

The Tower 191

Chapter 191: The Match

This event managed to seize the global spotlight. While not a contest between nations akin to the World Cup, it was a clash between Earth and alternate dimensions. Even those who originally held negative feelings toward China hoped that China would win today's match.

"Hello, Mr. Lee Shin," said Chairman Samuel to Lee Shin.

The chairs of Challenger Associations from various countries had already gathered inside. Most of them were affiliated with WCA. Besides, the ones from China were also present here.

"Hello," Lee Shin replied.

"How do you see today's match?" Chairman Samuel asked.

The space was not very large. Therefore, everyone could hear their conversation.

"We will lose," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin sensed everyone's attention shift toward him after he had said that.

"Is that so?" Chairman Samuel asked.

"Yes." Lee Shin only gave a short reply.

Chairman Samuel just nodded as if he had anticipated this answer. However, the reactions of the others were quite different.

"I won't ask you about the score since I myself fear the answer," Chairman Samuel said.

"All right," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin continued to give short replies to Samuel. Lee Shin caught snippets of conversation among the Chinese officials via the screen. Their discussion revolved around the rationale behind selecting the representatives for this match.

- I heard applicants from various countries wanted to represent China. Yet, for this match, all representatives are Chinese. Is there a reason for this?

Sami Harrison had asked this question. For once, she was not broadcasting live from the scene and conducting interviews elsewhere.

- Well, the reason is quite simple, actually. We thought that our Chinese representatives had a higher probability of winning than the applicants from other countries.

The Director of the Chinese Challenger Management Office, responsible for selecting the representative team, said so. Uniquely, the Challengers Association and the Challenger Management Office coexisted in China. The government had established the latter to oversee the former.

- Our Challenger Management Office quantifies the abilities of challengers worldwide and collects data. These representatives were chosen based on accurate and diverse data.

Did he just say data? Data? Seriously?

Wow! I didn't expect to hear such an obvious lie!

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Yeah, right.

What are you guys talking about? Our Chinese team is strong.

Those ignorant citizens of a small country are jealous again.

Since we're the representative for Earth, we'll try to understand again.

Ugh, they're so annoying. What the hell are they saying? Our Korean representative team is stronger. Do you know that?

As always, Sami's chat room was filled with arguments.

- Ah, I see. Then, can you possibly share that data with us?

- Sorry, but that is classified information.

Sami Harrison gestured and nodded excessively, seemingly having expected the response.

Haha, look at Sami's reaction.

Hilarious! Even Sami Harrison is laughing.

lolololololololol You guys think you're stronger than our Vergo? Even passing dogs would laugh.

Well, let's see if you can win this time.

Hahaha. Just laugh it off.

Lee Shin turned off the screen specially arranged for him in the VVIP section and looked at the large screen in the room. The Chinese representatives and the wizards of the Empire were now entering the arena.

'Is it finally starting?'

Lee Shin had already checked the profiles of this round's representatives. Considering just their rankings, there were four rankers and one low ranker. And judging by the Integrated Ranking, China's team certainly appeared impressive, justifying their sense of pride.

Earth's combat strength had grown significantly in the last four years. Cha Yu-Min used to be the sole challenger to have climbed to the 80th floor; now, fourteen challengers had made it to that floor. Furthermore, Jonathan, an American challenger, had even cleared the 85th floor.

Two of the five Chinese representatives had cleared the 80th floor, another two had cleared the 75th floor, and Zhuge Yun had cleared the 63rd floor. Foreign challengers had applied for the spots, but the Chinese Challenger Management Office (CCMO), responsible for creating the representative team, rejected them all.

The CCMO staunchly asserted that they had selected the representatives using their gathered data. However, the underlying truth appeared to be their reluctance to include foreign challengers within their national lineup.

- This is Li Xiao, the commentator for today's match! The match is about to begin!

Representatives from both sides stepped onto the stage. On Lostria's side stood a wizard in a robe adorned with intricate green designs. And on the Chinese side was a challenger wielding dual blades. Having reached the 75th floor, he held a rank of 13,201st, with the potential to break into four-digit rankings. It highlighted his impressive standing.

- The match is about to begin!

As the commentator spoke, the chat room buzzed with viewers' comments. Lee Shin analyzed the real-time responses in Sami Harrison's Broadcasting chat room to gauge their reactions. While it was filled with curses before, now everyone was cheering for China.

Please win!

We need to win the first match to have good momentum.

Stay strong! Please win this match!

As soon as the match began, the Chinese challenger with the dual blade charged toward the wizard, thinking the wizard would be helpless in close combat. Unfortunately, that was a foolish notion.

“Keugh...!” The Chinese challenger gasped.

The challenger staggered, paused briefly, dropped the swords, and collapsed.

What’s going on?

What are you doing! What’s happening right now?

Did the wizard do something?

