

The Tower 183

Chapter 183

Unlike the peace it enjoyed during the period of Dimension Gate opening, the Lardel Archipelago located in Island 43 was now bustling with people. On one side, a new base for the Defense Force was under construction under the leadership of Hwang Kang-Woong, while Vian's hextech equipment was installed throughout the area.

Shelters were set up to prevent anyone from entering the vicinity of the Eternal Gate. The entrance was guarded by the White Elves of the Defence Force and the subordinates of the Platinum Group. While Sevrino was monitoring the status of the Eternal Gate in real time, Jeon Jae-Yong and Yoon Sang arrived at the Tower from Earth. As they walked toward Sevrino, he greeted them.

"You are here," Sevrino remarked, looking at the two.

"Oh, thankfully you are here," Jeon Jae-Yong muttered.

Jeon Jae-Yong introduced Yoon Sang to Sevrino.

"May we have a short chat?" Jeon Jae-Yong asked Sevrino.

"Sure," Sevrino replied.

"Where is Mr. Vian?" Jeon Jae-Yong asked.

"Oh, Vian is..." Sevrino muttered.

Before Sevrino could respond, Vian came in through the entrance.

"Oh, there he is," Sevrino said.

"Hmm? What's up? Were you guys looking for me?" Vian asked.

"Hello, Mr. Vian. It's nice to see you again," Jeon Jae-Yong politely greeted Vian, who responded curtly.

The four of them headed inside to have a conversation. Sevrino and Vian were also part of the reason why Jeon Jae-Yong and Yoon Sang had come here.

"Mr. Sevrino, is it possible for you to create more Eternal Gates?" Jeon Jae-Yong asked.

"The Eternal Gate is not something that can be built so easily," Sevrino expressed his displeasure, indicating that it was impossible.

"I'm also quite interested in this kind of research. We're merely curious about its potential," Yoon Sang added when he picked up on Sevrino's reaction.

Before becoming the current Director of the National Security Agency, Yoon Sang had long been a researcher in weapon technology, which helped him relate to Sevrino's reaction.

"For us Earthlings, the Eternal Gate is almost like a revolution. We're just curious about how significant this gate is for you," Jeon Jae-Yong asked.

"...The Eternal Gate is the greatest masterpiece of my life. So, I can't guarantee that I could achieve the same result if I were to go back to the past. However, recreating the Eternal Gate is not an impossible task," Sevrino replied.

Jeon Jae-Yong and Yoon Sang were surprised by this unexpected response.

"So are you saying that you can make this again?" Jeon Jae-Yong asked.

"Ridiculous... It's easier said than done. You want us to make that again? Besides, even if I could make it again, do you think we would do it for you?" Hearing Jeon Jae-Yong's question, Vian gave a wry smile and snapped.

"No, it's not that..." Jeon Jae-Yong tried to calm him down.

"Don't get worked up, Vian," Sevrino tried to calm him down and explain.

"Tsk." Vian clicked his tongue.

"Do you even know the effort and preparations that Lee Shin went through to create this Eternal Gate?" Sevrino asked, looking at the two.

Both of them pondered for a moment and then shook their heads.

"Sorry, we've been short-sighted," Yoon Sang apologized.

"Sorry," Jeon Jae-Yong also apologized.

"Well, why did you call me again?" Vian asked.

"Ah! I heard that you have an interest in science and technology," said Jeon Jae-Yong.

The words 'science and technology' that came out of Jeon Jae-Yong's mouth moved Vian.

"In our world, Earth, there are hardly any people who can do proper hextech. It is said that mana-based technology is rapidly advancing, but we need someone like you to deal with the situation we have now," Jeon Jae-Yong explained.

"Hmm... Are you telling me to teach a bunch of idiots who know nothing about hextech?" Vian replied.

"Just offering advice would be enough for us. But, in return, we will teach you about our science and technology. If science and hextech come together, we will be able to create remarkable synergy," Jeon Jae-Yong said with excitement.

"I know several top scientists who I could introduce you to," Yoon Sang said.

Reluctantly, Vian started to speak, but in fact, he had genuine interest on the inside.

"Well, um, that sounds interesting," said Vian.

"Besides, if science and hextech get combined, we will be able to make some decent equipment," Jeon Jae-Yong replied.

"If you're willing, I'd like to bring you to them right away," Yoon Sang suggested.

After considering his schedule, Vian nodded.

"Okay then," Vian replied.

Thunk.

At that moment, Laurent opened the door and entered.

"No, you can't do that," Laurent intervened.

"What?" Vian looked surprised.

"How can you trust them and go back to Earth?" Laurent had overheard their conversation from outside and came in because he was worried about Vian.

"Hey... You don't need to eavesdrop on this..." Sevrino scowled at Laurent.

Vian also grumbled that Laurent was worrying for no reason.

