

MYST, MIGHT, MAYHEM

Myst, Might, Mayhem #Chapter 41 - Read Myst, Might, Mayhem Chapter 41

Chapter 41

Everything appeared black.

Guard Go Chan felt no sensation in his body.

And he realized that everything around him was empty, and he couldn't feel any of his five senses.

'Am I dead after all?'

He thought his life was truly pathetic.

He was an orphan who didn't even know who his parents were, and he had lived half his life as an assassin after being taken in by an assassination organization.

Just when he finally retired and tried to live like a human being, everything became twisted because of one damn impostor.

Everything felt unjust, and he could only lament.

'Where am I going?'

He was curious at times.

About what happens when you die.

But then, a familiar voice reached his ears.

".....With meager words and numbers, success lies in the timing. Today's alcoholic offering enters the profound realm, communicating with and receiving the spirits I rely on, the spirits I seek. Weighing and pouring the ceremonial fruit, I bear the shadow of regret as I carry the sacred fragrance within me."

'Haa.....'

Even in death, he could hear this voice.

It was the voice of that impostor.

'Am I suffering even in death?'

Having lived as an assassin, he never thought he would go to paradise.

But hearing this voice even after death made him depressed.

However, the voice continued.

"The third invocation: a leisurely return and surrender. Eight pecks and eight flavors, fresh and new. Choose wisely, devote yourself to the knowledge of the spirits' desires."

As soon as those words ended,

Go Chan felt himself being pulled by some strong unknown force, and the sensations that had disappeared were faintly replaced by something else.

Along with it, the blackness in his vision brightened.

'!?'

Go Chan blinked his eyes.

He saw Mok Gyeong-un forming some strange hand seal in front of him.

What was this? Wasn't he dead?

While he was puzzled, he noticed a captivating woman with a dumbfounded expression beside Mok Gyeong-un...

'Heuk!'

It was none other than Ha Chae-rin.

What is happened was this situation?

Why were the two of them looking at him like this?

As he was wondering, Ha Chae-rin opened her mouth.

"Did it work?"

"Yes. It seems to have succeeded. The Half-Six-Eight Spirit Summoning Technique."

'Half-Six-Eight Spirit Summoning Technique?'

What did that mean?

The Half-Six-Eight Spirit Summoning Technique.

It is a type of sorcery that utilizes the Eight-Person Talisman to control ghosts.

Not knowing this, Go Chan had no idea what the two were talking about.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un lowered his hands from the seal and said,

“Go Chan, let me apologize first.”

-Huh? Wh-what?

Go Chan was momentarily startled.

His voice didn't sound like his own, but rather some strange, different form.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said,

“Reviving you was impossible from the start, so I tried to turn you into a corpse ghost using the Six-Person Spirit Summoning Technique, but it seems that failed because my death energy is still insufficient.”

-Yo-Young Master? What in the world are you talking about? And why does my voice sound like this? Huh?

Go Chan was stunned for a moment as he looked at his body.

He looked at his palm, but why did it appear so hazy?

He could see through his palm to the other side.

He had no idea what this phenomenon was.

“Hey, you fool. Your soul's rank has fallen, so it appears even more hazy. Don't make a fuss.”

Ha Chae-rin said to him.

-What?

At this, Go Chan frowned as he looked at her.

This bitch had tried to kill Mok Gyeong-un by piercing through his heart, and now she was acting as if they were acquainted?

As if sensing this thought, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Ah, Guard Go Chan. This isn’t the assassin from the Bi-Sal Sect that you knew.”

-What? What do you mean by that?

“Cheong-ryeong has taken over her body.”

-.....

Go Chan couldn’t help but be confused by the incomprehensible words.

Why was his body like this, and what on earth was Mok Gyeong-un talking about?

To the bewildered Go Chan, Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head and said,

“Guard Go Chan, I think I need to tell you this.”

-What is it, Young Master?

“You’re dead.”

-What?

“I’m saying Guard Go Chan is dead.”

-...What do you mean by that? I am currently...!?

Suddenly, Go Chan’s expression stiffened.

Come to think of it, it was strange that his voice sounded eerie and that he appeared translucent.

So he went to a place where there was a mirror to look around,

‘!?’

Go Chan was at a loss for words.

His reflection did not appear in the mirror.

-...Young Master... Am I really dead?

“Yes.”

-.....

Go Chan was speechless.

He felt a mixture of emotions and a sudden surge of grief.

He had held onto a faint hope.

The hope that he might not be dead.

Seeing him like this, Mok Gyeong-un offered condolences that were not quite comforting in a dry voice.

“May you rest in peace.”

-...Are you mocking me right now? Are you playing with me?

Go Chan couldn't hold back his anger anymore, beyond the surge of emotions.

Now that he was dead anyway, he was sick and tired of being mindful of this fellow, and there was no reason to do so anymore.

-If you hadn't killed Master Gam, none of this would have happened, you damn bastard!

Curses poured out of him.

