

## **The Tower 254**

### Chapter 254: Side Story 7

When did humans first start to enter the Tower? It was a story from the distant past, too far back to recall.

"I never thought it would take this long..." Lee Shin muttered, trying to think back to the past.

Was it because he had lived like this for such a long time?

Despite having met countless humans over the years, Lee Shin could not prevent his tears from welling up as he saw ten light streaks descending from the sky. Though the physiques and faces of his colleagues had changed considerably from how he had remembered them, Lee Shin thought they were still recognizable.

"Heh," Lee Shin chuckled bitterly.

Lee Shin was amazed and started to wonder how this could have happened. The probability to be one of the billions of people on Earth who could obtain a fragment of memory was limited. Besides, there was no guarantee that such individuals would become Irregulars, because they might not be able to recover their memories entirely with just a fragment, compared to having the entire Immortal Sphere.

There were so many variables and obstacles to cross to get to where Lee Shin was; and yet, those ten individuals had overcome all of those to enter the Tower.

"Haha..." Lee Shin laughed, looking at the ten individuals in disbelief.

Then, he started to wonder if this was truly the thing called fate. Lee Shin was simply pleased. He thought that anyone from Earth would do, but those ten individuals had somehow managed to get here.

"Shall we have the long-awaited conversation?" Lee Shin muttered with excitement.

Lee Shin approached Gene immediately, explaining the situation and requesting cooperation. He needed Gene Ebrium to pretend as if he was Lee Shin.

"Tsk. I already have a ton of things to do research on! And I am in the middle of a deep study on the encounter of gods and humans!" Gene Ebrium replied in an irritated tone, as if Lee Shin had disturbed him.

"Wow, since I've put gods and humans together in the same place, random things like this are happening. Anyway, enough of the useless stuff and please do what I asked for," Lee Shin said to Gene Ebrium.

"Ha... This is not useless. Tsk. But okay, I get what you're saying," Gene Ebrium replied with a sign.

The next moment, Gene got out of the lab and took a seat on the throne. Since the figure that the Earth's challengers had seen in Lee Shin's past was now Gene's current body, he had no other option.

"There they are," Lee Shin said, looking at the ten individuals.

"What should I do with them? Should I treat them reasonably?" Gene Ebrium asked Lee Shin what he wanted Gene to do.

"Yeah, because we can't make those guys into gods," Lee Shin replied.

"Well, since they are the first ones to come from the Earth, I'll have to gather some data on how much power humans can unleash after regaining memories through the fragments of the Immortal Sphere," Gene muttered.

Lee Shin hid himself, and those ten individuals from Earth arrived in the Temple.

'Cha Yu-Min...'

Cha Yu-Min stood in front of Park Hye-Won, tearing up. Then, he shouted at Gene Ebrium, whom he thought was Lee Shin.

"Is that all you've turned into, a heartless doll? Is that why you decided to do this all on your own!"

"Why! Why! Why does it have to be you who is always sacrificing like this!"

"Because of you, we are able to live so comfortably!"

It had been a while since Lee Shin heard such cries from Cha Yu-Min.

‘They seem to be living well. That’s a relief...’

Lee Shin wondered what kind of life they led in that world that was untouched by gods.

‘Hmm... Is that all they have got?’

If the Gate opened after they had recovered their memories and became Irregulars, he would have expected them to show much greater skill than what he had just seen. However, their skills were somewhat disappointing. It was far more inferior to what they were capable of doing in the past.

Besides, it seemed as though the memories were not significantly restored, and they did not seem familiar with their abilities.

‘What could have happened? Wait a second... Could it be...’

Was it related to them gathering in a group? Perhaps, due to karma, the Gate opened simply because they were together in the same place, even if their levels did not individually meet the criteria.

For each fragment of memory to completely restore one's memories, it was necessary for it to resonate with other fragments. That meant that the more fragments there were on Earth, the higher the probability of the fragment's power manifesting would be.

'Is this also part of that fate...'

Lee Shin could not help but be amazed at the fact that there was no straightforward explanation to what was unfolding, although he was the one who came up with the idea of scattering these fragments and executed it.

