

## **The Tower 143**

### **Chapter 143**

Lee Shin and the old Hunchback locked eyes. And at some point, without even Lee Shin realizing it, the old Hunchback had brought his hands forward. Before that, they had been clasped behind his back. Lee Shin's eyes twitched at the sight.

Even though he was looking at the old man very closely, he was having difficulty perceiving the old man's movement.

'Is it a sensory disturbance?'

Lee Shin abruptly realized that the old man had disappeared, and he hadn't even heard the air rustling as the old Hunchback had moved. To increase his precision, he decided to fragment his mana.

'Is he hiding over there?'

He detected a subtle movement after dispersing his mana in every direction. He immediately grasped that entire space with psychokinesis.

[Psychokinesis]

The massive black mana hand tried to grab the old man, but the old Hunchback's blade broke through Lee Shin's mana, and he slipped away.

'He's even capable of breaking mana?'

The old Hunchback's talent and prowess were beyond his expectations, making one of his eyebrows twitch momentarily.

'Man... I can't waste my time here. It's a bad, bad idea.'

A slightly annoying situation could have unfolded had Lee Shin wasted his mana earlier. Thinking about that, he frowned. He could not detect the old man's movements with his senses.

Lee Shin bent his knees and placed his hands on the ground. His mana extended from his fingertips and spread in all directions over the ground.

Woong—!

His mana extended far, and soon climbed up the trees.

Pizz—!

Next, faint sparks could be seen here and there above the trees.

‘What is he doing?’

The old man, hiding among the trees, furrowed his eyebrows when he noticed Lee Shin’s actions and swiftly moved between the trees, avoiding his thunderbolts. The thunderbolts weren’t powerful, but the old man thought that the wizard was using them to locate him.

‘He can use psychokinesis and even thunderbolts...?’

The old man's eyes narrowed.

‘So, this wizard must be Lee Shin.’

As the old man smirked, the corners of his mouth went up. He had entered the tower to eliminate his next target and that turned out to be Lee Shin. Before he had entered, he had even learned that Lee Shin was the one responsible for Jack’s defeat.

Since the old man had been in a hurry to chase him, he didn't get much time to gather information on Lee Shin.

'Hmm... What should I do...?'

The old man pressed his lips tightly. Lee Shin's abilities were much more outstanding than he had anticipated. Besides, he could not ignore the fact that he did not have much information on Lee Shin. Therefore, the old man was currently unsure of the victor if the two of them fought.

'He is definitely different from ordinary wizards.'

The old man pondered whether he should wait for better timing or kill him now before the enemy grew even stronger.

'Let's wait a little longer for now.'

The old man organized his thoughts, but as soon as he turned, strange spores poured out from all directions. Then, the faint green particles turned into mist, covering everything around him. The old man anxiously looked around with furrowed eyebrows. The particles had enveloped the entire space, even cutting off his escape route.

'So, this is what he was aiming for?'

The old man looked stunned and then turned his attention toward Lee Shin's location. If he was right, this mist was undoubtedly the toxic spores of Calacia. Calacia was a plant and parasite that latched onto trees and absorbed sap to survive.

It emitted toxic spores to kill the enemies that disturbed it. Looking at the number of toxic spores around, at least hundreds of Calacia plants had been disturbed simultaneously. The old man believed that it was absurd to think that Lee Shin could accurately locate hundreds of Calacia and disturb them all at once.

'Argh!'

The toxic spores were gradually closing in. If the old man left this toxic spore-infested space, their effect would diminish, but he would then be within Lee Shin's attack range.

'The best way to deal with this situation is to kill him while staying away from the spores.'

The old man had decided to wait for a better opportunity to kill him, but he now had no choice. He turned toward Lee Shin, who stood before the Drosophile corpse. Mana emanated from his crude scabbard.

A sword abruptly appeared in the old Hunchback's hand and moved through the space, aiming for Lee Shin's head. He believed he could snatch Lee Shin's life with this attack before the enemy even realized it. As the blade approached Lee Shin, he didn't react, seemingly proving the old man's thoughts correct.

The old man thought everything would be over in a second. Considering he had defeated Jack, Lee Shin now seemed too easy of an opponent. He wondered why he even considered Lee Shin a threat.

However, until the sword had done its job, the old man refused to let his guard down. He never averted his gaze from Lee Shin's face until the end. The faint sense of unease lingering in the corner of his heart wouldn't leave until he had killed his opponent. That indescribable sensation he had felt only once in the past continued to get on his nerves.

"Ha," Lee Shin smirked.

As soon as Lee Shin smirked, the old man realized something was wrong.

Woong— Clank!

Suddenly, a black chain shot up from the ground. The old man failed to dodge it.