Seeing him like this, Cheong-ryeong, who had taken over Ha Chae-rin's body, laughed.

She had expected him to be this angry to some extent.

In fact, without considerable anger or obsession, souls usually ascend rather than becoming vengeful spirits.

But it was Mok Gyeong-un who had forcibly held onto him and turned him into this state.

'His rank has fallen too.'

In terms of rank, Go Chan was the lowest-grade spirit.

He was no more than a street-level spirit that could be seen only very rarely.

-Damn bastard. You son of a bitch. Bastard. Die! Die! I curse you even in death... No, I'm already dead. Anyway, I curse you. You impostor! From the fourth generation to the fifth generation, misfortune...

“Phew. Shut up.”

Mok Gyeong-un said with a sigh.

At that moment, something strange happened.

-Mmph mmph mmph!

Go Chan couldn't open his mouth as Mok Gyeong-un commanded.

He wanted to curse, but the words wouldn't come out regardless of his will.

Why was this happening?

To the puzzled Go Chan, Mok Gyeong-un said with a smile,

“Although you're dead, Guard Go Chan has become my servant ghost through the Half-Six-Eight Spirit Summoning Technique.”

-.....?

What did that mean again?

“You're curious about what a servant ghost is, right? To put it simply, a slave ghost? Yes, you can think of it that way.”

“A slave ghost?... Ha! Do you want to die, you fool?”

Cheong-ryeong glared at Mok Gyeong-un and raised her voice.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un waved his hand lightly and corrected himself,

“Let's just say he's a ghost who has to cooperate with me.”

-.....

“Ah, you can't speak. If I let you, will you keep cursing?”

Go Chan shook his head vigorously.

“How obedient. Then you can speak again.”

-Ah?

At Mok Gyeong-un's command, his voice returned.

At this, Go Chan was momentarily confused about how to accept this situation.

He had thought that now that he was dead, he wouldn't be swayed by this fellow anymore, so he had cursed to his heart's content.

But even in death, he had to follow this fellow's orders?

'...shit.'

Curses naturally came to his mind.

Of course, they didn't come out of his mouth.

Now that he knew Mok Gyeong-un could control him with a single word, he became afraid of this fellow.

'what the is he?'

He had witnessed strange scenes several times.

But he never imagined that he would possess such unbelievable abilities.

The power to make even the dead submit to him was absurd.

To such Go Chan, Mok Gyeong-un said,

"Anyway, Guard Go Chan, I'm glad we can continue to be together."

-.....

Glad?

Did he think he would be happy to be ordered around by him even in death?

It was not only disheartening but also distressing.

"Hmm. You don't like it?"

-.....

"It seems you don't like it. Then should I just let you go?"

At those words, Go Chan looked at him with a gleam in his eyes.

He thought he would be used even in death, but was he really going to let him go?

As he was feeling hopeful, Mok Gyeong-un glanced at Cheong-ryeong and said,

"I don't know the technique to release a servant ghost yet. Is there any other way to release him?"

“If I knew that, would I be in this state?”

“I see.”

“Or if he desires it so much, you can forcibly exorcise him.”

At those words, Go Chan asked in puzzlement,

-I... What is exorcism?

“It means forcibly banishing a spirit, you fool.”

-...Banish? Then does that mean I'll die?

“That's right.”

-I'm already dead though.

“If you die further from there, you'll be annihilated.”

-...Does that mean I'll completely disappear?

“Yes. You'll completely vanish from this world. Who knows, there might be something else, but I don't know since I haven't experienced it myself.”

At these words, Go Chan's face stiffened.

He thought if Mok Gyeong-un released him, he would go to a place like the afterlife.

But from what they were saying now, it sounded like they would kill his soul.

Suddenly, Go Chan became afraid.

Even now that he was dead and had become a spirit, it was terrifying, and the concept of completely disappearing evoked immense fear.

Was that why?

-Yo-Young Master!

Go Chan knelt down in front of Mok Gyeong-un.

Then, lowering his head, he pleaded,

-I... I misspoke. Having just died and being confused about what was happening, I was rude to you, Young Master.

“Hmm? Didn’t you say you didn’t want to be with me?”

-No! I absolutely want to be with you, Young Master. Not wanting to be with you? That’s an absurd thing to say. Although I have died like this, now that I have another chance to be with you, I will serve you with utmost loyalty.

It was a quick change of attitude.

Even though he was dead, Go Chan feared further changes here.

Seeing his appearance, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

-Ttuk!

Then, Cheong-ryeong frowned.

Noticing her expression, Mok Gyeong-un asked,

“Is it as expected?”

At that question, Cheong-ryeong muttered in an irritated voice,

“This one can’t endure it either. I thought it would be a bit better, but it’s a useless wench.”

At those words, Go Chan looked at her in puzzlement.

That expression and way of speaking were completely different from Ha Chae-rin’s.

What was going on?

-Ttuk! Ttuk!

At that moment, black blood vessels bulged out from the neck of Ha Chae-rin, who was expressing anger.

