

## **The Tower 23**

### Chapter 23

The community was on the verge of imploding into chaos when Lee Shin's ranking was updated. People tried to find out about Lee Shin, but the things they could find were very limited. Even the challengers, except for a couple of them, who had just progressed up the floors knew nothing about Lee Shin in detail. Even those who knew the most about him had only fragments of information.

They did not know why his name was Lee Shin. Also, they did not know what his former tower was, and how he became a boss and then a challenger to climb the tower. There was nothing they could claim they knew for sure.

And these were the same questions that the people of the Undermost had been curious about in the past.

Kang Ji-Hoon had been looking at the posts on the community, thinking it was great entertainment. "Haha! It's a mess, a mess."

"Why do they care? They can just accept that there is someone like him."

"Do you think all people are as simple as you?" Park Hye-Won asked.

"Do you think I wanted to be like this? It's because he doesn't tell us even if we ask him!" Baek Hyun shouted in frustration, furious at Park Hye-Won's words.

"Well, that's true. We don't even know that much about him," Park Joo-Hyuk intervened as he watched the two bickering.

"What are you going to do?"

"What do you mean?" Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

"Have you decided on which difficulty level you're going to choose?"

"Oh," Park Joo-Hyuk mumbled.

Park Joo-Hyuk had already been thinking about it. There was a skill gap between him and the members of the special team created by the Korean government and the Korean Challengers Association. And even though it was small, the gap was widening.

There had already been a difference in the floor numbers between Park Joo-Hyuk and his team members. At this rate, it was clear that the team members would only be a burden to Park Joo-Hyuk.

Of course, Park Joo-Hyuk did not think that way. However, the problem was that the team members were starting to feel it themselves. To make matters even worse, the fifth floor allowed challengers to adjust the difficulty level themselves. The widening gap the other team members had observed while on this floor was enough to make them feel like they were worse off.

'To be honest, I want to challenge the Hell level,' thought Park Joo-Hyuk.

However, besides the risk of dying, he felt bad for his team members. He did not want to abandon his comrades. And if Park Joo-Hyuk challenged the Hell level, his team members would definitely raise their difficulty level at least by one to catch up with him. If that happened, it was obvious that there would be a series of people who would die.

"I will go with the Extreme level." People nodded as if they sympathized with Park Joo-Hyuk's words.

"I knew it. What about the CEO, Mr. Hwang?"

"Mr. Hwang also said that he would go with the Extreme level."

"Is Extreme level the way to go?"

"I think so. I mean, we're the first to even challenge the Extreme level. Choosing the Hell level is too much of a risk," Park Hye-Won answered.

Everyone agreed with Park Hye-Won, except for Baek Hyun.

‘We should not limit ourselves...’?Baek Hyun was not listening to the others.

He was mulling over Lee Shin’s words after seeing?Lee Shin’s newly updated ranking.

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"Are you a challenger?" The Lizardman, sitting against a block of wood in a wet and damp swamp, looked at Lee Shin.

"Yes, I am," Lee Shin replied.

"You are... Hmm..." The Lizardman looked at Lee Shin with an interesting expression.

"Are you of divine blood?" the Lizardman asked again.

"That’s nonsense," Lee Shin replied.

"You’re not? Oh well, it's been a long time since I've met a person who acquired a divine status, whether they are of divine blood or not," the Lizardman muttered.

As soon as the Lizardman saw Lee Shin, he recognized Lee Shin’s divine status.

‘Does this guy also have a divine status?’ Lee Shin wondered.

This Lizardman was a manager of the second-floor waiting area. These managers were specially elected by the gods. It was not strange for them to have a divine status.

'If I attack this guy... Can I take away his divine status?' Lee Shin suddenly thought about his stat, Chaos.

There was greed in his eyes.

"You are giving a greedy look there. Unlike you, I'm just an ordinary manager, so just go on your way," the Lizardman said.

Lee Shin seemed a bit remorseful hearing the Lizardman's words. In fact, even if he had a divine status, he would not have attacked the manager, because it was stupid to mess with a manager.

"I will challenge the second floor," said Lee Shin.

"Okay," the Lizardman replied.

Lee Shin's body was wrapped in light and he was transported with a streak of light. When he arrived, he looked at the surroundings, which was a swamp similar to the waiting area on the second floor.

Lee Shin could see a Lizardman slapping his long tail against the floor in front of him.

A dark purple arrow made of mana appeared at the tip of Lee Shin's finger. And that penetrated the Lizardman's forehead. He died just like that.

[You have defeated the Lizardman Warrior.]

[Do you want to challenge the next stage? The next stage is the Lizardman Archer.]

"Yeah, sure," Lee Shin replied.

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[Defeat the Lizardman Berserker.]

"Crrr... I can tell that you have great energy," the Lizardman Berserker started.

