

The Tower 149

Chapter 149

[You have entered the 31st floor.]

[Find and kill the Dark Wizard who is hiding in the village.]

Lee Shin decided to climb the tower along with Vuela and Alice. Vuela was his comrade for killing Gods, but he also had to take Alice with him because he needed her skill, the Eyes of the Wise Man.

"Cigarate has been persistently following us, but it seems like he suddenly disappeared," Alice commented, looking around.

"Hmm..." Vuela, who was pursing his lips, glanced at Lee Shin.

"We had a battle yesterday," Lee Shin spoke up.

"What? Really? I knew it... So that's why he wasn't around," Vuela said.

Cigarate had been wanting to test his magic skills against Lee Shin, and Lee Shin had been postponing the battle, but he finally offered to have a light duel with Cigarate last night. If Lee Shin did not agree to the battle, Cigarate would probably continue to follow him all the way, even to the 100th floor, just for a chance to fight.

'Considering his competitiveness, he'll probably ask me for another round later on.'

Lee Shin thought that as time passed, the skill gap between him and Cigarate would widen further. Therefore, he was determined to show a clear difference the next time he encountered Cigarate.

"By the way, if I have to find the Dark Wizard, does that mean he is in this village?" Vuela muttered.

While Vuela was looking around the village, some people approached Lee Shin's group.

The chief of the village introduced himself to Lee Shin's group. "Nice to meet you. I'm Bill, the chief of this village."

Bill had a friendly demeanor and offered a handshake.

"As you can see, our village is not in the best condition. The Undead have been stirring up trouble nearby lately," Bill muttered. "It's really difficult for our village vigilantes to find the Dark Wizard, no matter how hard we have tried."

"Judging by your attire, you seem to have considerable skills. So, if you don't mind, could you please help us?" the village vigilantes asked Lee Shin, as if they had been struggling a lot.

Seeing their anxious faces, Lee Shin nodded.

"Sure, I can," Lee Shin replied.

"Thank you. Then... let me first give you a tour of the village—" Bill offered.

"No, there's no need for that," Alice interrupted the chief's words and smirked.

Alice looked at Lee Shin.

"This guy is the Dark Wizard," Alice declared and pointed at the chief.

"Oh, is that so?" Lee Shin replied.

"W-What are you talking about? Why would I be the Dark Wizard!" Bill, the chief, blurted out so loudly that his spit also went flying. His eyes were wide and he seemed to be getting nervous at Alice's words.

The village vigilantes who stood next to the chief drew their swords and started to defend Bill.

"Oh wait, so you guys were the minions of the Dark Wizards!" Lee Shin shouted.

"There's no way our chief is the Dark Wizard...!" The village vigilantes seemed stunned.

"Step aside," Lee Shin ordered.

Lee Shin pushed away the people next to Bill with his Psychokinesis and approached him.

[Wind Cutter]

Wind gathered above Lee Shin's index finger. With a loud whoosh, a gust of wind spun around and flew toward the chief's neck.

Baaam—!

Suddenly, a purple sphere appeared in the air, blocking Lee Shin's Wind Cutter. It then exploded, creating a purple mist.

"Keugh... The chief is trying to escape!"

"I got him," said Vuela.

Vuela drew his sword and swung it in a wide circular motion. Strong winds emerged around him and then shot forward. Because of the wind, the mist was pushed away, and the chief's figure that had been hidden was now revealed.

"Kraaahhh...!" the chief screamed in agony.

Vuela's Sword Wind made many cuts to the chief's entire body.

"Darn it... But how did you know?" The chief's eyes, shining with purple light, were glaring.

"You don't need to know." Lee Shin's cold voice entered the chief's ears.

[Dark Thunder]

Black mana shot up into the sky and then slammed into the ground.

Babababam—!

The chief urgently tried to put up a barrier to block the attack, but it was futile.

"Krrraah!" the chief screamed.

The village chief, who had not anticipated such a situation, lamented his failure to bring his wand and robe with him and soon collapsed on the spot.

[You have cleared the 31st floor.]

[Your achievements will be recorded.]

[The gods are amazed by your rapid progress.]

[You have achieved 189,300 points.]

[...]

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[You have cleared the 35th floor.]

[Conquer the Ice Castle.]

[You have chosen the Hell Level difficulty.]

[The Monarch of the Ice Castle has turned into the Tyrant of the Ice Castle.]

Baaam—!

Bababam—!