Then, Cheong-ryeong, who was inside Ha Chae-rin’s body, let out a deep sigh and,

-Sssss!

She emerged from that body.

-Thud!

Ha Chae-rin’s body collapsed on the ground like a corpse.

At that moment, Go Chan froze like an ice sculpture.

He wondered what it was, but Cheong-ryeong, who had emerged from Ha Chae-rin's body, was truly a shock in itself.

'Wh-what is this?'

Among spirits, their ranks can be clearly distinguished.

Just as humans have five senses, spirits have their own alternative senses.

Those senses were warning Go Chan.

That this was a monster beyond imagination.

-Hwaaaaa!

It was as if the surroundings were dyed in blood, walls were collapsing, and even the ground was splitting apart in an illusion.

This was definitely not an ordinary spirit.

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong raised an eyebrow and said to Go Chan,

-Won't you lower your gaze?

At those words, Go Chan trembled and slowly lowered his head.

Then, Cheong-ryeong snorted and said,

-A newbie spirit whose body is still warm from just dying dares to stare at me?

-...I-I apologize.

Go Chan felt disheartened once again.

He thought that everyone would be the same in death, but that wasn't the case.

Even in death, there was still a gap in power in that world, and he was no different from the weak.

While this was happening, Mok Gyeong-un said,

"What a shame. I thought it was a quite suitable body."

-I didn't have high expectations.

“Is that so?”

He clearly remembered her being very pleased.

Where else could he find the body of a young woman who had reached the peak realm?

He thought this level would be able to handle Cheong-ryeong, but in just a few moments, the body couldn't endure it and cracked like the servant ghosts.

“I guess there's no choice. It's a pity, but this body...”

-What's there to pity? We can just use it.

“Pardon?”

-The rank has fallen anyway, so it won't be of much use in the spirit state. We can give it to this fellow.

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un looked at Go Chan with interest.

Go Chan tilted his head with an anxious expression, wondering what they were talking about.

-Why me all of a sudden?

Then, Cheong-ryeong suddenly approached Go Chan.

-Sssk!

Feeling fear from the overwhelming pressure, Go Chan instinctively tried to back away, but Cheong-ryeong grabbed his neck as if hooking him and pushed him somewhere.

-Wh-why are you doing this...

-Stop blabbering and go in. It's rare for a newbie to have this opportunity.

-Pak!

It was Ha Chae-rin's body, lying on the ground like a dead person.

-Uh-oh?

-Ssssssk!

At that moment, Go Chan's spirit was forcibly pushed into Ha Chae-rin's body by Cheong-ryeong against his will.

Ha Chae-rin's body, which was lying on the ground, squirmed and moved wildly.

Looking down at this with his arms crossed, Mok Gyeong-un said indifferently,

"Hmm. Is it alright?"

-Don't know. I've cleared out the ego, so even if the rank has fallen, it should be able to take control quickly.

"Is that so? But..."

He wondered if it was really alright.

While this was happening, Ha Chae-rin, who had been convulsing as if in agony by herself, suddenly sat up and spoke with a bewildered look in her eyes.

"Wh-why all of a sudden... Heuk! What is this?"

She couldn't hide her bewilderment at her own voice.

After being startled like that, she lowered her head to look at her chest and was even more shocked.

"Wh-what on earth is this?"

No matter how you looked at it, it was a woman's body.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said to him as if there was no other choice,

"Yes. It seems you'll have to work with that body from now on."

Chapter 42

We corrected the numbering of chapters from 250 to 270 (there are some errors in it, but the consistency of the chapters is correct, don't worry)

A man in navy blue martial arts robes, carrying a writing case on his back, paced back and forth not far from the Yeon Mok Sword Manor's clan residence, clutching a talisman in his hand.

-Flutter flutter!

Before long, a large flapping shadow appeared, centered around where he stood.

Gradually, as if descending, the shadow diminished in size.

“Go-jo. Have you found him?” the man asked.

In response, the shrunken eagle shadow shook its head.

Perplexed, the man’s expression shifted to one of incomprehension. He then pointed his sword finger mudra towards a specific spot in the void.

Closing his eyes, he immersed himself in deep concentration.

After a while, he opened his eyes, furrowing his brow.

‘What’s this?’

Having received what Go-jo had witnessed, the man struggled to make sense of the situation.

The entire clan residence seemed shrouded in a hazy mist.

Such a phenomenon does not occur easily.

It can be considered a type of Ghostly Domain, manifested by the powerful intent of a high-level vengeful spirit.

‘.....This is no ordinary matter.’

In terms of magical techniques, a Ghostly Domain is akin to a barrier.

Only vengeful spirits of at least the Green ghost level and above are capable of forming such a domain.

This was the reason for the man’s grave concern.

‘How do I deal with this?’

He had intended to observe the target from the outside, but that had become difficult.

Even diviner Sak, whose mastery of magical arts nearly rivaled his own, had fallen victim to it, making it impossible to recklessly approach using spells.

