

MYST, MIGHT, MAYHEM

Myst, Might, Mayhem #Chapter 11 - Read Myst, Might, Mayhem Chapter 11

Chapter 11

It had been trapped inside a body for a long time.

The owner of that body possessed a stronger will and determination than it had anticipated.

When it tried to quickly take over the body, the owner blocked the energy flow and cut off his own consciousness.

-It's no use resisting.

Seizing the consciousness was only a matter of time.

No matter how strong-willed, he was bound to succumb eventually.

Once the weakened body and consciousness were captured, this body could be taken over.

-It won't be long now.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly.

However, an unexpected variable appeared.

Just a little longer and it could have broken through the blocked consciousness, but an obstacle arose.

-Who are you?

Ordinary humans cannot perceive their existence.

But this being knew how to control it with strange techniques.

-Are you trying to drive me out?

Thus, the being began a battle of wills.

It was a matter of driving out or taking over.

Then, the being was deceived by the one wielding this bizarre technique and ended up inside a wooden doll.

-How dare you trick me.

The resentful being grew even more furious.

It felt this anger would only subside after taking over that body again and wringing the neck of the one who tried to expel it.

But in the middle, it was interrupted.

So the being targeted not the body it had been trying to possess, but the one who interfered.

-A good body indeed.

A young body.

Unlike the body it had originally tried to take over, it wasn't overflowing with vitality, but rather, it was inclined towards yin energy, making it even easier to run rampant.

If it was this body, it was worth possessing.

Since it was younger than the previous body, the sense of self and will would also be weaker.

-I'll take over quickly.

It just needed to erase the bastard's consciousness.

By stimulating the consciousness and trapping it, the sense of self would eventually weaken.

However,

-This is...

The being couldn't hide its astonishment.

what the was the owner of this body?

Primal desires that felt like they would pierce through the lungs.

It was the desire to kill.

-Is this guy really a living being?

Death.

Darkness.

Anger.

Murderous intent.

All of these mixed together were full of yin energy.

For the being, this desire filled with death and killing intent was an irresistible instinct.

-It's the best.

The being felt ecstasy at this desire.

But soon it was also gripped by a sense of disappointment.

If left alone, it would have bloomed into the most magnificent desire, but something was suppressing it, preventing it from fully blossoming.

-I'll eliminate that factor suppressing your desire.

If the desire hadn't fully bloomed yet, it was better to completely unleash it.

After all, the ultimate body needed a perfect mind.

But then, an unbelievable thing happened.

'What are you?'

The bastard recognized it.

It tried to trap his consciousness in the current reality but failed.

-This can't be.

How did he recognize it?

It was impossible for a living being to directly perceive or contact it.

'I asked what you are.'

Then there was no choice.

Even if the method was a bit rough, it had to forcefully proceed with the possession.

It chose to forcefully possess.

The possession of the body had already begun, and if it devoured the will and consciousness, he would have no choice but to surrender the body.

-Sss...

-!?

For the first time, it felt perplexed.

The possession was occurring in reverse.

The energy that had penetrated the body was instead being absorbed by the bastard.

It happened at an unimaginable speed.

-Stop.

'What are you babbling about?'

-Stop it.

'You're noisy.'

-No.

'I said you're noisy, didn't I?'

-I'll give up. I'll leave, so stop it.

At this rate, it might be completely devoured.

It tried to escape somehow.

But now the bastard was grasping it.

"Phew."

Diviner Myo-sin let out an exhausted sigh, then picked up the sword that had fallen on the floor.

He thought it would be light, but the weight of the sword was quite heavy.

Gripping the sword with both hands, diviner Myo-sin looked at the Manor Master with a tense expression.

'Can I do it?'

Even if he had exorcised demons and such before, he had never killed a living human.

So when he actually tried to do it, he felt nervous.

But he had to do it.

'I have to kill him.'

Only then could he complete the Madam's request and pin everything on this guy.

He would say that while possessed by the demon in the Manor Master, he went berserk and killed the Manor Master.

If that happened, with the Madam's help, he could naturally dispose of this guy.

'Let's do it.'

He had to hurry.

If this guy's guard outside came in, things would go wrong.

diviner Myo-sin tried to take a step towards the Manor Master.

Right at that moment,

-Flinch!

diviner Myo-sin, who was about to take a step, flinched.

Gripped by a spine-chilling coldness that made his skin crawl, Myo-sin slowly turned his head with a stiff expression.

'!?'

Myo-sin couldn't hide his bewilderment for a moment.

He doubted his own eyes.

A hazy figure larger than an average adult by two heads was glaring at him, emitting a ghastly gaze.

'Th-this is...'

A giant monk in bloody robes with a skull rosary around his neck.

The monk's face, devoid of any vitality, was lifeless.

It was,

'A demon?'

Myo-sin could tell this being was undoubtedly a demon.

Those like him, diviners, called them demons or vengeful spirits, but people also referred to them as ghosts.

-Trickle!

Cold sweat ran down Myo-sin's forehead.

Had his spiritual sight heightened?

This was the first time he saw a demon with such a clear form with his own two eyes.

'shit!'

Myo-sin cursed harshly inwardly.

There was no way his spiritual sight would suddenly heighten.

This demon must be of a much higher level and possess a stronger vengeful spirit than he could handle.

That was why it could manifest its own form like this.

-Clang!

Throwing away the sword, Myo-sin formed hand seals.

-Papak!

'Lin(臨)!'

-Papak!

'Bīng(兵)!'

-Papak!

'Dòu(鬪)!'

-Papak!

'Zhū(者)!'

-Papapapak!

Along with that, Myo-sin, who had formed sword seals and the Diamond Fist Mudra, chanted an incantation towards the demon.

“者...鬪...鬪...鬪...鬪”

He was in the middle of chanting the incantation.

At that moment, the demon in the form of a demonic monk approached him, moving like mist.

-Swish!

'It's useless!'

He had the Seven Stars Descending Talisman attached to his chest to protect his body.

Although exorcism would be difficult, it was impossible for this demon to directly affect him...

-Thwack!

“Ugh!”

At that moment, Myo-sin, who was hit in the face, had no choice but to stop chanting the incantation.

It wasn't just that it hurt, but Myo-sin blinked in surprise.

“H-how?”

The one who hit him was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

How was he moving when he should have been unable to control his body after being possessed by the demon in the Manor Master?

He should have been suppressed by the “suppress” talisman.

Myo-sin’s eyes, which had been bewildered, wavered as they discovered something.

A hazy black thread was flowing from Mok Gyeong-un’s chest, connecting to the demonic monk demon.

Seeing this, Myo-sin realized something had gone wrong.

‘...How could this happen?’

What that meant was one thing.

The fact that the souls were connected meant it was a familiar.

A familiar literally means to make an thing belong to and follow oneself.

But the reason Myo-sin was surprised was simple.

‘How did he do it to a demon?’

That demon was a vengeful spirit.

It was a soul that had become a lump of resentment to resolve its grudges, and they didn’t follow people.

It wouldn’t be strange to call them evil.

Occasionally, among excellent diviners, there were those who controlled familiar, but those were old “things” or a kind of benevolent mischievous spirit.

