

Nano Machine |

Chapter: 21

“I’m done explaining. Begin forming groups for assigned dorms, and I will proceed with the first test on the stage.”

The students became shocked to hear sudden progress. They didn’t think they would be tested on the first day.

“As I said before, if you fail this test, you are expelled. If you can’t pass this test, you don’t even deserve to be a low-ranked warrior.”

More than half of the students became pale. They thought they would at least learn something before the test, but this meant that anyone with no training had no chance. Chun Yeowun was also shocked.

‘What? First test already?’

He had no internal energy and it was likely for him to fail the test. He had to hope that the test was either easy or did not require internal energy. Hameng declared what the test was.

“The first test will assess your basic skills. You will need at least basic internal energy if you are going to be a warrior of our cult.”

Chun Yeowun frowned. This meant that if there was one without any internal energy, he was going to fail.

“If you fail this test, you will be sent down to the farms or mines for hard labor. Try your best to... no, we do need people to do the dirty work, so don’t try too hard.”

Hameng was joking around, but Chun Yeowun felt uncomfortable after hearing it.

‘Ugh... this is problematic.’

He was furious as he thought that at least the academy did not have traps set up for him. However, the internal energy test on the first day seemed to be too coincidental to think that it wasn’t made for him.

'Was this why they didn't want me to train?'

Yeowun now realized why the ladies of six clans did not allow him to train. If he were to be expelled here, he would be cast out and he'd stay within the lowest caste of the cult. This would allow those people to kill him whenever they wanted to.

'Hmph.'

Chun Mukeum, the prince of Loyal Clan, seemed to be satisfied.

'I was going to kill him myself, but this will get rid of him. Whoever thought of this is a genius.'

The Loyal Clan did not have a part in not allowing Yeowun to train. Mukeum knew it was one of the six clans who led the plan, but he didn't realize it was to expel Yeowun from the first stage test. That's when a beautiful, alluring middle-aged woman came up onto the stage. Hameng pointed at her and said, "She is the Clan Leader of the Lust Clan, and the proctor who will watch over this test. Our fifth elder, Hang Soyu."

A girl standing in the front row with lavish red silk clothes smiled. She was Chun Wonryou, and she was the sixth rank to the throne from the Lust Clan. The six clans were not involved with any of the tests in the academy except for the first one.

'What test calls for the fifth elder to come?'

The students were filled with questions and Hameng explained, "This test is a piece of cake. If you fail here, you will never get a chance to even become a low-ranked warrior."

After she finished, Hang Soyu sat down and readied to play the string instrument that she brought with her. It seemed like people realized what she was going to do and they began plugging their ears while crouching down.

"Well, you kids will not withstand her Musical Energy Wave, but she will control it for you weaklings. With luck, you might even endure it without any internal energy. Haha."

His last set of words felt like he was talking to Yeowun. The Musical Energy Wave was not something that one could tolerate with just endurance. Chun Yeowun bit his lips.

‘...Dammit.’

The first test was to endure the energy wave attack. This was also the simplest way to easily weed out the unworthy students.

“If they have even the slightest amount of internal energy, they will be able to endure a minute.”

Fitting her clan name, Hang Soyu spoke with a beautiful voice, but none of the students were able to hear it as they were already plugging their ears.

“Those who endure the energy wave for a minute will pass the test! Begin!”

And with the signal, the fifth elder began to play the instrument.

Chapter: 22

The beautiful sound of the instrument spread through the training ground. However, it wasn't only beautiful. She didn't hadn't even played a measure yet, but tens of boys fell to the ground with bubbles coming out of their mouths.

“Nnnngh...”

“I-I still hear it!”

It was only the beginning. As she plucked the strings, the sound thundered their eardrums and shocked their hearts; some students dropped while grabbed onto their hearts. Enduring such a wave required at least twenty years of internal energy. If it wasn't for the heirs of the six clans or the children from high-ranking clans, there wasn't anyone who had such internal energy.

‘This stings in the ear. You will be down on the ground already, hehe..’

Chun Mukeum was filled with joy, but things weren't going as expected.

‘Huh? What's going on?’

Hang Soyu's fingers that plucked strings began moving faster. Based on the look on her face, it was apparent that she didn't look too happy. It was because she was only looking at Chun Yeowun.