However, the Ghostly Spirit Pavilion had incurred the Madam’s wrath, rendering the prospect of entering equally daunting.

“Hmm.”

As he pondered, his gaze fell upon a tipsy youth, arm in arm with women who appeared to be courtesans, stumbling along the path.

The youth swayed and collapsed to the ground, vomiting, as the courtesans attempted to rouse him.

“Oh my!”

“Young Master Mok? Young Master Mok? You should go home and rest. Didn’t you promise to show us around?”

“Mmm…….”

The courtesans, referred to as Young Master Mok, shook him several times to wake him. When he failed to regain consciousness, they furtively glanced around.

Seeing that Young Master Mok remained unresponsive, they discreetly began rummaging through his pockets.

Observing this, the corners of the man’s mouth curled up slightly.

The Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang state that the lowest rank of vengeful spirits, the Red Spirits are a type of earth-bound spirits that can cause the living to experience goosebumps or mild chills.

Go Chan had become a vengeful spirit due to his unwavering desire to live, his sense of injustice, and the death energy infused by Mok Gyeong-un.

Moreover, he was a Red Spirit, the lowest rank.

As a newly formed vengeful spirit, he knew nothing and had no clear understanding of possession or how to carry it out.

Thanks to Cheong-ryeong’s advice, he managed to gradually take control of Ha Chae-rin’s body.

As he suppressed her consciousness, fragments of memories seeped in.

A blood-stained room.

A heart filled with resentment.

[Grandfather? You can’t be dead, right? Grandfather, you’re one of the Four Great Assassins of the Central Plains, the Flying Killing Yama’s Guest. Get up. You can’t die. Get up!]

[The position of sect leader is vacant, and you want me to complete the Hundred Days and Nights? What kind of nonsense is that?]

[Just do it! Do it!]

[Grandfather..... I will definitely inherit your position and avenge you. No matter who it is.]

Through absorbing Ha Chae-rin's memories, Go Chan learned that the sect leader had been suddenly murdered, plunging the Flying Killing Sect into internal chaos.

Ha Chae-rin had been undergoing the Hundred Days and Nights ritual to become the next sect leader of the Flying Killing Sect.

'Was that so?'

It was a truly astonishing revelation.

The deceased sect leader, who had earned the title of one of the Four Great Assassins, was a supreme master who had reached the Peak of the Transcendent Realm and boasted an almost perfect success rate in assassinations, befitting his status at the pinnacle of the assassin world.

Yet, such an exceptional assassin had been unexpectedly killed.

Based on Ha Chae-rin's memories, even his granddaughter suspected that it might have been the work of one of the other Four Great Assassins.

If that were the case, it would pose significant challenges for the Flying Killing Sect's pursuit of revenge.

Of course, that was their problem.

Go Chan desperately wanted to resolve this issue.

"Sir....."

"Yes?"

"Please remove me from this body."

-Shudder!

Even as he spoke, goosebumps rose on his skin, and his arms tingled.

It was because of his own voice.

Anyone can imagine being the opposite sex, but when it actually happens, it becomes overwhelming for Go Chan.

“If I remove you, I’ll have to deal with that woman immediately.”

“.....”

She was an assassin who had targeted Mok Gyeong-un’s life.

He couldn’t let her live.

“That woman is the granddaughter of the Flying Killing Sect’s Manor Master, right? Didn’t you say she’s the next sect leader?”

“Well, yes, but.....”

“I came here because of the now-dead Guard Gam, but if his granddaughter dies, things will get even more troublesome, don’t you think?”

“..... That’s..... true.”

Go Chan’s voice trailed off.

He couldn’t deny Mok Gyeong-un’s words.

Although the disciples of the Flying Killing Sect found her temperament challenging, their loyalty and respect for the deceased Flying Killing Yama’s Guest were exceptionally high.

Therefore, if his granddaughter Ha Chae-rin were to die, the entire Flying Killing Sect would resort to every means possible to kill Mok Gyeong-un.

In fact, he secretly hoped for it.

‘I wish he would die.’

However, if Mok Gyeong-un died, Go Chan would also perish.

That was the fate of a spirit with a connected bond, as Cheong-ryeong had explained.

‘shit.’

It was a cruel twist of fate.

He was essentially no different from a slave.

He couldn't allow Mok Gyeong-un to die, even if he wanted to.

Go Chan found himself in a conflicted state of mind.

-Sigh.

Cheong-ryeong, who had been smoking a long pipe and exhaling smoke, clicked her tongue and spoke to the troubled Go Chan.

-Why do you look like you're about to die? Newbie. You should be grateful just for possessing a living body.

Is this something to be grateful for?

If that's the case, couldn't she have put him in a male body?

However, fearing Cheong-ryeong, he uttered words that contradicted his true feelings.

".....Well, that's true, but."

-You were a weakling when you were alive, weren't you?

"....."

-To be merely second-rate at that age, even after retiring as an assassin, means there was almost no hope for you.

"....."

It was like a fatal blow, one might say.