"Don't talk to me and just bring it on," Lee Shin replied.

"Alright! A confrontation with a strong warrior always excites me!" The Lizardman Berserker's muscles swelled to the fullest.

Kwang—!

Lee Shin's intangible mana shield blocked the Berserker's ax.

Kwang! Kwang! Kwang! Kwang! Kwang!?

The more damage Lee Shin's counterattacks inflicted, the more ferocious the Berserker's attacks became.

"Crrr!" the Lizardman Berserker roared.

In his previous life, Lee Shin had not encountered the Berserker on the second floor. He had only dealt with the Great Shaman. Even so, he gave up and ran away while fighting with the Great Shaman.

However, Lee Shin had some information about this guy. As he climbed up the floors, he heard briefly about the Lizardman Berserker. Normally, he would have forgotten about information like that, but due to the Immortal Sphere, Lee Shin could not forget about it.

"Crrr! Do more! Try harder!" The Lizardman's whole body was covered with blood, but he came at Lee Shin even more madly.

'What an idiot,'?thought Lee Shin.

The Lizardman's physical ability was gradually strengthened. However, his judgment was significantly blurred as he lost his rationality to the point where he even stepped into a trap so openly laid out for him.

"Just die now," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin made an obvious mana circle on the floor. When Lee Shin lured him onto it, the Lizardman jumped on it without any hesitation.

Swoosh-!

As the mana circle lit up, the ground distorted and soared. A drill made out of stone penetrated his groin, then his entire torso, and finally his head.

[You have taken away the power of the Lizardman Berserker.]

[Your Strength has gone up by a level.]

It was the power to extort the opponent's stats, Chaos. When Lee Shin looked at the stat window, his strength was increased by a level.

'Good.' Lee Shin was satisfied.

[You have defeated the Lizardman Berserker.]

[From the next stage, the level of difficulty increases very rapidly! You cannot give up in the middle.]

[Do you want to challenge the next stage? The next stage is the Lizardman the Guardian Warrior.]

"Yes, I'll go for it," Lee Shin answered.

Light flashed and he was transported to a new place. The field was wider than ever before and there stood a Lizardman the Guardian Warrior who was one foot taller than the Lizardman Berserker.

"Are you an apostle?" the Lizardman the Guardian Warrior asked.

Lee Shin frowned as soon as the Guardian Warrior had said that.

"Do not ever say that disgusting thing again," Lee Shin replied in an annoyed voice.

"Does that mean you're not?" the Guardian Warrior asked.

"I'm not," Lee Shin replied.

"All the apostles that I've encountered had the same power as you," the Guardian Warrior explained.

"It might look the same but it's different. This is my power." Lee Shin scoffed. "Do not ever associate me with such bloody gods."

"Amazing," the Guardian Warrior looked at Lee Shin with a startled look.

Boom!

The huge spear that the Guardian Warrior was holding fell and stuck to the ground.

"My name is Gundo, Lizardman the Guardian Warrior. I request you, [The Sacred Battle of the Warriors]!" the Guardian Warrior shouted.

Lee Shin looked at him with surprise. He did not expect to have to do this here.

"Ha... You're too greedy. Do you think you can defeat me?" Lee Shin asked.

"I never think about losing. You can't move forward if you don't struggle. I will beat you and get stronger once again!" the Guardian Warrior replied in a determined voice.

[Hidden Stage - The Sacred Battle of the Warriors.]

[Gundo has requested you to the Sacred Battle of the Warriors. This competition will not end until the opponent dies. This battle is done in the presence of the God of Judgment. The loser will lose everything to the opponent.]

The Sacred Battle of the Warriors was not something a challenger would normally face on the second-floor stage. Once the battle began, either one had to die in order for the battle to end. Plus, the winner took everything from the loser, whether it was the opponent's stats, abilities, or class. The winner got to take all of those.

However, not everyone could participate in this battle. The participants had to be qualified and the God of Judgment had to qualify the battle for it to be possible.

The strong could not ridiculously call for a battle against one who was weak. And in most cases, the two sides were either similar in strength, or the weaker was the one who called for a battle against the stronger. However, even this was at the discretion of the referee.

Was it his divine status that led to this situation? Or was it because of his stat, Chaos? Anyway, having this battle was not a bad situation for Lee Shin.

[Begin the battle.]



There was a familiar voice in Lee Shin's ear. It was phenomenal, mysterious, cold, and hard. It was the voice of the God of Judgment.

"Crraaack!" Gundo's spear rushed toward Lee Shin in a split second.

At the same time, the mana circle that had already been set up was activated at once.

[Soul Chain]

The translucent chains of mana from the mana circle bound Gundo's head, body, arms, and legs. And one red chain popped out and entered his heart.

"Keughhh-!" Gundo groaned.