'Why? Why is he not falling down?'

Chun Yeowun, who should not have any internal energy, was not falling. When the fifth elder began playing the instrument, Nano activated the emergency defense mode.

[Sensing strong high and low frequencies from the instrument. They can damage the user's eardrums and body. Activating automatic defense system. Muting all incoming soundwaves to the user.]

Nano usually activated programs per the orders of the user, but when an incoming attack threatened the user's life, it was automatically enabled. It blocked out every soundwave coming into his ears right now.

'...What?'

He only heard Nano's voice in his head the moment Hang Soyu plucked her instrument and he couldn't hear anything else. Yet, countless students were falling down in front of him.

Chun Yeowun was really worried about going through a test, but with Nano, he was able to pass the danger with ease.

'Did you make me not hear the sound?'

[The soundwaves coming from the instrument might be potentially dangerous to Master. I have stopped your body functions to sense sounds temporarily.]

'How am I hearing your voice then?'

[The information is being sent directly into your brain.]

'I don't get what you're saying.'

It was hard to understand Nano. More than half the students had fainted already. Some even had blood coming out of their mouths, proving that they had acquired internal damage.

Hang Soyu's fingers were now fiercely playing the instrument. The tempo had increased much so that even Hameng who stood next to her could feel the intensity. Hameng knew why she was so frustrated.

'I thought he didn't have any internal power.'

Hameng was also intrigued by the current situation. He knew that Chun Yeowun was not trained in any martial arts. Thus, he wouldn't have any internal power, but he seemed to be able to withstand the energy wave without any difficulty. And unlike Chun Yeowun, the other students around him were all on the ground.

"Nnnnghhh..."

"Ugh, your ear's bleeding!"

"You too!"

And it seemed like it was hard even for those who were enduring it. However, that was also because Hang Soyu was increasing the intensity of her attack due to her frustration.

'Why is she playing so fiercely?'

The princes of the six clans, who had about thirty years worth of internal energy, could still withstand the attack without that much trouble, but they still sensed the elder's frustration and that made them curious. They were not allowed to turn back to look, but Mukeum was extremely curious so he had to turn around to see.

'What?!'

He almost spat out from his mouth.

'How is he still holding on?'

Chun Yeowun was standing there as if the attack was nothing. Even Mukeum who had about thirty years worth of internal energy through the various medicines he took could feel stinging in his ears, but Yeowun stood there as if he couldn't hear anything.

'T...th... that bastard. He had internal energy!'

Chun Mukeum was extremely furious. Chun Yeowun swore that he would not train martial arts or internal energy, but withstanding Hang Soyu's Musical Energy Wave meant that he didn't keep his promise.

'What?'

'What's going on?'

Fourth rank Chun Jongsum and sixth rank Chun Wonryou wondered why Mukeum seemed to be furious and they also turned back.

'W-what?! What's going on?!'

'How can he stand like that without any internal energy?'

They all frowned too. They thought Chun Yeowun would have fallen a long time ago, but he was still standing.

'Nano, if I'm right, those kids up front and the fifth elder who's playing the instrument are angry, right?'

[Analyzing facial muscle movements. Frustration, shock, and anger can be seen from their facial muscles.]

Without even analyzing, it was apparent that they were looking at him with hostility. Yeowun realized what he was doing was angering them.

'They thought I didn't have any internal power, but me enduring this triggered them.'

If this wasn't solved, it would still be a problem even if he passed the test. He had sworn an oath that he would not learn about internal energy until he joined the academy.

'Nano, can you give me an internal injury?'

[Internal injury as in damaging your internal organs?]

'Yeah. Can you do it or not?'

[It is possible, but I do not recommend damaging your body intentionally, Master.]

'I see. Then can you injure me when the instrument is finished playing and make me vomit blood?'

[Blood through your mouth?]

'Yeah.'

He was making his enemies angry. If he did not take any internal damage or vomit blood, they would be suspicious of him. He couldn't take that risk even before getting the chance to learn martial arts.

[As ordered, processing damage to the internal organs.]

After the time limit was over, Hang Soyu's patience was at the limit. She was already angry that Yeowun had gained internal energy, but he was now withstanding like as if it was= nothing.

Her tune changed. Lee Hameng quickly sensed the change and frowned. He knew how she felt but she was now forgetting the purpose of why she was playing her instrument.