Every word Cheong-ryeong spoke was like a sharp dagger, tormenting Go Chan.

It rendered him speechless in a different sense.

-Pak!

At that moment, Go Chan instinctively tilted his head back slightly.

"Yo- Young Master?"

Right in front of his nose, he saw the sole of Mok Gyeong-un's shoe.

If he had been a moment later, he would have been kicked in the chin.

Mok Gyeong-un then said to him,

“You’re definitely fast. Even faster than when you were alive.”

“What?”

Go Chan frowned at those words.

Upon reflection, he realized that this movement was not his own.

He had followed the lead of the body.

The body of Ha Chae-rin, who had reached the Peak of the Transcendent Realm, possessed a level of intuition that was incomparably more acute than Go Chan, who had merely been second-rate.

‘Ah!’

Seeing his realization, Cheong-ryeong chuckled and spoke.

-Why are you so surprised? It’s only natural since you’ve possessed a strong body.

“Is- is that so?”

-Still, it’s best if you adapt to it. Newbie, given your low level, it will take more time for you to fully utilize that body.

Even among vengeful spirits, there exist different ranks.

Cheong-ryeong, who had ascended to the realm of the Two Demons and Two Spirits[1], could draw out power surpassing the original body when possessing someone.

However, Go Chan, who was merely at the lowest Red Spirit level, was incapable of such feats.

Nonetheless, possessing the body of a supreme master at the Peak of the Transcendent Realm meant he had become incomparably stronger than his original self.

‘Peak.....’

Go Chan felt a strange sensation.

When he had been alive and cultivating martial arts, his goal had been to reach the first-rate level.

However, despite his ardent desire, his talent was lacking, and he ultimately failed to cross that threshold.

Now, he found himself in possession of a body that had reached the Peak of the Transcendent Realm.

Realizing this, his feelings took a distinct turn.

-You seem to be pleased now, I see.

At Cheong-ryeong's remark, Go Chan regained his senses and waved his hands in denial.

Although he was captivated by the prospect of being at the peak, the fact that it was a woman's body and not a man's continued to torment him.

-Being a newbie, your thinking is still mundane.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

Once one accepts the reality of their own death and the concept of being a spirit, the physical body becomes nothing more than a shell.

Of course, there is a difference between a shell one likes and one that one doesn't, but still.

She found it incomprehensible that he would show such aversion simply because it was a woman's body.

-Tsk tsk. You should be satisfied that you've obtained a young and beautiful body.

"I- I am a man. Even if being young is good, a woman's body is simply....."

-If you dare to indulge in self-gratification while secretly admiring yourself in the mirror when no one's looking, I will kill you.

"No. Why would I do such a thing?"

He had no such inclinations.

If he had to possess a body, he would have preferred a male one.

Mok Gyeong-un then said to him,

"For now, please adapt to that body. When an opportunity arises later, I will arrange for you to transfer to another one."

He wanted to demand an immediate change, but recognizing the situation, Go Chan could say no more.

He could only nod his head in dejection.

It seemed he had no choice but to live as Ha Chae-rin for the time being.

But would this fellow really allow him to switch bodies so easily?

He felt a strange unease.

At that moment...

-Thump thump thump!

The sound of someone running down the corridor could be heard.

Then, someone knocked on the door.

-Knock knock!

“Who is it?”

-Young Master! It's Bokhyeon from the Inner Hall.

“Come in.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the door opened, and a man dressed in the attire of the Inner Hall entered.

The man named Bokhyeon slightly bowed his head in a simple greeting, then spoke in a voice filled with delight.

“Young Master. Rejoice.”

“What?”

Why was he suddenly being told to rejoice?

As he wondered, the Inner Hall guard Bokhyeon said,

“The Manor Master has awakened!”

‘!?’

Those words brought a glint to the eyes of both Mok Gyeong-un and Go Chan, who was possessing Ha Chae-rin's body.

At the time, the Manor Master had not been possessed but was on the verge of death due to the demonic master's kill (殺).

Although Mok Gyeong-un had left the body, the Manor Master had been significantly weakened, yet somehow, he seemed to have survived.

'Hmm.'

This was an unexpected development.

Mok Gyeong-un had been contemplating leaving this place once he had become somewhat familiar with the basic techniques before the Manor Master succumbed to his injuries.

Staying longer would only lead to unpleasant entanglements with the Madam or the Second Young Master.

But now, the Manor Master had awakened.

Does that mean he had fully recovered?

"Young Master?"

At the call of the Inner Hall guard Bokhyeon, Mok Gyeong-un changed his expression and placed his hand on his chest, speaking in a tone of relief.

"Ah, what a relief. To hear that Father has awakened."

Seeing his act, Go Chan inwardly clicked his tongue.

Of course, the Inner Hall guard Bokhyeon, unaware of Mok Gyeong-un's true nature, harbored no suspicions.

"It's a blessing for the Yeon Mok Sword Manor Clan."

"Indeed. Thank you for coming to inform me."

