

The Tower 44

Chapter 44

"That was pretty fierce," Cui Qian muttered as he got up.

A few moments ago, Cui Qian had been pushed back by Shin Ha-Neul's wind. He got up and shook his clothes.

"Stop pretending to be fine," Shin Ha-Neul muttered.

"Do I look fine?" Cui Qian began to laugh at Shin Ha-Neul.

The Blue Pattern on the back of his hand glowed and he drew his sword out. A blue sword aura formed along the tip of the sword and flew toward Shin Ha-Neul.

"Huh...? Ugh!" Shin Ha-Neul quickly pulled up his mana to block the sword aura, and looked at Cui Qian with a surprised face.

He could not believe that Cui Qian was okay even after his sudden attack.

'No way, how is this possible? He is not even from Undermost.'

When Shin Ha-Neul had been at Undermost, he used to be ignored by many people. However, in terms of talent, Shin Ha-Neul had been one of the top challengers at Undermost. As he had started climbing the tower, he had been in close pursuit of the top rankers and had attained great achievements. It was unimaginable for him to be losing to other challengers who climbed up without having gone through proper training on the first floor.

"This guy has the Blue Pattern. It will be impossible to defeat him just with our stats," Park Joo-Hyuk explained.

"Oh... I just realized that..." At Park Joo-Hyuk's words, Shin Ha-Neul noticed the blue light radiating from Cui Qian's body.

Shin Ha-Neul was frightened seeing the Blue Pattern.

"What the hell! You should have told me that earl— Keaugh!" Shin Ha-Neul gasped.

"You think this is some kind of a joke?!" Cui Qian shouted.

Cui Qian got offended when he saw Shin Ha-Neul being so calm and relaxed in front of him. Therefore, he started to attack Shin Ha-Neul.

Shin Ha-Neul blocked the attacks in a hurry. However, when the merciless attacks continued on, he began to panic and everything started to go wrong.

Chang—!

Park Joo-Hyuk pulled himself together while Shin Ha-Neul was fighting Cui Qian. He then jumped in to block Cui Qian's sword and pushed him away from Shin Ha-Neul.

"Ha... You guys are pretty good," Cui Qian muttered.

"Damn it... it feels like there's one more burden to carry," said Park Joo-Hyuk.

"Jeez, what do you mean a burden? Did you forget that I saved you—" Shin Ha-Neul got offended.

"Heads!" Park Joo-Hyuk shouted.

Clang clang clang!

Park Joo-Hyuk avoided Cui Qian's sword and looked back because, for a moment, he thought that something was amiss. It was because the other challengers on Cui Qian's team did not show up. Park

Joo-Hyuk had thought that they would soon come this way after defeating Hwang Kang-Woong. However, that did not happen.

‘No way...’

Bam—! Crash—!

Suddenly, there was a loud sound coming from behind. Park Joo-Hyuk looked back with a look of surprise.

"See? I didn't come here alone!" Shin Ha-Neul grumbled.

Behind the offended Shin Ha-Neul, Park Joo-Hyuk could see several familiar faces.

"Boss!"

"What's going on with you? You abandoned us, went up ahead, and got into a situation like this?"

"We would not have sent you ahead if we'd known you were going to struggle this much."

"You guys!" Park Joo-Hyuk seemed relieved.

They were Park Joo-Hyuk's colleagues from Undermost. The group included Park Joo-Hyuk's special team members and other Korean challengers who had joined them.

"Just stay here and rest for a bit. We will deal with the rest."

"Hey, I'm the one who saved Joo-Hyuk," Shin Ha-Neul muttered.

"Everyone, get ready for battle! Protect our boss and Mr. Hwang. After that, we will enter the inner city!" Baek Hyun-Ah commanded.

She did not even bother to listen to Shin Ha-Neul's words and gave instructions to the team.

"Ugh...?You, annoying bastards!" Cui Qian shouted.

