

The Tower 228

Chapter 228. The Secret

A pure white figure appeared in front of Lee Shin's eyes. It was as if a reflection of himself was hovering in the air.

"Are you feeling alright?" Lee Shin asked, looking at Gene Ebrium.

Shallow wrinkles formed at the corners of Gene's eyes as he stared blankly at Lee Shin's face. His eyes seemed lost and were moving restlessly until they found its focus on a single spot a while later. Meeting his fiery gaze, Lee Shin could not help but smile warmly.

- How... How am I still sane like this?

"That's because I saved you," Lee Shin replied.

- ... I... I just can't believe it.

Gene Ebrium's face contorted and his mind was swarmed with thoughts. Lee Shin thought that Gene would need some time to sort out the sudden rush of thoughts that were coming back to him. It seemed difficult to engage in a conversation with him at the moment.

[The God of the Heavens...]

[The God of Jealousy...]

[...]

Lee Shin felt the need to leave this place because of the constant stream of messages from the disruptors, these gods.

"I'm going back," Lee Shin muttered.

Woong—

A flash in the background, and he returned to the world of nothingness. There was nothing else besides a white void. Even the representatives of the gods could not enter this place recklessly.

‘Shall I just check the rewards that I got first?’

[Shadow Space]

This is a space where you can store anything with a shadow.

You can put anything in here except for living things.

There is infinite space.

You can control the inside of the shadow using black mana.

Previously, the number of entities that could be placed in the Shadow Space was limited depending on his level of Dominance. However, it had now become an unlimited space. Moreover, it was said that Lee Shin could control the inside of the Shadow Space using his black mana.

‘So this was the key.’

Gene’s Corps earned the title of the Corps of Immortality with this ability. The crux of it all was this skill. Inside the Shadow Space, Gene Ebrium could restore the Undead to their original state, using the skills of 'Bone Fusion' and 'Bone Decomposition'.

Continuously regenerating the Undead during a battle demanded an immense level of mana control, but Lee Shin did not think it was a big deal since he was already used to doing that.

"Finally it feels like the shackles are gone, but..." Lee Shin muttered.

The mana vessels in Gene Ebrium's body had been completely destroyed. As the system stated, his body was sealed by something, so it could not be restored completely. Lee Shin unlocked the seal up to its third and final level and alleviated the discomfort using an immense amount of mana and skills. It felt like the pain had finally subsided, but he still was not feeling his best yet.

'But isn't the change after having completely unlocked the seal a bit underwhelming?'

Lee Shin thought that there would be a greater difference in the system, if the skill could now manifest to its fullest extent. After purifying Gene Ebrium's soul, the seal on his physical body was completely lifted. There was definitely something related.

"Gene, not too long ago, the mana vessels in this body were damaged," Lee Shin said, looking at Gene.

- Yes, of course that would be the case.

"But when you returned this time, the mana vessels reverted to their original state. But it seems like that's the only thing that changed," Lee Shin said.

- Hmm... Even though you've got a good physical body, it seems like you can't make good of it.

Gene Ebrium, who gave Lee Shin a withering look, sighed deeply and narrowed his eyes.

- My memories are frozen in an unknown past. I don't know if it's tens of years ago, hundreds of years ago... or maybe even just yesterday...

"I believe at least a hundred years would have passed," Lee Shin replied.

Having observed the deaths of so many, Lee Shin learned that it had been quite a while since the Tower was created. That was because Lee Shin encountered those who had died at least a hundred years ago.

- Alright then. Whatever I can remember must be from at least several hundred years ago. Do you know what my last memories are?

"No, what is it?" Lee Shin asked.

- It's a scene of a terrible monster swallowing me up. But even that monster remains in my memory as a vague shape.

Then, the next moment, Gene Ebrium slowly scanned Lee Shin's face and body. He showed a strange yet calm expression as he looked at this image of himself—Lee Shin in his own body.

- Can you tell me about what you can remember of me? I would like to hear all the stories up to this point. If you can tell me those, then I will teach you how to properly utilize my body.

"All right," Lee Shin replied.