"Ah! That's not the only reason."

"What?"

"The Manor Master is looking for you, Young Master."

"For me?"

"Yes. He said to bring you immediately."

Mok Gyeong-un slightly tilted his head at those words.

The Manor Master had summoned him as soon as he woke up?

Why?

-Could it be because of that hidden place beneath the Medicinal Hall?

'Ah.....'

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un inwardly acknowledged the possibility.

Perhaps the Manor Master had already checked the place where the secret manuals were hidden after waking up.

If that were the case, Mok Gyeong-un would naturally be the object of suspicion.

-What will you do?

In response to that question, Mok Gyeong-un lightly shrugged his shoulders.

Currently, the Inner Hall guard had personally come to escort him, so he had no choice but to go.

Judging solely from the delighted reaction of the Inner Hall guard, it was still uncertain whether the Manor Master had summoned him for the reason Cheong-ryeong had speculated.

"I understand. I will head to the Main Hall shortly."

"No. He said to bring you immediately."

"Immediately?"

'Maybe not?'

Hearing it put this way, it became difficult to ascertain once again.

Regardless, it seemed the encounter with the Manor Master could not be delayed.

"Understood. Then, let us go."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Go Chan, who was possessing Ha Chae-rin's body, habitually prepared to follow.

However, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head and said,

“Guard Go..... Chae-rin, don't you have some cleaning to do in the storage room?”

‘.....Go Chae-rin, he said.’

The names were mixed up.

Feeling somewhat cringed, Go Chan frowned.

Suddenly, he recalled what had happened in the storage room.

‘!!!!!’

It was the place where he had lost his life.

Had they not disposed of his corpse yet?

“I'll be back soon. In the meantime, please take care of the cleaning.”

“..... Understood.”

As Go Chan responded, Mok Gyeong-un left the room, following the Inner Hall guard Bokhyeon.

Cheong-ryeong naturally accompanied Mok Gyeong-un.

After their departure, Go Chan felt a sense of unease.

He now found himself in a situation where he had to handle the disposal of his own corpse.

‘shit.’

Go Chan shook his head in disbelief.

Nevertheless, he soon rose from his seat to head to the storage room.

‘Mmm.’

For a moment, Go Chan blushed as he looked down at his chest.

The unfamiliar weight and sensation he had never experienced as a man left him feeling strange. Goosebumps rose involuntarily.

He gazed into the mirror but couldn't adapt.

Ha Chae-rin's alluring face and fluttering clothes remained unchanged, and she was undeniably beautiful.

Perhaps because she had grown so splendidly, 'It's more bothersome than I thought.'

His chest felt somewhat heavy.

Go Chan furtively glanced around to ensure no one was nearby, then, driven by curiosity, unknowingly brought both hands gently to his chest.

-Swish!

At that instant, Cheong-ryeong's face abruptly appeared, penetrating through the door screen.

"....."

Go Chan instantly froze like ice.

-Tsk tsk.

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue as if finding it pathetic, then promptly withdrew her face.

-Swish!

He hastily opened the door and looked outside, but she had long vanished.

Go Chan felt the urge to dig a grave and bury himself right then and there.

'Hmm.'

A glint of interest flashed in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes as he headed towards the Main Hall.

It was because he wasn't the only one heading there. On a forked path, Mok Yu-cheon, whose complexion had turned somewhat dark red compared to four days ago, was walking under the guidance of another Inner Hall guard.

'Could it be unrelated to the Medicinal Hall incident?'

Should he consider it fortunate?

As he pondered, Mok Yu-cheon, who had spotted Mok Gyeong-un, approached with quick strides as if he had something to say.

Chapter 43

Mok Yu-cheon approached with quick strides, as if he had something to say.

However, upon reaching Mok Gyeong-un, he seemed unable to speak his mind directly, perhaps due to the presence of the two Inner Hall guards who had come to escort them.

In response, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and spoke first.

“It’s been four days.”

“Don’t make idle talk. You.....”

“You?”

Mok Yu-cheon stammered, unable to complete his sentence.

What could be the reason for his behavior?

As Mok Gyeong-un wondered, Mok Yu-cheon gestured with his head, indicating that they should head to the Main Hall for now.

Thus, they walked towards the Main Hall.

When the Inner Hall guards took the lead, walking ahead with a sense of discretion, Mok Yu-cheon spoke in a quiet voice.

“You..... Have you tried that thing?”

“That thing?”

“Keep your voice down.”

Mok Yu-cheon admonished softly.

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and replied in a low voice.

“What are you talking about?”

“Are you really asking because you don’t know?”

“Ah! Perhaps the Ignited Wood.....”

“Shh.”

Mok Yu-cheon cut off Mok Gyeong-un’s words.

Glancing at the Inner Hall guards walking ahead of them, Mok Yu-cheon whispered even more quietly.

“Don’t mention it directly. Just answer my question.”

What Mok Yu-cheon was inquiring about was none other than the Manor Master’s exclusive secret manual, the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Method.

