

The Tower 69

Chapter 69

The World of Death appeared in the Herman Temple. The ascetics and administrative monks were starting to lose against the undead, that were full of murderous intent. A psychic energy blast came flying toward Lee Shin.

Boom!

The shield created by Lee Shin melted and the psychic energy blast scattered in all directions. Lee Shin then looked in the direction where the psychic energy blast came from.

"Don't mess with the innocent monks. Come here and talk to me," said the Abbot.

"Are you the Abbot?" Lee Shin asked.

"That's right," the Abbot replied.

The Abbot had suddenly appeared, which was strange. There had never been any indication that the Abbot would come out from his room and neither had he done this in his past or present life.

'What is going on?'

Lee Shin could tell that something had changed. The psychic energy blast that the Abbot used a while ago was somewhat strange. His power was far greater than what Lee Shin had expected. Lee Shin observed the Abbot, trying to notice any detail about him. The Abbot continued to look at Lee Shin with a calm expression.

"Let's get going," said Lee Shin.

With those words, the intense battle came to a complete stop.

"Follow me," said the Abbot.

The Abbot turned around and walked away, without even considering that a sudden attack could come from behind. This was an unexpected situation for Lee Shin, because Lee Shin could clearly remember that the Abbot had never done anything special at this stage. Besides, if there were a hidden stage, there would have been a system message telling him about that, but there was not any.

The Abbot and Lee Shin stopped in front of a room in the center of the temple. It was a room that was neither too big nor too small. The room did not look that great. The Abbot still had his back to Lee Shin and Lee Shin was looking at him from a distance.

"Why did you come here?" the Abbot asked in a calm and composed voice.

However, in his voice, there was a hint of anger that was hard to describe.

"I came to kill the patriarch," Lee Shin replied honestly, because Lee Shin thought that he already knew about Lee Shin's intent.

"I see," the Abbot replied.

The Abbot disappeared from the spot suddenly and then reappeared right in front of Lee Shin as if he had teleported.

Bam!

With a loud noise, the Abbot's fist hit Lee Shin's shield, but not even a single layer of the shield was broken. It seemed like the Abbot had expected that outcome, because he smoothly continued on with a series of attacks.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Abbot tried hard to attack Lee Shin using his spells, avoiding the shield. However, the Abbot did not succeed, and moments later, their stances shifted, with Lee Shin attacking and the Abbot going on the defense.

Rumble— Crack!

A bolt of lightning fell from the sky, aimed at the Abbot. However, the Abbot was not hit.

It was just as Lee Shin had expected, and Lee Shin was not mistaken. It was clear that the Abbot's skill had improved greatly compared to when Lee Shin had encountered him before during his previous life. How was that even possible though?

Lee Shin decided to try and capture him to find the answer to that question. He then began to properly link his spells. Not only did the number of bolts of lightning falling from the sky increase, but the mid-air explosions that occurred without any warning made the Abbot more vulnerable.

Bam!

"Keugh..." the Abbot gasped.

It was only for a moment that the Abbot could deftly avoid Lee Shin's magic. Soon after, the Abbot got hit directly by the lightning and knelt on the floor helplessly.

"Go... inside..." said the Abbot.

"Is it the time for me to go see the patriarch now?" Lee Shin asked.

"The patriarch is waiting for you," the Abbot muttered.

"Can I kill you before I go?" Lee Shin asked.

The Abbot lowered his head with a complex expression after hearing Lee Shin's cold words.

"..." The Abbot remained speechless.

"I guess you don't want to die, do you?" Lee Shin asked.

The Abbot did not answer, which was strange for Lee Shin. In Lee Shin's previous experience, the Abbot was nothing like this. Even if he died, the Abbot would continuously block the challengers until the end.

However, the Abbot in front of Lee Shin right now did not beg for his life nor was he planning on doing that. Lee Shin could not comprehend what on earth had caused this change at this stage.

"I guess you don't have a preference then," Lee Shin muttered.

The next moment, Lee Shin's silver wand pointed at the Abbot who was kneeling in front of Lee Shin. As the mana started to gather at the tip of his wand, the atmosphere around them got heavy all of the sudden. The pressure that was crushing the entire space was warning Lee Shin to not mess with the Abbot.

'Huh.'

It did not matter to Lee Shin whether he did or did not kill the Abbot. In fact, Lee Shin had not thought to kill the Abbot from the moment he was told to proceed to the patriarch's room. Lee Shin only acted as if he was going to kill the Abbot because he was curious about what the patriarch would do if Lee Shin showed any movement to kill him.

However, Lee Shin did not expect the patriarch would get involved to protect him. Lee Shin clicked his tongue and walked past the Abbot, deactivating his mana.

"... Are you... letting me go...?" the Abbot asked Lee Shin with a nervous voice.