After conjuring up a chair in the space, Lee Shin began to recount all the events that had happened so far. Gene seemed amazed a few times, but did not say much other than that. As the story progressed, Gene's face filled with nostalgia, and by the end of the tale, his eyes revealed a tinge of regret and bitterness.

- Okay, I see...

Lee Shin was the first human from Earth to reach the 100th floor, and he became the boss of the first floor as a punishment for going against gods.

There, he seized the chance to escape out of the cave, obtained the Immortal Sphere, regained his memories, and climbed the Tower. If someone were to hear this, they might have told Lee Shin to stop spinning a fantasy story like this, but Gene did not think that way.

- Listening to your story helps me get some understanding, although it may not be complete.

"But doesn't it bother you that I have your body?" Lee Shin asked.

- To be honest, I can't say I'm entirely okay. But don't worry, because I'm not angry, and I don't have any thoughts of taking back my body from you. Besides, if everything you've told me so far is true, then I would even be willing to support you.

"Well, I also have a question. Do you mind if I ask?" Lee Shin asked.

- Sure, go ahead.

"How did you end up on the first floor in the first place?" Lee Shin asked.

As He Who Knows Death, Lee Shin had a glimpse of his past. However, that was only a part of the full story. He wanted to know everything.

- Well, from your experience, you would already know how wicked the gods are. I despised them and so I decided to go against them ever since I discovered that the gods were planning absurd schemes.

"What exactly was that?" Lee Shin asked.

- I don't know the exact details, but my rough guess is that they want to make their existence even greater.

"Hmm... Make their existence even greater..." Lee Shin muttered.

- Yes. Moreover, the means they used to achieve that purpose were vile and dirty. That's why I went against them, and they tried to make me their subordinate.

Past or present, the actions of the gods had always been the same. The lower beings were just tools to elevate their authority.

- I could not defeat them with my own power. Thinking I had reached the pinnacle of Transcendence was nothing but my own arrogance. I accepted the gods' proposal just to uncover their intentions. However, they gave me one mission, probably because they did not trust me. I went to the place where they sent me to uncover its secrets.

"And that was the first floor, wasn't it?" Lee Shin asked.

- Yeah, that's right. Well, I did not know that at the time, but listening to your story, I can see that it was the first floor. And it was that place where I encountered that monster.

Lee Shin was aware that the monster on the first floor was the real culprit who turned Gene Ebrium into its boss. He also knew that the monster was the owner of the first floor and that its presence was the reason why the gods could not access it.

- The skills that you acquired, including Chaos, as well as the Immortal Sphere must be the abilities of that monster. It's all becoming clear. It feels like I've finally found the missing pieces.

"So then, are you saying that the Forgotten God is that monster?" Lee Shin asked.

- From what I see, it seems so. If we try to come up with a divine title... then... the God of Chaos. Yes that's right, the God of Chaos suits him, the monster, perfectly.

Gene Ebrium spoke with confidence.

"Hmm... The God of Chaos...? If the gods are really looking for the God of Chaos, does that mean the gods and the God of Chaos are in opposition?" Lee Shin asked.

- That might be the case, but we can't be sure about that.

Another name, the God of Chaos, had come up in the quest to unravel the secrets of this world.

"Perhaps the reason the gods haven't pressured me more lies here," Lee Shin replied after some contemplation.

So far, the gods' restraint and attacks were not what Lee Shin had been expecting. Lee Shin thought that their response towards him had been lukewarm so far, considering their attitudes. He did not know the reason behind that, but now the reason was becoming clear to him.

Lee Shin was their sole connection to the God of Chaos. If they were looking for the God of Chaos, then he was a challenger who must not die in vain. Lee Shin had to continue climbing the Tower for the gods to get closer to the secrets of Chaos.

- Also, the reason why you must have felt differently about their intentions too could be this. Even within Astria, the gods must have differing thoughts and intentions. Maybe the higher-ranking gods over there know about Chaos but the lower-ranking gods don't.

"I'm starting to get a rough sense of where this is going," Lee Shin replied.

- Good, I will gladly support you with that.

"But before that, why don't you catch up with your subordinates for a bit?" Giving him a light smile, Lee Shin said to Gene.