In fact, upon noticing that Mok Yu-cheon’s complexion had turned significantly darker compared to four days ago, Mok Gyeong-un immediately understood what he was referring to.

However, he feigned ignorance.

-It’s impressive that you haven’t succumbed to delusion yet. Hoo.

Cheong-ryeong, who was beside them, remarked while puffing on her pipe.

She, too, was aware that Mok Yu-cheon had learned the wrong cultivation method.

Since Mok Gyeong-un had not provided the complete method and had arbitrarily changed some characters in the oral formula, side effects were inevitable.

“Is there a problem?”

Although it was intentional, Mok Gyeong-un spoke as if he knew nothing.

Mok Yu-cheon’s brow furrowed fiercely.

“You’re saying that even after looking at my face.....”

His voice rose, but as he glanced ahead, Mok Yu-cheon cut off his words.

He seemed to be suppressing his anger.

After managing to compose himself, Mok Yu-cheon spoke quietly.

“Did you try it or not? Just tell me that.”

In response to that question, Mok Gyeong-un answered nonchalantly.

“If it were you, wouldn’t you have tried it?”

At those words, Mok Yu-cheon narrowed his eyes and stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un.

‘..... Right. There’s no way you wouldn’t have tried it.’

Even if he had claimed not to covet the position of Manor Master, it was a secret manual of the Supreme Martial Arts.

Any martial artist would have been curious.

‘But why are you unaffected?’

For the past four days, Mok Yu-cheon had practiced the breathing technique of the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Method with overflowing enthusiasm.

However, the more he practiced, the more he felt the internal energy within his body transforming and becoming strangely different.

On the first day, he had dismissed it as a possible effect of the Supreme Martial Arts cultivation method, but after four days, his skin had turned dark red, and something felt amiss.

‘..... Did he deceive me?’

Due to the changes occurring in his body, his suspicions wouldn’t easily subside.

It was difficult to confront Mok Gyeong-un, as he had readily recited the oral formula nine times upon request, making it ambiguous to accuse him of providing a fake one.

‘If that fellow taught me the genuine method, then it means I’m the problem.’

That, in itself, was hard for him to accept.

Even he, who had reached the Peak of the Transcendent Realm, was struggling to master the cultivation method, yet this fellow showed no signs of the same side effects as him.

If that were the case, it would imply that he might have misunderstood or incorrectly practiced the oral formula of the cultivation method.

-Clench!

Mok Yu-cheon’s fist tightened.

No, that couldn’t be.

How could this fellow, who was merely third-rate due to his lacking talent, surpass him, the one hailed as a genius, in his understanding of the Supreme Martial Arts?

He didn't know what the problem was, but he was determined to overcome it.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un said to Mok Yu-cheon,

"I'm not sure what the issue is, but now that the Manor Master has awakened, won't the situation change?"

This time, the corners of Mok Yu-cheon's mouth curled up slightly.

Indeed, the Manor Master's awakening was a stroke of fortune for him.

He had begun learning the Manor Master's exclusive martial arts through a deal, but many of the clan's vassals still viewed him, the son of a concubine, with distrust.

Thus, he had felt a great sense of unease.

However, now that the Manor Master, who cherished him, had awakened, the succession structure had once again turned in his favor.

'The heavens are on my side.'

Perhaps the Manor Master summoning his children immediately after waking up was related to this matter as well.

To clearly designate his successor.

Seeing Mok Yu-cheon's expectant demeanor, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and turned his gaze away, as if disinterested.

-Hoho.

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong looked somewhere with intrigue.

Mok Gyeong-un glanced at her questioningly.

She then spoke.

-It seems they have entered.

'Entered?'

-They have quite the guts. To set foot inside my Ghostly Domain without fear, even after seeing it.

'Ah.'

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un nodded in understanding.

It seemed that what he had been waiting for had arrived.

Mok Gyeong-un had anticipated that diviner Sak's associates would undoubtedly come before long.

-I shall greet them first.

-Swish!

With those words, Cheong-ryeong, whose red eyes gleamed, vanished beyond the wall beside the path.

In front of the Main Hall.

Another bloodline of the Mok family had already arrived.

It was Mok Yeong-ho, the eldest young master.

Although he had circulated his internal energy to alleviate his hangover to some extent, he still reeked of alcohol, causing Lady Seok's expression to sour.

His debauchery was nothing new, so despite her frustration, she had grown somewhat accustomed to it.

However, today was different.

'Why now, of all times?'

She was already plagued with worries due to the variable named Mok Gyeong-un.

But this variable could be resolved by either eliminating Mok Gyeong-un or seizing the Manor Master's exclusive secret manual from him, so she was contemplating alternative solutions.

Yet, the Manor Master, whom she had assumed would surely breathe his last, had awakened.

Rather than joy at her husband's awakening, she was gripped by unease.

'..... Could it be?'

Why had he summoned his children first thing after waking up?

No matter how much she pondered, only one thought crossed her mind.

‘Successor.’

