

The Tower 103

Chapter 103

"We are almost there," said a knight.

"We should be able to see the valley soon." The knight who had guided Lee Shin's party pointed toward the valley to show them the way.

These Wildes knights had rescued Lee Shin's party from Tetir's siege.

"So, you're saying that if we go that way, we'll come across the traps, right?" Lee Shin asked the knight.

"Yes, that's right. Since traveling with our army would slow you down, it may be better for you to go ahead if you're in a hurry," the knight replied.

The four of them, including Lee Shin, nodded in agreement.

"What kind of idiot came up with this plan?"

"I know. We really can't afford a single misstep," said Kanoko.

"But, they are the Saviors. Can't they come up with a way out?"

"Maybe they can; realistically, it would be tough. Besides, the main force of their group is in Windsor right now."

Lee Shin could not shake off a foreboding feeling as he listened to the three Japanese challengers talk to each other. When he extended his mana, he sensed a violent mana wave emanating from the valley's direction.

"It seems like it's already started," said Lee Shin.

"What?"

"Already?"

The three challengers froze in alarm at Lee Shin's words.

'The sense of death is getting stronger and stronger.'

The sensation of death had become so intense that it now seemed like an omen. This feeling continued to heighten Lee Shin's senses.

"What's the matter, Master?" Lilian asked Lee Shin.

"I have a bad feeling," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin unconsciously clenched his lips and activated his mana.

"I'm going to go first, so just follow along. And you too," Lee Shin said to the three Japanese challengers and the knight.

Next, Lee Shin rushed toward the valley.

'Please hold on for a little longer.'

Baek Hyun-Ah could not decide what to do. She had to get out of this situation with all her allies alive, but she couldn't devise a plan that met all these criteria. She was willing to sacrifice herself but wasn't sure that would guarantee her teammates' survival.

Baek Hyun-Ah had boldly tried to save the two challengers, but the plan had failed. The enemies were far stronger than she had imagined. If she were to confront them head-on, she was sure to fail.

Moreover, the man with red hair and the Purple Pattern before her radiated an aura different from other Purple Pattern holders.

‘I have a bad feeling.’

The man exuded confidence, and his relaxed expression never wavered, leading Baek Hyun-Ah to believe that underestimating him would be a mistake.

And apart from him, the enemies had over ten knights with the Blue Pattern or above, as many Qualified individuals, and dozens of soldiers.

Choosing the cliff to retreat was impossible, and returning to the entrance was not an option, as soldiers were blocking the way.

‘I didn’t think they would have set a trap in the prison cell.’

Baek Hyun-Ah realized that the enemies had no intention of keeping Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju alive in the first place. She had mistakenly assumed they would want to take her and the other Savors as prisoners along with Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju.

‘All right then. I’ll have to reduce the number of enemies quickly by dealing with the weaker ones first.’

[Stealth Movement]

Baek Hyun-Ah assimilated into the background and disappeared. Then, she suddenly appeared behind a knight looking for her.

Thud!

Swish—

A chill went down the knight's spine as he narrowly avoided the attack. His throat would have been cut had the red-haired man not kicked him away. Seeing that her sudden attack had failed, Baek Hyun-Ah quickly changed direction to run away, and then, she met eyes with the man with the red hair.

The man glared at her viciously, seemingly urging her to show him more.

'Damn it!'

Baek Hyun-Ah saw the man move away from her, so she darted toward him.

Clang—!

The man seemingly had Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju in his crosshairs, but he quickly turned around and swung his sword at Baek Hyun-Ah. Her remarkable reflex helped her barely deflect the sword, but she failed to dodge the kick aimed at her abdomen and was pushed back.

The knights then launched a series of attacks. As she struggled to fend off the assault and drifted further away from Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju, she gritted her teeth. Kim Kang-Chun still seemed to be in a daze from that explosion, and Eun-Ju was having trouble controlling her body. Baek Hyun-Ah had no time to waste, as they needed to be rescued quickly.

"St—Stone... keugh!

" Ji Eun-Ju gasped.

Ji Eun-Ju tried to push away her captive, but the red-haired man struck her with a whip-like kick. She fell and rolled a few times on the ground a few times.

"Eun-Ju!" Baek Hyun-Ah shouted in shock.

The scene shocked her, but she had no time to save Eun-Ju, as she was barely surviving her own fight. Baek Hyun-Ah felt that her defeat would be immediate if the red-haired man also joined the knights. But, for some reason, he stayed at bay.

‘Damn it, what is that guy up to?’

The man seemed uninterested in the fallen hostages as if enjoying the situation. It was odd how he was different from typical challengers.

"Nuna!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

Whoosh— Bang!

Shin Ha-Neul's fist hit the ground, creating a large crater, and the impact threw back the surrounding knights and challengers. He forced his way through the qualified individuals of Aman and stood next to Baek Hyun-Ah.

"Are you okay?" Shin Ha-Neul asked Baek Hyun-Ah with a worried look.