His body was not pierced. It was just that a translucent red chain was embedded in his heart like a ghost. The spear, which looked as if it had pierced through Lee Shin and turned him bloody, stopped moving.

"What... have... you... done.... to me...?" Gundo asked.

Lee Shin walked slowly in front of him, ignoring his words. Because Gundo's size was several times larger than Lee Shin, he raised the ground he stood on using mana to come eye-to-eye with Gundo.

"Do you want to know? I just bound your soul," Lee Shin laughed.

At Lee Shin's words, Gundo's eyes were filled with rage.

"That's ridiculous...! Undo it right now! How can you do that during the Sacred Battle of the Warriors-!" Gundo shouted.

"That is why I did it! Because it's the Sacred Battle of the Warriors," Lee Shin replied.

"What do you mean?" Gundo asked.

"The Sacred Battle of the Warriors is a battle where you can take away everything from the other person. And so, I'm just trying to take everything from you perfectly," Lee Shin explained.

"I asked you what that meant!" Gundo shouted.

Even when Gundo's whole body was constrained, his violent voice resounded.

"The soul is the existence itself. Can't you understand what it means when your soul is bound?" Lee Shin laughed.

"... What are you talking about!" Gundo shouted.

Lee Shin had a mean smile on his face. For the first time, there was fear on Gundo's face.

"I will erase your existence as a whole, because that's what The Sacred Battle of the Warriors should look like," Lee Shin explained.

With Lee Shin's final word, the mana in the [Soul Chain] became stronger.

"Keughhh—!" Gundo screamed.

Gundo's great presence started to fade slowly, little by little.

"No... I can't disappear like this...!" Gundo shouted.

"You don't want to disappear?" Lee Shin asked.

"It doesn't matter whether I die or not, because that's what a warrior is! But I won't allow my existence and everything that I've accumulated so far to disappear!" Gundo cried out.

"Who cares if you don't allow it?" Lee Shin put more mana on the Soul Chain.

Gundo, struggling in pain, gasped and looked at Lee Shin.

"What... can I do?" His eyes were still ferocious, but his voice was calmer than before.

"There is one way that you will not be erased from the world," Lee Shin explained.

"What is it?" Gundo asked.

"You can be my subordinate by handing over your soul to me," Lee Shin replied.

"What happens when I pass you my soul?" Gundo asked.

"You will belong to me and you will live for me. When I die, your soul will be released," Lee Shin explained.

"Alright, I will hand over my soul to you," Gundo replied.

Lee Shin still retained his blank expression, but he was thrilled on the inside. Lee Shin had won the gamble. It was not a bad deal to take away his ability, but taking away his soul was a much greater accomplishment. Lee Shin could easily develop his skills.

Also, Gundo's stats, such as strength, was of no particular use to Lee Shin in the first place.

Even if Gundo had a 100 strength stat, Lee Shin wouldn't be able to receive it entirely. He could take away everything, but he could not receive everything. That was the condition of this battle. Moreover, Lee Shin could make up for the lack of ability with his stat, Chaos.

The fact that Lee Shin could participate in the Sacred Battle of the Warriors meant that he was recognized by the God of Judgment. That was enough to make Gundo part of his clan.

"God of Judgment! I will make Gundo my soul's subordinate! With this, the Sacred Battle of the Warriors ends with my victory!" Lee Shin shouted.

[Lizardman the Guardian Warrior, do you agree with this?]

"Yes, I agree!" the Guardian Warrior shouted.

[Alright! The Sacred Battle of the Warriors ends here. Victory goes to the challenger Lee Shin.]

When the statement was made, Gundo was engulfed in mana and his body turned into a green bracelet. It was then placed on Lee Shin's wrist.

[The Bracelet of Archipelagoes]

# You can use your mana to summon the Lizardman the Guardian Warrior.

[You have defeated the Lizardman the Guardian Warrior.]

[Do you want to challenge the next stage? The next stage is the Lizardman Chief.]

"Wait a minute," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin sat down and began to meditate.

The [Soul Chain] that he had used just now consumed a tremendous amount of mana. Although he had been increasing his mana power, it was not sufficient. The Soul Chain was a miraculous mana that was created by combining the mana realm and the realm of the spirit.

It was the product of his tremendous understanding of death, in synergy with his title [He Who Knows Death]. His mana consumption was too great, because he forced mana that was impossible at his current level. Lee Shin felt that he desperately needed an increase in the amount of mana power and the efficiency of his mana power recovery.

[The God of Recovery wants to give you the power to restore your mana power. Would you like to receive it?]

Lee Shin frowned at the system message that suddenly appeared while he was meditating.

'Is that God trying to lure me after looking at my lacking?mana power?' Lee Shin sneered.

"Get lost," said Lee Shin.