

The Tower 217

Chapter 217: The Heavenly Secretary

Upon his return to Lardel Archipelago, Lee Shin wasted no time and made his way towards the Eternal Gate. True to form, Kang Sang-Jun was already waiting for him at the gate's entrance, making Lee Shin wonder if the man just waited there all day.

"Have you come?" Kang Sang-Jun greeted Lee Shin.

"Huh? Aren't you busy? Don't you have a lot of work to do as the Deputy Director of the National Security Agency?" Lee Shin asked, surprised to see him again.

"Well, yes, the National Security Agency has a lot to do, but since I am responsible for you, Mr. Lee Shin, I'm not too busy. You know... you are the most important person for national security," Kang Sang-Jun replied with a smile.

"Is there any particular problem on Earth?" Lee Shin asked.

"Nope. So far, there is nothing to worry about," Kang Sang-Jun replied.

Lee Shin nodded and handed over the video that he had recorded in the Tower.

"What is this?" Kang Sang-Jun asked, confused.

"This is a video of me clearing the eighty-fifth floor on Hell difficulty," Lee Shin replied.

Surprised by the unexpected gift, Kang Sang-Jun's eyes opened wide.

"Y-you, Mr. Lee Shin...?" Kang Sang-Jun asked again to clarify.

"Yes, that's right," Lee Shin replied.

Aware of the recording's importance, Kang Sang-Jun gently held the Video Storage Stone with both hands, seemingly holding a precious treasure.

"Are you finally going to release the videos?" Kang Sang-Jun asked.

"For now, this is the only one I plan to release," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin knew that his videos alone wouldn't help others clear the Tower, as his methods of obtaining a clear were unconventional. Most of those videos showcased Lee Shin doing reckless and dangerous things to clear a floor.

He understood that his videos might disillusion others and spur them to undertake more dangerous difficulty modes, potentially leading to casualties. Recognizing the advantages, uncertainties, and variables involved, he chose not to upload the videos.

'I think this one should be fine.'

The mere existence and power of an Evil Spirit would dissuade others from even considering the challenge, making them realize the immense danger posed by the Hell difficulty level.

'And I'm also sharing it because they keep asking for the video of me clearing the stages in the Tower.'

Kang Sang-Jun, holding the Video Storage Stone, gulped.

"Uh... Is it okay if I just take a quick peek at it first?" Kang Sang-Jun asked Lee Shin politely.

"Yes, you can," Lee Shin replied

"Thank you so much!" Kang Sang-Jun replied with excitement.

The anticipation seemingly made Kang Sang-Jun break out in a cold sweat. He infused his mana into the stone, and the video of Dexter and Lee Shin fighting appeared in the air.

"Oh... Isn't this the ability of challenger Cha Yu-Min?" Kang Sang-Jun asked Lee Shin, looking at Dexter's ability.

"Yes. And that's why I think Cha Yu-Min can improve his skills by watching this video," Lee Shin replied.

"Oh! So..." Kang Sang-Jun muttered.

Kang Sang-Jun couldn't complete his sentence because his jaw hit the floor after seeing Dexter's Phantom Slash and the skill called White Light.

"Wow... So this is what the Hell difficulty looks like. I thought challenger Cha Yu-Min was strong, but this boss seems to be on a different level," Kang Sang-Jun said.

Lee Shin just laughed at Kang Sang-Jun's commentary. He had to go through the Eternal Gate, so he turned his attention away from Kang Sang-Jun.

"Then, I'll get going," Lee Shin said.

"Oh, I'll go too!" Kang Sang-Jun replied and followed Lee Shin.

Kang Sang-Jun hurriedly put away the Video Storage Stone and followed Lee Shin. Three Angels were waiting for Lee Shin on the other side of the Eternal Gate.

"What are you guys doing here?" Lee Shin asked, looking at the Angels.

"Mr. Secretary told us to bring you," the Angels replied to Lee Shin.

The research facility staff standing nearby looked at Lee Shin with worried faces.

