

The Tower 148

Chapter 148: The Journey

It was not just the old man who was standing in front of Lee Shin. In front of him were the Naga, the kid, the Elf, a werewolf and so on. The challengers who had earlier been killed by Lee Shin were now alive, emitting murderous intent.

A challenger who had transformed into a werewolf charged toward Lee Shin. At that sight, Lee Shin, who had been activating his mana, stopped and smirked. The next moment, a glaring flash of light pierced through Lee Shin's mana waves and passed by his side.

Crack!

Following the direction of the light, Lee Shin could see the werewolf, fallen, with an arrow pierced through its neck. The end of the arrow was stuck into the ground, and the werewolf convulsed on the floor, writhing in pain.

"Master!" Park Joo-Hyuk shouted.

"We will take care of this place," said Natasha.

Park Joo-Hyuk and Natasha stood side by side as if trying to protect Lee Shin. Other challengers also stood surrounding them, with a determined look on their faces. However, compared to the number of enemies they were facing, their combat force seemed significantly less.

Boom!

At that moment, there was a loud sound of explosion and tremors spread across the ground. As Lee Shin and his comrades directed their gazes toward the epicenter of the vibrations, a loud yell came from that place.

"Lee— Shin—!"

Since it was an extremely familiar voice, it caused Lee Shin to laugh.

"Hurry— up— and finish— it—! I'm super hungry—!"

The challengers around him also burst into laughter. Lee Shin shook his head and activated his mana.

"Ha, I guess Mr. Vuela is still the same."

However, Lee Shin quickly realized that Vuela was not in a good condition.

'That idiot... He accumulated hunger.'

Clicking his tongue, Lee Shin sharpened his senses. Mana started to swirl in all directions and the heat in the surrounding atmosphere intensified. While the battle between challengers and Mandragora's creations raged on fiercely, Lee Shin received a long iron bar from Tashi.

"Where are you going to use this?" Tashi asked Lee Shin.

However, Lee Shin did not immediately answer. It was not that he did not understand the underlying question: why would a wizard ask for an iron bar? Lee Shin thought that if she saw it with her own eyes, it would be easier for her to comprehend than if he were to explain with words. Thus, he simply infused mana into the iron bar he was holding.

'Well, since I don't have enough mana, I have no other choice.'

The traditional steel-based magic was vastly different from elemental magic in terms of difficulty and the amount of mana consumption, because steel-based magic required one to materialize matter. However, if there was a medium, it became much easier to evoke.

The iron bar that Lee Shin received was old and rusty. If it were to collide with Mandragora's branches even once, it would break. This was obvious enough without having to check its durability. Since Tashi did not need this object, Lee Shin was planning on using it for this one attack.

'I need to deliver a critical hit right now.'

The Mandragora was at its most vulnerable the moment when it blossomed. Its defense was the weakest then, because most of the nutrients it had were used to make it bloom. Besides, the newly blossomed branches could not be used for defense.

Furthermore, the previously damaged branches could not recover, so they were unable to move properly. If Lee Shin could not inflict substantial damage on Mandragora right now, he would have no chance of winning.

[Strengthening of the Durability]

[Size Adjustment]

Woong— Woong—

As mana flowed up the iron bar, indistinguishable engravings appeared on it. The scent of death permeated from the iron bar due to the black mana.

[Piercing Enhancement]

[Rotation Acceleration]

Mana rotated rapidly, making the surrounding wind to swirl and scatter.

'Die.'

Lee Shin pulled back the iron bar, now a spear plated with steel, in his hand, then thrust it forward with all his strength.

Swoosh—!

The spear cut through the air with a sharp sound, and it accurately hit Mandragora's body.

Kieeeeik—!

Mandragora writhed in pain, relentlessly striking the ground and screaming. When the challengers near Mandragora heard its scream, they covered their ears and began to lose their footing and fell.

[You have heard the scream of Mandragora.]

[You are going into a state of confusion.]

[You have resisted.]

Lee Shin frowned at the scream, but he was not affected. However, that was not the case for other challengers.

“M-m-move! Move away!” Ethan, who had been suffering from a headache, shouted as he rushed toward Tashi.