"Keugh! Aaaah!" Cha Yu-Min screamed, slamming the ground with his fist as if he was frustrated.

That was because Cha Yu-Min fell under Warrie's sword.

'In terms of swordsmanship, Warrie was superior, but Cha Yu-Min's astonishing decision-making skills and intuition in every moment surpassed Warrie's.'

Lee Shin wondered what Cha Yu-Min would be like if he could use Complete Shadowization. Complete Shadowization was a skill that he used to be able to perform.

"Hyung!!" All of a sudden, Cha Yu-Min shouted toward Gene Ebrium.

'Did he just say 'Hyung'? That's kind of unexpected actually...'

Lee Shin thought it was strange for him to call out 'Hyung', even if his memories had not fully returned. Considering his previous demeanor, it was very unlikely for him to call him Hyung.

"Hyung..."

"Darn!"

"If you're going to live like this, then why did you go back in time! Or you shouldn't have shown us that, at least! Wasn't this all discussed with Metatron?" Yu Jia said to Gene, tearing up.

Lee Shin tilted his head in confusion, because he was hearing this for the first time.

When Lee Shin was challenging the hundredth floor of the Tower and fought the God of Time, everyone on Earth witnessed it. That was because Metatron had broadcasted the scene of the challenge to Earth by the power of the Heavenly God.

She had also told the people of Earth to pray for Lee Shin, and to have faith to help Lee Shin gain strength. In the end, Lee Shin defeated the God of Time and made the shocking decision to carry all of the burden on his own. That's how Lee Shin left and went back to being the boss of the first floor.

Yu Jia looked at the people in front of her, gasping for breath. Lee Shin seemed much weaker compared to how he was in his past, yet he was also too strong to be considered the boss of the first floor now. Besides, it was hard for those ten individuals who still lacked skill to defeat this boss of the first floor.

'But still! I can't give up yet.'

However, this time, Yu Jia did not want to give up on Lee Shin so easily without a fight. In the past, Lee Shin had forgiven her and saved her, the one who used to be the leader of Reverse, killed many Earthlings, and committed atrocities under the command of the Necromancer. Therefore, this time, she wanted to save him herself. She did not want to lose Lee Shin again just like she had in the past.

'Can my body endure this?'

Yu Jia thought that by using her unique ability, Black Hole, she could allow others to escape from this place. However, she also knew that to move all ten of them would be testing the limits of her body.

'Well, then even if I have to sacrifice myself...'

Yu Jia looked at them with a strong determination in her eyes.

"Gather here, everyone!" Yu Jia shouted at the ten individuals.

Fortunately, the boss was not paying attention to them and was taking his time. Therefore, she thought it was best for them to escape and make plans to return.

"Let's run away. And we'll rescue Mr. Lee Shin after we become stronger!" Yu Jia suggested it to the ten.

"Okay, that sounds good. Please help us. Sob. I want to be different this time," Park Hye-Won sobbed and grabbed Yu Jia's arm.

"Me too... I don't want to be a burden again," Ji Eun-Ju replied.

Ji Eun-Ju, too, remembered her past life. In fact, the harm that she had caused to her colleagues haunted her. Therefore, she was determined not to run away this time, no matter what happened to her.

"Yeah, that's right. We're not going to die," Baek Kang-Woo, who was bleeding from his arm, also asserted.

"This time, we will help Mr. Lee Shin!" Even Shin Ha-Neul, who used to be constantly teased by Lee Shin, also joined in.

"Master said not to abandon your comrades," Park Joo-Hyuk said with determination.

"Yeah, that's right," Park Hyun-Ah also declared his resolution.

"Well, we've all learned something so we should use them," Kang Ji-Hoon said.

After hearing his words, Kim Kang-Chun said, "Yes, you're right. I'll show him the energy and strength that I've developed from work."

Kim Kang-Chun laughed and extended his hand. One by one, they gathered closer and put their hands on top of one another.

"Alright, I'll begin," Yu Jia said, looking at everyone around her.

After saying that, she activated her power.

'Huh?'