"But—" Laurent muttered.

"Don't worry. These two are people whom Lee Shin said we could trust," Sevrino said.

After hearing that Lee Shin had said they could trust these people, Laurent nodded with relief.

"...But I'll still go with you guys on the first day," Laurent said.

"Ugh, you worry too much," Vian muttered.

"If you can come with us, we'll feel more at ease," Sevrino replied.

Having concluded the conversation like that, the four of them got up from their seats.

"Oh, wait a second..." Jeon Jae-Yong remembered something all of a sudden and asked Sevrino.
"Where's Mr. Lee Shin right now?"

"Oh yeah, you're right. I haven't seen him around lately," Yoon Sang commented.

"He's probably still climbing the Tower," Sevrino replied.

"Kieek!"

Inside the burning temple, the monstrous creature that had been burnt fell to the ground.

[The monster of the Burning Temple, Lingbringa, has been defeated.]

[You have cleared the 54th floor.]

[Your achievements will be...]

[...]

"I'll go back," Lee Shin said.

Returning to the 50th floor, Lee Shin let out a sigh as he read messages that had accumulated. There was the beginning of the Gate Crisis. Lee Shin thought there would be some developments sooner or later, and indeed, the Gate had opened.

'I wanted to finish up to the 55th floor before the Gate opened.'

For now, it seemed that clearing the 55th floor should be postponed a bit. Despite it being only about a month, Lee Shin had completed four stages. Even if he were to consider the 49th floor as an exception, the level of difficulty was much higher now. From here onward, the difficulty gap between each floor would become even greater.

Now, Lee Shin was on the 54th floor. His ranking had risen from 999th to 932nd. The community was filled with stories about the Gate Crisis and Lee Shin's updated ranking. After returning to Island 43, Lee Shin passed through the Eternal Gate and headed to Earth.

"You are here," Kang Sang-Jun greeted Lee Shin.

He was the one who had been Lee Shin's assistant when he arrived in Korea last time.

"Have you been waiting for me here?" Lee Shin asked.

"Oh, haha, yes. I heard that you might come back today, so I stayed nearby," Kang Sang-Jun replied.

When Lee Shin nodded, Kang Sang-Jun took out a tablet and showed him something.

"I heard that you came back because of the Gate Crisis. Here is a video taken on-site when it happened. And this is a summary of the overall situation," Kang Sang-Jun said.

Lee Shin quickly skimmed through the summary. It talked about the massacre that had occurred in Zaozhuang City in China. Orcs had descended from the mountains and wiped out the entirety of a large village. The military responded late, and therefore, the damage was tremendously severe. Also, it was noted that no one lived in the place where Orcs first appeared.

"There were 527 deaths and more than a thousand casualties..." Lee Shin muttered.

"Yes, that's right. And only 38 Orcs were found," Kang Sang-Jun replied.

The response from the Chinese side was much slower than Lee Shin expected. Even if the Orcs appeared suddenly, it was hard to understand how a mere thirty-eight of them could cause such significant damage.

'But I told Zhuge Yun about the Gate incident in advance though.'

The response to an event that should have been managed with haste was delayed. It was as if someone intentionally blocked the communication and delayed the response.

"Tsk." Lee Shin clicked his tongue.

As Lee Shin organized his thoughts about the situation, he could infer how it went down. It was undoubtedly Zhuge Yun's doing.

'And I see why... he did that.'

First impressions were always crucial. With only thirty-eight Orcs, hundreds of people died. Inside the Tower, there were creatures far stronger than the Orcs. However, suffering such an event from a mere Orc would undoubtedly leave a much greater impact and fear on people. Since the Orcs did not dominate China yet, it seemed like Zhuge Yun wanted to make them experience fighting the Orcs themselves and act accordingly.

'I understand his intentions, but the method was wrong.'

Zhuge Yun's methods were incredibly cold and ruthless. Especially toward his fellow Chinese people, he seemed particularly cruel. It seemed as if he held their lives and sacrifices with little regard. With a sigh, Lee Shin started the video. Someone had recorded a scene of Orcs attacking a village at night.

It seemed like people thought they would be able to hide on the rooftop of the buildings without being found by the Orcs, but that was a grave mistake. In fact, Orcs had a keen sense of smell, and they were surprisingly strategic in battles. Challengers would not have made such a mistake, but these people did not look like they were challengers, but ordinary people.

The buildings in the village were not that tall, so it was easy for them to spot the humans on the rooftop. In the video, the Orcs slaughtered the people mercilessly. The speed of ordinary humans was insufficient to escape from the Orcs, and they were defenseless in combat. These Orcs killed the humans and ripped their bodies apart.

While this gruesome scene might be familiar to challengers, it was pure terror for ordinary people. After capturing all the humans who tried to escape past one of the buildings, one Orc broke through the door and entered it. It was obviously searching for the person who was recording the video because it had picked up on the smell of a human.