"I'm fine. We need to take care of these guys quickly and go rescue them," Baek Hyun-Ah replied.

Baek Hyun-Ah replied in a low, almost inaudible voice, impossible to hear unless you were standing beside her.

"Don't worry about those two for now. The enemies don't seem to have any intention of harming them yet," Shin Ha-Neul said.

"Okay," Baek Hyun-Ah replied.

Shin Ha-Neul glanced at the collapsed Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju; he then met eyes with the red-haired man standing before them. The man's eyes were eerie. Shin Ha-Neul's face froze in shock, and he turned away quickly.

"Bring it on, you bastards!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted, looking at the Qualified individuals.

Shin Ha-Neul taunted, beckoning with his fingers. The Qualified individuals frowned and charged toward him. He easily parried their sword strikes like a nimble dancer performing a well-choreographed set.

And when Shin Ha-Neul saw an opening, he concentrated his mana into his fist and punched a knight's chest with full force.

Crack!

The knight's armor caved in, and he collapsed, coughing blood. Suddenly, a wizard at the back aimed his wand at Shin Ha-Neul.

[Acid Bomb]

The abrupt acid attack caught Shin Ha-Neul off guard. And since he only had light armor on, he frantically waved his mana to deflect it. But this gave his opponents with swords an opportunity, which they used to leave a deep gash on his side, his flesh torn apart like a piece of cloth.

"Tsk." Shin Ha-Neul clicked his tongue.

"Are you okay?" Baek Hyun-Ah asked with a worried look.

"I'm fine. It's nothing," Shin Ha-Neul replied.

Shin Ha-Neul pretended to be fine. In reality, the pain was searing, like he had suffered a burn, making him furrow his eyebrows.

'Did the acid fall on my wounds?'

There were too many enemies. Each of them was a highly skilled fighter, and they were holding hostages. Furthermore, Baek Hyun-Ah was in the worst condition possible, as she had protected two people from an explosion.

They still had eight enemies left; at this rate, Baek Hyun-Ah and Shin Ha-Neul would be defeated before their four teammates dealing with the Aman enemies could arrive.

‘I’ll sacrifice my flesh to save their lives.’

Shin Ha-Neul thought he needed to reduce the number of enemies, even if it meant sacrificing his life. He ran toward the strongest-looking qualified individual, propelling himself off the ground with powerful strides.

Shin Ha-Neul appeared to be charging blindly, but the enemy was cautious until the end.

‘What is he trying to do?’

The enemy, holding a sword, was confused. Shin Ha-Neul was getting dangerously close, his mind solely focused on launching an attack. However, the enemy knew that his weapon had a longer reach than Shin Ha-Neul's, so if he struck Shin Ha-Neul like this, Shin Ha-Neul would surely die.

‘I can't miss this chance.’

With this thought in mind, the enemy engraved his mana on his sword and tried to attack Shin Ha-Neul.

The enemy had confidence that he could not miss Shin Ha-Neul from here, no matter what. The enemy activated his magical power to deal with Shin Ha-Neul in one blow; unexpectedly, an intangible airwave hit the enemy's arm, making him stagger.

‘Damn it!’

The attack damaged a few of his mana vessels, disrupting his flow of mana. As a result, his attacks slowed down, and his trajectory slightly twisted, causing his sword to pass by Shin Ha-Neul's side, not his heart.

Swoosh—

Crack!

Blood spurted out from a deep, gaping wound on Shin Ha-Neul's chest, extending from his chest to his armpit. The man responsible for the wound received a punch from Ha-Neul, which snapped his neck, killing him on the spot.

Shin Ha-Neul gritted his teeth in pain, but he did not make a sound. Acting like nothing had happened, he looked at the other knight rushing toward him with his sword. Then, he noticed a dagger flying past him, accurately piercing the knight's neck.

"Ha... Ha..." Baek Hyun-Ah was out of breath.

Shin Ha-Neul and Baek Hyun-Ah, her shoulder bleeding, stared at the knight she had killed with devilish expressions. There were two corpses around Hyun-Ah, and she had seemingly lost her right arm to obtain that outcome, as her blood-soaked right arm did not move at all.

They had attacked the four enemies simultaneously and quickly. The enemy still had superior firepower, but at least they had lost the numerical advantage.

"Acid Gun," the wizard muttered.

The wizard shot acid toward Shin Ha-Neul again. Shin Ha-Neul dodged the acid bullet charging toward him and ran toward the wizard.

Woong—!

Shin Ha-Neul's every punch created a powerful ripple in the air, like something was shaking the very fabric of reality. After headbutting the qualified individual with the Blue Pattern, he gritted his teeth as blood spurted from his eyes and grabbed the wizard.

The startled wizard urgently tried to use his mana, but it was for naught as he couldn't block Ha-Neul at such a close range. Only then did he notice the Qualified individual for Cormir standing behind the wizard; the Cormir soldier was smiling at him.