"Yeah," Lee Shin replied.

At the end of Lee Shin's words, the Abbot did not speak anymore. Although Lee Shin could not see him very well, Lee Shin thought he could feel the Abbot's remorse for having to send the enemy away so helplessly.

Lee Shin's mind was bombarded with many questions. However, when Lee Shin saw the patriarch who had been waiting in the next room, he could tell instinctively that he would be able to know the answers to all his questions after this fight.

"Here you are," said the patriarch.

"Why did you wait for me?" Lee Shin asked.

"Weren't you going to come anyway?" the patriarch asked Lee Shin.

"Yes you're right. I'm here to kill you," Lee Shin replied.

"I am aware of that. Anyway, thank you for having mercy on the Abbot. I told him to bring you here right away, but he almost got himself killed there while messing with you... And... without him, this temple could not exist," the patriarch explained.

It seemed to Lee Shin that the patriarch still had a lot of days to live. Therefore, it was incorrect to assume that the patriarch was old and he was concerned about his succession. Based on the tone of the patriarch's voice, it seemed like the patriarch was expecting himself to die in this battle.

'What is going on?'

Before entering this stage, Lee Shin had already confirmed some information on the 17th floor thanks to the community. Based on the information that Lee Shin gathered, the patriarch should not have changed much since the last encounter in his past life. However, the aura of the patriarch who stood in front of Lee Shin right now had changed drastically.

"You look puzzled," said the patriarch.

"It seems like you're predicting your death," Lee Shin replied, suspicious.

"I'm going to win this battle, and protect this temple," said the patriarch with determination.

However, the more they talked, the more Lee Shin could not shake the feeling that something was off. The patriarch was clearly hiding something from Lee Shin.

"But then, why did you just say that?" Lee Shin asked as if he could not understand the patriarch.

"I said it just in case," the patriarch replied.

"But you know, the patriarch I knew was not such a person," said Lee Shin.

Lee Shin instinctively knew that this conversation had to continue and he needed to find the truth hidden between the lines.

"I'm different from the patriarch that you used to know," said the patriarch in front of Lee Shin.

There was a lot behind that statement. When Lee Shin heard him say that, Lee Shin's eyebrows twitched.

"Who do you think I'm talking about...?" Lee Shin asked with suspicion.

"You're probably referring to other patriarchs that are like me, but also different at the same time," the patriarch replied.

Lee Shin's eyes widened for a moment. This patriarch standing here was aware that Lee Shin had known that he was a cloned fake. Then why? Why was it only the patriarch of this stage that was changed?

"You look like you have a lot of questions," said the patriarch, looking at Lee Shin.

"That's right," Lee Shin replied.

"If you beat me, I'll tell you as much as I know," the patriarch suggested.

The patriarch held his hands out in front and got into his fighting stance. The next moment, the atmosphere changed.

This patriarch was a monk who was considered a genius in the field of martial arts. Considering the Abbot's skills from earlier, which were much more advanced than before, Lee Shin could not underestimate the patriarch as well.

When their fight began, Lee Shin could immediately feel that something was off.

'Why am I not getting the effect of divinity class?'

There had to be a 10% increase in all of his stats when Lee Shin encountered an opponent with a lower divinity class. The power that Lee Shin had taken for granted could no longer be felt.

'So... he's a divinity class?'

Lee Shin could not think deeply about this question, because of the patriarch's relentless attacks.

Woong—

The patriarch jumped from his spot like a spring and poured out energy chunks using his psychic energy blast.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

That energy from the patriarch was so powerful that Lee Shin thought the entire temple was shaking. Then, the mana of Lee Shin which had been spread out secretly, swirled like a whirlwind and sent thunderbolts blasting everywhere.

It would have been great if Lee Shin could use his yield magic, but due to the seal on his body, Lee Shin could not use magic above the sixth order.

Lee Shin had no choice but to use this trick.

Numerous thunderbolt streaks had formed a mesh to capture the patriarch, but the patriarch was able to avoid that. As soon as he avoided that spell, numerous pellets of ice began to form on top of his body.

[Ice Fog]

The blitz became more widespread due to the moisture generated in the air.

However, the temperature that rose due to the patriarch's mana that spun at a high speed, caused the ice pellets created in the surroundings to evaporate instantly.

Bang!

At the same time, the patriarch's psychic energy blast rushed toward Lee Shin in a straight line, seemingly sufficient to tear apart Lee Shin's shield. The trick of concentrating the shields in one place, as Lee Shin had done before, was useless in stopping the psychic energy blast. In the end, Lee Shin's shield, which had been widely spread, was shattered by the psychic energy blast.

[10,700 damage had been done.]

"Keugh..." Lee Shin gasped.