Sobbing was audible from the video. In view was an iron door to the rooftop. After a quiet thirty seconds passed, the door began to bend.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

With a punch, the iron door dented, and the person begged for mercy, mumbling intelligible words.

Baaam—!

Then, with a loud crash, the hinges supporting the iron door were shattered, and the door fell down, revealing the Orc.

As the Orc approached, the video started to shake, went black, and only the audio could be heard. After listening to those cruel sounds, Lee Shin hardened his expression and turned off the video. When he sighed and looked to the side, Kang Sang-Jun also had a displeased expression, his mouth tightly shut.

"It seems like someone in the army found this video and spread it to the public," Kang Sang-Jun explained.

"...They decided to spread it to the public despite knowing that doing so would make the Chinese military look bad?" Lee Shin found it odd.

"I didn't understand that part either, but it seems like a soldier who found the phone secretly uploaded it. After uploading the video, that soldier went into hiding," said Kang Sang-Jun.

Lee Shin thought that Zhuge Yun was definitely behind this. Even in such a situation, he managed to send someone into the place and collect the phone.

‘He's quite skilled.’

The next moment, Lee Shin immediately observed people's reactions.

* Wow, Orcs for real? That's crazy.

↳ Did challengers really deal with those in the Tower?

↳ I heard Orcs were on the weaker side in the tower.

↳ In the Korean Tower, they have to kill Orcs already on the 3rd-floor stage.

↳ People couldn't even pierce their muscles with a kitchen knife. This is insane.

↳ I turned it off because I felt nauseous while watching. Ah... I don't feel good anymore.

↳ Shit... I can't believe they eat human corpses.

↳ Why did these creatures appear all of a sudden?

* Isn't this all because of the Eternal Gate? The Eternal Gate allows beings from other dimensions, not just Earthlings, to come over.

↳ Oh, Is that so? Did the Eternal Gate cause this?

↳ Damn it, what did those crazy people create?

↳ Wait a second... Then does that mean this happened all because of Korea?

↳ Let's protest against the Eternal Gate.

↳ I'm in. Are they crazy? They brought in monsters just to move in and out of the Tower for all year long? ↳ I feel like they are going to close it down, because other countries have been putting pressure on them as well.

After the Zaozhuang City Massacre, people's reactions toward the Eternal Gate were extremely negative. They pointed to the Eternal Gate as the tragedy, which was a reasonable conclusion.

"I guess we're in a difficult situation," Lee Shin said.

"Yes. Right now, there are numerous articles from China and some other countries criticizing Korea," Kang Sang-Jun commented.

"What do you plan to do?" Lee Shin asked.

Kang Sang-Jun was also a member of the government. Perhaps he could know how they would respond.

"Take a look at this," said Kang Sang-Jun.

He smirked and showed Lee Shin his tablet. On the screen, familiar figures were holding a press conference.

- Hello, this is Samuel Campbell, the Chairman of the WCA.

The person speaking was the Chairman of the WCA and also the president of the American Challengers Association. Next to him were Jeon Jae-Yong and the Chairman of the French Challengers Association. They were all officials of the WCA.

- The Eternal Gate was not solely created by Korea but was secretly developed by several countries, including the United States, Japan, France, and Germany.

It was entirely untrue, but that was what they declared.

- This recent Gate Crisis was something we had anticipated, and we were secretly developing the Eternal Gate to respond to it. Linking the Eternal Gate to this incident as the cause is meaningless. The Eternal Gate is a connection to the Tower, while this Gate Crisis is caused by a connection to a different dimension.

Samuel spoke so casually and calmly, as if this was normal.

- Do you guys know the purpose of the Tower's existence? It was to enhance Earth's competitive advantage when at war with different dimensions. That was why challengers emerged, and we are able to use that power even outside the Tower.

It was a plausible argument, and many scholars had proposed similar hypotheses before. It was refuted due to lack of evidence, but it was sufficiently persuasive.

- Stronger monsters will invade in the future. So, if we don't become stronger in the meantime, we won't be able to protect Earth. This is not a war between nations.

Everyone listened intently to his words. War, monsters, invasion—every word was difficult to accept and raised people's unease.

- We need to prepare for the invasion by different dimensions and planets.

The sound of cameras snapping and furious typing could be heard clearly from the video. This showed how much of an impact their declaration had on people.

- In different dimensions, an endless war is already taking place with intense slaughter. They have been training like this to become more powerful this way, but we have not.

He looked at the public with a determined gaze. He met the eyes of reporters one by one and sent his message to the people beyond the camera.

- If Earth is not strong enough, we will be invaded by them. Now is the time for us to come together as one.

As soon as his speech ended, questions poured out from the reporters like an avalanche.