‘It doesn’t make sense.’

But how could such an evil demon filled with killing intent become a familiar?

Moreover, that guy wasn’t even someone who had learned divi-ation techniques or Taoism.

It was completely incomprehensible.

If an ordinary person was possessed by a demon of that level, it would be normal for them to have their body taken over or lose their life.

'How...'

"Can I remove this?"

"What?"

-Pak!

Just then, Mok Gyeong-un reached out and removed something from his chest.

The fluttering yellow paper was none other than,

"Huh?"

The Seven Stars Descending Talisman.

At this, Myo-sin's eyes widened.

It was that talisman that protected him from the demon.

But if that was removed,

-Swish!

The pale giant demonic monk was approaching with a ghastly smile.

Surprised by this, Myo-sin hurriedly tried to form seals to chant a protective incantation instead of the talisman.

However,

-Thwack!

"Ugh!"

Mok Gyeong-un kicked him in the abdomen.

Myo-sin, who was hit in the abdomen, collapsed in a shrimp-like posture due to the pain that felt like his internal organs were turned inside out.

He tried to form seals again while suppressing the urge to vomit, but,

"Gah!"

Myo-sin's waist bent in the opposite direction.

His face darkened and his veins bulged.

-Thump! Thump!

Myo-sin could tell.

The demon had entered his body and was trying to kill him.

If he didn't quickly form seals and use divi-ation techniques, he might be devoured by the demon and lose his life.

Myo-sin tried to form a seal with one hand, mustering all his strength.

But then,

-Squish!

Mok Gyeong-un stepped on that hand of his.

So that he couldn't do anything.

Surprised, Myo-sin panted and pleaded with all his might.

"Huff huff! Y-young master, please spare me. Please... if you just let me... live... I-I'll do... anything..."

"I don't need that."

"If it's because... I tricked you..."

"No."

Mok Gyeong-un shook his head.

"You did it to survive, so what can you do about it? But you also heard where the seal and secret manual are, right?"

'!?'

At this, Myo-sin was at a loss for words.

Separate from him deceiving and whatnot, wasn't Mok Gyeong-un saying that he had already intended to kill him?

Looking at him with an absurd expression, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“So just die.”

–Shivers!

His mouth was smiling, but his eyes were motionless like a dead person.

That appearance felt even more eerie than the demon.

“Guh! Guh!”

Blood flowed from Myo-sin’s mouth, his entire face bulging with veins.

Then, his body that had been convulsing gradually stopped.

“Ugh...”

The middle-aged man with a scar under his left eye, sitting cross-legged on the floor while eating a sweet, sighed as he looked towards the pavilion leading to the main hall.

The pavilion, usually guarded by escort warriors, was empty.

‘Is this really okay?’

His name was Jang Myeong-in.

He held the position of Inner Manor Master, the head of security for the main hall at Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

In his youth, he was a renowned expert in martial arts near Xiaoxing, Zhejiang. Nineteen years ago, during a pirate suppression campaign in the Haeyang region, he formed a connection with the Manor Master and joined Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

‘Manor Master...’

The Manor Master of his younger days was a true hero.

Jang Myeong-in admired him and believed everything he did was right.

But how did things end up like this?

[Inner Manor Master... you don’t really wish for that lowly courtesan’s son to inherit the position of the great Yeon Mok Sword Manor, do you?]

[That’s...]

[Think carefully about what’s best for Yeon Mok Sword Manor.]

At first, he tried not to get involved.

However, he couldn't help but be swayed by the words of the first wife, Lady Seok.

Even if Mok Yu-cheon, the youngest son, had overwhelmingly superior martial arts, he lacked a strong foundation and allies within the family. If he were to inherit the clan, it would eventually lead to the division of Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

'Yes, this is the right thing to do.'

Even if the eldest son, Mok Yeong-ho, was somewhat tyrannical, he was still the firstborn.

His maternal family was none other than the Jinhua Seok clan, more than capable of supporting him.

In many ways, it was right for him, as the eldest son, to be the successor.

However, there was one thing that bothered him.

[Even the physician couldn't do anything, how could a mere diviner...]

[It won't take long. Just pretend not to know for about an hour.]

[...]

[He's a skilled diviner from Mengcheng. If he finds out, there will be no need to clash with the retainers and the second son, Mok Eun-pyeong.]

The Manor Master's seal.

With the seal, one could appoint a successor.

It could also prevent the division among the retainers.

'Is it possible?'

However, he couldn't shake off a hint of doubt.

How could a mere diviner, who only dealt with sorcery, find a way to make the Manor Master, who was on the verge of drawing his last breath, reveal the location of the seal?

It seemed like a waste of time with pointless actions.

'It can't be that they plan to intimidate the weakened Manor Master with medicine or something to find out, right?'

No matter how much the eldest son, Mok Yeong-ho, wanted to become the successor, that was unacceptable.

It was a disgrace to the Manor Master, to whom he had pledged his loyalty.

-Clench!

Jang Myeong-in's hand clenched tightly.

'No, that's not it.'

Although he was told to keep the surroundings empty for about an hour, he decided to check just in case.

They told him not to interfere, so there shouldn't be any significant issues if he just took a look.

With that thought, Inner Manor Master Jang Myeong-in passed the pavilion and headed towards the main hall.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un grabbed the neck of the diviner Myo-sin, whose veins were bulging grotesquely.

Myo-sin's pulse had stopped, his breath cut off.

Confirming this, Mok Gyeong-un turned around with an expressionless face.

'Not bad.'

It didn't look like he had died by human hands.

A mysterious death.

That's how Myo-sin's death appeared.

-Whoosh!

At that moment, a pale, giant monk appeared above the dead Myo-sin.

A string of clattering skull beads hung around his neck.

Mok Gyeong-un reached out and touched them.

The monk's eerie, ghostly white eyes, emitting a sinister light, trembled.

"You wear interesting things around your neck."

-...

The reason was simple.

It allowed direct contact with Mok Gyeong-un's ethereal form.

As Mok Gyeong-un fiddled with the skull beads, he asked, "You said you'd be a faithful slave, so what should I call you?"

The giant monk, who had been standing still, mumbled something softly in response to Mok Gyeong-un's question.

His lips barely seemed to move.

-...

This was not something that could be heard by human ears.

However, Mok Gyeong-un heard it clearly.

"Demonic Monk? Sounds more like a title than a name. Well, as long as I can call you something, it doesn't matter."

The strange being referred to itself as the Demonic Monk[1].

Looking at Demonic Monk, Mok Gyeong-un smirked and turned his head to look at the unconscious Manor Master, whose arm had been severed.

Mok Gyeong-un stroked his own chin.

"Hmm."

He was contemplating.

Whether it would be better to kill the Manor Master or keep him alive.

The contemplation didn't last long.

If he were to kill the Manor Master immediately, it would put him in a difficult position.

So it was better to keep him alive.

“Then we need to change the scenario a bit. Demonic Monk, can you move him in front of the Manor Master?”

-...

In response to Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the Demonic Monk, who had been standing still, shook his head.

Mok Gyeong-un muttered with a hint of disappointment, “You can’t do it?”

-...