"Honey! Why are you doing this! Look at me!" Tashi seemed nervous.

"Just die!" Ethan shouted at Tashi.

Fortunately, Tashi, being a Cyclops, seemed unharmed, but Ethan was lost in his confusion and could not distinguish friend from foe.

"Ha-Neul! Wake up!" Park Hye-Won shouted.

"Don't attack! Stall for time until he regains his senses!" Park Joo-Hyuk shouted.

Park Hye-Won and Park Joo-Hyuk managed to maintain their composure and stopped the others. Lee Shin, who saw the challengers starting to panic, clicked his tongue.

"Tsk."

The moment Lee Shin's eyebrows furrowed, his mana erupted in front of the hunchbacked old man, who was born from one of the buds. The old hunchback, who had been hiding his presence and waiting, attempted to attack Park Joo-Hyuk with his sword but was restrained by Lee Shin's intervention.

"...Kek!"

Thanks to Lee Shin, Park Joo-Hyuk barely managed to avoid the attack and pushed the old man away.

In this chaotic battlefield, the most dangerous person was the old hunchback. If he were actually alive, he could have killed anyone here in this situation if he wanted to. Lee Shin, who had unleashed his mana and hit the old hunchback's side, pushed him away and then turned his gaze back to Mandragora.

"Park Joo-Hyuk, you deal with that old man," Lee Shin ordered.

"Understood," Park Joo-Hyuk replied.

Lee Shin thought that if it was Park Joo-Hyuk, he should be able to handle the fake old hunchback. If Park Joo-Hyuk had sensed the old man's presence earlier and known his identity beyond his fragile appearance as a skilled warrior, he would not have been hit.

"We need to wrap this up quickly," Lee Shin muttered.

Due to the widespread chaos, the number of casualties was rapidly increasing. Although Lee Shin had expected the battle to take a slightly longer time than this, he decided to hurry and wrap things up. At

that moment, the surrounding air heated up rapidly. Lee Shin looked up at the sky. Above Mandragora, there was a bright red flame that was gradually growing larger.

‘Is that the Red Flame?’

There was only one person who could use flame magic of such power. It had to be Cigarate. His flames began to fall from the sky.

Just like before, numerous twisted branches extended upward and clashed with the Red Flame.

Baaam—!

The flames charred the branches black, but they could not penetrate Mandragora's defense. The twisted branches turned into ash and fell limp.

"Hahaha! Is that all you've got? Let me show you!" Vuela laughed at Cigarate.

Realizing that Cigarate's magic was ineffective on Mandragora, Vuela, who was in an armor all bloodied, infused his mana into his sword.

[Wave Cutting Sword]

Swoosh—!

A fierce wave of mana poured toward Mandragora.

Bababam—!

However, just like before, the challengers born from the bud appeared and tried to block the Wave Cutting Sword. Although the fakes gathered their strength, it was utterly insufficient. The fakes were

swept away by the force of the Wave Cutting Sword and fell into an abyss, while Mandragora's branches became tattered.

"Ha... Ha..." Vuela was out of breath.

Vuela had used all his strength in that blow. He was at his limit.

"Hey, get your act together and help me! Why are you wasting your strength on him when the master will be the one to kill him anyway?" Baek Hyun, who had been dealing with the challengers all alone, shouted.

"Got it!" Vuela replied.

Vuela turned away with an annoyed expression because it felt like he had been scolded. He bit his lips; it felt like he had not been of much help in defeating Mandragora, but Lee Shin did not think that way.

‘His momentum has weakened rapidly.’

It was natural for Mandragora to be in a weakened state since it had been struck by the blows of Cigarate and Vuela at its most vulnerable state. Besides, it had been struck by Lee Shin as well.

“Even you won’t be able to react properly now.” Lee Shin smirked and his mana soared up into the sky.

Did that creature also realize how dangerous this situation was? The challengers who came out of the flower bud hurriedly rushed back into it.

"It's too late," Lee Shin muttered.

[Punishment]

At the center of the chaotic Growth Island, a black spear of thunderbolt appeared. The confusion and fear of all those who were hiding themselves all over the island were all converted into the power of the thunderbolt.