"I'll join you," said Inyou Kogo.

Flames soared in the midst of the Korean challengers. When Park Joo-Hyuk and Hwang Kang-Woong saw the flames, their faces stiffened.

"Inyou Kogo..." Cui Qian muttered.

"Let's wipe out these guys first, and then we will have our battle after," Inyou Kogo explained.

Cui Qian did not like how things were going, but he nodded because he did not have any other choice. Unlike the first time, the situation had changed. Cui Qian and Inyou Kogo became the minority, whereas Park Joo-Hyuk and his team were the majority. And the next moment, a bloodied Hwang Kang-Woong slowly walked out from among the special team members.

"Now the tables have turned. How do you feel now? Do you think you two can handle it?"

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In the inner city, other challengers kept looking for the four members of Park Joo-Hyuk's team. The four people were already riddled with wounds. They had barely managed to elude their pursuers, and they sighed in relief.

"Ha... Do you think Joo-Hyuk and Mr. Hwang are doing alright on their own?"

"They will be fine. Let's think about how we are going to get through this situation first." Kim Kang-Chun took out a map of Merteng's inner city from his arms and put it down on the floor.

"If we keep pushing forward like this, we will arrive at the Throne Room. I know that the challengers are a problem, but we also have to deal with the demons who are in the inner city," Kim Kang-Chun explained.

"What do you think, Eun-Ju?"

"Give me a minute," Ji Eun-Ju replied.

Ji Eun-Ju placed her palm on the floor and sent her mana through the ground. The wave of mana that was flowing through the ground detected several disparate waves.

"I think we will encounter more enemy challengers while dealing with the demons if we take this route," Ji Eun-Ju explained.

"Then should we go back the other way?"

"No, we don't have time for that. We have to deal with them quickly in order to save the two people who are still outside."

"How's the enemies' strength? How many people have they got?"

"There are three small demonic beasts and two demonized humans who are blocking the entrance. But I can't figure out where the challengers are right now," Ji Eun-Ju explained.

Was it better to go ahead without finding out where the enemy challengers were? Or was it better for them to consider all the possibilities and advance cautiously, just in case? Kim Kang-Chun was in agony. He was the only one who could take the leadership role here. However, he was not sure if it was right to risk the lives of his colleagues. His head was telling him that the former was right, but he was still hesitant.

"Let's just go in." Park Hye-Won gave her opinion first. "There is no guarantee that it will be safe to go back, and above all, the two people outside are sacrificing themselves for us. I think it's better to just break through."

"Yes, I think so too. Let's just break through it."

After hearing the opinions of the two people, Kim Kang-Chun looked at Ji Eun-Ju.

"What about you?" Kim Kang-Chun asked.

"...I agree," Ji Eun-Ju muttered.

"Will you be okay?" Kim Kang-Chun asked.

"Yes," Ji Eun-Ju replied.

Kim Kang-Chun realized that he had been thinking of them as weak.

"Let's go then." Kim Kang-Chun led the group.

The four challengers opened the door carefully and moved cautiously along the corridor. Soon, they could see a demonic beast and a demonized human who were walking slowly down the corridor.

"Thank God, they're not together."

"I think we will be able to handle them quietly." Kim Kang-Chun exchanged glances with the other three.

They had already worked together countless times. Kim Kang-Chun considered the demons' appearance and characteristics.

‘Okay, so the Qurett is an agile demonic beast, but weak in defense. And on the other hand, these demonized humans have reinforced gloves? I'll be in trouble if I make a mistake.’

The next moment, Park Hye-Won and Kim Kang-Chun's eyes met. The two nodded lightly, and Kim Kang-Chun ran out first. At the same time, Kang Ji-Hoon also moved and Park Hye-Won's mana buffed Kim Kang-Chun's sword.

"Kirik?" The Qurett was surprised.