He thought that since the Demonic Monk had killed the diviner, he would be able to exert physical strength, but unexpectedly, he couldn’t perform such a simple physical task.

Or was he pretending not to be able to do it on purpose?

Moreover,

-Whoosh!

The moment the materialized part of his body was exposed to sunlight, it disappeared like a mirage.

The phenomenon was similar to a shadow vanishing in the light.

‘It’s a difficult domain to understand.’

It was intriguing but hard to comprehend.

Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze turned to the bookshelf of the dead diviner Myo-sin.

Various books related to sorcery were placed there.

If he referred to those, could he gain a better understanding of this strange being?

-Thump! Thump!

At that moment, the sound of someone walking on the wooden floor outside the room could be heard.

Soon, the voice of the escort guard came from outside the room.

“Is it not finished yet?”

“Come in.”

At those words, the escort guard opened the door and entered.

The guard’s eyes widened upon entering the room.

“What... What is this...”

The guard was startled by the sight of the dead diviner Myo-sin.

He expected Myo-sin to be performing sorcery, but seeing him dead in the meantime was quite shocking.

Strangely, the escort guard didn’t seem to notice the Demonic Monk.

Mok Gyeong-un pointed to the left side with a nod and asked, “Do you see anything here?”

“Pardon?”

“It seems you can’t see it...”

-...

“Ah... I see.”

“Pardon?”

“No, I wasn’t talking to you, guard.”

‘!?’

At those words, the guard frowned.

Then was he just talking to himself?

While the guard was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un looked to his left and spoke incomprehensible words.

“No, I don’t think there’s a need to reveal yourself.”

-...

“Young Master? What are you talking about?”

Mok Gyeong-un smiled at the confused guard and said, "Don't worry about it. Rather, could you move that diviner over there in front of the Manor Master?"

"No, Young Master, why is the diviner...?"

The state of the dead diviner Myo-sin was extremely bizarre.

The veins on his entire face were grotesquely bulging, and he was dead, his expression filled with pain, shock, and fear.

'How was he murdered... Is this what it looks like to be murdered?'

Poison?

It was strange to call it poison.

It was extraordinarily grotesque.

'Could it be that this fellow didn't kill him?'

Even if his blood was toxic, it was quite different from that.

It didn't seem like he was killed by physical means either, so what was it?

While the guard was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

"Instead of just staring, could you move him?"

"Y-Yes... Yes."

When Mok Gyeong-un repeated the same words twice, the guard hastily moved the dead diviner Myo-sin in front of the Manor Master, sensing the impatience.

Then Mok Gyeong-un said, "Place him there as naturally as possible, as if he died while going berserk on his own."

'What?'

How was he supposed to place the body to make it look like he died while going berserk on his own?

The guard, at a loss, simply laid Myo-sin's corpse down haphazardly.

He did as he was told, but what was the intention?

'Could it be that he's trying to make it seem like the diviner did all this?'

Looking at the state of the messy room, it did seem plausible.

The only fortunate thing was that the Manor Master was still alive.

Although his arm was severed, it was better than being dead.

“Young Master... What will you do now?”

“Ah, I forgot something important.”

In response to the guard’s question, Mok Gyeong-un picked up the sword that had fallen on the floor.

With the sword in hand, Mok Gyeong-un approached the bed where the Manor Master lay and swung it back and forth.

-Swish swish!

“Let’s do it like this. The diviner, who was trying to treat the Manor Master with sorcery, was possessed by an evil spirit, severed the Manor Master’s arm, and tried to kill him, but we stopped him.”

“...”

The escort guard clicked his tongue inwardly at those words.

He had come up with a plausible excuse to escape the situation.

Indeed, looking at the bizarre way the diviner Myo-sin had died, it did seem as if he had been possessed by something.

However,

‘Will they easily believe it?’

The first wife was not a woman to be trifled with.

Just as the guard was contemplating whether to simply not say anything, he cautiously spoke.

“Young Master... If we try to deceive them clumsily, it may arouse suspicion.”

“Is it clumsy?”

“It was truly a coincidence, but if we say that we appeared at the perfect moment to save the Manor Master, the first wife will not easily accept it. Moreover, this diviner was hired by her, so even more so...”

“I see. We need to make it more believable.”

-Swish!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un gripped the sword's handle in reverse.

The guard was wondering what he was trying to do when suddenly, Mok Gyeong-un brought the tip of the sword to his own thigh.

“Y-Young Master? What are you doing?”

“We need to make it more believable. This should be enough.”

“Wa-Wait...”

Before the guard could stop him,

-Stab!

The sharp blade pierced through Mok Gyeong-un's thigh.

‘!!!!!’

The guard's expression stiffened at the sight.

He wasn't just pinching himself but stabbing his own thigh with a sword. Was there not a moment of hesitation?

What was even more absurd was that despite the pain he must have felt, Mok Gyeong-un didn't let out a single groan.

No, there was no change in his expression.

‘D-Does he not feel pain?’

Even the guard himself would have gritted his teeth or made a grimace to endure the pain.

Yet, this fellow showed almost no change in his expression, as if he felt no pain at all.

‘Ruthless bastard...’

The guard couldn't help but be astonished.

It was remarkable that he stabbed his own thigh without hesitation to avoid suspicion, but he was truly a cold-blooded person.

"There... There was no need to go this far..."

"This is the most effective way."

"I'll stop the bleeding!"

"No, I need to lose more blood to look a bit pale."

"..."

The guard found this fellow increasingly frightening and terrifying.

'Someone this crazy should never be made an enemy...'

-Bang!

At that moment, the door swung open, and someone barged in.

The guard was startled to see who it was.

"Inner Manor Master?"

The middle-aged man with a scar under his left eye was none other than Inner Manor Master Jang Myeong-in.

It wasn't really surprising.

As the head of security for the main hall, he was originally supposed to be stationed here.

Rather, it was strange that he had been absent from his post.

-Ching!

Inner Manor Master Jang Myeong-in drew his sword from his waist and pointed it at them.

"What have you done?"

In response to his rebuke, the escort guard waved his hands.

“Inner Manor Master, it’s a misunderstanding. The Young Master and I...”

Before he could even offer an explanation,

“More importantly, we need to take care of the Manor Master first...”

-Thud!

‘!?’

Mok Gyeong-un collapsed beside him, swaying.

The escort guard was momentarily at a loss for words upon seeing this.

Did he just pretend to faint?

And while saying that the Manor Master’s well-being should be prioritized over his own?

Chapter 13

‘How can this be...’

Physician Noh couldn’t hide his astonishment as he checked the pulse.

Just this morning, it seemed as if the Manor Master’s pulse would stop at any moment.

But now, there was vitality as his pulse beat.

In just a few hours.

‘His complexion has improved too.’

The symptoms of unknown cause had all disappeared.

Although he had weakened somewhat from lying unconscious in bed for a long time, there was a high possibility of recovery if he recuperated well.

However,

‘The problem is his consciousness.’

The Manor Master had been unconscious for quite a while.

Because he hadn’t regained consciousness, the Yeon Mok Sword Manor was in turmoil over the issue of succession.

Since he was recovering, there was a high probability of him waking up, but it was uncertain when that would be.

