World 23

Chapter 23 - 23. Competing In Speed

When he saw the Lizardman rushing towards him, he immediately moved back out of the room. The monster turned his back and returned to its original position like a well-choreographed script.

Should he give up? Jack was dismayed. Should he come back later after he was stronger? But what if the clues he was looking for had disappeared by the time he returned? This kind of trace tended to degrade with time. He weighed between the risk and potential benefit. There was no guarantee the clue he was looking for will be there even if he managed to get past this boss.

He looked inside the room again. The Lizardman was sitting down with its eyes closed, looking exactly the same as when he first saw it. He looked further behind the monster, to the opposite door which he had mistaken for the entrance door before. He deduced that if he managed to defeat the Lizardman, the reward would be a passage through that door. He looked to the card reader beside the door, it looked exactly like the one outside here. He should be able to use the same Administrator card-key in his possession to open it, right?

Could he open the door without defeating the Lizardman? If the monster didn't chase him once he was out of the room, theoretically it should also let him go once he went through that door. He thought for a while. He thought he should give it a try, if he could not open the door then he would just give up and came back again after becoming stronger. The trick now was how to open that door while surviving the Lizardman's assaults. It was too fast and too fierce, he would not be given the chance to operate the key card reader with ease.

He reviewed the options that were available to him based on the fight experience with the lizardman just now, and thought of a few combat simulations in his mind. After a few minutes, he opened his attributes window and dumped all his free attribute points to Dexterity. His target now was not to overpower the monster, but to have enough window to operate the card reader and open the door. Hence, every speed he could improve would help.

After finished with his preparation, he took a deep breath, ran the simulation one more time before stepping inside the room. As predicted, the Lizardman came to life again once his feet came into the room. Without pause, it ran towards him.

Jack summoned his Magic Shield. The Lizardman unleashed a flurry of slashes once it was in range. The speed was frightening, but after the previous round against the monster, he had somehow gotten used to its attacking patterns. He blocked every blow with a combination of Magic Shield and Parry.

He still lost HP but nothing significant. He focused on defense with no attention to attack. The monster moved left and right trying to get an opening, but Jack maintained his iron-clad defense. At one point the lizardman suddenly vanished from view.

This is it! He exclaimed in his mind. He turned around as the Lizardman's scimitar was coming towards him. The monster had used this move several times in their last skirmish. Every time after jumping to its opponent's back, it always followed up with an attack towards its opponent's chest or neck. Knowing where the monster planned to hit, made it easier for him to block.

The powerful blow came into contact with the white glowing shield as he sent a Power Strike to the monster's waist. As he felt the impact, his leg pushed against the floor. Adding the momentum of his jump with the force of the Lizardman's blow, he flew away several meters, immediately putting a large distance between him and the monster.

The purpose of the Power Strike he gave to the Lizardman was not to damage, but to hinder its movement instead. Once his feet touched the floor again, he immediately cast Mana Bullet. The ball of energy rushed forward and crashed against the monster's round shield, it staggered slightly.

Jack whirled around and put the monster at his back. He cast another spell without looking as he started running towards the opposite door. He could hear his four Energy Bolts hit the Lizardman consecutively, further rooting it at its place.

He stored his sword as he ran as fast as possible. His left hand kept holding his staff as a Magic Shield was again reformed on its tips. His right hand which was now free, took out the key-card from his inventory. He had managed to put as large a distance as possible between him and the Lizardman, all he needed to do now was to open the door before the Lizardman reached him.

He heard fast-paced repeating footsteps behind him, he knew that the monster had also chased him with all its speed. Fortunately, he had spent all his free attributes onto Dexterity, now the monster could not close in the distance as fast as their last confrontation.

He didn't bother to look back and risked his speed decreasing, he just tried to pinpoint the monster's distance from the sound of its footsteps. When he was several meters away from the card reader, he could hear the Lizardman was closing in on him.

He kept running at high speed even as he approached the wall with the card reader, he didn't allow his speed to decrease. He crashed onto the wall and let it be the break to stop his advance. He gritted his teeth, ignoring the pain on his shoulder due to the impact.

With a fast motion, he swiped the card in his hand onto the card reader machine, which missed.

Goddamnit! Get a hold of yourself! He screamed in his mind. His heart was beating like crazy. He could hear the Lizardman's fast pace running steps and knew that it was almost upon him, but he forced himself to not look and instead focus on the card reader. He swiped it one more time. This time it went smoothly. He jumped sideways to the door as the card reader went green and finally let his vision shifted towards the oncoming monster.

Before his feet even touched the floor again, his view was covered by a red shadow that crashed onto him. He felt a searing pain in his stomach as the scimitar thrust through. His body slammed onto the door behind which made a click sound half a second ago. Its door leaves swirled wide as Jack burst through into the space behind the door. He tumbled wildly onto the cold flat floor and slid to a stop only after the force that threw him through diminished.

The room inside was dark, but he could feel his vision whirling around. He clenched his teeth as he endured the pain and forced the dizziness away. He was terrified that the Lizardman would continue to attack him as he quickly looked around to pinpoint the monster's position. He saw it just behind the door of this dark room, standing there with a snarl and a menacing gaze.

He didn't know what was the facial expression of a lizard when it was angry, but he bet it would look exactly like what the lizardman's face was showing now. Yet the monster stayed outside the door line. Even as the door-leave which had opened wide due to the impact slowly rotated back to its closing position, it still didn't make any intention to pass through the door.

The door closed by itself with a click, and Jack was swallowed by total darkness.

He was still on the floor trying to calm his nerve. He looked at his HP bar. Holy Crap! He lost almost half his health just from that last single assault. He still had more than 80% of his health when he had a race with the Lizardman, now it was less than half. The monster must have scored a critical on his last attack.

After catching his breath for a while, he stood up and looked around. It was a total and complete darkness.

What place had he got himself into this time, he thought.