The Tower 128

Chapter 128

The violent vibrations on the ground could be felt as Gurakan charged forward with his mace in an attempt to rescue Montblanc. However, the tide had already turned against him. Two of the three Solo Digit demons had already lost their combat force and collapsed to the ground.

Rumble— Crack!

A bolt of lightning struck Gurakan's head.

"Kraaaah!" Gurakan roared in pain, shaking, having been weakened by a hit from an earlier thunderbolt.

[Stone Hammer]

A hammer made of rock appeared from the ground and struck Gurakan's side.

"Kraaaak!" Gurakan roared again.

[Psychokinesis]

As Gurakan was screaming, he was caught by Lee Shin's Psychokinesis and thrown toward one of the fallen Solo Digit demons, whose limbs were broken.

'I'll kill you in one shot.'

A spear lay on the ground by Lee Shin's feet. He stepped onto one end of the spear and grabbed it as it bounced upward, launching it at Gurakan.

[Strengthening of the penetration]

[Strengthening of the rotation]

[Correcting of the target]

[Strengthening of the durability]

Mana swirled around the flying spear.

[Gaibolg's Spear]

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The spear was not directly summoned by Lee Shin, but rather, he cast a spell using a medium. By adding the spell to something that already existed in the material world, the difficulty and mental strain on the user were reduced while the power increased.

Swissh—!

The fiercely spinning spear pierced through Gurakan's thick skin with a loud booming sound.

"Keugh…!" Gurakan gasped and breathed his last.

[You have defeated Gurakan.]

[Your merit points have increased by 95,000.]

[You have defeated Anentis.]

[Your merit points have increased by 99,000.]

Anentis was right behind Gurakan when Lee Shin launched the spear, and so Anentis was killed at the same time. Lee Shin looked around. The demons were greatly shaken by what just happened—all of their leaders were dead.

'I could not feel the power of the Demon King. Was the Demon King already exhausted from using too much power? Or…'

Did the Demon King deliberately abandon them? The odds in this war were already overwhelmingly favorable for the Bilone Union when the Qualified with White Patterns were deployed.

With Wang Xiao Ran and his assistant dead, those who now had no leader had no choice besides relinquishing their power to Zhuge Yun. Now, even the authority to make decisions was in Zhuge Yun's hands.

'The challengers from China would probably follow Zhuge Yun now.'

However, Lee Shin thought that Zhuge Yun's goal was not simply about gaining power in China, because it seemed like he did not have good feelings toward China.

'Well, that's not important right now.'

Lee Shin's gaze turned toward where Bilone's base was. Even though it was far away and he could not have seen any faces, Lee Shin could feel that Zhuge Yun was looking his way. Since Lee Shin had fulfilled his request, it was time for him to move elsewhere.

Lee Shin summoned his Skeleton Crow and rode on it, leaving the battlefield. Although the war with the Demon Corps was not yet over, everyone watched as Lee Shin disappeared into the distance. Zhuge Yun smiled in satisfaction and bowed in his direction slightly. Then he looked at the officers standing around him uneasily.

"As soon as this war is over, I'm going to reorganize Bilone," said Zhuge Yun.

"...Do as you please," said an officer.

"What can I do to make it up to you?" another officer asked Zhuge Yun.

Some of the quick-witted officers immediately changed their attitudes.

"The lifespan of the demons in this round won't last much longer. Soon, Mr. Lee Shin will kill the Demon King and the Qualified with White Patterns will go up to the 30th floor," said Zhuge Yun.

Zhuge Yun covered his mouth with a fan and spoke.

"I will uproot Bilone. There's no time to waste, so think carefully. I don't think anyone is still hesitating at this point," said Zhuge Yun.

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'There is definitely no devil in the west.'

Thanks to Zhuge Yun, Lee Shin had used the power of Bilone to explore most of the eastern continent, but he could not find any traces of devils. When he went to Dier to liberate the Korean challengers who were held captive there, he had searched the south but found nothing as well.

Besides the Demon Zone in the northern territory, the only place left unsearched was the west. According to Zhuge Yun, who said that Meldeuren was where the exchange with the devil began first, the probability of Meldeuren making contact with the devil was very high.