If something were to happen to him before then...

‘...’

At that moment, a sharp female voice reached his ears.

“How is he?”

Physician Noh slowly raised his head.

The voice belonged to the first wife, Lady Seok.

Her expression was different from usual.

Just this morning, her eyes were filled with arrogance and determination.

Physician Noh had felt an ominous premonition.

‘Something is off.’

Physician Noh sensed that the situation was unusual.

When he had hurried here, the Manor Master’s arm was severed, and the surroundings were filled with traces of sorcery, such as talismans and red threads.

But the diviner who had performed the sorcery was found dead.

The third young master was involved in the process.

‘What is happened is happening?’

Physician Noh cautiously observed Lady Seok’s eyes.

Her eyes were trembling strangely.

It was the kind of reaction that would appear when something had gone wrong.

‘Things must not have gone as planned.’

Although the Manor Master’s arm was severed, his complexion had improved significantly.

As Lady Seok was also a martial artist, she would have learned martial arts and be able to assess his condition to some extent.

If so, she would have already noticed that the situation had improved compared to the morning.

Yet, she showed no signs of joy, which meant...

'Could it be that she wasn't trying to heal him through the diviner, but rather plotting something with sorcery?'

It wasn't farfetched to think so.

Everyone knew that the Manor Master was considering the youngest young master, Mok Yu-cheon, as his successor.

In fact, from the perspective of the first wife, she wouldn't want the Manor Master to wake up.

"Has his condition improved a bit?"

When Lady Seok asked again, Physician Noh hesitated for a moment.

In this room, there were only the two of them.

If he were to tell her that the Manor Master would wake up soon, he feared that Lady Seok might do something unexpected.

After pondering, Physician Noh cautiously spoke.

"...His complexion has brightened, and his pulse has improved, but his condition is still poor. It's because the illness has been prolonged. It's best to consider it as a momentary resurgence before death."

"Ah..."

Momentary resurgence before death.

It was a saying that referred to a brief surge of vitality before death, likening it to the sky brightening momentarily just before sunset.

In fact, it wasn't true, but he deliberately said so.

However,

'Ha.'

Physician Noh was inwardly exasperated.

Although she let out a sigh as if she was saddened, Lady Seok's expression and eyes were closer to relief.

It was undoubtedly because she didn't want the Manor Master to recover.

Physician Noh looked at the Manor Master and spoke inwardly.

'Manor Master... There's no time. You must wake up.'

Otherwise, there was no telling what Lady Seok might do.

Lady Seok, the first wife, regained her usual arrogant expression as she stepped outside.

As she exited to the wooden porch, Inner Manor Master Jang Myeong-in, the one-eyed female warrior Ho-ang who served as her escort, and two maids were waiting for her.

Lady Seok approached Inner Manor Master Jang Myeong-in and spoke.

"Is the cause of death certain?"

In response to that question, Inner Manor Master Jang Myeong-in nodded and quietly replied.

"It's certain. He didn't die from physical trauma. I've seen countless corpses for a long time, but that..."

Jang Myeong-in gestured with his eyes to where the corpse of the dead diviner Myo-sin lay.

It was covered with a rough cloth, but the exposed skin was grotesquely bulging with veins.

Even she had never seen such a corpse before.

Lady Seok turned her head away from the corpse and asked in a low voice.

"What did they say?"

"According to the escort warrior, he came to visit the sick."

"Visit the sick..."

“Yes. Then the diviner went berserk as if possessed by something, severed the Manor Master’s arm, and tried to kill him.”

“...What a mess.”

“I apologize. I should have at least guarded the entrance of the pavilion...”

Jang Myeong-in bowed and apologized.

She shook her head at this.

“What can be done about what has already happened? But do you really think so?”

“What do you mean by ‘think so’?”

“Do you really believe that the child came to visit the sick and accidentally discovered it?”

“...Based on the state of the corpse and the circumstances, it seems to be the case.”

“Seems to be?”

“Young Master Mok Gyeong-un even suffered an injury where his thigh was pierced by a sword. The bleeding was severe, and it could have been dangerous.”

From Jang Myeong-in’s perspective, that was the case.

An injury of that degree was difficult to self-inflict.

If it had been a slight cut by a sword without danger or minimal bleeding, it could be doubted, but this left no room for suspicion.

“...”

Despite this explanation, she still didn’t let go of her doubtful gaze.

Seeing this, Jang Myeong-in understood.

It was because she viewed all the young masters, except for the eldest, unfavorably.

At that moment, she asked.

“Where is that child now?”

“Pardon?”

“I’m talking about Mok Gyeong-un.”

“Ah, I hurriedly stopped the bleeding for the third young master, but I sent him to the infirmary for treatment.”

“The infirmary?”

“Yes.”

Her gaze turned towards the infirmary located on the west side of the main building.

Soon, her footsteps followed her gaze.

‘A pleasant scent.’

Mok Gyeong-un sniffed and smiled.

The scent of various medicinal herbs, which he hadn’t smelled in a long time since descending the mountain, immersed him in nostalgia.

Memories of following his grandfather to gather medicinal herbs.

Recalling those fresh and beautiful memories, conflicting emotions welled up in a corner of his heart once again.

-...

The Demonic Monk’s eyes, with only white pupils, flickered with interest.

It was influenced by the intense killing intent.

Ordinary killing intent wasn’t particularly influential to ghosts, but what emanated from Mok Gyeong-un was different.

It was so intense that even ghosts found it unpleasant.

It was a darkness qualitatively different from the resentment created by the environment.

It was almost primitive in nature.

-...

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un asked in a low voice.

“So, did you find it?”

-...

The Demonic Monk nodded in response to that question.

“Where is it?”

The Demonic Monk pointed to a wall filled with medicinal herb drawers.

At first glance, the entire wall seemed to be filled with drawers for storing medicinal herbs.

But the Demonic Monk pointed there.

The medicinal herb drawer that the Demonic Monk pointed to had ‘O-yang[1]’ written on it.

When the bark of the parasol tree[2] was dried in a shaded place for a long time, it became a medicinal herb called O-yang, which wasn’t commonly used.

‘It makes sense.’

They deliberately targeted a medicinal herb drawer that wasn’t frequently used.

The reason Mok Gyeong-un had the Demonic Monk confirm this was because of the words that had come from the Manor Master’s mouth.

[Medicinal... Hall... Underground... (丁, jeong)... stone... door... inside...]

However, there was no entrance leading underground inside the infirmary.

He had expected that to be the case.

If it was a valuable item that a woman like the first wife would target, there was no way it would be placed where everyone could see it.

‘Well, I’ll find out when I check.’

Mok Gyeong-un surveyed his surroundings.

Currently, the infirmary was filled with people working there, including the pharmacist.

With many eyes watching and ears listening, it seemed difficult to verify.

It seemed that he would have to wait until late at night.

Just then,

-Creak!

The one who opened the door and entered the infirmary was none other than Guard Go Chan.

Go Chan approached Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un said to him.

“You’re a bit late.”

At those words, Go Chan almost frowned for a moment.

The task Mok Gyeong-un had assigned him wasn’t as simple as fetching water.