In response, Gene Ebrium opened his eyes wide and his lips started to quiver slightly.

[Shadow Space]

A long, elongated shadow appeared in front of them. The next moment, countless Undead emerged from it.

"You too, Lilian. Come out," Lee Shin called Lilian.

At Lee Shin's call, after a few seconds of stillness, a portal opened in the air as blood gathered. From there, Lilian walked out in her true form. Although she could have come out on her own if she wanted, it seemed like she was hesitant. She would not have come out if Lee Shin did not call her explicitly.

- ...

Gene Ebrium remained silent.

"Are you just going to stand there like this? Oh, let me use necromancy to make it easier for you to talk," Lee Shin said, looking at Gene Ebrium.

The next moment, Lee Shin summoned a sturdy-looking Skeleton to the spot and put Gene Ebrium's soul into it using necromancy. The eyes that used to be vacant glowed, but the Skeleton remained still. Since Gene did not move, his subordinates did not try to make a move either. Just like that, a good three minutes, which felt like three hours, passed, and he finally spoke.

"I am sorry..." Gene apologized to his subordinates.

"Gene, you scoundrel!" Lilian shouted and shed tears for the first time.

She then rushed to Gene and hugged him tightly. After Lilian, some of his subordinates also approached him.

'I think I should give them some privacy...'

Lee Shin gave them some time to have a private talk. After the short reunion, Gene returned to Lee Shin.

"I'm sorry, and... thank you," Gene Ebrium muttered, looking at Lee Shin.

"No problem," Lee Shin replied.

"Anyway, can you afford to take your time like this? The gods must be getting quite impatient," Gene Ebrium said.

A considerable amount of time had passed since Lee Shin cleared the 90th floor. Just as Gene Ebrium had mentioned, the gods must be growing impatient. Gene could not remember using the power of Chaos and had no idea what had happened, but the gods who had witnessed the greed would probably not believe that Gene knew nothing.

There was a high chance that the gods thought Gene Ebrium knew something about the power of Chaos. Perhaps countless gods were already waiting outside for them.

"I think I should get going right away," Lee Shin said, looking at Gene.

"Wait! Before you go, I will tell you about the true abilities of this body," Gene Ebrium said with a smirk. "If your abilities and my abilities combine, most gods won't be able to defeat you."

Unlike what the backdrop of white clouds, blue skies, and swaying emerald green grass suggested, the atmosphere was chilly. Lee Shin, who had returned to the forty-third island of the Lardel Archipelago sensed some changes and headed straight to where the Eternal Gate was located.

The size of Ardalgia, which had become a signpost for the forty-third island, had also increased significantly. As a result, the influence of the White Elves had grown stronger as well.

"Finally you've arrived," Genia, the leader of the Defense Force, greeted Lee Shin.

"If you've been waiting for me all the way out here, the situation must be quite serious at the moment," Lee Shin asked, looking at Genia.

The faces of the White Elves around him, as well as the employees of the Platinum Group and the researchers of the laboratory, were all stern, indicating the gravity of the situation.

"The Apostles are targeting this place to go to Earth," Genia explained with a serious look on her face.

"So what happened exactly?" Lee Shin asked.

"Nothing major. This place is inside the Tower, so they won't be able to harm us, especially when we're under Ardalgia," Genia said.

"Okay, that's a relief," Lee Shin replied.

It seemed that it was difficult for the Apostles to make a move because not only were they inside of the Tower at the moment, but Genia's forces and allies, which had significantly grown, stood guard at this place. Lee Shin frowned and walked past Genia.

"Please hurry!" Genia shouted in an urgent voice.

"It's alright. It's me they want anyway," Lee Shin replied.

The reason why Lee Shin was not in a hurry was clear—the intentions and motives of the Apostles were now very obvious to him. Lee Shin was sure that the Apostles would not mess with Earth recklessly when Lee Shin was not around. Knowing this well, Lee Shin stood in front of the Eternal Gate.

"I'm so sorry that I can't help," Genia said, dejected.

"Don't worry about it. You're doing more than enough by protecting this place," Lee Shin replied.

With those words, Lee Shin threw himself into the Eternal Gate.