

The Tower 229

Chapter 229. The Prologue

The first scene that flickered into sight was his anxious colleagues eagerly waiting for him.

"Mr. Lee Shin!" Kang Sang-Jun approached Lee Shin with a relieved sigh.

"We've been waiting for you," Sevrino said, looking at Lee Shin.

"What is going on exactly?" Lee Shin asked.

"I will explain everything," Sevrino replied.

Sevrino took out a holographic device and projected a screen into the air.

"After you cleared the 90th floor Mr. Lee Shin, the attempts to connect to our Gate started pouring in instantly although the Gate blocking device had not been fully implemented yet," Sevrino explained.

In the hologram, the image of Earth appeared, with various regions shimmering with different colors. Some spots were covered in dark red, but the most striking thing was that the entire Korean territory had turned somewhat red.

"At this moment, we're barely managing to block the Gate thanks to Metatron's power. But you know, we can't hold out for long. Metatron asked me to tell you to come to her room when you arrive," Sevrino said.

"Understood," Lee Shin replied.

Lee Shin could sense that Earth's combat power had significantly increased during his absence. He had expected the Apostles to invade and wreak havoc or, at the very least, threaten the Earthlings at the negotiation table.

'Hmm... I was wrong. They couldn't even manage to enter Earth.'

In the brief moment, Lee Shin realized how much Earth had changed and chuckled quietly to himself.

- Metatron? Who on Earth is that, telling you to come and go?

"She is the Heavenly Secretary. Her name is Metatron," Lee Shin replied.

- The Heavenly Secretary? Is she the one I know?

"Yes," Lee Shin replied.

Gene Ebrium was startled and looked at Lee Shin with his eyes opened wide. Lee Shin wondered if he himself looked like this when he was surprised and chuckled.

"Umm... Who are you talking to?" Sevrino asked Lee Shin, looking confused.

"I'm in a conversation with a soul. So, you don't need to worry," Lee Shin replied.

"Oh, okay," Sevrino muttered.

"Where are the Angels?" Lee Shin asked.

"I'll take you to them," Yu Jia replied.

Yu Jia, who had been waiting in front of the Eternal Gate, activated her powers. As a murky black hole appeared in the air, Lee Shin nodded and stepped into it.

When he came out on the other side, he found himself surrounded by towering bamboo trees, in a forest where the Angels were gathered. The Angels stood on the bamboo shoots, their feet not touching the ground. Lee Shin, too, ascended to their eye level.

"You're late," Sikael said, looking at Lee Shin with disappointment.

Sikael, with two pairs of wings fluttering, swung his spear in the air, slashing the space.

"Go in. The Heavenly Secretary is waiting for you," Sikael said.

Woong—!

Just like the last time, Metatron was sitting in front of her desk, sipping tea and reading books. Behind her, countless books were stacked inside the towering bookshelves. It was astonishing to think that all that knowledge resided inside Metatron's small head.

- Wow... It's fascinating to see the infamous Metatron in person.

Since he could not simply look as if he was talking to himself in front of Metatron, Lee Shin ignored Gene Ebrum.

"It seems like you are too relaxed," Metatron said, looking at Lee Shin.

For the first time, there was a hint of dissatisfaction in her usually calm voice. It was intentional, and it reflected the challenge she faced in preventing the Apostles from intervening.

"I had no choice. Wouldn't I need time to organize things as well?" Lee Shin replied.

In response to Lee Shin's words, Metatron nodded, looking at him.

"Okay, I see. And I can see that you've certainly changed from the last time I saw you," Metatron said.

Even though Lee Shin was trying to restrain his power, it could not be hidden completely. As a result, Metatron was amazed by Lee Shin's new class and the aura he exuded.

"To be honest, I was going to discuss with you how to deal with the Apostles who are still knocking on Earth's door. But I guess there would be no need for that anymore," Metatron said.

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

- Of course. With the [360 Mana Vessel Manifestation] opened, he cannot be compared to who he was before.

A proud Gene Ebrium boasted.

"It is fascinating to see that the two humans who have earned the ire of the gods are standing side by side like this," Metatron muttered, her eyes shifting from Lee Shin to Gene Ebrium and back.

"...Huh? How did you know?" Lee Shin asked Metatron, looking confused.

Lee Shin's expression hardened because he did not expect her to see Gene. Metatron remained calm, took a sip of her tea, and then stood up.

"Seeing him is not that difficult of a task for me," Metatron replied.