For some reason, her body started to feel better than she had expected. Even though she was using her unique ability, it did not seem to strain her much.

'Nice!'

As Yu Jia unfolded the space, a black hole appeared in the air, sucking them in and spitting them out somewhere outside the temple.

"Phew, thanks to you, Unnie, we survived," Park Hye-Won said, looking at Yu Jia.

"Huh? Am I older than you?" Yu Jia asked Park Hye-Won with a confused look.

Park Hye-Won tilted her head as if she had stated the obvious.

"Aren't you older than me? I'm only twenty-seven—" Park Hye-Won replied.

"Huh? Hey! Who are you?" While the two ladies were busy deciding who was older, Shin Ha-Neul noticed someone strange near the group and shouted.

Confused by Shin Ha-Neul's loud shout, everyone turned their heads in unison.

"Nice to meet you," a man said, looking at them.

A man with black hair and brown eyes, a seemingly ordinary Korean, stood and smiled warmly at the ten people. Cha Yu-Min and Park Joo-Hyuk stepped forward, defending the others.

"Being here means you also have a fragment of memory, right?"

"Fragment of memory? Ah, wait a second. Are you talking about this?" The man took a violet fragment and showed it to the group. "Well, actually, I have quite a lot of them."

As soon as the man said this, the challengers hesitated and frowned. Having many of these fragments of memory meant that he probably took them from many others.

"Be careful."

"What do you mean be careful, haha." The man laughed at them.

Suddenly, a black lightning bolt struck from the sky.

Baaaam—!

Sparks flew on the ground, leaving a dark burn mark. The challengers froze at the sight, feeling like they had seen it before. That was because they knew that there was only one person capable of creating such a thunderbolt.

"Well, can you guys even defeat me?" the man asked, looking at the individuals gathered there.

At the man's words, Cha Yu-Min started to tremble as if he had realized something.

"Cha Yu-Min," the man called out.



From that point on, the man with black hair started listing their names without hesitation.

"Baek Kang-Woo."

Baek Kang-Woo looked at the man with surprise.

"Park Joo-Hyuk, Baek Hyun-Ah," said the man.

"Master..." The two, Park Joo-Hyuk and Baek Hyun-Ah realized that their intuitions were correct.

"Park Hye-Won."

"Sob..." Park Hye-Won burst into tears, covering her face with both hands.

"Kim Kang-Chun, Kang Ji-Hoon, Ji Eun-Ju, Shin Ha-Neul." The man finished listing all their names.

One by one, he had called out each name correctly without making any single mistake.

"Is it really you, Master?"

"Are you Master Lee Shin? Are you?" "Sob..."

"But, surely our Master was in that temple, no?"

Even though their hearts were telling them the man standing in front of them was Lee Shin, their minds were still not sure.

"Yu Jia. You came too," the man, Lee Shin, said.

"Yes, Mr. Lee Shin. I can tell that it's you. Even though your appearance is different, you are definitely the one who saved me, Mr. Lee Shin."

Yu Jia approached calmly and hugged him.

"I've missed you," Yu Jia said, embracing Lee Shin tightly with an emotional voice.

"Hey! We've known him for longer!"

"I'm going to hug him too!"

"Yeah! Me too!"

Park Hye-Won, Kang Ji-Hoon, Shin Ha-Neul, Ji Eun-Ju, and Kim Kang-Chun all rushed to hug Lee Shin. Afterward, Park Joo-Hyuk and Baek Hyun-Ah also approached and hugged the group. Baek Kang-Woo scratched his head awkwardly and put himself closer to the group.

"Yu-Min..." Lee Shin called out.

Cha Yu-Min, who was staring blankly at the group, approached Lee Shin as their eyes met.

"Mr. Lee Shin..." Cha Yu-Min replied.

Lee Shin laughed as he heard Cha Yu-Min address him formally again, unlike what he had heard earlier.

"What do you mean mister, haha. Just call me Hyung," Lee Shin replied with a smile.

Cha Yu-Min hesitated for a while but spoke up.

"Hyung... You came too late," Cha Yu-Min said to Lee Shin.