It wasn’t a task that could be done in an instant, yet he complained about being late. It was truly unfair.

“Where is it?”

In response to Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Go Chan took out two books from his bosom.

“Only two books?”

Go Chan grumbled at Mok Gyeong-un’s disappointed tone.

“These were secretly removed before they were burned.”

“Before they were burned?”

“Yes, the escort warriors guarding the main building are burning the diviner’s bookshelf and all his belongings.”

“Oh, really?”

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue regretfully at those words.

He had been interested in the diviner’s sorcery and wanted to examine the books he possessed.

But among the many books, only two were salvaged.

'Synopsis of Various Philosophers: Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang[3]?
Introductory Writings on the Strange and Unusual[4]?'

Those were the titles of the two books.

Go Chan had managed to remove the two thickest books among the ones he had seen.

It seemed he would have to be satisfied with these, as disappointing as it was.

"Good work."

"But Young Master... why do you need the books the diviner had..."

Go Chan stopped mid-sentence.

Then he put the books he was about to hand over to Mok Gyeong-un back into his bosom.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at him with a puzzled expression, wondering why he did that.

But soon, he understood the reason.

-Step back for a moment.

-Yes.

As new footsteps approached from outside the infirmary and said something, the escort warriors guarding the entrance vacated their positions.

-Creak!

As the door opened, someone revealed themselves.

It was a middle-aged lady dressed in fancy attire adorned with precious metals.

Go Chan, surprised, bowed his head and greeted her.

"Greetings to the First Madam."

'First Madam?'

She was none other than Lady Seok, the first wife of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes flickered with interest.

She was the woman mentioned in the information file given by Guard Gam.

It was stated that Lady Seok, the first madam, was more dangerous and needed more caution than the eldest young master, Mok Yeong-ho.

She was from the martial arts family of Jinhua Seokga Clan and had considerable martial arts skills. She was also described as a cunning woman.

'Oh my...'

Go Chan was equally perplexed by her appearance.

Although Mok Gyeong-un's appearance was indistinguishable from the real one, Guard Gam had strongly advised to avoid meeting people from the Mok family as much as possible to prevent any unexpected situations.

"It is the First Madam's order. Everyone, leave."

At the command of Hoang, the one-eyed female warrior escorting Lady Seok, everyone in the infirmary went outside.

-Rustle rustle!

As everyone was sent out, Guard Go Chan sensed that something was wrong.

He had never directly clashed with her, so he had no idea what this was about.

At that very moment,

Lady Seok approached Mok Gyeong-un, who had only raised his upper body on the bed.

Go Chan hurriedly gestured with his eyes.

'Greet her. Greet her.'

Understanding this, Mok Gyeong-un clasped his hands together and bowed his head in greeting.

"Please forgive me for not being able to stand up due to my injured leg."

He greeted her better than expected.

However, the critical point was from here on.

The stark difference between the fake and the real one was the voice and manner of speaking.

Fortunately, this fake Mok Gyeong-un had a similar voice to the dead real Mok Gyeong-un, so it sounded somewhat similar during practice, but he was worried if it would work.

'Although the young masters, except for the eldest, rarely have direct encounters with the First Madam...'

Lady Seok was more sensitive and suspicious than expected.

If they were exposed here, the worst situation might unfold.

At that moment, Lady Seok, who had approached right in front of him, spoke.

"I'm not here just to receive a mere greeting."

'Phew...'

For a moment, Go Chan almost let out a sigh of relief.

Fortunately, it seemed that Lady Seok hadn't noticed.

It seemed that the fake was more indistinguishable from the real one than expected.

It was still like walking on thin ice, but if they didn't make mistakes, they could overcome this moment...

-Squeeze!

'!?'

Go Chan's eyes widened.

It was because Lady Seok suddenly pressed on Mok Gyeong-un's injured thigh.

Mok Gyeong-un lowered his head as if in pain and let out a groan.

"Argh!"

'D-shit!'

Go Chan couldn't hide his perplexity at the sight.

It seemed that the issue wasn't whether he was real or fake.

Judging by her attitude, she was suspicious of whether Mok Gyeong-un was truly injured or not.

“What did you see and hear there?”

-Squeeze!

“Ugh!”

Lady Seok pressed even harder on Mok Gyeong-un’s wound and spoke.

Seeing this, Go Chan couldn’t sit still.

That crazy bastard couldn’t possibly endure the pain.

But if he made a slip of the tongue in this situation, not only would it arouse the First Madam’s suspicion, but it would also make her an enemy.

“Madam! There seems to be some misunderstanding...”

-Shing!

As Go Chan stepped forward to stop her, Hoang, Lady Seok’s escort warrior, drew her sword and pointed it at his neck.

“Don’t interfere.”

‘Damn that wench!’

Go Chan was at a loss for what to do.

If he couldn’t speak, Mok Gyeong-un had to handle this situation alone.

Now, he had to endure and lower his head to escape this situation.

Hoang, the escort warrior of Lady Seok, was glaring at him, so he couldn’t even exchange glances or mouth words anymore.

-Squeeze!

At that moment, Lady Seok pressed even harder on Mok Gyeong-un’s thigh and urged.

“You may not know, but it’s rare for a diviner with that level of skill to die by being possessed by an evil spirit while performing sorcery. Yet you say that the diviner was possessed by something, severed the Manor Master’s wrist, and tried to harm him, but you stopped it? Did you think I would easily believe...”

-Snicker!

Lady Seok furrowed her brows at the sound coming from Mok Gyeong-un's mouth.

Just a moment ago, he had been in pain.

But did he just sneer now?

If she hadn't misheard, that was the sound of a sneer.

"You... Did you just..."

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un slowly raised his head.

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un smiling with the corners of his mouth lifted, Lady Seok was momentarily dumbfounded.

Had this fellow gone insane?

'No, what are you doing now?'

Guard Go Chan was equally perplexed.

In a situation where he should be keeping his head down to avoid suspicion, what was he doing?

As expected, Lady Seok spoke in a voice filled with anger.

"If you truly..."

"Let's not waste each other's energy on pointless things."

"What?"

"You need the Manor Master's seal, don't you?"

'!?'

Chapter 14

'!?'

At those words that came out of Mok Gyeong-un's mouth, Guard Go Chan's expression stiffened.

The Manor Master was safe, so there was no need to hide it, but Go Chan never expected Mok Gyeong-un to directly mention it.

'No, how did he...'

Did he really want to provoke the First Madam, Lady Seok, that badly?

That was practically her secret.

Revealing that he knew about it could easily lead to his death in this very place.

'shit!'

Go Chan, tensed up, glanced at Lady Seok.

As expected, Lady Seok's expression had turned even more venomous than usual.

However, anger didn't immediately pour out of her mouth.

That was because,

'This bastard...'

From the beginning, she had come here because she suspected that Mok Gyeong-un might have seen or found out something.

But Mok Gyeong-un's attitude was completely unexpected.

Admitting that he knew her secret was no different from asking to be killed.

'What is his intention?'

Did this wretched fellow think he had the upper hand because he held her weakness, making him act boldly?

If that was the case, he had made a grave mistake.

