

The Tower 63

Chapter 63

‘What's wrong with her?’

With her skills, it would not have been difficult to escape the labyrinth even if she did not follow the trio. Even if it was difficult to deal with the wave, it was nothing compared to following them to the starting point and fighting the monsters there.

‘There must be something I haven’t caught yet.’

Lee Shin decided to let her come along and then figure out her intentions later on. Besides, Alice's combat power was not a great threat to him.

"Okay then, let's go," Lee Shin said.

With Lee Shin’s permission granted, Fletta sighed with relief, because he knew that he would not be able to refuse Alice if she wanted him to join her instead. Fletta thought that it would not necessarily be a bad idea to be alone with a beautiful lady like Alice, but for the sake of things working out smoothly, it was best to be with someone like Lee Shin.

Lee Shin’s group moved more smoothly than ever before. Now that the group was completely under Lee Shin’s leadership, Alice was more cooperative than ever. Lee Shin kept an eye on her, trying to figure out why she had changed her stance so suddenly, but each time he glanced at her, he realized that she had been looking at him too. This made Lee Shin’s doubt grow even more.

‘Hmm... She keeps turning away...’

Lee Shin thought that this behavior was indicative of the fact that Alice was trying to hide something very important from him.

While Lee Shin became more and more on guard, the group members stopped in their tracks because a voice came from afar.

"Shhh!"

They even stopped breathing just in case there was someone who could hear them. They sneaked up to the wall and looked toward the place where the sound was coming from.

"What is that? I think there's people there."

Three men and a woman had surrounded a group of people and were attacking them. The group that was being attacked seemed to be challengers as well.

"How can they do such a terrible thing!" shouted Mariel in rage.

When Lee Shin and the group members looked at the scene closely, they saw that the two women and one man on the defending side were seriously injured. The two women still looked somewhat capable of moving around, but the man was covered in blood. He looked as if he was about to die.

Alice wanted to just walk by, but her opinion was drowned out by Mariel's shouts of anger. In the end, Mariel, who could not watch any longer, suddenly ran out.

"Hey, what are you doing? It's not right to bully challengers like that! They are just like you!" Mariel shouted.

"Who are you?" A man asked.

"Wow... She's pretty," another man muttered.

"Here comes the apostle of justice," the woman whispered.

When the three men saw Mariel's face, they changed their attitudes in an instant but the woman was not happy about it. Lee Shin did not intend on just watching the scene anyway, because he had to care about Mariel's impression of him, but somehow it seemed like he was just getting dragged into this situation.

"Oh well, there's nothing I can do now," Lee Shin muttered.

"You bastards! You're harassing women because you have nothing better to do? You lack chivalry!" Fletta stood next to Mariel and shouted as if he was chastising them.

Alice looked at them and grabbed her head in exasperation. With nothing else to do, she followed them, but she stiffened when she saw one of the men in the attacking group.

'No way... t-t-that is...'

The man Alice saw was known as Fighting Dog, one of the challengers who climbed the tower from her dimension. He couldn't even be considered properly human—just as his nickname said, he was a rabid dog, a monster born and raised to fight in the Underworld.

Her legs refused to carry her any farther, and she started to tremble.

"No... We have to run away," Alice mumbled.

When Lee Shin saw her panic, he grabbed her arm.

"What's wrong?" Lee Shin asked.

"He... he's a monster... We can't win against him, so we better run away now," said Alice in a shaky voice.

Lee Shin turned her around and held onto her arms. Seeing her break down like that, as if past trauma had just caught up with her, Lee Shin lightly patted her shoulder.

Alice looked up at him.

"Don't worry. At least I won't let you get hurt," Lee Shin said.

It was something that anyone could have said, and it could very well be nothing more than false bravado. However, Alice felt her growing fear subside in an instant. Her heart was still pounding fast, but strangely, her fear and anxiety had disappeared. She stared blankly at Fighting Dog again.

"Keugh..." Alice gulped.

The guy was looking at her with a creepy smile.

"Oh, we have two beautiful ladies here," said Fighting Dog.

The lewd way he looked at them made Alice feel very disturbed, as if his hands were all over her body, but at least she was no longer afraid.

"The blonde one is mine."