"... Hey, I'm sorry," Lee Shin replied.

"It's okay. At least you're here now," Cha Yu-Min muttered.

He embraced Lee Shin along with the others. In an instant, the place turned into a barrage of tears, and even Cha Yu-Min and Park Joo-Hyuk, who rarely cried, teared up. After comforting them, Lee Shin received a fragment of memory from Ji Eun-Ju.

"Good job. You've worked hard," Lee Shin said, looking at Ji Eun-Ju.

"You won't disappear even if I give this to you, right?" Ji Eun-Ju asked with nervousness.

"No, of course not," Lee Shin replied with a smile.

The next moment, Lee Shin flicked his fingers. Immediately, a black Gate appeared in the air.

"This is a Gate that brings you back to Earth. Let's all go back," Lee Shin said, pointing to the Gate that materialized in front of them.

At Lee Shin's words, they let out a sigh of relief.

"Are we really going together this time?" Park Hye-Won grabbed onto Lee Shin's arm and asked.

"Yes, we are really going together this time. For real," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin thought about how long he had endured being alone. During that lengthy time, Lee Shin had constantly wished to return to Earth. And if possible, he wanted to see how those whom he had protected in the past were living.

'I was lucky.'

Lee Shin thought he was lucky because if the timing had not been right, he would not have been able to see them.

"But what about the fragments of memory on Earth? If they exist, Earth will be thrown into chaos again," Park Joo-Hyuk asked Lee Shin with curiosity.

In response to Park Joo-Hyuk's question, Lee Shin created a violet sphere in his palm.

"This is an Immortal Sphere," Lee Shin said, presenting a violet sphere to everyone around him.

Now, this sphere was not in its complete shape, but a form with more than half of its structure broken. It seemed like Lee Shin had split parts of it and scattered the fragments across different places.

"And I'm going to get rid of this," Lee Shin said.

After saying that, Lee Shin sent out a purple mana which wrapped around the Immortal Sphere with it, shattering it.

The Immortal Sphere was smashed so thoroughly that not even dust remained. Since no debris remained, It was hard to tell whether it truly disappeared or just hid itself.

"Since the Immortal Sphere itself is gone, the fragments of memory will gradually lose their power as well. And no one will even know that they existed," Lee Shin explained.

"Wait a second... Then what about us...?" Cha Yu-Min gritted his teeth and asked Lee Shin, as he understood what that meant for them. Seeing a bitter smile on Lee Shin's face, he remained stiff.

"Well, if our destinies align, we'll meet again. If not, I will come find you guys," Lee Shin said to the group, reassuring them.

Having said that, Lee Shin activated his Psychokinesis, and lifted them all.

"No!"

"No wait! I don't want to go like this..."

Swish—

Thrown in one by one, these individuals disappeared into the Gate without being able to finish their sentences.

And then, walking out from the shadowy forest, came Gene Ebrium.

"How was the talk with them after such a long time?" Gene Ebrium asked Lee Shin, curious to know how Lee Shin was feeling.

"It was good. It felt like meeting friends from my hometown after a long time," Lee Shin replied to Gene with a big smile.

"I'm glad then," Gene Ebrium replied, sounding satisfied.

"Thank you for everything. And I'm so sorry for leaving all the burden with you," Lee Shin said to Gene Ebrium.

"Well, I have neither friends nor a hometown like you, so this life isn't too bad either. So, farewell," Gene Ebrium said farewell to Lee Shin and sent him away.

His farewell was plainer than Lee Shin had expected, which he appreciated.

"Goodbye," Lee Shin said to Gene Ebrium.

The two shook hands. The next moment, through Lee Shin's body, the violet and black mana began to flow entirely into Gene Ebrium.

"Now you've become truly an ordinary human," Gene Ebrium said, looking at Lee Shin.

"Yeah. I'm going to live the ordinary life that I've lost," Lee Shin replied, feeling refreshed.

"But seeing that you kept that particular strength, I guess you still don't want to lose the memories of them, right?" Gene Ebrium asked.

"...Well yeah, I'll miss them if they're gone," Lee Shin replied.

