

The Tower 129

Chapter 129: The Whole Story

The fading moonlight failed to vanquish the darkness on the battlefield. A pitch-black thunderbolt suddenly shattered the tranquility and pierced the ground. Its overpowering energy and presence caught everyone's attention amidst the darkness.

"Keugh..." A muffled moan broke the silence brought by the thunderbolt.

"This is..." Ethan had seen the thunderbolt strike Nuit, so he was at a loss for words.

The seemingly indestructible and invulnerable monster had turned charcoal black and groaned in pain. Its presence that once dominated the battlefield had disappeared, and Ethan found the sight of the monster writhing in pain strange.

The thunderbolt had instantly killed Nuit's horse, so its corpse remained still on the ground. Using his spear as support, Nuit struggled to get up.

Nuit was quite a remarkable fellow. Even after being struck by such a thunderbolt, he stood up again like it was nothing.

'No, wait. It was something for him.'

However, from Ethan's point of view, it was still a shocking scene. The thunderbolt had exploded on contact, and its fragments had then spread in all directions and targeted the demons around. The ones who had managed to stay alive were now struggling more than Nuit.

"Ethan!" Shannon shouted desperately.

The voice was gradually getting closer; Ethan turned his head upward to the source. Shannon was coming toward him.

"Are you okay?" Shannon asked with a worried look.

"Me? Yes, I'm fine..." Ethan replied.

Ethan looked dazed, glancing from side to side. While the thunderbolts had ignored him and everyone around him, they had mercilessly attacked the demons.

'Huh...'

This could only happen if the spellcaster of the attack wanted it to happen.

"Keaaakkk!" Before Ethan could process what had just happened, Nuit abruptly stood up and let out a scream that sounded like a seizure.

The piercing scream rang in his ears, and the demons around stood up again.

"Oh no!" Shannon shouted.

"Everyone, stay focused!" Ethan shouted.

Ethan and Shannon shouted in surprise. The battle was not yet over. Everyone had been momentarily stunned, giving them a brief rest.

"I'll kill you all!" Nuit's demon power was rising as if it could explode.

Nuit was fatally wounded, but even so, Ethan and Shannon had no confidence in defeating him. They desperately hoped that the wizard with the immense lightning power would reappear to help them.

Rumble—?

And their prayer was answered.

Crack—!

Black lightning bolts struck down once again. Nuit, hit by a thick bolt again, knelt and let out a breathless voice. A man appeared behind it.

"That person is..." Ethan muttered when he saw the man.

"Just as expected..." Shannon also recognized the man in the distance.

The man was handsome, had purple hair, and a sharp impression. He was a wizard who always carried a pure white sword at his waist. Ethan and Shannon, who had witnessed the black lightning bolt, had already begun guessing the spellcaster's identity.

This black lightning was this wizard's signature spell. How could anyone not know the wizard's identity after witnessing that skill? Ethan and Shannon felt their hearts that had calmed down starting to warm up again.

"Keugh..." Nuit stood up, holding the spear tightly with trembling hands.

Nuit turned his head to look at Lee Shin with an expression of disbelief. When Lee Shin noticed that, he smiled coldly, slightly showing his teeth.

"Did you guys think you could beat us?" Lee Shin asked Nuit.

Lee Shin's words weakened Nuit's resolve. Its anger dissipated, leaving only fear in its eyes. Lee Shin's fingers radiated dark mana that seeped into the ground, and a black-armored knight emerged from the shadows at his feet.

Swoosh—! Thud!

The knight swung his sword and beheaded Nuit. It had been a nightmare for Merteng, but it had died so easily. Ethan and Shannon rubbed their eyes several times to make sure they were not dreaming, but everything was happening for real.

"Execute them all," Lee Shin ordered.

Hundreds of undead surged forward from the ground, following his command.

Kaaahhh!

Keek!

Kyaahh!

The word massacre could aptly describe the ensuing battle, as it was completely one-sided.

"I now understand the extent of Meldeuren's lunacy for attempting this."

"I agree."

Meldeuren, on the brink of collapse, had survived but had suffered severe damage. After the war, the pain that adrenaline had kept at bay came in waves. Cries of agony could be heard from all around.

Lee Shin looked around sullenly before looking skyward. The night sky was beginning to brighten up. A blue eastern sky was revealed through the dreary darkness, indicating that dawn was approaching.

"Are you Mr. Lee Shin?" A man in neat attire approached him from the bottom of the valley.

"I'm Clark. I've been waiting for you," Clark introduced himself to Lee Shin.

"I see," Lee Shin replied.

"There seems to be a lot to discuss. Follow me. Let's go up," said Clark.

Lee Shin nodded and followed Clark as if going for a scheduled meeting. Puzzled, Shannon and Ethan watched them, wondering about Clark's natural reception to Lee Shin's arrival.

"Has he been waiting for Lee Shin?" Shannon's face distorted in disbelief at Clark's words.

When Lee Shin entered Clark's office, Clark handed him a cup of tea. He sat down and drank it. It was a calming tea that soothed his mind and body. The exhaustion from the battle seemingly instantly disappeared. Clark smiled softly, as if he had known Lee Shin would be satisfied, and looked Lee Shin in the eyes.

"Recently, the Demon Corps has begun encroaching on the continent's eastern part vigorously. It's as if they want to push out even here. The army is pushing its forces in without considering the damage they might cause." Clark tried to explain the situation to Lee Shin.