The stable-looking pillars of the Ice Castle started to crumble and the ice shattered. Then the whole Ice Castle fell apart with a loud crash. The Tyrant of the Ice Castle embedded his gigantic machete into the icy ground and then stared at the man in front of him, Lee Shin, with an expression of disbelief.

"Guhhh... Cough! How... how can you be... so strong..." the Tyrant of the Ice Castle muttered.

"The more desperate you become, the stronger you get," Lee Shin replied.

"De...sperate...?" the Tyrant of the Ice Castle asked.

"People like you won't understand, so don't even try," Lee Shin replied.

As Lee Shin finished speaking, his black thunder shot out from his fingertips and made the Tyrant of the Ice Castle disappear.

[You have cleared the 35th floor.]

[Your achievements will be recorded.]

[...]

"Take me to the next floor," Lee Shin said.

[You are moving up to the 36th floor.]

* Breaking News) Lee Shin breaks through the 35th floor.

↳ Wow, looking at his achievements, he seems to have chosen the Hell Level and yet, he's already cleared it?

↳ He's insane.

↳ Why are you so surprised? It's not even that surprising anymore.

↳ Yeah, stop overreacting.

↳ So, is this what this Lee Shin guy can do? How can he be so fast?

↳ The Dimension Gate is about to open now. With this speed, if there were a month or two left, he would have been able to reach the 50th floor before the Gate opens.

└ True that, LOL.

└ By the way, there will be a huge commotion when the Dimension Gate opens again.

└ Yeah, even if challengers here are getting along pretty well, it could be different on Earth.

└ What if a war breaks out?

└ What war? A war can't happen that easily, calm down.

Since the opening of Isocia, the attention of not only the Koreans but all the Earthlings had been focused on Lee Shin's every move and the upcoming opening of the Dimension Gate.

"Deputy Leader," said Park Joo-Hyuk, looking at Baek Hyun-Ah.

"Yes, Leader," Baek Hyun-Ah replied.

"Did you finish writing the report?" Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

"Yes, there was so much to report this time that I couldn't even sleep properly for a few days," Baek Hyun-Ah replied, rubbing her eyes.

"Here's your beer!" The waiter approached their table and handed her the beer.

Baek Hyun-Ah, who had been sighing, slumped into her chair, took the beer from the waiter and gulped it down.

Clank!

Then, she roughly put down the beer glass on the table and started venting her dissatisfaction.

"Ugh... It makes no sense that they are making us challengers write such detailed reports when we should be focusing on climbing the tower. Do you think it's reasonable?" Baek Hyun-Ah grumbled.

"Umm... Well... It's still a task assigned by the country—" Park Joo-Hyuk tried to explain.

"But still! How would humans who haven't even entered the tower themselves understand? Do they even know how much of our precious time has been wasted trying to document all the hardships we've gone through? We don't even have enough time for training, and this just makes me tired," Baek Hyun-Ah continued.

Since Park Joo-Hyuk had nothing to say in return, he continued to gulp down his beer.

"Also, those team members, what the hell are they even doing? They never do anything on their own. Do I have to tell them every little thing to get them moving? Besides, whenever I tell them what to do, they make faces at me. They are making it obvious that they are annoyed by what I say," Baek Hyun-Ah continued.

As she thought about such things, Baek Hyun-Ah's face started to flush with anger; she gulped down the beer and then slammed it on the table.

"One more pint over here! No wait! Actually, give me three more!" Baek Hyun-Ah shouted.

"Hey, don't drink too much," said Park Joo-Hyuk.

"Don't stop me today. I need to drink a lot today," she replied.

As she kept chugging down the strong alcohol, her entire face turned red and she poured out her inner thoughts.

"I don't even have enough time to focus on my training. Do you even know how hard I'm working to narrow the gap with you?" Baek Hyun-Ah cried out.

"Of course I do," Park Joo-Hyuk replied.

"You don't know a damn thing. If you did, how can you pretend not to know what I'm doing and just focus on your own training?" Baek Hyun-Ah continued.

"Well... Umm..." Park Joo-Hyuk did not know what to say.

Park Joo-Hyuk was aware of the situation, but he was not good at that kind of thing and he did not want his training time to be interrupted by anything. Therefore, he could only feel sorry for her.

"You don't have anything to say, right? But I totally understand... As our team leader, you should be training in the time you have. Besides, Master Lee Shin also said that you should focus on training," said Baek Hyun-Ah.

"Senior Shin also said so..."

"..."

"..."

After saying that, she silently looked at her glass and drank again. When Park Joo-Hyuk saw that, he tried to get up from his seat.

"Why don't we start going up—" Park Joo-Hyuk muttered.