Before he could send her the message to stop, she began playing the instrument with half of her power. This attack could not be withstood unless one was a very powerful warrior.

"UGH!"

Chapter: 24

Students of the high-ranking clans and families turned pale at the moment. They began to vomit blood as their internal organs were damaged, and they weren't the only ones who were in trouble.

'UGH!'

Even the heirs from the six clans couldn't stand the fifth elder's energy wave. They tried to defend themselves as much as they could, but it didn't work. The weakest of the six heirs, Chun Jongsum, began coughing from the internal energy damage and Hameng decided that it had gone too far.

[Stop! This is dangerous! You must not do it any further!]

With that, Hang Soyu also stopped playing. Students who barely withstood it fell to their knees in exhaustion. If she played for a bit longer, all the students might have failed. Hang Soyu became embarrassed that she went out of control, but she was still angry at Chun Yeowun. She was sure that Chun Yeowun had not kept his oath. It was then...

Chun Yeowun's face quickly turned red and went pale, and he sprayed blood from his mouth like a fountain. Everyone who was watching, Hameng, Hang Soyu, and Mukeum, frowned.

'What?'

It was hard to believe that much blood could be vomited out from a person's mouth.

'He wasn't okay?'

It was too much blood to be an act. Chun Yeowun sprayed blood out and fell to his knees with his hands on the ground. He had definitely taken some heavy internal damage.

'Nano... you...'

[Program processed as ordered.]

'I almost d-died!'

People felt pain even when it was a simple vomit. But vomiting blood like a fountain was more painful than he had imagined.

"Ugggggh!"

Chun Yeowun then vomited more blood. The place around him was now drenched in blood, and it was even a terrible sight to even look at.

"Hmph!"

However, unlike the fifth elder who was dumbfounded, Left Guardian Lee Hameng couldn't just stand and watch. If Chun Yeowun, the son of Lord, did not die from the feud between family members but a test, all the blame was going to be on Hameng. He quickly rushed forward with his movement skill to fly to Yeowun and check on him.

“Hey, kid! Are you okay!? Hey!”

Chun Yeowun felt dizzy after vomiting blood. He almost collapsed to the ground but Hameng got a hold of him.

[Sensing dizziness from 7% blood loss. Activating self-healing mode against organ damage and blood loss.]

Nano spoke of going into healing mode and Yeowun stopped it.

‘No! Not yet.’

[Master’s condition might go into critical danger.]

‘Wait a second.’

Nano stopped its process. Hameng looked at Yeowun’s pale face.

“You could’ve just given up.”

Hameng already had checked to see if he had any internal energy. Contrary to his expectations, Chun Yeowun had no internal energy within him.

‘What? How can this be?’

This meant that Yeowun had endured the attack through sheer will. And for the price, he had taken severe internal damage.

‘This one is crazy. How can one withstand such an attack without any internal energy?’

He was astonished. Yeowun really passed the test without a single hint of internal energy inside him. Hameng had heard bad rumors about the Seventh Prince. But who would have thought such a kid from a slave girl would have such a strong mind?

Hameng called out to staff standing outside the training ground.

“Send him to a hospital room.”

As Yeowun was being carried out by the staff, he gave an order to Nano.

‘...Heal me, now.’

The fifth elder, Hang Soyoun, didn't look all that excited as she watched Chun Yeowun being carried away. The amount of blood he threw out was proof that he had taken heavy damage. Lee Hameng soon walked up to her.

"You went too far."

"W-what are you talking about?"

"You almost killed him."

After she acquired the musical wave skill, she had never seen a person take that much damage. It almost made her think that her attack skill had increased in damage. She became embarrassed at Hameng's words and asked, "He... did he really not have any internal energy?"

She felt much better as she knew that her attack worked, but it was impossible to withstand her attack for so long without internal energy, which she couldn't believe. Hameng shook his head.

"No. None."

"What?"

"He has no internal energy. He kept his oath."

"That can't be... how can one withstand my attack without any internal energy?"

Only about thirty students withstood her attack, and even some of those were down on their knees or vomiting from enduring so much. Moreover, those students had internal energy.

"He should've passed out a long time ago."

"He already had taken internal damage for quite some time. It was his will that kept him standing."