"No...!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

The Cormir Qualified individual was about to plunge his sword into the two collapsed challengers gasping for breath.

"Stop!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted.

Swish—!

"Keugghhh—!" Kim Kang-Chun gasped in pain.

Kim Kang-Chun had pushed Ji Eun-Ju away, putting himself in the sword's path.

Swoosh—!

The sword had pierced Kim Kang-Chun's back and had then been yanked back out.

"Kang-Chun!" Kang Ji-Hoon cried out.

"Hey, you fucking bastard!" Baek Hyun-Ah shouted as well.

The sight made Kang Ji-Hoon and Baek Hyun-Ah cry out in despair.

"Ah... no... it can't be... this can't be happening..." Ji Eun-Ju trembled as she looked at Kim Kang-Chun, who was dying in her place.

She crawled to Kim Kang-Chun as she trembled in shock and fear.

"Get out of the way!" Shin Ha-Neul shouted in anger.

Shin Ha-Neul, who had been about to strike the wizard, changed course and rushed toward Kim Kang-Chun. However, he saw something unbelievable and stopped abruptly.

Baek Hyun-Ah noticed the acidic magic approaching Shin Ha-Neul, so she quickly pulled him toward her and shouted, "Focus!"

The shout helped Shin Ha-Neul regain his composure and pull up his mana.

"Heh." A chilly laugh echoed in Shin Ha-Neul's ears.

"No way... He died because of me... This can't be true... No..." Ji Eun-Ju's eyes lost focus as if a screw had come loose, and she trembled as if something inside her had broken.

"Yeah, that's right. It's all because of you," said the qualified individual from Cormir.

The Qualified individual from Cormir wiped Kim Kang-Chun's blood from his sword with his hand and smirked. The mocking smile was directed at all the Korean challengers. At the same time, he also stabbed Ji Eun-Ju's heart.

Thunk!

"Kuh... uh... uh..." Ji Eun-Ju could not make any sound because of the blood filling her throat.

Ji Eun-Ju's eyes brimmed with tears of blood as she looked at those who had come to save her before collapsing.

"Eun-Ju!"

"I'm going to kill that bastard. That bastard is mine!"

"Get out of the way! You bastards!"

Helpless cries of despair filled the air, as they had failed. Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon, who had lost a comrade for the first time, could not control the emotions rising from deep within them. Baek Hyun-Ah, who had experienced this before, couldn't help but be angry at herself for not changing and repeating history.

"Are you really saying that with that kind of skill?" The red-haired man laughed at the Korean challengers, seemingly enjoying their anger.

Furious, Shin Ha-Neul and Kang Ji-Hoon rushed toward him, forgetting about the others present. Baek Hyun-Ah tried to stop them and the others from rushing mindlessly toward the enemy, but with her right arm still unusable, she had her limits.

"Keugh!" Baek Hyun-Ah groaned in pain as she got hit by her opponent's sword.

Her muscles screamed in agony, her breathing became labored, and she felt her mana would deplete anytime.

Kang Ji-Hoon forced his way through the enemies but was hit by a sword; he eventually fell to the ground. However, Shin Ha-Neul went berserk, losing her senses and charging forward like a bull ignoring his wounds.

Although Tetir and Aman's people were slightly surprised by Cormir's arbitrary actions, they were grateful that they now had the advantage because the enemies had lost their minds. A qualified individual from Cormir had utterly broken the enemy's morale, and they gradually gained momentum.

"Keuahhh!" Shin Ha-Neul roared.

Shin Ha-Neul was on a rampage. However, the Qualified individual with the Purple Pattern calmly avoided Shin Ha-Neul's punches and struck Shin Ha-Neul's abdomen with his knee.

"Oof!" Shin Ha-Neul flew backward, coughing and shedding tears.

"Are you crying already?" The man laughed at Shin Ha-Neul.

The man poured his mana into his sword with murderous intent.

"No! Shin Ha-Neul! Stop there!" Baek Hyun-Ah cried out.

"Stop it! Get away! You bastard, get away!" Kang Ji-Hoon shouted urgently.

Seeing Shin Ha-Neul might die like Kim Kang-Chun and Ji Eun-Ju, Baek Hyun-Ah and Kang Ji-Hoon felt like they were on the brink of insanity. They knew they had to save Shin Ha-Neul, but their bodies would not move.

Besides, all they could do was shout. They watched helplessly, shedding tears of blood.

"I'll send you to your beloved friends," said the qualified individual from Cormir, lifting his sword.

When the sword was about to strike, everyone heard a loud noise.

Rumble—! Craaaack—!

A lightning bolt from the sky had stopped the qualified individual from Cormir. The black flash of lightning struck was aimed at the man, leaving only a gray mark on the ground before disappearing.

"Ugh...!" The man had barely avoided the lightning; he groaned and frowned at the sudden attack.

The Qualified individual saw a man with a Yellow Pattern standing between him and Shin Ha-Neul. There was a cold, distorted expression on the newcomer's face.

"What... is going on?"