"Stop talking shit, who says that?"

"Haha. It's great that I don't have a competitor. That handsome guy over there is mine," said the woman.

Fletta and Mariel were outraged as they saw how their opponents teased them in their face, as if they were auctioning for objects.

"You filthy ones!" Fletta shouted.

"Even the heavenly God will not forgive people like you," said Mariel.

Fletta and Mariel took on the two men standing on either side of Fighting Dog. The woman next to them tried to join the fight, but she found that she could not move—an unknown force was holding her in place.

"What? What's going on?" The woman seemed surprised.

"You're playing with me, you stupid bitch," said Alice with her usual cool look, having completely shaken off her fear.

"What a cheeky bitch," Fighting Dog muttered.

His voice was very rough, as if he had thick mucus stuck in his throat. The fear associated with this man, Fighting Dog, was so intense that Alice's mana was disturbed just by hearing his voice. She started to shiver again, as if she was really affected by PTSD, but at that moment, Lee Shin stood in front of Alice and faced the guy.

"Are you the leader of this group?" Lee Shin asked.

"Get out of my way if you don't want to die—oh, sorry. Let me rephrase. Get out of my way if you want to live a little bit longer," said Fighting Dog.

Hearing his words, Lee Shin laughed. A moment later, the tip of his wand flickered with lightning.

Woong— Fizz! Fizz!

Lee Shin's lightning bounced off the blades of Fighting Dog's tiger claw gauntlet. In that short amount of time, Fighting Dog was able to sense Lee Shin's mana and block the magic, displaying great reaction speed and agility. Fighting Dog's confident attitude was not groundless after all.

"You cheeky bastard!" Fighting Dog shouted.

Fighting Dog jumped out like a cannonball and swung its claw with a force that was enough to tear Lee Shin apart.

Wooong! Clang!

However, the claw was stopped by an invisible barrier that appeared in the air, the sound of metal striking metal echoing several times in just a moment.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Fighting Dog could not believe that Lee Shin had just blocked his attack, so he struck at Lee Shin again and again. However, no matter how much he clawed at the barrier, he couldn't even get near Lee Shin.

"Ahhh!" Fighting Dog roared.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

He tried to strike from all sides, as well as from above. However, a barrier would appear exactly at the spot where his attack landed, and it did not seem possible to break through it.

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Claaang—!

Suddenly, the barrier exploded, and the resulting shockwave blasted Fighting Dog away.

[You have taken away Turkaran's Health Points.]

[Your Health Points increased by 1.]

"Keugh...?Kek!" Fighting Dog coughed and spit out blood. He then clenched his teeth and glared at Lee Shin.

"This... can't be... true..." Fighting Dog said.

"Did you think you could mess with me with that level of skill?" Lee Shin laughed at him.

Lee Shin did not make it obvious on the surface, but he was manipulating his mana at a certain risk.

The shield barrier was a first-order basic elemental spell. Naturally, its actual power depended on the ability of the caster, but the spell itself was a low-level one—easy to use, but not terribly powerful.

When Lee Shin spread the barrier over a wide area, its defensive power was weakened, and it also consumed a great amount of mana to boot. Besides, with only a single layer, Lee Shin could not block the attack of a challenger like Fighting Dog, so Lee Shin had layered a few barriers in order to block the first attack.

This had successfully stopped Fighting Dog, but seeing the excessive mana consumption, Lee Shin immediately decided to change strategies.

He had to focus his defensive power onto a smaller area, so he shrunk his wide barrier into a small shield. He layered several of these shields on top of each other and reinforced them. Then, he also put up a mana shield that would absorb the impact of the opponents' attacks until maximum capacity was reached, which would then set off an explosion.

It was a technique that other wizards would not have recommended. Lee Shin had done two things at the same time, which was against the common sense of ordinary wizards.

With the size of the shield thus reduced, he was running the risk of letting an attack slip around it and hit him, especially if he somehow miscalculated the opponent's attack pattern. In other words, the shield had to be placed precisely in the way of the attack at the precise moment of the attack. This involved keeping up with an attacker who moved at a speed that normal people couldn't even follow.