"Uh..." Kang Sang-Jun arrived after Lee Shin, so he stared at the Angels in confusion and then frowned.
"Wait a second! Was this pre-arranged—"

"It's fine." Lee Shin interrupted Kang Sang-Jun and stepped forward.

Lee Shin knew that the Angels couldn't have pre-arranged this as no one knew the Heavenly Secretary's schedule.

'Well, I had to meet the secretary anyway.'

And Lee Shin saw value in the Secretary's efficient approach. He also knew that prolonged disagreements between Angels and Earthlings would help no one.

"I hope you will take good care of those tasks, Deputy Director Kang Sang-Jun," Lee Shin said.

"Understood! Don't worry about those," Kang Sang-Jun replied.

Lee Shin began walking with the angels, but they were interrupted by Sikael's abrupt arrival.

"Sorry for coming late. A gate nearby exploded, and I had to deal with it," Sikael explained and apologized.

The bloodstains on his white clothes indicated that he was not lying.

"You put dealing with the gate over the secretary's summon?" Lee Shin asked, confused.

"Many innocents would have died otherwise. The summon order doesn't take precedence over our beliefs," Sikael replied.

"Yeah, of course," Lee Shin said sarcastically.

Lee Shin considered reminding them of the Mayotte Incident, where they had detained challengers. But he held his tongue, knowing their beliefs were long-held. They likely acted that way because they believed it was necessary to convince Earthlings for the greater good.

Also, Lee Shin couldn't label them wrong because many on Earth held similar values, too. Angels just had their own beliefs, firm beliefs.

'And the current Earth just happens to align with their beliefs.'

These guys could easily become enemies if Earth even slightly deviated from their beliefs.

"Just open the door already," Lee Shin said.

"Got it," Sikael replied.

Sikael swung his blood-stained blade in the air, splitting the space open to reveal a white portal. Sikael and the other Angels didn't enter the portal.

"Go in," Sikael said, looking at Lee Shin.

As Lee Shin walked into the portal, he found himself in a clean yet plain room. Books surrounded him, and the large desk in the center had various documents piled atop each other.

"Oh! You've arrived." The Heavenly Secretary wore white and emerald-green armor. She adjusted her glasses and stood up from her seat.

The Heavenly Secretary had her golden hair neatly tied up in a bun. She gave a friendly nod and introduced herself.

"Hello, my name is Metatron," said the Heavenly Secretary, looking at Lee Shin.

Her soft voice provided a sense of comfort to all who heard it.

"Hello, my name is Lee Shin," Lee Shin introduced himself as well.

"Yes, I'm aware. I feel those who don't know your name are in the minority," Metatron replied and smiled.

Metatron summoned teacups into her hand and gently placed them on the table.

"I've heard that you enjoy tea," said Metatron.

"Yes, thank you," Lee Shin replied.

"This tea is quite popular in the Heavenly Realm, so don't hesitate to ask for more," Metatron said with a smile.

Slurp—

Lee Shin took a sip of the tea, and its robust aroma flooded his very being. The tea was seemingly massaging his entire nerves/nervous system. The flavor was exquisite, and its effects were so pronounced that he opened his eyes wide.

"How do you like it?" Metatron asked.

"It's good... surprisingly amazing," Lee Shin commented.

"I'm glad," Metatron replied.

She calmly closed her eyes and savored the tea before speaking again.

"Aren't you curious as to why I came here?" Metatron asked.

"Yes, I'm curious," Lee Shin replied.

She stood up from her seat and approached the bookshelves, running her fingers over the spines of the books.

"I enjoy reading books. So much so that I can say that I've read every book in the Heavenly Realm," Metatron said.

"Oh, I see," Lee Shin replied.

"So, I started reading books from other dimensions as well. And as I acquired knowledge from different dimensions, I saw glimpses of the future," Metatron explained.

Lee Shin pondered her words. "To see glimpses of the future." He wondered if Metatron's ability was responsible for all the events foreseen and set into motion in the Heavenly Realm.