Hey! Get up! Grab your swords!

The viewers seemingly couldn’t judge the situation properly, but Lee Shin could. The wizard had created a vacuum using a technique that instantly removed air from the space around the opponent’s face, utterly incapacitating them.

‘In such situations, stumbling will only make recovering or escaping more challenging.’

The best approach in this situation was getting close and attacking, even if you couldn’t breathe. The more time your opponent had, the lower your chances of surviving became.

“Kek... Ugh...” The Chinese challenger clutched his neck and writhed like a fish out of water.

It probably was a power he had never experienced before, so it was natural for him to be startled.

Pwiiiiht—!

With that whistle sound, the unconscious Chinese challenger was carried out. The wizard turned around and left the scene with a smirk on their face.

What the hell are you doing!

What an idiot! Why did you even go out for the match if you were going to do that?!

Fucking yellow monkey! Why did you reject Vergo when he applied?

What a shame! Get lost!

The chat room exploded. The viewers were displeased with the Chinese challenger for losing so pathetically and easily.

‘The difference in their skill level was substantial from the beginning.’

Moreover, if it was one’s first time encountering such an ability, there was really no hope. This likely would not have happened had China selected a challenger from another country instead of asserting its pride.

After the first match ended, there was a brief rest period. Lee Shin saw Zhuge Yun approach the fallen challenger.

‘Is he planning to use some kind of a trick?’

Lee Shin pondered over why Zhuge Yun was in China’s representative team. He was neither the strongest nor someone from the government, so there had to be a specific rationale for his selection.

- The next match is about to begin.

Despite being disappointed with China's previous lackluster performance, the chat expressed hope for the next match.

'But it seems like the Empire is getting ready to do something as well...'

The next set of representatives got onto the stage. This time, a wizard wearing a robe with red patterns and the Chinese challenger who had conquered the 80th floor were up.

Tang Zihao is up!

Finally, a ranker is up! I don't know about anyone else, but I'm sure?Tang Zihao will win.

Please win! The last match was a disgrace to Earth!

Tang Zihao, who carried many people's expectations, seemed confident.

'Hmm... There is a faint mana connection between Tang Zihao and the defeated challenger from last time.'

Zhuge Yun closed his eyes as if he was concentrating on something. Lee Shin was confident that Zhuge Yun had made the connection.

'Will they win this time?'

Lee Shin thought that the past and the present looked different, prompting him to entertain the idea of a more optimistic outcome this time.

- The match will begin nowww—!

Relaxed, Tang Zihao approached the wizard with a sword in his hand, keeping an eye on the opponent. They measured the distance between them, maintaining some space and looking for openings.

‘I can win.’

Due to Zhuge Yun’s formation, Tang Zihao had a portion of Long Jiang’s ability. The opponents couldn’t have expected this.

‘I will end this match in one go with a surprise attack.’

Suddenly, mana started to move above the wizard’s hand.

Now!

Tang Zihao dashed forward, and a bluish sword aura shimmered over his sword.

[Dragon Thrust Sword]

A colossal dragon-like figure surged ahead, seemingly ready to rend the wizard. Yet, a shield of flames materialized before the wizard, who maintained a calm demeanor while casting spells. Numerous wind blades combined with flames inside the shield and flew toward Tang Zihao.

‘Huh?’

Tang Zihao had been focused on the magic attack rushing from the front, so when he sensed the ground cracking and shaking, he couldn’t help but clench his teeth.

‘The magic seems... sentient.’

Tang Zihao felt like he was facing multiple wizards together. And since each spell was exceptionally powerful, he had difficulty dealing with each.

"Keugh...!" Tang Zihao gasped.

After exchanging several spells and attacks, Tang Zihao finally fell to his knees. His body had turned completely red, and the fire had burned his clothes, leaving him naked.

“How pitiful you look,” the wizard muttered, looking at Tang Zihao.

The wizard turned away and left the stage, chuckling. The challengers on China’s side quickly covered Tang Zihao with their clothing, but the sting of humiliation had already struck him deep.

What the fuck!

Isn’t that cheating, though? Those from behind must have used magic, for sure.

What kind of trick did they use?

What are you guys saying! How can they use magic when there’s a barrier?

But then, how can one person use such magic alone? Does that even make sense?

Well, think about Lee Shin. Can we understand him?

Mr. Lee Shin is a God! Don’t compare him to mere mortals.

Yeah, that’s right!

People were furious at the unexpected outcome. Although Tang Zihao's trick was not obvious to people, the one from the wizards was. It was clear to anyone that the wizards standing behind had assisted their representative.

Although China protested, it was meaningless. Besides, they could not explain how their opponent bested the barrier and the mana blockade. The absence of regulations only exacerbated the situation.