'Something must have happened between them…'

But then, would it have come to this situation? Compared to the other countries, Meldeuren had suffered the most. If there was a deal, it would have been broken, or it would have been that they were deceived or controlled by the devil.

However, until now, Meldeuren had shown no particular reaction to the war so far, except to block the Demon Corps just like all the others. That was why Lee Shin was even more confused about whether Meldeuren had something to do with the devil.

'Now all preparations are complete.'

Lee Shin was ready to kill the Demon King and leave Isocia. If Meldeuren continued to deny the existence of the devil, Lee Shin had no choice but to investigate Meldeuren even if it meant destroying all of it.

'Oh right… Clark is in the Valley of Despair right now…'

Clark was a challenger who had climbed the tower with him in his previous life. He was loyal to the United States and was someone who could consider his life as nothing if it was for his country. He had enough sense to make reasonable judgments.

'I've been here too long.'

Lee Shin had to hurry to reach the 50th floor before the next dimension gate opened.

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The Valley of Despair was in the eastern part of the Isocia continent, which was considered the last front line of the Navy zone of Meldeuren. It was named after the fact that it was difficult to escape from that valley and that people would be trapped in their despair once they entered. However, even that infamous reputation was coming to an end today.

"Where the hell is Ethan?!" Shannon shouted.

"He's holding off the demons so they can't come up into the Valley of Despair!" a challenger replied back.

"What? I'm sure I've told him not to go!" Shannon shouted again with a worried look.

"Yes, that's why he was holding them off from above, but it seemed like Nuit would come up, so he fell into the valley with him," said the challenger.

"Dammit!" Shannon shouted.

It seemed like something had happened to Ethan while the support troops were making their way here. Shannon, standing on the railing, bit her lip while watching the battle unfolding in the valley below.

"Isn't Nuit the Number 2 demon?" Shannon asked with nervousness.

"Yes," came the reply.

Nuit was a type of demon that rode on horse-like demons and wielded a spear.

Unlike regular horses, the legs of Nuit's horses were replaced by dozens of tentacles that allowed them to move on the ground in a wide range of strange and unpredictable patterns, making them difficult to deal with. They were also extremely powerful, so many Qualified had fallen victim to Nuit.

"It's only a matter of time before this place is breached. We should stop putting our allies in the Valley of Despair," Shannon muttered.

Although Shannon believed that giving this place up was the right decision, the commander currently in charge did not think so. The base could be recovered, but once a person dies, that was it. Even if they pushed back those on the frontlines, sacrificing any more lives in this place was not the right thing to do.

"Tsk." Shannon clicked her tongue.

Shannon untied her hair and pulled out a bunch of her hair. Then, she infused her mana into the strands of hair she had pulled out and threw it up into the sky.

[Steel Rain]

Dozens of strands of hair stiffened and increased in size. Shannon's unique ability, [Nucleus of Steel], allowed her to transform parts of her body into steel and adjust their size and strength as she pleased.

"Die," Shannon muttered.

A sudden downpour of steel rods from the sky pierced the heads of the demons.

Babababam—!

Hundreds of demonic beasts died instantly. The allies who were blocking the enemies' movement in the Valley of Despair realized that Shannon was there to support them and reorganized their formation. However, it was still not enough.

The demonic beasts were still overwhelmingly many, and the name-class demons were still alive. The next moment, Shannon spotted Ethan. He had transformed into a bear-like humanoid and was dodging Nuit's spear.

Ethan's physical abilities were outstanding, unmatched by anyone in Isocia, but Nuit's speed was not to be underestimated either. Though Ethan's speed was comparable to Nuit, when comparing attack strength, defense, attack range, and everything else, Ethan was overwhelmingly inferior to Nuit.

This was a precarious situation, as if Ethan was walking on a razor's edge. If he were to withdraw, the formation of his struggling allies would collapse in an instant. The troops that Meldeuren had boasted of were all rendered useless, and the once great soldiers fell one by one.