"His will? You think that makes sense?"

"...It is beyond our imagination."

It almost made Hameng want to take him in as his apprentice if he wasn't a bastard son of the Lord. However, Hameng was a realist. He had no intention of taking on such a controversial individual as his own apprentice.

"HAHA! That's interesting. He just endured it, huh?"

Right Guardian Submeng spoke amicably although he usually paid no interest in other matters. Hameng answered annoyingly, "It's none of your business. Go away and drink all you want."

"Bah, I was going anyway without you speaking to me, redhead."

"Drunkard."

"Puny girl."

Submeng spat and walked away from the stage. They were both guardians, but they didn't get along very well.

"Well, either way, he did not have any internal energy and there is no problem. And for what you did... it will be reported to the Lord."

"...Understood."

Chapter: 26

Hang Soyu was still unconvinced, but she couldn't say anything further because of the warning she had received already.

'The Left Guardian will never side with that lowly peasant.'

She then walked away and Hameng turned to the students crawling on the training ground.

"Ugh... what should I do now?"

He couldn't continue onto the next step with this situation.

Behind the training ground was the main building of the academy. On the second floor was the first aid room, and Baek Jongmeng, the apprentice of the Baek Jongwu, was here. He had just gotten into the office from the orders of his teacher last night. He was excited to see as many patients as possible within the academy to gain more experience.

That's when someone began banging on the door.

"Doctor! Patients!"

"Already? Come in!"

He had not seen that many patients recently since all the giant Wulin forces were busy training their former warriors and they were in times of peace.

'This academy is great!'

He was eager at the thought of seeing many patients. As the door opened, two academy staff came in with the patient. It was Chun Yeowun who was drenched in blood.

"What! What kind of test puts a man in such a state?!"

This much blood could only come from fatal sword injuries. The staff members shook their heads and answered, "He has taken serious internal damage. He does not have any internal energy so Left Guardian has asked for you to take special care of him."

"THIS is from internal damage?"

It had been ten years since he was the apprentice of the famous doctor of the Demonic Cult. He had seen many patients, but he had never seen that much blood from a patient with internal injuries.

"Well, he's all yours now. We'll be on our way."

"Oh, okay."

The staff knew that they had things to do and that they were needed so they quickly came out of the room. However, one of the staff members stopped curiously. Another staff, who was his superior, scolded him on the spot.

"We're busy! Come on!"

"Uh, hm. It's nothing."

He felt that Chun Yeowun looked much better when he put him down on the bed, but he shook his thoughts away. After the staff was gone, Baek Jongmeng sat next to Yeowun and began checking on him.

“Hmm...”

Yeowun then opened his eyes slightly and looked at Jongmeng. It felt so painful when he was at the training ground, but the self-healing had healed him enough to allow him to get back up.

‘I didn’t think of this..’

He realized this as he was being carried up to the medical room, so he ordered Nano to stop healing him. He just focused on healing his painful throat and neck and decided to let everything stay as is until the doctor worked on him.

“Irregular and fast heartbeat... he must have taken a huge amount of internal damage.”

Jongmeng made the conclusion after checking Yeowun. However, it was still weird to have let out so much blood.

“Not even biting a tongue can do this.”

Jongmeng then walked over to his desk to get some needles when someone burst into his office.

“Oh! My!”

Jongmeng was shocked that he fell to the ground on his butt. He turned to the man who had walked in. It was a middle-aged man with a red nose and a bottle of liquor.

“Right Guardian?”

“Huh? Why are you here?”

“And why are YOU here? I thought you should be at the ceremony?”

“Hah, so are you the doctor of the academy this time?”

Submeng didn’t respond to Jongmeng and just kept asking his own questions. Jongmeng sighed as he knew Submeng was this kind of man.

“A little one came to the big league then, eh?”

“Ugh. So, why are you here? I hope it isn’t YOU who got hurt?”

“...Oh, is that sarcasm?”

“Hahaha, of course not.”

Submeng then looked away from Jongmeng and turned to the bed. He then smiled with interest.

“Oh? Look at this brat. Interesting kid.”

“W-what? What’s going on?”

Submeng then walked up to Chun Yeowun who was on the bed. Yeowun became frustrated.

‘W-what? Why is he here all of a sudden?’