Their morale crashed instantly. In the ensuing matches, the wizards continue to defeat the Chinese challengers. The score quickly reached 4-0. Earth's populace teetered on the edge of uproar, while Lostria's side appeared unruffled, adding fuel to the earthlings' fury.

If Vergo from our country had participated, this wouldn't have happened!

Britain will now boycott China.

China is no longer earthlings like us.

Shit! Damn it! What a shame!

Fucking ass! Just go kill yourself!

Our German challenger should have participated as their representative.

Had we known this would happen, we would have asked Lee Shin to be our only representative. Why did all of them go out and embarrass us like this? What a shame!

The sympathy that had formed amid insults and mockery directed at Tang Zihao disappeared completely as the score became 4-0. Countless insults were directed at the Chinese Challenger Management Office for not including foreign challengers in the representative team.

- It's time for the final match. Zhuge Yun is stepping onto the field.

The commentator's voice had grown notably quieter and downcast. Zhuge Yun had the lowest ranking in the representative team. Moreover, he was a challenger brought in to buff the team. People thought that the probability of him winning was almost zero. When the score became 4-0, everyone realized that Zhuge Yun was there to buff the team.

The last one is Zhuge Yun.

Should we even watch it? It's 5-0. Confirmed.

I'm going to turn off the broadcast now. I can't watch this anymore.

I'm just looking forward to the next representative match starting in the United States. China's team is just too disappointing to watch.

The Director of the Chinese Challenger Management Office should resign right now. Their performance was unbelievable. In every bad way possible, that is.

I feel bad for Zhuge Yun. I heard that he is just here to buff the team.

Yeah, I know... His death will be the highlight of this match.

I'm so glad that I'm Korean. At least Korea won't suffer such humiliation.

If we had someone like Mr. Lee Shin on our team, the outcome would have been different...

Zhuce Yun was aware of the people's frustration but still wore a confident smile. His opponent was a wizard in a red-patterned robe.

'Do we have a flame wizard this time?'

The people from the Empire were interfering with the match through unknown means. People thought that if Zhuge Yun could not create a barrier that far surpassed the one around the arena, there was really no point in fighting.

'I think I would have a much higher chance if I enhanced my own power.'

Zhuge Yun covered his face with his fan and looked at the wizard. The opponent seemed careless, assuming that Zhuge Yun was the weakest among all the Chinese representatives.

"I'll give you a chance to attack first," said the wizard nonchalantly.

Zhuge Yun smirked behind his fan and unfolded his Eight-Sided Formation.

"Breakthrough," Zhuge Yun shouted.

The Eight-Sided Formation shone brightly, its power piercing through the barrier in the direction indicated by Zhuge Yun's fan.

"What did you just do...!" The wizard seemed stunned.

"Grip of Wonder!" Zhuge Yun shouted.

With that, the wizard sensed a mana wave and saw something green leaving the four defeated challengers outside and entering the arena through the opening Zhuge Yun had made previously.

[You have absorbed 20% of Long Jiang's abilities.]

[You have absorbed 20% of Tang Zihao's abilities.]

[...]

Zhuge Yun's mana rapidly amplified. His pupils shone blue, and the wind seemed to surge wherever the Plantain Fan moved.

Thud—!

He quickly erected a shield; simultaneously, a mana circle materialized beneath Zhuge Yun. Sensing the mana, he quickly evaded. With each movement of the Plantain Fan, Zhuge Yun made wind roar and lightning strike.

What the hell? What's up with Zhuge Yun? Why is he so strong?

Oh my days...

Who said that Zhuge Yun was weak?!

Who decided to use Zhuge Yun as a buffer? Who came up with such an insane idea?

Was Zhuge Yun China's hope?

The chat room exploded with comments as the viewers saw the possibility of Zhuge Yun winning. However, contrary to the viewers' thoughts, Zhuge Yun was uneasy. Absorbing his comrade's strength was a good tactic, but it wouldn't last even a minute. He needed to subdue his opponent before that quickly.

'This fight is going on for longer than I thought.'

It was time for Zhuge Yun to end the fight.

"Dragon Soar!"

From the tip of the Plantain Fan, a fiery dragon emerged and soared.

"Central Radiance!"

The flame dragon rushed down, and the ground where the wizard stood crumbled as the dragon engulfed him.

Swoosh—!

The area became engulfed in flames, but they subsided quickly, revealing the charred figure of the wizard.

- The match has ended! Zhuge Yun, the challenger named Zhuge Yun, has finally secured his team's first victory!!

The cheers of 200,000 people rained down upon the arena like thunder. Zhuge Yun smirked, barely holding his composure, and descended from the stage. The first set of matches between Earth and the Lostria Magic Empire ended with a score of 4-1, a humiliating defeat for Earth.

- The next set of matches will start in a week in Arizona, U.S.. Will the U.S. wash away the shame of China's defeat? All eyes are on this set of matches.