"You can go up first, Leader," said Baek Hyun-Ah.

"..." Park Joo-Hyuk could not say anything in return.

"We already know you're still on this floor because of us. We know," said Baek Hyun-Ah.

"Hey, Deputy Leader," said Park Joo-Hyuk.

"Can I please have more beer?!" Baek Hyun-Ah shouted.

"I told you to stop drinking," said Park Joo-Hyuk.

Although Park Joo-Hyuk tried to hold her back, she continued to drink without saying a word. What she said to Park Joo-Hyuk just now was what she actually had been wanting to say for a long time.

Her previous tantrums all stemmed from this concern. She did not want to become a team member who was an obstacle to the team leader's growth. Since she knew how painful it would be, she trained and worked hard like crazy to not get in the way.

However, Master Lee Shin was climbing the tower at an incredible speed, and Baek Hyun, Park Hye-Won, Kim Kang-Chun, Shin Ha-Neul, and others were following him very closely.

Unlike these people who were preparing to challenge themselves on the 35th floor, the team leader, Park Joo-Hyuk, had only managed to complete the 33rd floor. In fact, the reason behind this was the team members who were lagging behind and struggling to go up faster.

"Leader," Baek Hyun-Ah called out.

"Deputy Leader!" Park Joo-Hyuk shouted really loud.

His shout drew the attention of others inside the pub.

"Hey! Take your lover's quarrel outside! You guys are too loud!" A gigantic drunk person sitting at a nearby table was irritated and started yelling at Park Joo-Hyuk.

However, when he saw Joo-Hyuk ignoring him, he got angry and got up from his seat.

"This damn bastard!"

"Wait a minute! It's him! Park Joo-Hyuk," another person sitting at the same table as the man shouted.

"Park Joo-Hyuk?" The man tried to recall who he was.

"Yeah! Remember the challenger who defeated that crazy monster, Harakus, single-handedly?" The person sitting at the same table reminded him.

"Huh? Seriously?" Startled by his comrade's words, the gigantic person stopped moving forward and returned to his spot.

"Is that true that he defeated Harakus on his own? How can that tiny human defeat Harakus? Besides, I think I also heard that Harakus inherited divine blood or something," said the man.

"I don't know either. But there were plenty of witnesses. If I didn't stop you just now, things would have turned out badly," said his comrade.

A while ago, Park Joo-Hyuk got into an argument with a challenger named Harakus, and he defeated Harakus on his own. Of course, Park Joo-Hyuk was also severely injured, but he won the fight, and the news spread.

Park Joo-Hyuk did not pay much attention to the commotion next to him. One's good reputation inside the tower reduced petty disputes, so things were easier for Park Joo-Hyuk.

"Leader, Natasha Polly has already separated from the team," said Baek Hyun-Ah.

Natasha Polly was a German challenger and also the team leader of the German Special Task Force KSK. She was climbing the tower alone due to the gap between the other team members' skills and hers.

"Please go ahead and climb up. We'll follow you soon," said Baek Hyun-Ah.

"..." Park Joo-Hyuk, who seemed to have something to say, could not bring himself to open his mouth.

After drinking silently for a while, the only words that came out of Park Joo-Hyuk's lips were, 'I'm sorry.'

On December 1st, the Dimension Gate opened. The situation in the tower caused a frenzy on Earth. The fights between nations that had occurred in Isocia, and the deeds committed to capturing a single challenger named Lee Shin to increase their own national power, stirred up public debate.

The United States and China faced worldwide criticism, and other countries also received their fair share of condemnation, albeit to a lesser extent. The Challengers' Association of each country convened urgent meetings to discuss countermeasures, and almost every country sent their challengers to the tower and established communication with the Head Office that had witnessed the events in Isocia.

The Chairman of the United States Challenger Association sat in his office, biting his lips with a serious expression. Then, when he heard the sound of a knock, his eyes lit up.

"Come in," said the Chairman.

A tall, handsome man bowed his head and placed a folder on the Chairman's desk.

"This is the report on the results of the Isocia Closure Operation," said the man, handing him the folder.

"Alright..." the Chairman replied.

Even without reading the report, the Chairman already knew the results from the rumors that had spread like wildfire. However, he needed to confirm the detailed information.

"Is Lee Shin really that amazing?" the Chairman asked.

"Yes, that's what people say. According to Clark, Lee Shin has already surpassed the level of skills needed at the 50th floor by a lot," the man explained.

"Hmm..." the Chairman was lost in thought.

As he stroked his chin and flipped through the documents, he paused at a certain point.