The front of Lee Shin's robe was torn apart due to the psychic energy blast, and his chest had turned red because of that. Lee Shin could not believe the amount of damage done when most of the impact was offset by the shield. The patriarch rushed towards Lee Shin again, not wanting to give him a break.

Thud—!

A stone wall that sprang up from the floor blocked the fist of the patriarch but was destroyed.

Lee Shin's main magic, the thunderbolt, was more suited for offense rather than defense. Earth-based magic that was ideal for defense was not Lee Shin's specialty. Besides, the risk was too high for Lee Shin to come up with an application spell, like he did with the shields, for the earth-based magic.

Even if Lee Shin had examined the properties of his and the patriarch's magic, there were no advantages in using earth-based magic. Therefore, Lee Shin thought it would be better to modify the shield spell and use it properly instead of coming up with an unfamiliar earth-based magic.

Whoong—

The energy of dangerous mana was picked up by Lee Shin's senses. Mana gathered quickly in the patriarch's fist. This technique would be much more powerful than the psychic energy blast.

'I might actually die here if I'm careless.'

Lee Shin felt a sense of death more and more acutely. How long has it been since Lee Shin last felt this sense of death? If it had only been a mild worry about getting hurt when he had faced Vuela's Wave Cutting Sword, this time, against the patriarch's technique, Lee Shin thought that he might actually die.

"Destruction Wave," said the patriarch.

A lump of mana that looked horrifyingly dangerous pierced the air. Lee Shin's heart, which had been beating like crazy, slowed down at that moment. Lee Shin had always climbed the tower toeing the line between life and death, and this sense of crisis that Lee Shin had not felt in a long time now awakened his senses. Lee Shin could remember the days when he practiced his magic fiercely every day.

For the sake of survival, to protect his family and colleagues, and to climb the tower, Lee Shin had to grow and develop constantly.

'I've forgotten about it for a while.'

Lee Shin had forgotten about the sense of urgency that he had felt that time. In a world where it seemed like time had stopped, only Lee Shin's mana accelerated rapidly.

Dozens of calculations and plans went off in his head, which was throbbing crazy. With his brilliant talent in the field of magic, Lee Shin's intuition had shone. There was such a thing as fusion of the earth and the flame field. It was a type of combination that was beyond the fusion of simple properties.

'The blooming of imagination.'

Lumpy stones that were deformed and crushed were heated and fused back together, changing into a new property.

[Shield]

[Plate]

Steel was laid over this strong shield.

[Steel Plate Shield]

Kwaaa— Thud!

These elements were combined to create something new as the patriarch's Destruction Wave emerged. The new steel-based magic now in Lee Shin's hands stopped the Destruction Wave and accomplished its goal.

[You have succeeded in combining the two elements.]

[You have acquired a 『Title - The Pioneer of Magic』.]

[You have acquired a 『Title - The Wizard of Steel』.]

"No way!" the patriarch shouted with a stunned look.

The patriarch gasped, not expecting Lee Shin to stop the Destruction Wave. The patriarch was sure that he would surely get a critical hit with this Destruction Wave, because he had inflicted a significant blow on his opponent with his psychic energy blast earlier.

However, this time, the opponent Lee Shin had completely blocked the Destruction Wave with his magic. The steel shield was almost completely destroyed with only little traces of it left. However, there was no damage done to Lee Shin himself.

"How could a man manage to block the power of a deity..." The patriarch looked stunned.

"The power of a deity...?"

The patriarch muttered with an incredulous look, and Lee Shin frowned at his words. Lee Shin did not expect God to intervene. With his teeth clenched, Lee Shin lifted his wand to finish the battle.

[Thunderbolt]

A thick bolt of lightning struck the patriarch from above, who was out of breath.

Rumble— Crack!

"Keuaaughhh!" The patriarch gasped in pain.

His whole body was paralyzed by the lightning bolt and he could not move properly. The patriarch tried to prevent the thunderbolt from striking him using his mana, but it was difficult to do so due to the rebound of the Destruction Wave.

Crack!

"Keaugh!" The patriarch gasped.

Crack! Kreakkk—! Kreaaakkk!

"Keu...auughhh..." The patriarch gasped again in pain.

Even though the patriarch was able to defend himself until the second thunderbolt, he had to endure the pain of the third thunderbolt striking his bare body.

Lee Shin approached the patriarch who was nearly half-dead.

"I won, so keep your promise. Which damn god made you like this?" Lee Shin asked accusingly.

"The God... of... Blessings..." the patriarch replied.

"What did you say?" Lee Shin asked to clarify.

Lee Shin could not believe that this God intervened. Was the God of Blessings so great that he could intervene so deeply on a stage in the first place? The God of Blessings was not bold enough to use his karma to kill a challenger who just got on the 17th floor.

"There... is... more..." the patriarch continued on with his shaking voice.

"There's another one?" Lee Shin asked with a frown.