Furthermore, it was a great risk to use a technique that triggered an explosion the moment a threshold was reached. If the caster failed to predict the exact moment when the impact shield's capacity reached maximum, they would also get in big trouble. This technique was a gamble, and Lee Shin had just won it.

It was a high level of mana control that would not have been made possible for anyone else other than Lee Shin, who had brilliant talent in the field of magic and was in his previous life a great wizard. The other three challengers, who did not reach this level, simply thought that Fighting Dog lost because he was being careless.

"You fucking bastard!" Fighting Dog shouted.

"Just die," said Lee Shin.

Swoosh—!

Crack!

A lightning spear shot out from the tip of Lee Shin's wand and into Fighting Dog's throat.

The man seemed unable to believe that he was about to die, even as death struck him. An instant later, he collapsed on the ground like a puppet with its strings cut.

"Your boss is dead," Lee Shin said.

The once-heated battle cooled down instantly at his calm words.

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"Thank you."

"Thank you very, very much!"

The three who had been attacked were able to recover thanks to Mariel's treatment. They expressed their gratitude, then left the scene, leaving the three attackers kneeling on the ground, with Fighting Dog's corpse laid beside them.

"You should just kill people like these," said Alice.

"But I don't feel good about killing those who surrender..." Fletta muttered.

"Then do you want to keep them alive? They were trying to kill us." Alice looked at Fletta as if he was talking nonsense. When Fletta noticed her glare, he shut his mouth.

"Still... I don't feel good about killing them. They surrendered," said Lee Shin.

"Uh... well... That's true. I think I was a little aggressive." Alice suddenly changed her attitude after hearing Lee Shin's words.

Mariel, who was listening to their conversation, shook her head.

"No, these criminals should be severely punished."

"Huh?" Lee Shin was surprised to hear that.

"If this was the heavenly realm, we could have administered a reasonable punishment, but we can't do that in this place. Therefore, they must pay for their sins with their lives," said Mariel.

Lee Shin was a little puzzled by Mariel's words—it was quite unlike her to be this aggressive. For a few moments, he was left speechless. Actually, the reason why he had suggested leaving these people alive was that he was trying to stay in Mariel's good graces. However, Mariel was actually in favor of killing them!

"Uh... Well then..." Lee Shin muttered.

"No! Wait! How can you kill us when we got rid of our weapons and surrendered?"

"That's right! If you forgive us, we won't do it ever again!"

"Please... I have a family to go kee— kek!"

Suddenly, spikes emerged from the ground and pierced the hearts of the three challengers. The three vomited blood and groaned, their eyes filled with hatred.

"You have to stop talking nonsense," Lee Shin muttered.

Lee Shin had lived a life long enough to not believe what such people said. Besides, he had the same opinion as Mariel.

After killing the three challengers without hesitation, he immediately turned around and moved forward. Alice and Mariel followed him. Fletta, who was a little late in figuring out what was going on, noticed the collapsed challengers and followed Lee Shin's group as well.

'Now that I see this, I wonder... how many elements can he use?'

Alice could not bring herself to say her thoughts out loud.

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"But are you sure you know the way?" Alice asked.

"Yeah," Lee Shin replied.

Alice had full confidence in Lee Shin's outstanding combat ability because she had seen it in the battles they had fought so far. However, finding their way in this labyrinth was another matter. Lee Shin was moving forward without a single trace of hesitation, but Alice thought it was necessary to know for sure whether he actually knew where he was going. Otherwise, she was prepared to use her skills.

"I don't forget what I see," said Lee Shin.

"Ha!" Alice thought Lee Shin was bluffing in a way that did not even make sense, but there was a smile on her face.

'Men tend to bluff a lot in front of the girl they like, no?'

Even with his lacking skills, Lee Shin had still thrown himself into danger to save her. He had even tried to reassure her when she had been panicking. In Alice's mind, it was clear that Lee Shin liked her, so Alice followed Lee Shin, trying to hide her red cheeks.

"Ms. Mariel, is it that hot in here?" Fletta asked.

"Well... not really, no," Mariel replied.

"But then, why is Alice's face so red?"

"Oh, maybe she's sick?"

Alice's face flushed redder when she heard their conversation.

"I'm not sick, so just shut up and get going!" Alice shouted.