge of truth and memories. He had the "Book of Truth" that answered a question correctly in exchange for demon power.

In hindsight, Dantalion regretted what he had done back when an apostle abruptly visited him.

"I have found the challenger, Lee Shin, who crushed your head." The apostle had then given him Lee Shin's location.

The apostle had also said that since Sayr's power would soon weaken, he should go to Sayr's territory and connect the dimensions. Dantalion was also told that he could take his revenge this way. The Book of Truth confirmed the apostle's information, and Dantalion unwittingly made the grave mistake of bringing Lee Shin to his land.

'How could such a thing happen?'

Dantalion used to believe that his power to read the truth and memories worked on everyone. However, he was wrong. His power didn't work on that human.

For the first time in his life, Dantalion started to doubt the Book of Truth. On the day Sayr died, he had foolishly brought Lee Shin to his territory, intending to capture the arrogant human who had crushed his head.

Following the instructions of the Book of Truth, Dantalion had opened up a dimensional portal to bring Lee Shin into his domain. He had also read about Lee Shin's might in the book, but he had assumed that the fight with Sayr would have weakened the human, making his capture seemingly achievable.

Dantalion was certain that this was why the book had asked him to capture Lee Shin. However, the reality was different. His unique power did not work on the human, resulting in a complete failure. He could not understand why the Book of Truth told him to bring the human, and when asked this, the book didn't provide an answer to this question.

"Dantalion," Lee Shin called out.

"What do you want?" Dantalion asked.

"So, when can I hear the next truth?" Lee Shin asked back.

Dantalion struggled to suppress his urge to vomit at the human's audacity. The Book of Truth was his unique power. Yet, Lee Shin, standing in front of him, was attempting to use that power for his own selfish desires.

"Our battle damaged the Book of Truth. A significant amount of demon power is required to restore it to its original state. But because I am fulfilling your request, restoring the Book of Truth is impossible. Don't you see that?" Dantalion replied, expressing his indignation.

"Stop pretending like I haven't treated you well. Shouldn't you be able to do at least this much if I allowed you to absorb Sayr's force?" Lee Shin scoffed at his words and ignored him.

"What do you mean, allow? Because of the remnants of those apostles there, my subordinates suffered heavy casualties!" Dantalion shouted at Lee Shin.

Contrary to his title as the Great Devil of Truth, Dantalion had fallen for Lee Shin's deceit and sent his subordinates to Sayr's territory, resulting in significant losses. There were disciples there, and he suffered immense damage thanks to the clash with them. Of course, the apostles eventually fled, and he could absorb Sayr's remnants, but there was not much gain.

Dantalion stopped speaking. He was so angry that he wanted to smash his hand into a wall.

"Hurry up. The Dimension Gate will open soon," Lee Shin ordered.

Lee Shin, along with Sevrino, awaited the day when the Dimension Gate would open. Besides, they hid themselves in Dantalion's territory to evade the gods' attention.