Baaam—!

Kieeeeek—!

There was a loud sound of thunder that was enough to deafen the challengers. At the same time, the scream of Mandragora sent people into confusion. Lee Shin poured all the mana he had remaining into his final blow.

Lee Shin gasped for breath and stared sharply at the collapsing body of Mandragora. The entire island began to shake. The plants that had been everywhere quickly withered and died.

[You have cleared the 30th floor.]

[Your achievements will be recorded.]

[Amazing achievement! Many gods are...]

[...]

"Take me to the next floor," Lee Shin said.

[You are moving to the 31st floor.]

Lee Shin arrived on the 31st floor. This place was far away from the city center. Near the foot of the mountains, a muscular man was chopping wood in a small log cabin.

"Who are you guys?" The man tightened his grip on the large ax he was holding, wary of the sudden intruders.

"We came here to find Agatha," Lee Shin replied.

Despite the man's reaction, Lee Shin spoke bluntly. As soon as the man heard the name Agatha, he swung the ax ferociously.

Baam—!

A shield appeared in the air and blocked the ax, causing a piercing sound and sending a wave of tremors outward. His ax could not penetrate the shield, and the man, surprised and bewildered, stepped back.

"Get out of here!" the man shouted.

It was the first time that his ax had been so thoroughly blocked. He could not believe that such a thin barrier could stop his ax, which could cut down thick trees in one go.

"I won't let you take Agatha!" the man shouted.

The man, who leaped as high as Lee Shin's height, swung down his ax.

[Steel Plate Shield]

However, once again, the ax, unable to penetrate Lee Shin's shield, could not withstand the impact and the handle broke off and flew outward.

Thud.

The ax was so heavy that the spot on the ground where the ax had fallen sank in.

"You can't take Agatha with you!" the man shouted.

This time, the man rushed toward Lee Shin with his bare body.

"Tsk, stop it and get out of the way!" Vuela drew his sword.

[Wave Cutting Sword]

Waves of mana poured over the man.

"Kraaah!" the man screamed in pain as he was pushed back, but he did not fall.

"How can he endure this with his bare body?" Vuela muttered.

Although Vuela did not unleash his full strength, his pride was wounded by the fact that the man withstood his attack with his bare body. As Vuela gritted his teeth and attempted to step forward again, a girl came out from inside the log cabin and blocked his way.

"Stop it!" the girl shouted. "Why are you acting like this all of a sudden?"

Startled by her reaction, Vuela waved his hands.

"Well... t-t-that's because..." Vuela muttered.

"We came to find you. It was your brother's request," Lee Shin explained calmly.

"My... brother?" the girl asked, with a surprised look on her face.

"Yeah, your brother! Do you know how much I suffered trying to find you on behalf of your brother?" Alice said.

"But my brother is dead," Agatha replied, tilting her head.

"What did you say? That bastard! He lied to you, saying Jack was dead when he's perfectly alive?"

"That son of a bitch."

Lee Shin shook his head and then lowered himself to his knees to look Agatha in the eye.

"Listen carefully, your brother is alive. Jack thought you were dead and lived as a slave under Penser," Lee Shin explained.

"Don't lie to me like that!" Agatha shouted.

"It's not a lie. Here, I have a video of Jack," Lee Shin said.

Then, Lee Shin took out a projector from his pocket and showed it to her.

"This is..." Agatha muttered.

Jack appeared on the projector and started recounting their memories together, one by one.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Agatha's tears fell to the ground. Alice approached her and comforted her.

"Agatha, can you tell us how you've been living until now? Who is this person, and why are you here?" Lee Shin asked her.

"Umm... sniff... Is this... really true?" Agatha asked.

Agatha trembled as if she could not believe it. The gigantic man, who had been protecting her, stood right behind her with a bewildered expression.

"Alice," Lee Shin called out.

"I got it," Alice replied.

Alice immediately turned on the automatic camera and took a picture of Agatha. Then she uploaded it to the community immediately. The community was a resource that was not given to residents who were born and raised in the tower.

That was why Agatha could not use the community and they had to go through the trouble of preparing the projector. However, there were challengers around Jack so all they had to do was pass the message to Jack through those he trusted.

