

The Tower 203

Chapter 203: The Underworld

[You have chosen the Underworld.]

[You are now moving to the Underworld.]

[Earn recognition from the Grand Spirit of the Underworld.]

The blue sky contrasted with the reddish dark land, where streams of molten lava flowed intermittently and heated up the surroundings. When Lee Shin turned his head, he saw a massive volcano, too colossal to take in at a single glance, spewing forth red-hot lava.

Crackle— Crackle—

Tiny figures of fire sprinted across the lava. These creatures, known as Salamanders, were low rank fire spirits that resembled lizards.

Whoosh—

Whoosh—

While Lee Shin stood still, dozens of Salamanders gathered around him in an instant. They stared at him and began to breathe flames in and out for a moment.

‘Since this is my first time visiting the Underworld, I have no idea what they are trying to do.’

Lee Shin thought that it would have been easier if he had gone to a place where there were water spirits because they would have been able to communicate. In the past, he had dealt with a low rank water spirit and formed a contract with it before breaking his Silver Tree Wand back on the 20th floor. Therefore, he thought that dealing with another water spirit would have been more familiar for him.

"Hmm..." Lee Shin tried to come up with a way to communicate with them.

He thought that fire spirits would like flames, so he created flames by the side of these Salamanders who kept spewing their own flames at Lee Shin.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

In response, these Salamanders sped up and intensified their fire-spewing as if they were getting excited. Then, they started circling around Lee Shin.

"Hey, give me some space," Lee Shin said, looking at the Salamanders.

It was a bit awkward to attack these beings. If they had been hostile toward Lee Shin, it would have been easier for him to return an attack. However, he could tell that these creatures were non-hostile toward him, so this whole situation was even more bewildering for Lee Shin.

In fact, Lee Shin thought that he was actually more comfortable dealing with gods. As he was thinking, another spirit swooped in from behind him. It was a spirit with wings of fire, resembling a fairy, approaching Lee Shin.

"Hey there! You are finally here!" the spirit who resembled a fairy spoke to Lee Shin.

This spirit was named Ifrit, and was an intermediate-rank spirit. Thankfully, communication was possible starting from the intermediate spirits. This was a relief for Lee Shin, as he was feeling quite awkward.

"Oh, were you waiting for me?" Lee Shin asked Ifrit.

"Yes, of course! Weren't you also playing with these guys because you knew?" Ifrit asked.

Were these Salamanders asking Lee Shin to play with them when they were spewing flames and circling around Lee Shin? It seemed they were excited because they thought he was playing along by spewing flames too.

"I just tried to improvise," Lee Shin said.

"Oh, is that so? Well, it doesn't matter," Ifrit replied.

"Did you know that I was coming?" Lee Shin asked.

"Of course I did! You are the human successor who inherited the power of our spirit lineage," Ifrit explained.

After hearing Ifrit's explanation, Lee Shin nodded with a satisfied smile.

[The Successor of the Seven Elements]

You are a successor qualified by the spirits of the seven elements.

You will easily be liked by spirits of the seven elements.

Your proficiency in the seven elements increases rapidly.

When you encounter spirits of the seven elements, the probability of encountering the high-rank spirits increases.

The Successor of the Seven Elements was the title Lee Shin received after clearing the 15th floor earlier on. This was the main reason why Lee Shin chose the Underworld over the World of Death. He knew that now was not the time for him to go to the Demon World or the heavenly realm, and so he had to choose between the World of Death or the Underworld. However, there were too many variables with the World of Death.

Even though Lee Shin possessed abilities related to death, the World of Death was a world for the deceased. There was no benefit for a living person like him to go there. Moreover, the God of Death had

not shown much interest in Lee Shin since the 4th floor. Could he meet the God of Death even if he went to the World of Death? Lee Shin thought that was too much of a gamble.

On the other hand, Lee Shin was aware that he could proceed through the stages in the Underworld more smoothly with his title. Additionally, the Spirit King was a lot different from the God of Death. Since the spirits of the Underworld were quite friendly toward humans, Lee Shin thought that he might be able to meet the Spirit King in the Underworld.

"I want to meet the Grand Spirit," Lee Shin said.

"The Grand Spirit? If you want to meet the Grand Spirit, you will have to ascend this mountain!" Ifrit said to Lee Shin.

The fact that Lee Shin could encounter intermediate rank spirit from the very start was thanks to the title, the Successor of the Seven Elements.

‘Thanks to Ifrit, I should be able to meet the Grand Spirit without wasting effort wandering around.’

Ifrit controlled the Salamanders and moved them to the side, opening a path for Lee Shin.

"Thanks," Lee Shin said.

"If these guys don't listen to you in the future, just create a fireball and throw it far away. They'll rush to play with it on their own," Ifrit explained.

Lee Shin wanted to ask if these Salamanders were like dogs, but he stopped himself and simply nodded and started walking. Ifrit seemed to be quite curious about Lee Shin, because he kept talking and asking questions. In response, Lee Shin just gave rough answers as he made his way up the mountain.