He felt panicked that the Right Guardian himself had come up to the office, thinking that he might have noticed that he was acting all along.

‘...Dammit.’

The terrible stench of alcohol and breath bothered him.

“Why are you pretending to be asleep?”

Yeowun felt his heart sink and flinched. Then, an unknown force pulled him up from the bed. He couldn’t move as he hadn’t been healed yet, but the internal energy sent by Submeng pinned him straight up.

“If you keep pretending, I’ll smack you.”

Yeowun had to wake up. He then saw the drunk man who had been on the stage. Yeowun frowned and retorted, “How did you know?”

Submeng laughed, flashing his yellowed teeth.

“Hahahaha! Aren’t you an interesting one?”

Submeng laughed for quite a bit and continued, “Any experienced warrior can see through you if you are awake or not just by listening to your breath, kid.”

'By the sound of my breathing?'

Yeowun became shocked, and Nano spoke to him.

[The average breathing count for a fifteen to twenty-year-old human male is about sixteen per minute. Your breathing just now was about eight times in one minute, showing your effort to hide your nervous state.]

'...I don't need an explanation.'

Chapter: 28

Yeowun never imagined a mere person could sense such things. Submeng laughed, "Hahaha. I didn't think kids these days had guts like you."

'Huh?'

He thought Submeng was here because he noticed Yeowun faked his damage, but it seems like that wasn't the case. Instead, he seemed to be pleased.

"Kids these days have no endurance. They always pick the easy way!"

Yeowun felt bad. He didn't endure anything at all. He just stood there because Nano had cut off all the sound.

"So, what I mean is that you have the guts that no other kid has these days."

Yeowun didn't feel comfortable listening to all the compliments that he didn't deserve. He was going to heal himself after fooling Jongmeng, but listening to all this made him feel his pain again. His face began to go pale.

"Guardian, our patient is not in good condition. We should tend to him first."

"Ah, yes."

Submeng then noticed the discoloration on Yeowun's face. He then let go of his internal energy and allowed Yeowun to lie down on the bed again.

"Let me cut to the chase, kid. I'll take you in as my apprentice."

Yeowun's eyes grew wide, and so did Jongmeng's. Submeng the Crazy Blade was one of the top ten most powerful warriors in the Demonic Cult. He was also famous throughout all of Wulin.

"What are you talking about?"

Yeowun wasn't convinced as he had lived a lifetime in banishment and danger. Yet, Submeng looked very serious, if not considering the smell of alcohol.

"I am talking about taking you in as my student."

"...Guardian. Do you not know who I am?"

Everyone knew about Yeowun in the cult.

"Is there someone who doesn't know about you?"

"The six clans will not be happy if you take me in."

Submeng didn't seem to care. He spoke as if it was nothing.

"Hah, what will those women do? With or without you, they have to compete against themselves anyway."

Unlike Hameng, Submeng always did what he wanted. The one he feared and followed was the Lord of the Cult. Yeowun became tempted by the offer.

'But what if this is a trap?'

Yeowun had gone through too many threats so he was suspicious. Jongmeng, who was looking at him from the side, also became interested.

'So, this is the famous prince.'

He then made a conclusion about Yeowun's internal energy.

'So that's why... they went too far then.'

He couldn't understand the reason for the amount of blood at first, but if the six clans involved in this, it didn't seem all that impossible. And Baek Jongmeng's conclusion was fortunate for Yeowun.

“I don’t know what to say to that offer, especially since I’ll have a teacher in the academy.”

“Ugh, this sounds like I’m begging you to be my apprentice!”

Submeng then chugged his bottle.

‘He’s still not convinced.’

He had never taken any apprentices until now, but seeing Yeowun enduring the sound energy tempted him to take Yeowun as his apprentice. Yet, Yeowun didn’t seem so eager.

“Okay. If you are still unconvinced, I will offer you something you can’t put down.”

He then took out some wrinkled old paper and it placed down on the bed. However, Yeowun couldn’t move so he couldn’t check what it was.

“Heh, are you curious about what this is?”

“What is it?”

“It is what you need most if you are to survive here.”

“What?”

“You took internal damage on your first day at the academy. Don’t you think you will be left behind?”

The Academy Chief was Hameng, but Submeng also had experience as a student in the academy. The academy progressed differently each time, but everything worked in similar ways.