"Keugh..." He groaned in pain as Lee Shin choked him with his hand.

Pizz—!

"Krrrrraaaack!" screamed the old man in pain.

The old man writhed like a fish out of water, enduring tremendous pain. His Health Points declined rapidly, but Lee Shin had yet to exert his full force. The old man's Health Points decreased until they were nearly zero.

"Kuh... ugh...!" The old man coughed up blood.

Lee Shin picked up the sword that the old man had dropped and slowly examined it with narrowed eyes. There were dried-up blood stains here and there on the blade. He knew that it was someone else's blood.

Lee Shin couldn't even estimate how many people the old man had killed. He held up that sword close to the old man's neck.

"Why are you targeting me?" Lee Shin asked. He was already sure the old man was here, on this level, because of him.

Lee Shin knew that coincidences weren't a frequent phenomenon in this world, if not utterly nonexistent. In his previous life, he had been the only person on Earth to reach the 100th floor. Even then, he would only occasionally encounter such leading figures and only on the floors above the 50th.

'It feels kind of strange to call it a coincidence.'

Therefore, Lee Shin was confident that this old man was after him.

"Krr... kuk... I heard that you defeated Jack," said the old man, laughing chillingly.

"So what?" Lee Shin replied.

"I just wanted to kill the strongest," the old man said.

The old man's glaring pupils were filled with an unknown desire. The glare seemed to say he wanted to kill Lee Shin, even now.

"Well, you will die now," said Lee Shin.

"I have a question," the old man said.

Seemingly unafraid of death, the old man ignored Lee Shin's words and spoke his mind.

"How... How did you do it exactly?" the old man asked Lee Shin.

His eyes were looking for an answer from Lee Shin.

"That movement, gaze, and that unreal cognizance... It's like you are part of an entirely different world," the old man explained.

When Lee Shin saw the man's thoughtful expression, he realized what the old man was thinking.

'So that's what it was.'

Lee Shin could tell that the man yearned for and desired the transcendental class.

"Have you met anyone else like that before?" Lee Shin asked the old man.

"Yeah... That guy was just like you. He told me that if I excel in what I am good at, I will achieve it," the old man replied.

"So, is that why you killed the strongest challengers on each floor?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yeah, that's right," the old man replied.

Lee Shin laughed at him. The old man's greatest skill was killing others, so wasn't that guy just asking the old Hunchback to keep killing others? The very existence of this old man was a danger. Lee Shin fixed his cold eyes on him.

"You aimlessly pursued meaningless goals," Lee Shin muttered.

"What do you mean..." The old man seemed confused by Lee Shin's words.

"Starting today, your goals will no longer mean anything to you," said Lee Shin.

Swoosh—!

The next moment, Lee Shin beheaded the old man with his sword, splattering his blood all over the ground.

[You have taken away Matador's Agility.]

[Your Agility has increased by 1.]

'Was his name Matador?'

Lee Shin found it strange that he had never heard of the infamous old Hunchback's real name.

[You have killed a challenger.]

[Your Strength has increased by 3.]

[Your Agility has increased by 5.]

[Your Intelligence has increased by 1.]

[Your Dominance has increased by 1.]

[Your Health Points have increased by 700.]

[Your Mana Points have increased by 300.]

The increase in his abilities was greater than he had expected, so he burst into laughter. How many challengers' lives had he taken in such a short time for his stats to increase so significantly? Lee Shin plunged the bloody sword into the ground and looked into the old man's death.

Swoosh—!

The background rippled, and soon, a village in ruins was revealed. The small village was engulfed in flames, and all its citizens were seemingly dead. Blood, viscera, and corpses were everywhere.

In the middle of all this was a half-mad man—Matador. He was looking at the village entrance, looking at the approaching man.

‘A human...?’

One couldn't tell the difference between him and that man at a glance. Matador held a dagger and charged toward the man in a long black coat. Compared to the future him, this Matador's movements were noticeably inferior, yet still sharp and keen.

However, the man easily evaded Matador's attack. He had aimed his dagger at the man, but the weapon failed to even touch him. To be exact, it did not even seem like the man had avoided it. The man had stood still, but the attacks, however, all failed to land on him.



"Damn it! Die! Just die already!" Matador shouted.

Matador, relentlessly swinging his dagger, grew exhausted and fell to the ground. There were only two emotions in his eyes: astonishment and greed. He wanted to possess this power that had managed to shake his very being. He had failed to defeat the guy, but he felt no despair or fear at the possibility of dying fighting this man.

"What an intriguing human he is... Is that why you chose this guy?" The man's voice was calm and dry.

"What do you mean, choose? What are you talking about—" Just as Matador asked with a puzzled expression, peculiar-looking fluids oozed from Matador, gathering to form a single entity.