"Of course, I can't see all the future. I can only see fragments of it," Metatron said.

"So, what's your point?" Lee Shin asked.

Despite her gentle voice, Lee Shin was certain the pressure from her was mounting. He had only heard stories about the Heavenly Secretary; this was his first meeting with her. The rumors sure did not do her justice. He finally realized why her influence far surpassed that of the other Great Angels.

'Someone like Michael can't even be compared to her. He is just good at fighting.'

Lee Shin found it difficult to discern her thoughts as he looked into her calm eyes.

"There will soon be a great catastrophe in this world," Metatron said.

"Did you just say a catastrophe?" Lee Shin asked for clarification.

"Yes, that's right. I saw Earth becoming a battlefield, where strong individuals—the Absolutes from all dimensions would be summoned."

"Strong individuals/The Absolutes... Are you referring to the gods?" Lee Shin asked.

"It could be, but not necessarily because the Absolutes are not limited to just gods," Metatron explained.

This was a bleak prophecy, or rather, a terrifying one.

'The moment the Absolutes fight on Earth, the planet will die.'

Lee Shin wondered whether Earth could somehow withstand the aftermath of their battle.

"And at the center of it all was you, Mr. Lee Shin," Metatron said.

"Oh... I see," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin had somewhat expected that because there was a high possibility that the gods were causing trouble on Earth because of him.

'Hmm... Earth will be the battlefield?'

Unfortunately, few on Earth could fight against the gods. At best, it would be Lee Shin, McMatain, Laurent, and Cha Yu-Min. Therefore, using the term “battlefield” felt wrong, as Earthlings would be no match for them.

"The Heavenly God has decided to protect Earth. And that is why I'm here," Metatron explained.

"Will the Heavenly God protect us even during the battle with the gods?" Lee Shin asked.

"Yes," Metatron replied.

Would this alliance help them fight the gods on equal footing? However, Lee Shin could not understand why the Heavenly God would do such a thing for them.

"You seem curious about the reason," Metatron said, noticing the confusion on Lee Shin's face.

"To be honest, I am," Lee Shin replied.

"I cannot reveal the reason yet. But you can trust that we will be Earth's allies," Metatron explained.

"How can I believe your words when I don't know the reason?" Lee Shin asked.

Metatron replied by putting her hand on her chest and lowering her head.

"As the Heavenly Secretary and the Guardian of Order, I, Metatron, swear by my faith in the Heavenly God," Metatron said seriously.

With that, a radiant light beamed from Metatron. When an Angel invoked the name of the Heavenly God in their oath, it held undeniable credibility.

"All right then," Lee Shin replied.

"Climb the Tower. There, you will find answers to all your questions," Metatron said.

Bzzzz—

Kang Sang-Jun's phone vibrated; the caller was Yoon Sang, the Director of the National Security Agency. He quickly answered the call.

- Hey, Deputy Director Kang, I heard that Mr. Lee Shin went to meet the Heavenly Secretary. Is that right?

"Oh yes, that's correct, but I'm currently on a separate mission," Kang Sang-Jun said.

- What are you doing?

"Mr. Lee Shin brought a Video Storage Stone with him this time, so—"

- What? Lee Shin brought a Video Storage Stone? Why?

"I don't really know the details yet," Kang Sang-Jun said.

- What kind of video is it?

"He said it was a video of him clearing the eighty-fifth floor on Hell difficulty and—"

- What? After refusing to do that so many times, he suddenly agreed to do it? Why?

"I don't really know the details..." Kang Sang-Jun said.

- Ugh! Is "I don't know" your only answer?

"I apologize. But I'm currently driving so..." Kang Sang-Jun said.

- Are you telling me to shut up because you're driving or something?

"You wouldn't want me to end up in the news after causing an accident because I was on the phone with you, right? It will make you look bad," Kang Sang-Jun said.

Director Yoon was at a loss for words due to Sang-Jun's bare-faced attitude. The absurd reply made Yoon Sang burst into laughter.