“You can take the first test through sheer will, but you can’t pass the second step with that.”

“Th-that’s...”

“And you are already behind. Are you still going to be stuck inside the medical room for two weeks? That will push you back even further.”

Submeng's words were correct. Yeowun had ways to heal in hours if needed, but that would cause the six clans to be suspicious, so he had to stay here for a few more days.

"Do you know why the redhead sent you here?"

"Redhead? You mean the Left Guardian?"

"Yeah."

"Is it because I took internal damage?" Yeowun asked awkwardly.

"Of course, but isn't it weird? There are other kids who took internal damage, but why aren't they here?"

'Huh? That's true!'

As Submeng said, more than half of the students fell and most of them had taken internal damage during the first test. Yet none of them had been brought here.

"Most people of Wulin can heal themselves from internal damage through meditating. Moreover, they heal faster with help from a doctor or medicine."

"Meaning?"

"Yes. The other kids didn't need to be sent here because they can heal themselves."

"Oh."

Yeowun then realized what he meant. It meant Hameng verified that Yeowun did not have any internal energy, meaning he couldn't heal himself and had to be sent down here.

'Let's finish it then.'

Submeng then decided to put an end to his offer.

"Do you think a boy who can't even meditate can heal in a few days?"

'...Yes.'

He could heal in a day thanks to Nano, but that was top secret.

‘Yes, he is right. If I’m to move forward onto the next step, I will need internal energy and... oh!’

He then thought of something he had forgotten up until now.

“I forgot. I heard that if I pass the first test, I will be given the medicine ball and access to the first floor of the academy’s library.”

There were various books on the first floor of the library that would be pretty helpful.

“Hahahahaha!”

Submeng then burst out in laughter and Yeowun was startled.

“I would do that too, but it seems like the redhead skipped real important one there.”

“What? What did he skip?”

“It doesn’t mean that you are always allowed to enter the library. You can only enter once after every test.”

“What?”

That was far from having full access to it.

“All those important books are in there. Do you think you will be able to freely access such a place?”

Submeng was amused by Yeowun’s shocked reaction and continued, “You can only stay on the first floor for two hours. And as you move higher up, you will be given more time because the books on those floors are complicated, but you still don’t have enough time.”

“So, there’s a time limit too? How exciting.”

“Not to mention, you cannot copy any of the content down. It’d be good if you could memorize maybe one book or two. Most use all the time available trying to find the book they want.”

This was vital information that Hameng did not share. If people entered the library without knowing this, they'd frantically waste their time until it was over.

'But I have Nano.'

Yeowun then realized he had the Nano Machine, which could scan a book in seconds.

'This actually works better for me!'

Two hours was probably enough for him to even scan hundreds of books. The information Submeng gave to Yeowun so that he would feel discouraged actually worked in the opposite way. Submeng did not know this, so he thought it was about the right time.

"So, a kid like you has a limit to how far you can go without any help."

Most students who entered the academy were trained in their family martial arts at least. Yeowun thought for a second and asked, "The paper... is it the Breath of Internal Energy?"

'I threw the bait, and you bit it!'

He was glad that Yeowun had caught on, but he acted like he wasn't excited.

"Heh, so you are not all that dumb."

"Why are you..."

"If you become my apprentice, I will teach you the Breath of Internal Energy for the first lesson."

Yeowun was tempted. He had longed for it, but he couldn't learn it because of the oath. Submeng then knew his offer had worked.

'Does this man really want me as his apprentice?'

Yeowun looked at Submeng. He looked like a drunkard, but he was still a Right Guardian. Yeowun also felt that he really wanted to help him out.

'Then I should make him on my side.'

He knew how helpful it was to have one ally when everyone else was an enemy. He then barely got up with a pale face and got down from the bed.

“Oh?”

Submeng looked at him intriguingly and Yeowun bowed deeply to the ground.

“I accept Right Guardian as my teacher. Please take my bow.”

Yeowun bowed, shivering from the pain. Submeng became satisfied. Yeowun tried to continue bowing, when suddenly he was pulled up by internal energy.

“Stop. The blood of Chun does not bow to anyone other than the Lord himself.”

That was the law of the cult.

“Heh, my apprentice.”

Submeng then felt embarrassed for saying such words and he held up Yeowun with his internal energy to put him back on the bed.