"Did you come to get me?" the Slime Monster asked.

"Yeah, that's right," the man replied.

"So, you were the one hunting down the other gods," muttered the Slime Monster.

"I'm just trying to capture those who act like gods," answered the man with a chilling smile.

"Tsk... Do you really think a man like you can kill me?" The Slime Monster laughed at the man.

"Well, nothing is impossible," the man replied.

The Slime Monster assimilated with the ground as the man unsheathed the sword at his waist. The entire village, which had been burning, transformed into slime and started pulling the man underground.

"You will disappear within my domain!" said the Slime Monster.

"How foolish," the man muttered.

The man's expression remained unchanged even after half of his body had been pulled underground. He swung his sword downward and hit the ground.

"Divine Realm Breaking Force!"

An intangible force spread throughout the space; almost simultaneously, the Slime Monster's domain dissipated, reverting the area to its original state.

"W-w-what's going on...! M-m-my Divinity Class is...!" The Slime Monster started to panic.

"Ha! You seem flustered," said the man.

Then, the man slowly approached the Slime Monster, standing on the ground pitifully.

"What did you just do to my Divinity Class! What have you done! Give it back...! It's mine. It belongs to me—!" shouted the Slime Monster.

Swoosh— Thud!

However, before the Slime Monster could even finish his words, he was cleaved and collapsed. Anyone watching this scene might find its death pitiful, but the power within the man's swing was beyond one's imagination.

Matador looked at the dead Slime Monster, trembling. It was just a simple slash, yet he felt that he could never replicate such a skill.

"How did you do that? T-teach me too!" Matador grabbed the man's leg.

The man bent his knees and looked into Matador's eyes.

"Do what you do best. As long as you keep pursuing it relentlessly, someday you will reach the end of it," said the man calmly.

"Something I'm good at...?" Matador started to ponder.

"Do you want to become like me? Then go mad. Insanity will allow you to achieve this," said the man.

The man then looked beyond Matador's shoulder, so Matador also turned his head following that gaze. He saw the corpses littered around, and a sinister smile appeared on his lips.

Once again, the background changed. Matador witnessed countless deaths and grew older with time until he faced Lee Shin and died.

[You have witnessed the perfect speck of Transcendence].

[You have awakened the hidden power of the Qualification of an Adversary.]

[Qualification of an Adversary]

This is a qualification given to those who can challenge the gods.

# Takes a step closer to Transcendence Class.

# The Transcendence Class increases if one defeats an opponent with a Divinity Class of 10 or higher.

# Can use Divine Realm Breaking Force.

[Divine Realm Breaking Force]

This is a power created by the Adversary to resist the power of the gods. Your current Transcendence Class is too low. Therefore, the power of the Divine Realm Breaking Force has been decreased.

# Lowers the opponent's Divinity Class by 5.

‘Hmm... the Divine Realm Breaking Force?’

Seeing that it could lower others' Divinity Class, Lee Shin found this ability unbelievable. Even at a glance, he could tell that the Slime Monster was a god at an extraordinary level. Yet, the man completely nullified his Divinity Class. Lee Shin had never witnessed such power, not even in his previous life.

‘If only I had this ability... Could I have inflicted greater damage to the gods I encountered on the 100th floor?’

As Lee Shin reminisced with a regretful expression, he realized that dwelling on the past would change nothing. Biting his lip, he thought of the men Matador had confronted.

‘I thought my skills were growing somewhat quickly...’

However, looking at that man, Lee Shin felt that he was still far from reaching his goal. While he had only come a little closer to the Transcendence class, the man had already achieved it.

Matador could not perceive any difference between Lee Shin and the man with his eyes, but Lee Shin was different. Just by witnessing that speck of the past, Lee Shin could sense the vast difference between that man and himself.

‘Hmm... a person who has reached Transcendence...’

Even in his previous life, Lee Shin hadn't encountered someone at that level. The man looked human, but was he truly human? Lee Shin was curious about that, but all he could do was keep the image of that man in his memory.

The next moment, Lee Shin turned back and looked behind him. The corpses of the four individuals had disappeared. There was no trace of the blood that had once soaked the ground. Also, the bow used by the Elf and the robe worn by the Naga were all gone.

‘I need to hurry.’

After the battle with the old Hunchback, Lee Shin’s mana had decreased by half. The venomous spores that had filled the surroundings gradually dispersed, but he still needed to wait a little longer.

‘Meanwhile, I guess I should cook something with the Drosophile.’

The sound of waves from the coast faintly reached Lee Shin through the forest trees. There were thirteen days remaining. And before the day was over, Lee Shin had to find that location to complete the hidden piece to capture the legendary plant, Mandragora, sleeping in this forest.