At first, he had considered summoning an undead to get a ride up, but he decided to walk when he heard that the spirits found the undead frightening. As Lee Shin and Ifrit ascended the mountain, the amount of lava pouring from the volcano increased. In fact, Lee Shin thought that the volcano seemed to be more active than before.

"This is happening because the power of fire has grown stronger," Ifrit explained when he noticed Lee Shin looking at the volcano.

"Huh? The power of fire has grown stronger?" Lee Shin asked to clarify.

"Yeah! That's because rumors have spread that the successor has arrived, so fire spirits from all around are gathering!" Ifrit said to Lee Shin.

Lee Shin wondered when such a rumor spread. Glancing behind, he noticed that the dozens of Salamanders from earlier had multiplied into hundreds. They were following him like a pack of puppies.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

Lee Shin and Ifrit still had quite a way to go up, but a gigantic dog covered in lava was racing down from above.

"He's a high-rank spirit! His name is Flemen!"

Flemen was even larger than an ox. The creature, who was charging toward Lee Shin, came to a halt in front of him.

"Are you the Successor?" Flemen asked Lee Shin.

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

"Get on. I'll take you to the top." Flemen offered to give him a ride.

Had he come just to give Lee Shin a ride? Lee Shin soon thought that the spirits seemed to be more friendly than he had expected.

"But..." Lee Shin muttered, and hesitated as he looked at the lava flowing on the surface of Flemen's skin.

Getting on Flemen's back seemed no different from dunking himself in lava.

"It's fine. Get on," Flemen said.

Flemen, who kept repeating that it was fine, moved toward Lee Shin. When Lee Shin cautiously brought his hand toward the lava, it did not feel hot at all.

"This lava will not feel hot to those I have approved," Flemen said.

"Oh, that's interesting," Lee Shin muttered.

"Hurry up and get on," Flemen said.

Perhaps due to the fire attribute, Flemen seemed quite impatient.

"Alright," Lee Shin replied, and without hesitation, he climbed onto Flemen's back.

As expected, Lee Shin did not feel any burning heat at all. If he had to describe it, he would say it was only slightly warm. The next moment, flames wrapped around Flemen's feet, and as he moved, lava formed beneath its steps. The scenery passed by swiftly. Although he was not as fast as Veck Jack, his speed was remarkable. Thanks to Flemen, Lee Shin was able to reach the volcano's summit faster than he had thought.

Whoosh—

Looking down into the crater, Lee Shin could see magma rolling with intense heat. Glancing around, he realized that all the other spirits except Flemen had vanished.

"Where is the Grand Spirit?" Lee Shin asked.

In response to his question, Flemen turned his head and looked down into the crater. Something massive was moving within the surging magma, and it burst out, piercing through the magma. A gigantic spirit composed entirely of magma appeared in front of Lee Shin. It was so hot that being near it alone would scorch one's flesh.

The massive Grand Spirit, several times larger than Flemen, looked at Lee Shin with blazing eyes as it emerged from the magma.

"You are the next successor who will get power from the spirits of the seven elements..." said the Grand Spirit.

"Yes," Lee Shin replied.

"Come with me. The Grand Spirits are waiting to greet the successor," said the Grand Spirit.

After saying this, the Grand Spirit of Fire disappeared into the magma. Although there were no explicit words telling him how to come along, he remembered what Flemen had told him earlier and just threw himself into the magma.

Splash!

As soon as he touched the magma, the intense heat that he had felt diminished. Embraced gently by the magma, he stepped into a new world, where all he could see were the colors red and orange, and occasional flashes of white light. When Lee Shin followed those flashes, the scenery changed abruptly, revealing a completely different environment.

"Phew!" Lee Shin exhaled a breath that he had been holding and stuck his head out of the magma.

When he looked around, he could see a lush forest and verdant fields all around. Flowers were dancing in the air everywhere he looked. Pulling his body out of the magma, he approached the Grand Spirit of Fire, who was hovering in space.

Around him, the Grand Spirits of Water, Wind, Earth, Electricity, Light, and Darkness had transformed into human forms and were gathered there. Soon, the Grand Spirit of Fire also transformed into a human form and looked at Lee Shin.

"Good job coming along," said the Grand Spirit of Fire.

"Is he really the Successor? It's my first time seeing one who can inherit all of our seven elements," said the Grand Spirit of Water, looking at Lee Shin as if he were observing a curious creature.

"Yes, he is. Besides, that is why he managed to make it this far," the Grand Spirit of Fire replied.

"I know this person. He seemed to be quite remarkable in the human realm," The Grand Spirit of Light, seemingly having heard about Lee Shin somewhere, replied with a look of curiosity.

"No matter how exceptional he was as a human, he will need to be tested to see if he can inherit all seven elements," said the Grand Spirit of Fire. "We will begin the test."

[The test of the Grand Spirits has begun.]