"Then, did you approach me knowing it would turn out like this?" Lee Shin asked.

Lee Shin asked because he suddenly realized that this might have been the sole purpose she had in mind.

"Let's just say 50-50 for now," Metatron replied.

She blushed shyly as she used the phrase from Earth, "50-50". Lee Shin was aware that she was just pretending to avoid confronting the situation. However, he also sensed that he would not be able to get more answers from her so he stopped talking.

Since the Heavenly Realm had decided to support Earth, there was no need for him to dig too deep into their intentions. Whatever they were thinking, Lee Shin needed the combat power of the Heavenly Realm in the current situation.

"Please send me in," Lee Shin asked Metatron.

"But you know, there are quite a lot of enemies..." Metatron replied.

"Yeah, that's okay," Lee Shin said.

"Alright then. I've been running low on strength for quite a while now," Metatron replied.

With these words, Metatron slashed horizontally through the air. As she did that, the background shattered like a broken glass, and the outside world came into view.

Woong— Woong— Woong— Woong—

The space warped in an instant, and the heat distorted the surroundings. The next moment, the bamboo trees twisted, and the Gate began to open from there. Then, the Apostles walked out.

Thump Thump Thump...

With an arrogant look on his face, one of the Apostles stared at Lee Shin and smirked.

"Do I really have to exert so much effort and come to a planet like this?" the Apostle grumbled.

"Why are you complaining to us about how insignificant your abilities are?" Lee Shin replied.

The Apostle, who appeared in the form of dark red mucus, distorted his face and extended his right arm, which became as sharp as a javelin, toward Lee Shin.

Clang—!

However, the Apostle's arm was intercepted by the sharp blade of Sikael's spear. Standing in front of Lee Shin to defend him, Sikael stared menacingly at the Apostle.

"Don't act recklessly. This is not a place where you can throw a tantrum," Sikael said in a serious voice.

The next moment, all the Angels raised their weapons at the same time. There were over thirty Apostles, but there were only twelve Combat Angels along with fifty regular Angels. However, they were not afraid, because Lee Shin was on their side.

"How dare you! You're not even the Great Angel!" the Apostle named Bamak, who was in the form of dark red mucus, shouted at Sikael.

"Stop it, Bamak." Another Apostle, with a face as white as ivory and long white hair flowing down, stepped forward.

"Move aside! I don't plan to listen to your orders!" Already highly agitated, Bamak inflated both of his hands like a mace and walked forward. "Well, let's see if you can block this too!"

Click—

Bang—!

A bullet appeared suddenly and hit the mace on its head, causing the arm to veer off course and fly off erratically. At the same time, Sikael attempted to thrust his blade into Bamak's torso. The other Apostle stopped Bamak, and then blocked Sikael's path.

"Keugh...!" Bamak growled.

"You fool. You are putting yourself in this kind of a situation because you're underestimating Earth's combat power," Luca, the Apostle with a pale face, muttered looking at Bamak.

Luca, the Apostle of the God of the White Ghosts, remained on guard. He was aware that the targets they needed to be vigilant about were not just Lee Shin and Metatron. There were quite a few formidable individuals here as well. He thought that he would be able to win if things were to go down in a fight, but it was much better to resolve things through dialogue than to incur unnecessary casualties.

Besides, the Apostles' original purpose for coming here was not to kill these beings anyway.

Luca stepped back and looked at Lee Shin. "Lee Shin, we want to talk," he said.

Lee Shin glanced at the mass of Apostles who were gathered behind, including the mucous Apostle, and then looked back at Luca.

"Alright, go ahead," Lee Shin replied, suggesting that Luca can start the conversation.

"We are aware that you obtained the soul of Gene Ebrium at the 90th floor this time," Luca said.

Lee Shin started to wonder whether their goal was Gene Ebrium all along. He could already anticipate what would come out of his mouth next.

"Hand over Gene Ebrium's soul. If you do that, we won't do any harm to Earth," Luca said in a demanding tone.

"Ha!" Lee Shin could not hold his laugh.

How shameless and audacious they are. Lee Shin chuckled at the blatant and confident demand that was so predictable.

- Then or now, the mental state of those guys remains incomprehensible to me.

"I agree with you," Lee Shin replied to Gene Ebrum.

After muttering these words, Lee Shin glared at Luca.

"And why do I have to do that?" Lee Shin asked Luca.

"Gene Ebrum is a soul that opposed the mighty gods, faced punishment, and was imprisoned. So, having someone like him won't do any benefit for you," Luca replied.