In any case, this fellow was also someone who needed to be dealt with if Mok Yeong-ho became the Manor Master.

-Grab!

Lady Seok's hand swiftly grabbed Mok Gyeong-un's neck like a snake targeting its prey.

Seeing her movement, Guard Go Chan could be certain.

She, hailing from the martial arts family of Jinhwa[1] Seok Clan, was definitely a first-rate expert.

'No one but Master Gam could match her.'

That also meant that Mok Gyeong-un couldn't handle her.

'Huh?'

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes flickered with interest as his neck was grabbed.

He was inwardly surprised by her unexpectedly strong force and unique hand technique.

'Is this woman strong?'

The information file stated that she would have considerable martial arts skills as she was from the Jinhua Seokga Clan.

But if she was this strong, she was much more powerful than Go Chan.

'Interesting.'

Lady Seok's wrist was extremely slender.

It was no different from any other woman's, yet it possessed such strength.

Indeed, the power of martial arts was mysterious.

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un's reaction, Lady Seok's eyes narrowed.

'This fellow...'

She had grabbed his neck to intimidate him, implying that she could take his life at any moment, but far from being afraid, he didn't even show a hint of perplexity.

She hadn't seen him often because he wasn't her own child, but did this child have this much guts?

Rather, she knew him to be the most timid among his half-siblings.

"You..."

That single word that came out of Lady Seok's mouth.

Hearing it, Guard Go Chan swallowed his saliva.

Could it be that they were exposed?

Come to think of it, wouldn't a first-rate expert be able to discern whether the other person had learned martial arts or not just by grabbing their neck?

However,

"...Were you hiding your true colors?"

'!?'

At those words that came out of Lady Seok's mouth, Go Chan was dumbfounded.

Should he consider this fortunate?

Or should he see it as having aroused even more suspicion?

She didn't seem to doubt him, but it appeared that Lady Seok had perceived it negatively.

"So this was your true self..."

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

"That's... not... important... right now."

"What?"

"If... the Manor Master... were to... pass away... it would be... difficult for... the eldest young master... to become the Manor Master."

"You bastard!"

-Squeeze!

Lady Seok's grip tightened even more.

"Impudent fellow. Do you think I can't kill you right here? Who do you think you are, trying to negotiate with me?"

"This... is a bit painful."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, she furrowed her brows.

With this much force on his neck, it should be difficult for him to breathe, but his expression didn't change much.

Was he not in pain?

While she was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“I see... Negotiation... requires... a certain level... of caution... towards the other party.”

“Caution? Do you think I would feel that towards the likes of you?”

Among the four sons of the Mok family, Mok Gyeong-un had the most insignificant martial arts skills.

Moreover, his mother had passed away, and his maternal family was practically ruined, so what could make her feel cautious?

Right at that moment,

“Demonic Monk.”

As soon as those words were uttered,

-Flinch!

Suddenly, a chilling sensation that made her spine shiver seized Lady Seok.

Then, Lady Seok was suddenly pushed back as if she had collided with something.

-Whoosh!

Lady Seok’s eyes trembled as she was pushed back about four steps.

‘What was that just now?’

Something had touched her, but it was invisible.

In an instant, she raised her energy to create a reactive force as she was pushed, but the sensation was not just unpleasant; it even gave her goosebumps.

“Phew.”

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un, who had raised his upper body, twisted his neck to loosen it.

-Crack! Crack!

“Having someone grab your neck isn’t a pleasant experience.”

At his relaxed tone, Lady Seok glared fiercely and spoke.

“You... What did you just do?”

“What did I do?”

“Just now, clearly...”

It was difficult to explain.

Mok Gyeong-un hadn't directly done anything to her.

But what was that bizarre sensation?

As she struggled to understand, Mok Gyeong-un sat cross-legged on the bed and said,

“Are you now inclined to negotiate?”

“Negotiate? Don't make me laugh. It seems you had a hidden trick up your sleeve, but do you think that kind of luck will continue like it did just now?”

“Is it still not enough? Then shall we try with a maid?”

“What?”

“The left one seems good.”

“What are you talking about, the left one...”

At the moment she was about to question him,

“Ah!”

Everyone's gaze turned towards the direction of the scream.

‘!?’

Lady Seok's eyes trembled.

No, not just her eyes, but the eyes of everyone in the infirmary widened.

It was because one of the maids that Lady Seok had brought with her had floated up to a height of about one jang (approx. 3.3 meters).

“Mmph!”

It seemed like she was trying to scream in surprise, but the maid's mouth was blocked as if something was covering it, making her mumble.

At this sight, everyone was at a loss for words.

What is happened was happening?

Why was a perfectly fine maid floating up there by herself?

'This... This is impossible.'

Lady Seok's mind became complicated by this bizarre phenomenon.

She had heard that among profound internal martial artists, there were those who could manipulate objects with their internal energy, or true qi.

But it was highly unlikely that this young fellow was such a profound internal martial artist.

Moreover, if he had exerted such profound true qi to lift the maid, she would have sensed some energy.

'What... What is this?'

Guard Go Chan was equally surprised.

What was the meaning of this?

Was this fake Mok Gyeong-un hiding such a strange ability?

-Swish!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un casually raised a hand and made a gesture of slitting his throat.

Right then,

"Ack!"

As if being grabbed by something, the maid floating in midair had her facial veins bulging grotesquely, and her eyes rolled back.

It seemed like she would take her last breath at any moment.

'This... This is?'

The image of the dead diviner's corpse flashed in Lady Seok's mind.

Startled by the sight, Lady Seok shouted,

“S-Stop!”

“What are you saying?”

“It’s obvious that you’re doing this! I don’t know what kind of sorcery this is, but stop it right now!”

“Well.”

“You!”

“Since I’m trying to prove that I’m qualified to negotiate with the First Madam, wouldn’t it be okay to take the life of one person?”

Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly.

In contrast, Lady Seok’s expression hardened even more.

The maid, who seemed like she would take her last breath at any moment.

If she were an ordinary maid, it would be one thing, but this girl had been serving Lady Seok since her main family, the Seokga Clan.

-Clench!

Biting her lip tightly, she shouted,

“Enough! Stop it! I’ll listen to what you have to say about negotiation or whatever, so stop it right now!”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un lightly nodded.

Then,

-Thud!

The maid, who was on the verge of taking her last breath, collapsed on the floor, unconscious.

“Sohwa! Sohwa!”

The other maid hurriedly checked on the condition of the unconscious girl.

Fortunately, she let out a sigh of relief, indicating that her life wasn’t in danger.

Lady Seok was also relieved, but more than that, she became suspicious of Mok Gyeong-un's bizarre ability.

What is happened was this?

It was a power unrelated to qi.

It was closer to sorcery or a mysterious force.

When did he learn such an eerie power?

'...This bastard.'

Her mind was filled with doubts, but she couldn't figure out what this power was at the moment, so it was too risky to confront him recklessly.

To do that, she should have brought only escort warriors who knew martial arts.

Lady Seok, who had been glaring at Mok Gyeong-un, opened her mouth.

"...What do you want to negotiate?"

"Since the Manor Master will pass away today or tomorrow, don't you need the Manor Master's seal?"

"..."