At Lee Shin's words, both Lee Shin and Gene Ebrium chuckled.

"Alright, I'll get going now," Lee Shin said.

The next moment, Lee Shin let go of Gene Ebrium's hand without hesitation, turned around, and entered the Gate. As Lee Shin entered the Gate, Gene, who was looking at him, saw no regret or wistfulness from Lee Shin.

"You've done well," Gene Ebrium muttered, looking at Lee Shin.

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Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap!

The chalk snapped and fell from the chalkboard.

"That is it. Any questions?" the professor asked.

The professor, who just finished giving the lecture, adjusted his glasses with his index finger and answered the students' questions wholeheartedly.

"Alright, the class is over now. Save your questions for our next class or send them by email. That's all. Ah, and Baek Ji-Young, organize the materials and bring them to my office after class," the professor said to the teaching assistant.

"Got it!" Baek Ji-Young, the teaching assistant, replied.

The professor walked out of the noisy classroom and into the quiet corridor. Then, he stopped and grasped the handle to the door with the name: 'Lee Shin.'

As Lee Shin entered the room, neatly organized tables, desks, and bookshelves came into view.

"Oh, you are here!" One of the teaching assistants greeted Lee Shin.

The teaching assistant, who had been watching something from his smartphone, quickly turned it off.

"What were you watching?" Lee Shin asked the teaching assistant.

"Oh, just some rumors over a celebrity romance," the teaching assistant said with excitement.

"A romance?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yes, that's right. It's said that the famous instructor, Park Hye-Won, is going to marry the athlete Cha Yu-Min," the teaching assistant explained to Lee Shin filled with excitement.

"Is that so?" Lee Shin replied without much excitement.

"Aren't you surprised though? I thought Cha Yu-Min was only into kendo, but it's really amazing how he was able to date such a beauty," the teaching assistant said, chuckling.

"What do you mean it's surprising. I already knew about this," Lee Shin replied, as if that was not a big surprise for him.

"What? You already knew about this?" Now the teaching assistant seemed surprised.

"Why do you look surprised? It's not impossible for me to know. Plus, I've already received the wedding invitation," Lee Shin replied with actual excitement.

"Heh... Wow! Uh, then, could you please get Cha Yu-Min's autograph for me?" the teaching assistant begged.

"Well, we'll see. It will depend on how well you do things," Lee Shin replied.

"Wow! Thank you, Professor! What should I do? Tell me anything!" the teaching assistant said, full of energy.

"You're too loud, so just go out for now. You can get off from work today," Lee Shin said with a smile.

"Yes sir!" the teaching assistant replied with excitement.

After politely bidding the professor goodbye, he left the room. Then, his office door opened again. This time, it was the teaching assistant, Baek Ji-Young.

"Professor Lee, I came with the materials," Baek Ji-Young said.

"You can leave those there and let's head out," Lee Shin said.



The next moment, Lee Shin and Baek Ji-Young headed to the underground parking lot. They quickly got into the car and drove off.

Not long after, they arrived at South Korea University Hospital, the top hospital in South Korea. It was the hospital where Lee Shin worked as a professor. The two quickly got into an elevator and headed to a certain ward.

Swoosh—!

As they drew the curtain, they saw a man lying on the bed, watching TV.

"Oh! You're here," Baek Hyun said with a surprised voice when he saw Lee Shin and his younger sister Baek Ji-Young.

"Oppa, are you okay?" Baek Ji-Young asked with a worried voice.

"Yeah, I'm doing fine. The surgery went well. Look at this. This is amazing. The world has really become better. You can even attach a prosthetic leg like this," Baek Hyun replied and laughed as if everything was fine.

However, Lee Shin was aware that this was not how Baek Hyun was feeling inside.

'He went from being a national representative to a disabled person in the blink of an eye. There's no way he would be okay.'

Baek Hyun had been a promising talent as a national representative for Taekwondo, but due to an accident, he lost a leg overnight. After being confined to a bed for several years, he recently underwent surgery to attach a prosthetic leg.