Out of many fortresses that were thought to be impenetrable, this one was the last one standing. Shannon was momentarily lost in thought, wondering how this helpless situation began in the first place.

'...Is this a disaster caused by greed after all?'

Shannon gritted her teeth and pulled out all the nails on her left hand. Ignoring her bleeding hand, she poured mana into her nails.

'Ethan and all the top ranking challengers must be saved.'

Otherwise, there would be no future for them. Even if they were pushed back to the Red Zone, the lives of the challengers must be preserved.

[Steel Wall]

Her nails increased in size and flew into the Valley of Despair one after another with maximum strength.

Thunk! Thunk! Thunk! Thunk! Thud!

Suddenly, a large steel shield flew out of nowhere and landed between Ethan and Nuit, separating them. The remaining shields landed in succession. Ethan looked up with surprise.

Shannon, with a pale face and rough breathing, was looking at Ethan. Then, she looked back at the wall of steel shields formed between the demons and the front lines to protect her allies. This could mean nothing else but an order to retreat.

'But... the commander hasn't given the order to retreat yet.'

Ethan was momentarily lost in thought. No matter how he thought, he knew the end of this hopeless fight was destruction.

'Yeah, this is a stupid sacrifice of our lives...'

Bang—!

Before Ethan could finish his thought, a loud noise pierced his ears. A thick steel shield that was hit by Nuit's spear was pushed back, fell down and crushed the formation of his allies. So many people had been swept away by the fallen steel shield that he could start smelling blood from the surroundings.

"I've been thinking for nothing," Ethan muttered in a gloomy voice.

It was despairing. A tremendous amount of mana surrounded the sharp edge of Nuit's huge sword. If that mana were to come directly at him, it would spell the end of Ethan and other comrades around him.

'If I dodge, hundreds of my comrades will die, and if I block, I die.'

Ethan's choice was ultimately his own death. It was not an efficient choice from a national perspective, but it was a choice he could not avoid. Death was not frightening, but Ethan was afraid of living a cowardly life. That was Ethan's belief.

"Bring it on!" Ethan shouted.

Ethan gathered his mana, and his entire body swelled as if his muscles were about to burst.

"No!" He heard Shannon's desperate cry, but ignored it, relieved that she would not end her life with him here.

Rumble— Rumble—

A sudden sound of thunder boomed in the sky.

'Huh? What's going on…? Why are there so many dark clouds all of the sudden…?'

Although the weather was not considered good, there had not been a dark cloud in sight. Now, the sky was covered with dark clouds, and lightning energy flashed.

'What's up with the weather all of the sudden…?'

Ethan's gaze was fixed on Nuit again. However, Ethan could sense that something was amiss. He tilted his head because Nuit, who had been emitting demon power, reacted strangely.

'What's going on?'

The demon power, which had seemed like it could easily take down its opponents at any moment, began to shake unsteadily as if frightened by something. Nuit's bewildered gaze was directed somewhere else.

'I don't know what's going on, but it's an opportunity for me.'

Ethan realized that Nuit's moment of hesitation was his last chance. He clenched his teeth.

'Now is the time!'

With his nails and feet filled with mana, Ethan sprang off the ground. It was the perfect opportunity to deal a fatal blow to Nuit. As Ethan approached Nuit, his shaking spear suddenly swung toward Ethan at high speed.

Woong—

Nuit, who had seemed frozen, was faster and sharper than Ethan had imagined.

"Kek!" Desperately twisting his body, Ethan managed to avoid the spear as it grazed his arm.

If it had hit him directly, it would have been powerful enough to kill him instantly. He quickly backed away, but Nuit did not pursue him.

'Is he not interested in me anymore?'

It seemed as if Nuit's attention was focused on something else. Although it seemed like Nuit had suddenly become unstable, he was more alert than ever.

When Ethan furrowed his eyebrows and kept his eyes on Nuit, an intense mana suddenly appeared in the sky, and a black lightning bolt struck directly at Nuit.

Kwaaaah!

The turbulent flow of demon power, which had been unstable, turned ferocious and gathered at the tip of Nuit's spear, extending in a straight line toward the black lightning bolt.