"Do you want to blame me for that?" Lee Shin asked coldly.

"No, I'm just telling you the facts," Clark replied.

Clark's expression was calm, like he had no other intention behind mentioning this news.

"I know, Mr. Lee Shin, you have negative feelings toward us," said Clark.

"Oh really?" Lee Shin asked back.

"Our greed made Merteng suffer and led to many being sacrificed—"

"No, that's not it," Lee Shin said.

"Sorry?" Clark asked, looking puzzled.

After interrupting him, Lee Shin looked at Clark and shook his head. Clark's confusion only grew.

"Then what is it that—" Clark tried to ask Lee Shin.

"Tell me what you're hiding. Tell me what made you so greedy," said Lee Shin, cutting off Clark again.

Lee Shin's response seemed to suggest that he already knew the answer. Clark shut his mouth, wondering how much he knew. Clark did not know what to do in this situation.

"If you don't tell me, I'll consider you an enemy," said Lee Shin coldly.

Clark thought for a long time but had decided on an answer long ago. He thought that Lee Shin was bluffing, but he knew that he would become Lee Shin's enemy if he lied about something Lee Shin already knew. He could not risk that.

"Do you know that a devil is living here?" Clark asked Lee Shin.

Lee Shin's eyes sank at his words.

"Two American challengers happened upon a devil while exploring De Gret Dale. The devil made an offer to the two challengers: Don't kill the Demon King, and the Demon King will cooperate with them in return," Clark continued.

The American challengers had then relayed the devil's offer to Meldeuren, which began planning based on it. The appearance of Lee Shin and the Korean challengers' transformation had made the United States, the strongest country in the world, anxious about Korea catching up to them in a few short years.

And so began the closure of Isocia, prompted by the devil's temptation. That was the beginning of the whole story.

"Korea used incredible abilities to climb the tower rapidly from the first floor and made great achievements on the way. It's not that the United States did not think of it, but we deemed it inefficient. We believed you were the sole reason behind Korea's success, Mr. Lee Shin," said Clark.

Clark decided to be honest as he understood that lying wouldn't benefit him.

"We judged that this place, Isocia, was the most suitable for achieving a perfect growth monopoly on the lower floors. We thought that, in this place, it would be easy to suppress other countries' growth while encouraging our own. It's honestly difficult to create infrastructure for growth on the first floor. However, Isocia was different, especially if it could join hands with demons," Clark explained.

"You are quite bold, aren't you?" Lee Shin smiled bitterly.

"I'm just telling the truth," said Clark.

"Sometimes, truth is more shameful than a lie," said Lee Shin.

"Is that so?" Clark asked.

Clark's expression remained unchanged throughout the conversation, making Lee Shin laugh. The memories from Lee Shin's past were overlapping.

"Anyway, although Meldeuren had definitely secured the country's growth engine by occupying the Demon Zone, it was still burdensome to manage the entire continent. So, we brought in Bilone. Meldeuren took charge of the east, and Bilone took over the west," Clark continued.

"Doesn't that mean, in the end, the two countries betrayed humans?" Lee Shin asked, accusing Clark.

There was a clear difference between betraying humans and betraying Korea. It could be somewhat understandable that they betrayed one country to keep their enemy in check, but it was different when it came to betraying humans.

"Please don't misunderstand. We only had a simple business relationship with the demons." Clark tried to explain.

"Did you think it was really possible to have such a relationship with demons—no, devils?"

"We didn't trust the devils either. We always thought about their betrayal, but we made a mistake. We assumed Meldeuren would always be in a stronger position than the demons," said Clark.

Humans had reigned over the demons for a long time, so the species had seemingly collectively forgotten about the time the demons had massacred many of their kind.

"Bilone was using demonized humans. So are you saying that you guys were steering clear of them?" Lee Shin asked Clark directly.

Lee Shin's question was reasonable. The fact that they were using demonized humans meant that they had already fallen into the hands of the demons.

"Yes, I am aware of that. I also know that a few other countries apart from Bilone also use demonized humans," said Clark to justify his actions.

"So, you're going to stick with the story that Meldeuren isn't using demonized humans?" Lee Shin asked again.

"Yes, that's right," Clark replied to Lee Shin.

"Well, how can I believe you?" Lee Shin asked Clark with a look of disbelief.

Clark's expression froze, but one could see the tiniest bit of frustration on his face.

"I know that the 30th floor for demonized humans is different from the 30th floor for Earth challengers. I'm not foolish enough to try something like that to gain more strength," Clark explained.

Lee Shin raised his eyebrows and looked at Clark.

"It was recorded. When humans combine their power with demonic power, they become demonized humans. The demonized humans climb the Tower as demons, not humans," said Clark.

"So, you're saying that Bilone decided to use the power despite knowing that?" Lee Shin asked Clark for clarification.

"Yes. Records are just records. They have remained unconfirmed for a long time. Maybe they did not believe it or care about its veracity," said Clark.

They may not have combined their power with demonic power to become demonized humans, but they were marked for disaster the second they made a deal with the devil. Such a deal always ended in despair.

"You did a foolish thing. Don't you know what being in bed with the devil means?" Lee Shin accused Clark.

"I have no excuse," Clark muttered.

Clark looked regretful, but Lee Shin could not tell whether he was pretending.

"Even if I decide to kill all of you here, you cannot say anything to me," said Lee Shin coldly.

Along with Lee Shin's cold voice emerged his black mana vigorously, almost breaking the chair's armrest.