"Baek Hyun, they say your sponsors will be here soon," Lee Shin said to Baek Hyun.

"Oh really? I was curious who they were... But by the way, did you see this? Ji-Young, did you see this? The athlete Cha Yu-Min is—" Baek Hyun said.

As they passed the time with light chitchat, the door of the hospital ward opened.

Squeak—!

"Hello," Cha Yu-Min greeted him.

"Nice to meet you," said Park Hye-Won, who was standing beside her fiancé, Cha Yu-Min.

Baek Hyun opened his eyes wide and looked at his sponsors. "Huh?"

In front of him was a well-built man with neat hair and a beautiful woman with brown hair. They were people whom Baek Hyun had seen on the television many times.

"What? Huh?" Baek Hyun kept repeating words that did not make any sense, shifting his gaze back and forth between his smartphone and the two people who were standing in front of him.

"C-Cha Yu-Min and Park Hye-Won?" Baek Hyun stuttered because he was shocked.

"Oh my, Oppa! They're not your friends! Be polite!" Baek Ji-Young said to Baek Hyun.

"Oh that's okay, don't worry about us."

After saying that, Cha Yu-Min and Park Hye-Won took their seats. Since they were in a private room, they had ample space.

"Oh, I'm sorry. And thank you so much... for supporting me," Baek Hyun replied and bowed his head in a somewhat awkward position.

"No worries, it's totally fine."

"You can stay comfortable. You don't have to get up."

"But may I ask how you decided to sponsor my brother?" Baek Ji-Young asked Cha Yu-Min and Park Hye-Won.

"Well... I just felt a connection, being fellow athletes," Cha Yu-Min replied.

"I, on the other hand, found him somewhat familiar. I don't really know why but somehow, I just wanted to help. Well, anyway, Yu-Min Oppa also wanted to help, so I supported him!" Park Hye-Won replied and smiled.

Park Hye-Won exaggerated her gestures and explained with great pride. As a result, the atmosphere, which had been a bit tense, loosened a bit as everyone started to chuckle. After exchanging light conversation with each other, Cha Yu-Min and Park Hye-Won got up from their seats.

"We'll get going now," Cha Yu-Min said.

"It was a pleasure to meet you," Park Hye-Won said.

"When I'm all better, I'll treat you grandly!" Baek Hyun said, looking at the two.

"Please come back again!" Baek Ji-Young said to Cha Yu-Min and Baek Ji-Young.

At the request of the Baek siblings, the two nodded.

"Yes, we should really get going now. Our friends are waiting."

"Professor, you're coming with us, right? Jia Unnie said she'd go to your house to find you if you don't come this time," Park Hye-Won asked and laughed.

Lee Shin chuckled and rose from his seat.

"Of course I am going if my friends are waiting," Lee Shin replied.

Hearing Lee Shin's response, Baek Ji-Young looked at him with surprise.

"You have friends too, professor? Oh oops... I'm sorry," Realizing she was being impolite, Baek Ji-Young quickly apologized to Lee Shin.

Lee Shin reassured her that it was okay by patting her on the shoulder.

"Well, I guess I've been working too much, haha," Lee Shin replied and laughed.

"This is why you should come out for drinks when we call you. There wouldn't be any misunderstanding like this, haha," Park Hye-Won said to Lee Shin, chuckling.

"Yes, exactly. You told me to call you 'Hyung,' but how come you never come out when I ask you?" Cha Yu-Min said.

Cha Yu-Min and Park Hye-Won scolded him cheekily.

"Okay okay. I got it! I'll try to go out with you guys more often now, so stop mentioning it," Lee Shin replied with a big smile.

The two, seeing the rare expression of bewilderment on Lee Shin's face, laughed, completely enjoying the moment.

"Let's get going now. Our friends are waiting," Cha Yu-Min and Park Hye-Won said, looking at Lee Shin.

"Sure, let's go," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin was living a carefree and comfortable life, without a burden or pressure.

"Let's go meet our friends," Lee Shin muttered with excitement.

Finally regaining the life he had forgotten, Lee Shin's face blossomed with a happier smile than ever.

- The end -