She didn't answer, but she didn't deny it either.

In the first place, there was no reason to deny it.

It was the only way to ensure the succession.

However, something didn't make sense to her.

"If you knew that, you could have kept it hidden, so why are you telling me?"

"Why am I telling you?"

"Yes. You're also from the Mok family, so you should want to become the Manor Master."

This was where she became suspicious.

She couldn't understand why he was bringing up something that he could have kept hidden.

If he used the Manor Master's seal, he could gain the support of the retainers.

But,

"I don't particularly want to become the Manor Master."

"What?"

At those words that came out of Mok Gyeong-un's mouth, Lady Seok was momentarily speechless.

He didn't want to become the Manor Master?

He could become the head of a prestigious martial arts family that wielded power in the northern part of Anhui Province, yet he didn't desire that?

"...Are you expecting me to believe that?"

"You don't believe me?"

"Would you believe it if you were in my position?"

"No, I wouldn't. You might think I'm lying."

"If there's no convincing reason..."

"Firstly, as I said earlier, I have no interest in it, and secondly, I don't want to get involved in the succession battle and fight. How about that?"

"You don't want to fight?"

"Yes. To be precise, I have no interest, and I don't want to waste time on unnecessary things."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, she frowned.

Was this fellow now considering the matter of determining the head of the great Yeon Mok Sword Manor a waste of time?

How much effort had she put in to make her own son, Mok Yeong-ho, become the Manor Master?

It was absurd in a different sense.

Lady Seok stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un and said,

“...If you truly don't want anything, tell me the location of the Manor Master's seal and the secret manual. Then I'll believe that you've really given up.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un scoffed.

“I can't do that.”

“Then I can't fully believe your words...”

“Don't believe me then. In that case, I'll make the same offer to the second young master.”

“What?”

For a moment, Lady Seok's composure wavered.

“What are you saying...”

“It's exactly as you heard. Since the First Madam seems to have trouble understanding, let me explain kindly. I may not need it, but are you and the eldest young master, Mok Yeong-ho, the only ones who want the Manor Master's seal?”

‘!!!!!’

Her expression completely hardened.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and said,

“It seems you now realize who holds the hilt of the sword.”

1A city in Hebei province

Chapter 15

-Bang!

Upon returning to her residence, Hyehwa Hall, the First Madam Lady Seok kicked a chair violently.

The chair, infused with internal energy, split in half.

Her face flushed red, she panted heavily.

“How dare he!”

Even when she was in the infirmary, she had tried her best to suppress her anger.

But now that things had turned out like this, it was difficult to contain her rage.

“Madam, please calm down.”

Hoang, the escort warrior, cautiously tried to dissuade Lady Seok.

In response, she spoke in an irritated voice.

“Calm down? Do I look like I can calm down right now? I finally found and brought a skilled diviner, but instead, that outrageous fellow got his hands on the seal... Argh!”

“Madam!”

Lady Seok grabbed the back of her neck.

As her blood pressure rose, she closed her eyes, perhaps feeling dizzy.

In fact, even though she kept the second son, the most cunning among the Mok family's children, and the youngest son, whom the Manor Master favored, in check, she had paid no attention to the third son, Mok Gyeong-un.

He had no talent in martial arts, and it was no exaggeration to say that his maternal family was almost ruined.

Therefore, she had not paid any attention to him.

But who would have thought that the fellow, who was never even considered, would turn out to be such a hidden threat?

-Clench!

Lady Seok gritted her teeth.

She had not anticipated that the fellow would negotiate like this over the Manor Master's seal.

She had thought that he would readily spill the information with just a little intimidation.

‘...Was he always like this?’

The Mok Gyeong-un she knew did not have such a cunning side.

Rather, he was close to being a coward and a scaredy-cat.

There were many anecdotes about him.

'Was he hiding his true self?'

Come to think of it, until his birth mother died, he was constantly described as being quite intelligent, if not a genius.

'Perhaps he did that to protect himself after that incident.'

If that was the case, he might be someone to be even more wary of.

Although he had stated that he had no interest in the position of Manor Master, those who knew how to hide themselves and had strong patience were all the more terrifying.

'And that power...'

That bizarre power bothered her.

The maid Sohwa had suddenly floated up, her veins bulging, and she was about to take her last breath.

Seeing that, the image of the dead diviner Myo-shin had come to her mind.

Sohwa's condition was very similar to his.

If that was the case,

"...That fellow must have killed the diviner Myo-shin as well."

"Are you referring to that Mok Gyeong-un?"

"Yes."

It certainly made sense if that was the case.

The diviner, who was brought in because of his rumored skill, couldn't possibly have been possessed by an evil spirit and gone on a rampage.

It had to be the doing of that Mok Gyeong-un.

At Lady Seok's conviction, the escort warrior Hoang leaped up.

"How dare he kill someone you summoned? Leave it to your subordinate. Before he can even use his sorcery, I will..."

"Stop."

"But..."

“If the Manor Master’s seal really ends up in the hands of the second son, Mok Eun-pyeong, or the youngest son, Mok Yu-cheon, my son will have to bear the consequences.”

“But if we let that fellow lead us around...”

“Who said anything about being led around?”

“Pardon?”

Lady Seok took something out of a white porcelain vase on a shelf in the corner of the room.

It was a small bead made of jade.

The bead had a unique pattern engraved on it, and she handed it to the escort Hoang.

“What is this?”

“Take this and go to the Ghostly Spirit Pavilion[1] in Mengcheng. And inform the pavilion master about the fact that the diviner Myo-shin was murdered.”

“Ah!”

The escort Ho-ang, understanding her intention, nodded.

Ghostly Spirit Pavilion.

It was the group of diviners to which the deceased Myo-shin belonged.

-Slap!

Guard Go Chan’s head turned to the side from the slap.

Guard Gam clicked his tongue, looking at him with disappointment.

“Tsk tsk, is it that difficult to monitor a mere novice?”

“N-No, it’s not.”

“I told you that you were allowed to subdue him, yet you took him to the main hall and back? Are you out of your mind to do such a thing?”

At Guard Gam’s scolding words, Go Chan couldn’t say anything.

In fact, if it were up to him, he wanted to reveal everything that had happened while he was away.

No, he had originally intended to do so.

But now, he was hesitant to do that.

‘...Why do I feel so uneasy?’

With just martial arts, Master Gam could easily deal with that fellow whenever he wanted to.

Yet, after experiencing the fake Mok Gyeong-un, he had become fearful of him.

Not only did he have toxicity in his blood and that eerie sorcery, but what bothered him even more was that the fellow didn’t seem human.

If he carelessly made an enemy out of him, it seemed that the end wouldn’t be good.

‘shit.’

He didn’t know what to make of this situation.

When they found someone suitable to play the role of Mok Gyeong-un, it seemed good, but now he had no choice but to do as that impostor commanded.

[I trust that you will keep your mouth shut.]

‘...’

Those words were quite ominous.

Although the fellow was outside the infirmary and couldn’t hear them, he strangely felt conscious of his presence.

It was as if someone was watching him.

Why was it like this?

While he was engrossed in this strange feeling, Guard Gam, who had been clicking his tongue, spoke.