“You will need to rest today. So until I come back, look through that note and learn.”

Submeng then grinned and walked out. It was unexpected, but it was fortunate that Yeowun had gotten such an ally in the academy.

And at the training ground, squad forming was taking place. And when it was almost over, Chun Mukeum of the Loyal Clan grinned ominously.

‘We are in the same squad, you peasant. Hehehehe...’

After Chun Yeowun was taken to the medical room, the ceremony came to a halt as all the students needed to meditate to heal.

‘Hmmm.’

People were curious as to what would happen to Yeowun who vomited blood out from his mouth, but Left Guardian Lee Hameng’s attention was elsewhere. The first rank to the heir, Chun Muyeon of the Wise Clan, and fifth rank Yuchan of the Blade Clan had endured the first test as if it were nothing.

'They are beyond expectations.'

Not taking any damage from Hang Soyou's half-powered attack would require at least hundreds of internal energy.

'They are beyond the level of students.'

They were already at the level of powerful warriors. It obvious why the rumor of the Wise and Blade Clans taking the throne was spread.

However, they weren't the only ones who had withstood it without taking any damage. The other members of the six clans endured without much trouble and there were also eight other students who also endured it.

'I thought they were all weaklings, but this is interesting.'

It felt like there might be powerful warriors in this year's academy. All in all, that was going to be decided after four years when it was all over.

A total of 415 students passed the first test. It was 200 less than the first test from ten years ago as the test had been more difficult due to Chun Yeowun.

Not everyone knew it, but some of the students who looked back like Mukeum were angry to see the intensity of the test because of Yeowun.

After dragging out the failed students, all the remaining students were officially appointed as cadets and they each were given a bronze tag with the number 3, symbolizing that they were now low-ranked warriors of the Demonic Cult.

"Is this the beginning now?!"

"I will go up to the top!"

Then the students began dividing themselves into groups. Hameng grouped them based on their personal information and the result of the test. Other than the five groups of 20, the other remaining groups had 21 people.

"Do you know why there are twenty groups?"

"Mado!"

Cadets answered 'mado' to Hameng's question. This was due to the instructions on answering with 'mado' for any answer that required a 'yes' or a 'no'. No other answers were allowed.

"Until you pass the third test, all of you will be tested on the same day and same time."

The academy had no intention to waste money on training up to the third step which was for high-ranked warriors. Therefore, they had a set amount of time allocated for each of the tests.

"The amount you need to learn the ways of a middle-rank warrior is three weeks."

'Only three weeks?'

The cadets were frustrated. They were shocked by the unexpectedly quick pace.

"After three weeks, the twenty groups will battle. Ten groups will be allowed to move onto the next step."

This meant that two hundred people were going to fail.

"This is the only and last test where you will need to work together, so if you want to compete against yourself within the group, you can happily fail the test and leave."

Most groups were equally formed, but there were some groups with a fewer number of students from the powerful clans. Thus, they weren't all that excited.

"This ends today's schedule. You can return to your dorms according to your groups and rest. Starting tomorrow, you will be taught nicely by the staff that are standing in front of you right now."

The students then turned to their instructors who were standing there expressionlessly. When they saw the staff members dragging the failed students out by clubbing them with their black clubs hanging on their waists, the students shivered.

"You are dismissed!"

“DISMISSED!”

Students then returned to their assigned dorms. However, one of the students stood in place while everyone left with exhausted expressions. It was Chun Mukeum of the Loyal Clan. Instructor Impeng, who was assigned to Mukeum’s 8th group, walked up to him, “3rd cadet. Why are you still standing there?”

Until the students passed the fourth test, they were called upon by their numbers.

“I have a question to ask, Instructor.”

“You know I won’t answer questions that are not related to training.”

“Yes, sir.”

Instructors did not know all of their students’ names and faces, but they at least knew about the princes of the six clans since they were going to be the future leaders of the cult.

“Good. What is the question?”

“I am sure that I will be the leader of my group.”

‘Hmm.’

This wasn’t announced as it was going to be decided tomorrow, but Mukeum already knew that they were going to have group leaders.

‘They don’t care about the rules.’

He knew the six clans would not keep secrets from their princes regarding the academy, but it was rather disappointing to see it in reality.