As the demonic beast and the demonized human realized the presence of the attackers, Kang Ji-Hoon's sword had already struck the Qurett while Kim Kang-Chun's greatsword had struck the demonized human. A rock that protruded from the ground caught the Qurett's feet, and Kang Ji-Hoon's sword penetrated the Qurett's neck immediately after. The demonized human could not even scream as its head rolled off to the ground following Kim Kang-Chun's attack.

"Let's go." Kim Kang-Chun led the group.

Fortunately, the challengers dealt with the remaining three demons smoothly, and safely arrived at the Throne Room without being caught by the enemy challengers.

"This is going too well."

"...Do you think this is a trap?"

"I think there's a good chance of that. So let's be careful."

The four challengers opened the door of the Throne Room with stiff expressions on their faces. The Throne Room was filled with black fog. The Throne was located in the middle of the room. And on top of the throne, there was a dark red Nucleus of Demon Realm.

As soon as they opened the door, Park Hye-Won noticed the Nucleus of Demon Realm. She then released the mana that she had been warming up before entering the Throne Room.

[Wind Cutter]

Craaack—!

Park Hye-Won was able to display her fast casting speed right there and then, but it did not leave even a tiny scratch on the surface of the pair of strong claws that had appeared and blocked the Wind Cutter's attack.

"You sure have a short temper," said a voice.

A creature with a heap of fur emerged from the black mist. Even at a quick glance, the challengers could see that he had a muscular body along with ferocious claws on both his hands and feet.

"Beastman?"

Considering the Navy Pattern that was glowing on his chest, he was definitely a challenger. From the 10th floor to the 19th floor, the challengers could only encounter other challengers from different dimensions. However, it had changed again from the 21st floor, because now the challengers could encounter only the challengers who came from the Earth's dimension, not from any other dimensions. Therefore, this Beastman was definitely a challenger who came from the Earth.

"Nice to meet you, Korean challengers and rising super rookies." The Beastman seemed relaxed and calm.

On the other hand, the four felt nothing but hopelessness. The power and stats of those with Patterns increased relatively. In addition, the Beastman had maximized physicality. Therefore, if he had a Pattern, the increase in stats made him impossible to deal with even for those who had outstanding achievements.

Moreover, earlier, they had been struggling to deal with the Qualifiers who acquired a Blue Pattern. However, this time, the opponent had a Navy Pattern, which was one level higher than the Blue Pattern. The challengers thought that there was no chance for them to win this battle.

'Damn it.'

Even if the challengers had been at their best, the Beastman was a tough opponent to deal with. Besides, it was even harder for them to deal with the Beastman because their Health Points and Mana Power were very low at the moment. Also, behind Beastman were other challengers trying to defeat them.

"You guys look worried. But, don't worry. If you four beat me, I'll hand you the Nucleus. Also, I won't let the other guys get in our fight," said the Beastman.

"What?"

"I wonder how good the super rookies are. So why don't I quickly introduce myself before we start fighting. My name is Ethan. Since I already know all of your names, you don't have to tell me, ha ha ha!" Ethan started laughing.

It was difficult for the four challengers to figure out whether Ethan was telling the truth or not.

"Alright, then let's begin!" Ethan shouted.

Ethan charged toward Kim Kang-Chun. A tremendous gripping force that seemed to be enough to crush the greatsword was delivered to Kim Kang-Chun through his sword.

Wooong—!

Along with his greatsword, Kim Kang-Chun was thrown into the wall by Ethan, because he lacked strength. Kang Ji-Hoon, who ran in a little late, was smashed into the ground by Ethan's foot, his head pressing against the floor.

"Ahhh—!" Ji Eun-Ju screamed.

Even though she was a little late, Ji Eun-Ju tried to cast a spell. However, she screamed as she was hit by Ethan. She flew away without being able to properly use her mana, due to fear. In the meantime, Park Hye-Won's Spear of Cool Wind thrust at Ethan's neck, but Ethan slightly tilted his head and easily avoided the last attack.