“If you let that fellow snoop around one more time, I won’t let it slide.”

“...He won’t be able to walk around easily for a while anyway, with his thigh pierced.”

“Whether it’s his thigh or whatever, don’t let him draw attention.”

“I understand.”

“Anyway, you’re sure you weren’t caught by the First Madam, right?”

“Yes, I’m certain. I was right beside him. However, the First Madam was displeased because he visited the main hall.”

‘To be precise, he held the First Madam’s weakness and negotiated with her.’

Go Chan’s mouth was parched.

The boundary of whose side he was on had become blurred.

To think that he had to hide half of the truth from Master Gam, who he should be telling the facts to.

“Tsk tsk.”

Guard Gam shook his head from side to side.

Indeed, that fellow was not suitable for the role.

He had realized it when he killed the real Mok Gyeong-un on the spot, but as time passed, it would become more difficult to control him.

‘We need to hurry.’

Even though he had warned him, if he continued to act on his own like this, things could go wrong later.

A quick decision was needed on who to replace him with.

“Keep an eye on him without taking your eyes off him even for a moment.”

“Won’t you directly warn him?”

“There are too many eyes watching.”

Inside the infirmary, there were pharmacists and attendants.

Although they were mere servants, they were also in the position of escorts, so they couldn’t interfere with them as they pleased, and they couldn’t scold him in front of others, even if he was a fake.

Moreover,

'He's cunning. It's not good to have a long conversation with that fellow.'

It was better to keep him in the dark about how the situation was unfolding.

That way, it would be easier to replace him later and deal with him.

Regardless of this conversation taking place outside, Mok Gyeong-un was comfortably leaning back and reading a book, flipping through the pages.

It was the "Synopsis of Various Philosophers: Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang".

As he was flipping through the books, a certain passage caught Mok Gyeong-un's interest.

'When a dead person becomes a wandering spirit and turns into a monster, the level of the monster varies depending on various conditions.'

The "Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang" had a surprisingly detailed description of monsters.

Based on this, the Demonic Monk could be considered a type of ghost or evil spirit that had become a monster from a wandering spirit.

'Low-level and weak wandering spirits take the form of earth-bound spirits and can only influence the living by stimulating their sixth sense. Hmm.'

According to the "Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang," the levels of wandering spirits were divided into seven stages.

Putting aside various conditions and simply dividing the levels:

The first level was the Red Spirit... an earth-bound spirit that could influence the living by giving them goosebumps or a slight chill.

The second level was the Orange Spirit... it could possess others, making their bodies feel heavy or causing them to feel sick enough to have a cold.

The third level was the Yellow Spirit... from this level onwards, it was described as requiring exorcism as it was quite dangerous.

In terms of level, a Yellow Spirit could not only weaken the possessed person but also lead them to death.

‘...Based on the level, the Demonic Monk is a Yellow Spirit.’

Even within the Yellow Spirit level, it was further divided into three stages based on the degree of danger.

The lower stage could reveal its form and directly instill fear in humans.

The middle stage could directly influence or inflict pain on living beings.

The upper stage could kill the possessed person.

-Swoosh!

At that moment, someone appeared like smoke, penetrating through the wall near the entrance of the infirmary.

It was the Demonic Monk.

Mok Gyeong-un didn’t know, but it seemed that the Demonic Monk had a higher level than he thought.

‘So that’s what it meant by influencing living beings.’

He now understood why the Demonic Monk couldn’t touch the corpse of the dead diviner Myo-shin.

It was because he was already dead.

A dead body ultimately had no life, so it couldn’t be influenced.

‘I see.’

However, there were also things he learned that weren’t described in the “Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang.”

He had the Demonic Monk target the First Madam, Lady Seok.

But the moment the Demonic Monk lightly touched her, Lady Seok instantly reacted and was pushed back.

‘They said that woman was a first-rate expert.’

On the other hand, the First Madam's maid didn't even notice until the Demonic Monk directly threatened her life and was helplessly affected.

What was the difference between them?

Was it because the maid hadn't learned martial arts?

'Could it be that the power of monsters doesn't work well on those who have learned martial arts?'

The "Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang" didn't mention that aspect.

-Creak!

At that moment, Guard Go Chan opened the door of the infirmary and entered.

Mok Gyeong-un slightly raised the corners of his mouth and muttered.

"A good test subject."

"Pardon?"

Go Chan asked, puzzled.

"Ah, I wasn't talking to you, Guard Go Chan. Shall we try lightly lifting your arm?"

"Young Master, what do you mean by that?"

Right at that moment,

-Flinch!

Go Chan felt a chilling sensation throughout his body.

It was a bizarre feeling that went beyond the realm of the five senses, which could be called the body's sensations.

-Lift!

"Huh?"

Go Chan's arm suddenly tried to lift upwards.

'What!'

The startled Go Chan sent his internal energy to resist it.

However, Go Chan's arm, which was trembling as he resisted, couldn't hold out for long and was forcibly lifted up.

'What is this...'

Go Chan was utterly perplexed as he couldn't understand what was happening.

But he soon realized why this was happening.

"Y-Young Master?"

Mok Gyeong-un gently waved his hand.

Then, as if someone had let go of his wrist, Go Chan was able to lower his wrist that had been forcibly lifted.

Although his wrist was lowered, Go Chan, who seemed very surprised, said to Mok Gyeong-un,

"What is happened did you just do?"

"I just needed to confirm something."

"Confirm?"

"Yes."

"Why did you do that to me..."

"You were just the right fit. Aren't you a second-rate warrior, Guard Go Chan?"

"That's right, but what exactly are you trying to confirm..."

"You don't need to know."

"..."

Yeah, you won't tell me nicely anyway.

Go Chan stood in front of the bed with a face that couldn't hide his discomfort.

'this bastard.'

He slightly regretted that it might have been better to tell Master Gam exactly what had happened.

Regardless of that, Mok Gyeong-un nodded to himself as if he had learned something.

'It works on Guard Go Chan.'

Go Chan also immediately noticed the moment the Demonic Monk grabbed his wrist.

Perhaps because he had learned internal energy, his senses were definitely more sensitive than ordinary people.

Although he resisted for a bit, he couldn't overcome the Demonic Monk's strength.

'The Demonic Monk's power works smoothly on ordinary people and up to second-rate warriors.'

That was the criterion for stable effectiveness.

Although it hadn't been definitively verified yet, perhaps the power of a Yellow-level monster might not have a significant effect on first-rate experts.

If that was the case, it might be a bit disappointing.

'Well, even so, it's not like it's not useful.'

The Demonic Monk, a monster, had high utility in many ways.

Just like how he had eavesdropped on the conversation between Go Chan and Guard Gam earlier, he could also send him to monitor if the distance was close, and it was good to send him for reconnaissance in blocked areas.

How useful was that?

Suddenly, as Mok Gyeong-un read the passages below in the "Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang," he had such a thought.

'It wouldn't be bad to obtain an even stronger monster.'

The fourth level, Green ghost... very dangerous. Exorcism is a compulsory.

A wandering spirit that has existed for more than several decades. It can influence surrounding objects and cause auditory hallucinations, enough to confuse the living.