"But don't you already know that I am not particularly fond of the gods either?" Lee Shin asked.

"No, that's a different issue. Gene Ebrum's beliefs are completely distorted and the gods possess the authority to deal with Gene Ebrum," Luca replied.

At those words, Gene Ebrum's face got distorted.

- Why do they have the authority to deal with me?

"I am curious about that too," Lee Shin replied.

- These guys are not worth talking to. Well, let's think of this as a good opportunity. We should just kill them all and take another step closer to Transcendence.

"Okay, I agree with you," Lee Shin replied to Gene Ebrum.

As Lee Shin continued to mutter to himself, Luca looked closely at Lee Shin with suspicion.

"Is that Gene Ebrium who you're talking to right now?" Luca asked Lee Shin.

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

"Enough with the pointless rants with that rebel and—" Luca was interrupted by Lee Shin.

"But I think it seems more useful to talk to Gene than listening to your pointless rants," Lee Shin replied with a taunting tone mixed with laughter.

The surrounding air grew heavy.

"Sometimes, arrogant folks like these need a wake-up call," said Bamak.

Bamak, who had been held back Luca, laughed at Lee Shin and rushed out.

"You're going to pay for this! I'll tear you apart!" Bamak shouted, charging forward.

As Bamak's hefty body slid forward and approached Sikaël, a sharp blade of wind pierced his side and pushed him out. Bamak, his face contorted with frustration and anger, stumbled backward and looked at the direction of where the sword strike had come from. When he turned, there was Baek Hyun with a look of surprise, watching him.

"Oh, it was quite a powerful sneak attack, but I guess it didn't work on him," Baek Hyun muttered.

"Ugh you damn little...!" Bamak muttered, looking at Baek Hyun.

Kugugugugu-

The next moment, the sound of the ground warping reverberated in all directions as the land, in contact with the Apostles' bodies, suddenly twisted and shot upward, restraining their movements.

"What do we need a conversation for? You just need to learn a lesson from today's incident that if you step onto our land, this is what you get," Jonathan said, looking at the Apostles.

Jonathan, the top ranker of America, cast a large-scale spell. He had been preparing for this kind of a situation from the beginning. The Earth's challengers had the upper hand for a moment, but then, a surge of brilliant light, which was picked up by Lee Shin's extensive mana detection skill, was rapidly approaching their allied formation with explosive force.

"Haha."

Even amid the deafening sounds from all around, the laughter could be heard clearly. Lee Shin turned his gaze toward the source of the laughter, and he enveloped the approaching flash with his mana. Upon closer inspection, it turned out to be a round bomb, and its internal mana flow indicated a danger beyond imagination.

A power that looked unassuming on the surface wielded an astonishing might beneath its facade. It had the ability to deftly manipulate the forces of space, scattering and then converging them into a singular focal point, utterly annihilating every living creature in its range.

Babam...

In the middle of the intense battlefield, where clashes and combat persisted, a muted detonation reverberated briefly before dissipating. Then, it was absorbed seamlessly into Lee Shin's formidable mana prowess.

Thump. Thump.

Seeing his carefully planned masterpiece fail so miserably, the Apostle hiding among the bamboo trees far away opened his mouth in shock.

"Huh? What just happened to my masterpiece...?" The Apostle seemed quite shocked.

However, this happened because Lee Shin himself had sensed the danger in that explosive a little while ago. If it were to detonate as designed, it would have swept away all the Angels and humans in this place. The guy, who had been twisting the opaque goggles on his face, gaped at Lee Shin.

"My plan has gone awry, so I'll settle the score with your life," the Apostle muttered from afar.

Sizzle... Snap!

White smoke billowed from the guy's mouth and nostrils, and then, with a sudden motion, he shot an eerie energy straight from his throat and out from his mouth.

Kwaaaaaah!

- Bring out the Seiku.

Gene Ebrium's voice echoed immediately upon detecting the guy's attack. Lee Shin had been waiting for that moment, and he instantly tore open the space with his black mana and summoned a colossal skull.

- What you saw in the past was not the real Seiku.

His voice brimmed with confidence; the two eye sockets of the massive skull flickered a vivid red before it swung a sword imbued with chilling energy.

Kwaaaahhh!

The energy cannon launched by the Apostle dissipated completely as Seiku's attack overwhelmed it, leaving nothing but a frozen bamboo forest and white ice fragments in its wake.