"It's all done," said Alice.

The next moment, Alice uploaded Agatha's picture to the community.

"But who is this person? He doesn't seem like an ordinary person..." Alice asked, looking at the gigantic man.

Agatha, who was sniffing, looked at the gigantic man behind her.

"He's like my brother, hired by Mr. Penser to protect me. He's so kind and treats me kindly," said Agatha.

"So, is he a trustworthy person?" Alice asked.

"Yes, of course!" Agatha replied.

"You! What's your relationship with Penser? Are you an informant under him?" Alice asked.

"No, I'm not a bad person," the gigantic man shook his head and replied to Alice's question.

"Is he telling the truth?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yes. It seems like he has no connection to Penser," Alice replied.

Alice used her unique ability, Eyes of the Wise Man, to confirm, and it was clear that his words were true.

"In that case, Penser must have placed him here just for protection..." Lee Shin muttered.

The next moment, Lee Shin approached the gigantic man, who was standing still.

"What's your name?" Lee Shin asked.

"It's Dic," the gigantic man replied.

"I gave him that name! I named him after seeing him shatter rocks with his bare hands when we first met," Agatha explained.

Looking at the large body size, an appearance not significantly different from a human, as well as his powerful strength and resilience, only two races came to Lee Shin's mind.

'He's either a Giant or Cyclops...'

However, he was too small to be a Giant and had no eyes on his forehead to be a Cyclops. Lee Shin observed him more closely stroking his chin, and spoke again.

"Do you remember anything from when you were young?" Lee Shin asked.

"No. When I was young, Penser rescued me. And he told me to protect Agatha," the gigantic man replied.

"Alice, come here," said Lee Shin.

"Huh? Why?" Alice replied.

Lee Shin called Alice and pointed at Dic.

"Can you tell what race he is?" Lee Shin asked.

"Oh, I'll take a look," Alice replied.

With her Eyes of the Wise Man, it was not difficult to determine the race. She nodded in awe.

"He's a hybrid. He's half human, half Cyclops," Alice said.

"Just as I expected," Lee Shin muttered.

If Penser had known his identity, he would not have left him in such a place.

'Perhaps another remarkable team would have been formed.'

The next moment, Lee Shin went back to Agatha.

"Agatha, if Jack comes, I have a message to deliver," Lee Shin said.

"What is it? Please tell me anything. If I really get to meet my brother, I owe you my life," said Agatha.

"Well..." Lee Shin told her the message.

The three of them, having finished their business with Agatha, returned to the central area of the thirty-first floor. They could see challengers from Earth gathered there, preparing to ascend to the next stage.

"Master." Park Joo-Hyuk approached Lee Shin.

"As I mentioned before, you guys should form a team and climb the tower. You'll encounter enemies of a certain strength according to the achievements you've made. So, don't try to shoulder everything alone," Lee Shin advised Park Joo-Hyuk.

Park Joo-Hyuk was a responsible person, and if he could not protect his teammates and colleagues, he would be utterly consumed by guilt.

"Don't worry. I'm not the person I used to be," Park Joo-Hyuk replied.

Lee Shin looked at the challengers gathered in front of him. They were all much stronger now, compared to the ones Lee Shin had encountered in his past life.

"There's less than a month left until the next Dimension Gate opens. You may not be able to pass this time, but you'll definitely be able to reach the 50th floor for the next Dimension Gate," Lee Shin explained.

After hearing his words, a faint look of excitement appeared on the faces of the challengers.

"Give it your all. Go for it even in moments when you feel like you're going to die. Otherwise, you'll regret it," Lee Shin said.

"Understood."

"Yes sir!"

"So, would we not be able to see you until the 50th floor?" Park Hye-Won asked.

After hearing her question, Lee Shin chuckled.

"I'll pick up the pace now, so if you can catch up to me, then you'll be able to see me," Lee Shin replied.

The important things on the lower floors had been taken care of. Now, there was only one thing left for Lee Shin to do here. Apart from that, there was no need for Lee Shin to waste any more time.

"I'll see everyone on the 50th floor." Lee Shin smiled at them.