- Ugh! Are you already talking to me this way?

"But I did take a quick look at the video, and it's no joke," Kang Sang-Jun said.

- How was it?

"The boss could manipulate shadows and demonstrated abilities similar to Cha Yu-Min... But wow, he was on another level," Kang Sang-Jun said.

- What did you say? The boss' ability was similar to Cha Yu-Min's?

"Yes. One of the reasons Mr. Lee Shin recorded this video was to show it to Cha Yu-Min," Kang Sang-Jun said.

- Huh, I see. So, where are you right now?

"I'm currently heading to Seoul," Kang Sang-Jun said.

- Make a detour. Suwon is on your way anyway.

"Sorry?" Kang Sang-Jun asked.

- Hey, you rascal. Let me see it, too! The eighty-fifth floor on Hell difficulty... Just how insanely cool must it be, right? I need to check it before it gets leaked to the media.

"Oh, all right. You'll be surprised when you see it," Kang Sang-Jun said.

After ending the call, Kang Sang-Jun left the highway and made his way to the National Security Agency in Suwon, Gyeonggi Province. Carrying the Video Storage Stone with caution, he entered the facility. Inside, he found Yoon Sang, Sami Harrison, and two National Security Agency personnel: Cha Yu-Min and Jeon Jae-Yong.

"Oh, I didn't know there were others here, too," Kang Sang-Jun said.

"Yes, I called them after the call," Yoon Sang said.

"Is it true? Does the boss really have abilities like mine?" Cha Yu-Min asked.

"Yes, that's right," Kang Sang-Jun replied.

Cha Yu-Min looked at the Video Storage Stone, eager to watch the video.

"Ms. Sami, you cannot broadcast this video just yet. You understand?" Kang Sang-Jun said.

"I'm already aware of that. I may be a news junkie, but I can show some restraint for matters related to Mr. Lee Shin," Sami Harrison replied.

"Oh, I see," Kang Sang-Jun muttered.

Kang Sang-Jun felt embarrassed after hearing Sami Harrison's response and silently placed his hand on the Video Storage Stone.

"All right then. I'll start it," Kang Sang-Jun said.

The video started with the battle between Lee Shin and Dexter.

"That human named Dexter is truly amazing. He is perfectly handling complete Shadowization!"

"If I had gotten caught in that Phantom Slash, I wouldn't have been able to move."

"What about you, Mr. Cha Yu-Min? What do you think of him?"

Cha Yu-Min, silently watching the video, finally let out a quiet exclamation.

"He surpasses me by leaps and bounds. And..." Cha Yu-Min muttered, hesitating to say the next part.

He decided to close his mouth, as Dexter resembled the man who had taught him shadow abilities.

"What's wrong?" Jeon Jae-Yong asked.

"Oh, it's nothing," Cha Yu-Min replied, shaking his head.

"Huh...?"

After the Shadow King was defeated, they thought that the stage would end. However, the stage did not end, and they saw Lee Shin heading somewhere.

"What's going on?"

Then came a vast abyss where nothing could be seen. Lee Shin jumped into it and confronted the shocking boss hiding within.

"Damn! T-this is insane...!" Yoon Sang swore for the first time.

"Is that... Is that really the boss?"

"Oh my gosh! Really?"

The eerie feeling was palpable even through the screen, enough to send shivers down their spines. As challengers themselves, everyone here present felt it keenly. They could sense the sheer terror emanating from the Evil Spirit.

"Why didn't you tell us something like this existed!" Yoon Sang scolded Kang Sang-Jun and yelled.

"I-I didn't know this either. I just assumed the Shadow King was the boss," Kang Sang-Jun muttered.

"Well, let's watch a bit more," said Jeon Jae-Yong.

Following Jeon Jae-Yong's suggestion, they all silently watched the video. After the video ended, they looked at each other in shock and gulped in nervousness.

"Are we... Can we even release this?" Sami Harrison asked, hesitating to broadcast something for the first time.