"The Devil...? Lee Shin captured it alone?" The Chairman seemed surprised.

"Yes, that's correct," replied the man.

"Have they not yet identified the identity of this Devil?" asked the Chairman.

"No sir. Our researcher, Dr. Selden has put forward one hypothesis, but it's still inconclusive," said the man.

"A hypothesis?" asked the Chairman.

"Yes, he suggests that the Devil may be Belial, who was once on the seventy-two thrones of the Demon World," the man explained.

When the Chairman heard that, he stared at the man, frowning.

"Do you really think so?" The Chairman asked the man.

The man who received his gaze trembled slightly, and his facial muscles momentarily stiffened. One could see the internal struggle in his mind. After a moment, he spoke.

"In my opinion, I think the hypothesis is wrong..." the man replied in a quiet voice.

"And, why is that?" the Chairman asked.

"Well, there are three reasons," said the man.

"Tell me," said the Chairman.

"Well, firstly, even if one had ascended and fallen from the seventy-second throne, there's no way a devil who had reached the divine level would be on a floor as low as the 20th floor," the man explained.

The Chairman nodded in agreement.

"Secondly, even if that devil was present, a mere human challenger would never be able to kill that devil alone," said the man.

"Didn't you say that he had surpassed the level of the 50th floor though?" the Chairman asked.

"That's not important. The problem lies in Belial's power of a deity. Without the ability to counter or skills equivalent to it, it would be impossible to defeat an opponent like Belial. Otherwise, one should at least have an appropriate class to counter a devil like Belial," the man explained.

"And?" The Chairman asked for more elaboration.

"The last reason is that there's no reason for Belial to be in Isocia. There's no reason for him to be there when he doesn't even have enough time to gather his forces and reclaim the throne," said the man.

"Exactly," replied the Chairman.

After hearing all three reasons, the Chairman smiled satisfactorily.

"Even if the devil captured by Lee Shin is not of that level, the probability of encountering a devil of at least the highest commanding class was high because the challengers on our side could not have gone missing without even so much as a chance to launch an attack," said the Chairman.

After saying that, he stood up from his seat and looked out the window. Many people had gathered outside the building to protest.

"Should I get rid of them all?" the man asked, looking at the Chairman.

"No, leave them like that. It's not their fault. Do not ever touch them. We can't afford to cause any damage to the people," said the Chairman.

"The public opinion was really bad. The United States, which had been hailed as the police of the world, was accused of committing despicable acts to trample over Korea," said the man.

"Since we failed in this gamble, it's an inevitable outcome," said the Chairman.

The next moment, the Chairman drew the curtains and started to laugh.

"Korea is still far from becoming the world's National Guard. It's never a good thing for the world order to be overturned because of one irregular person like Lee Shin," said the Chairman.

"That's right," replied the man.

As the Chairman skimmed through the documents, he looked at a certain part and smirked.

"This guy, Ethan, is still the same..." the Chairman muttered.

- Dear Chairman, we must never go against Lee Shin! If we do that, it will be truly dangerous for the country! Mr. Lee Shin is truly a good person, so we must maintain a good relationship with him...

When the Chairman saw the lengthy plea that almost filled up an entire page, he read the first part and then skipped the rest, closing the documents.

"Ethan had fought on the same battlefield as Lee Shin. That's why his opinion is—" the man tried to explain.

"It's right," the Chairman muttered.

"Sorry? What do you mean?" the man asked for clarification.

"What Ethan said is correct. We should maintain a good relationship with Lee Shin," said the Chairman.

"So... that means..." The man tried to read the Chairman's thoughts.

The Chairman seemed excited for some reason.

"It would be great to maintain a good relationship with Korea as well, but do you think it will be possible if the United States says they want to take Lee Shin? It's not like he's any other challenger; he's Lee Shin," said the Chairman.

"Will Lee Shin come?" asked the man.

"It seems like he's fond of artifacts, so if he wants them, we should give some to him. There's a lot more the United States can do for him as well," said the Chairman.

Then, the Chairman looked at one part of the large world map that was hanging on the wall.

"In order to protect the Earth, we need an exceptional leader. The world is changing every day and Korea is still lacking in its ability to become a leader. So that's why we must bring Lee Shin to the United States. Otherwise, we should build a strong relationship with him so that we can cooperate at any time," the Chairman muttered.

"You're right," the man replied.

"Other countries will surely want to get Lee Shin as well. So, until then, let's maintain the best possible relationship with Korea," said the Chairman.

"All right sir," the man replied.