[The content of the test has changed.]

[Get approval by all the Grand Spirits of the seven elements as their successor.]

Seeing the messages that appeared in front of him, Lee Shin furrowed his eyebrows. He had been thinking things were going too smoothly so far. Just gaining approval from one Grand Spirit was already a challenge, but now, he was supposed to get approval from all seven Grand Spirits of the elements.

"Defend yourself from all the attacks that we launch."

The Grand Spirits surrounded Lee Shin and began revealing their strengths one by one.

'Hmm... Defend myself from the attacks of all seven elements...?'

This test did not make sense from the beginning. That was because a successor of all seven elements was thought to be impossible. Besides, Lee Shin was not dealing with merely high-rank spirits, but the Grand Spirits. He had to block their attacks not just one at a time, but simultaneously, which made the test much more difficult.

Each element had its own compatible types, a factor that played a significant role in offense and defense. Therefore, in order to defend himself against the attacks of all seven elements, he had to demonstrate an extraordinary level of power that would render the compatibility of the elements irrelevant.

'Ha... I was going to take an easy way out, but I ended up putting myself in a more difficult situation.'

The next moment, Lee Shin activated his mana. Paying attention to the powers of the Grand Spirits that were coming in from all directions, Lee Shin transformed his attack into different elements.

Lee Shin wondered how he should go about defending against seven attacks simultaneously. While it might be a viable choice to endure these attacks with his overflowing mana level, he was in the Underworld.

In the Underworld, the Grand Spirits could draw upon their power endlessly. Therefore, Lee Shin was aware that it was impossible to go on only defending their attacks indefinitely. Besides, he still had to earn their approval.

'I should unleash spells of all seven elements simultaneously.'

Considering the compatibility of elements, Lee Shin needed to cast spells of different elements in different directions. He also had to keep in mind that he had to pour out an enormous amount of mana to block the attacks of the Grand Spirits.

Crack—!

The ground started to shake under the surging waves of mana.

‘Am I capable of doing this?’

Lee Shin did not have any other choice. He had to accomplish this no matter what.

[Transcendence]

The time in this world seemed to slow down. The immense power of the Grand Spirits, felt through the waves of mana, was accumulating.

A terrifying spear of lightning, scorching waves of lava, razor-sharp winds, a torrential fall of water, a mighty fist of earth, a pulsating aura of light, and a chilling shroud of darkness were all coming toward Lee Shin. The attacks of the majestic Grand Spirits were drawing closer to him every moment, looking as if they could engulf him even before they had reached him.

[Elemental Field]

The mana that came out of his body instantly transformed into the seven elements. The mana of the seven elements rotated in the air, growing in size, and were shot forward.

Baaam—!

Tremendous pressure beared down. When was the last time I felt such a sense of crisis? His mind was a whirlwind of complexity, as if it was about to explode.

[Due to the Power of Chaos, the power of the Grand Spirit of Fire has been reduced by 20%.]

[Due to the Power of Chaos, the power of the Grand Spirit of Water has been reduced by 20%.]

[Due to the Power of Chaos...]

Messages flooded in and the pressure gradually diminished. After pouring out mana without a break, Lee Shin suddenly realized that the Grand Spirits' attacks had halted, and he was standing in his place, breathing heavily.

"Man, this is unbelievable."

"Wow, the greatest successor in history has appeared."

"You are quite remarkable. I, Decar, the Grand Spirit of Earth, approve of you as the Successor," said the Grand Spirit of Earth.

"I, Lia, the Grand Spirit of Light, approve of you as the Successor as well," the Grand Spirit of Light added.

"And the same goes for me, the Grand Spirit of Darkness..."

The declarations of the Grand Spirits followed one after another.

[You have been approved as the Successor by the Grand Spirits of all seven elements.]

[You have cleared the 80th floor.]

[Greatest achievement ever! All the gods of the Tower are watching only you, Mr. Challenger.]

[You have achieved 2,134,115 points.]

[...]

Countless messages appeared in front of Lee Shin. Ignoring the messages that surfaced, Lee Shin looked around. Clearly, an indescribably massive explosion had occurred on what used to be lush greenery. With an ear-splitting boom, the ground had upheaved, and vast clouds of dust were floating in the air. However, the world before him now was tranquil, as if nothing had happened.

"Successor, as you grow, nature will become your strength."

[You have acquired a 『Title - Successor of Spirits』.]

[Successor of Spirits]

You are a successor who can control the power of all spirits.

You can summon spirits from anywhere.

No spirit can defy your command.

All elemental resistances are increased by 50%.

'What did I just...?'

Without time to marvel at the new title that he received, the space began to shake.

Crumble— Crack—!

[The Successor of Spirits can meet the Spirit King.]

[The Spirit King of the Underworld has blocked the gaze of the gods.]

[The gods have strongly resisted!]

- This is my world, the opinions of others do not matter.

A resounding voice echoed throughout the entire space.

[The Spirit King has presented herself.]