"Did I expect too much from you?" Ethan asked.

Ethan could not hide his disappointment and looked at the four people who fell down. He did not expect them to beat him, but since they were the talk of the town, he thought they would be able to show him something better.

"If this is all you've got, I don't have to wait and see. Lee Shin must be nothing, too," Ethan muttered.

Just as Ethan was about to leave with a sneer, there was a series of sword aura clashing.

Boom-boom!

"Ugh...!" Ethan gasped.

He panicked when the swords caused an explosion, as he had thought that they were just simple swords.

"It's way too early for you to judge our master." Kim Kang-Chun approached from the side.

Kim Kang-Chun seemed to be out of breath.

"You have a strong ego— Keugh!" Ethan gasped.

Whoosh!

The Spear of Cool Wind that was shot from the black mist spun at a high speed and dug into Ethan's nails.

"Keuaaahhh!" With a voice full of irritation, Ethan canceled his spell, grabbed Kang Ji-Hoon's head and smashed it into the ground several times.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

"Keuahhh!" Kang Ji-Hoon screamed.

"Ji-Hoon Oppa!"

Kang Ji-Hoon's Health Points which had been slowly recovering fell drastically. And due to Ethan's overwhelming strength, his mental state started to slowly fall apart.

Kim Kang-Chun hurriedly swung his sword to save him, but the sword was not able to reach the target in time, and Ethan threw Kang Ji-Hoon in front of the attack. Kim Kang-Chun swept across the ground and caught Kang Ji-Hoon mid-air, but Ethan kicked them down from above.

Clang!

There was a loud sound in the Throne Room as if something was hit by a cannonball.

"Ha... ha..." Ethan sighed.

Ethan's eyes began to return to their normal state. He had been too excited for a second. He had found it really exciting to allow the challengers to attack him when he thought that they would not be able to touch even a single hair of his. The side effects of becoming a Beastman appeared occasionally, and now was the time.

"I see that you have some capability," Ethan muttered.

Ethan looked at the four people lying on the floor. They were too talented to be killed like this here. If it weren't for his situation, Ethan would not have joined in this kind of activity.

Just then, other challengers flocked to the Throne Room.

"Ethan? You've already taken care of them all."

"Yes, I did," Ethan replied.

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The four challengers, who had already become unable to fight, were dragged by the other challengers, tied up, and thrown in one place.

"Shall we kill them?"

"They told us to capture these guys alive if we can, so just take them with you," said Ethan.

"Alright."

As the four challengers were about to be taken away in mana-blocking handcuffs, the challengers who had been dragging them suddenly collapsed with a sharp metallic sound.

"What's going on?"

"Is it Joo-Hyuk and Mr. Hwang?"

Except for Kang Ji-Hoon, who had lost consciousness, the others looked at the fallen challengers with puzzled faces, surprised by this sudden development.

Wooong— Clang!

A heavy sword aura struck Ethan from above. Ethan blocked the sword aura and observed the silhouette of the attacker through the cloud of dust.

"Who are you?" Ethan asked.

Ethan was confident in himself, no matter who his opponent was. If anything, this sudden attack aroused his excitement.

"What are you doing here? You abandoned me, and you're struggling with a bearlike human now?"

On the battlefield, visibility was impeded by the black fog and the floating dust. The silhouettes of several people slowly appeared through the fog and the three people lying on the floor could hear familiar voices.

"Is that you, Hyun Oppa...?" Ji Eun-Ju asked in a trembling voice.

Ji Eun-Ju was truly desperate. When Hye-Won heard the voice, she could not resist crying for a moment.

"I'll take care of this guy, so please take care of the rest." Baek Hyun appeared through the scattered dust.

Kim Kang-Chun clenched his teeth and Park Hye-Won closed her eyes. On the side, Ji Eun-Ju began to cry.

"Bring it on, you beast." Baek Hyun got into his position.