Perhaps the Manor Master, having barely regained consciousness after a long coma, intended to designate his successor in preparation for any unforeseen circumstances.

If her speculation were correct, it would be disastrous.

It was a well-known fact that the Manor Master had favored the youngest, Mok Yu-cheon.

If Yeong-ho were to enter in such a state at this juncture...

-Grit!

Even though he was her own child, at times like this, he was truly a nuisance.

Just two years ago, he had been sensible enough to be called clever, if not a genius, but at some point, he had become immersed in wine and women.

All of this was because of that Mok Yu-cheon.

However, now was not the time to loathe or resent him.

“Yeong-ho.”

“Yes, Mother.”

“Refrain from making unnecessary remarks in front of the Manor Master. This mother will handle everything, so you just stay quiet.”

Opening his mouth while reeking of alcohol would do no good.

Although this meeting was only for the children, she believed they wouldn’t prevent her, as the wife, from entering.

If the Manor Master intended to confirm the succession immediately, she had to find a way to stop it.

As she pondered, she noticed Lady Jang and the second son of the Mok family, Mok Eun-pyeong, approaching from the entrance of the left pavilion.

‘Hmph.’

They were also detestable.

Lady Jang, who hailed from the Huinan family, acted subserviently in front of her, addressing her as “sister-in-law,” but behind her back, she resorted to all sorts of schemes to elevate her own son to the position of Manor Master, such as winning over the clan’s vassals.

‘Despicable creature.’

That Mok Eun-pyeong was no different.

Like mother, like son, he was a thief coveting the position of the eldest son, Mok Yeong-ho.

Although she wasn’t certain what the Manor Master would say today, their desires would not come to fruition.

She would make sure of it.

As she ruminated, the last of the Mok family’s young masters arrived at the entrance of the southern pavilion.

It was the third son, Mok Gyeong-un, and the youngest, Mok Yu-cheon.

Seeing this, the Inner Manor Master, Jang Myeong-in, ascended the wooden floor and announced through the door screen,

“All the young masters have gathered.”

The four half-brothers of the Mok family stood side by side.

From left to right, there was the eldest young master Mok Yeong-ho, the second son Mok Eun-pyeong, the third son Mok Gyeong-un, and the youngest Mok Yu-cheon.

Only these four had entered the Manor Master’s room.

Lady Seok, the first wife, and Lady Jang, the second wife, had insisted on entering as well, but they were unable to do so due to the Manor Master’s adamance.

They were waiting outside, fidgeting anxiously.

‘Hmm?’

Mok Gyeong-un was inwardly perplexed.

The reason was the reactions of the Mok family brothers.

He had expected them to show joy and warmth, welcoming the Manor Master who had narrowly escaped death's doorstep, as he was their father. However, surprisingly, they appeared utterly tense.

Even Mok Yu-cheon, who was said to be so cherished, was no exception.

As a result, the atmosphere was quite heavy.

'..... So that's why.'

Now he understood.

He realized why they had been so concerned about the Manor Master's life and death while he was bedridden.

It turned out they were gauging the Manor Master's mood.

How strict must he be for them to display such nervousness?

Mok Gyeong-un surreptitiously glanced at the face of the Manor Master, who was half-sitting on the bed.

Despite being unconscious for a long time due to the killing (sal) curse (殺), his eyes were so sharp that they felt alive.

'Wasn't it said that he's the strongest in the Yeon Mok Sword Manor?'

That was indeed written in the information note left by the real Mok Gyeong-un.

Manor Master Mok In-dan.

He was said to be the strongest swordsman in the Yeon Mok Sword Manor and one of the top ten swordsmen in the entire Anhui Province.

Out of curiosity, he had asked the deceased Guard Gam about this.

[What level does being in the top ten of a province equate to?]

[Do you think it's an easy feat to become one of the top ten swordsmen in an entire province, you fool?]

The Guard Gam had said that Manor Master Mok In-dan was a martial artist who had reached the Peak of the Transcendent Realm.

At the time, he hadn't fully grasped the magnificence of that level.

However, after experiencing the strength of the youngest Mok Yu-cheon, who had reached the early stage of the Transcendent Realm, he could now somewhat fathom how powerful a master of that caliber would be.

But that also raised a question.

'How did he fall victim to the killing curse?'

A supreme master at the Peak of the Transcendent Realm is said to manipulate energy as naturally as breathing.

It was incomprehensible how someone so formidable had succumbed to the kill, a type of curse.

As he was studying magical techniques, it puzzled him even more.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes met those of Manor Master Mok In-dan.

Unlike the other brothers, Mok Gyeong-un did not avert his gaze.

He saw no reason to do so, no matter how strict the father-son relationship was.

"....."

This behavior caught the attention of Manor Master Mok In-dan.

The reason was simple.

This child, who had never properly made eye contact with him since his mother's passing, did not avoid his gaze.

However, his bewilderment ended there.

Mok In-dan spoke.

"Do you know why I summoned you all?"

"....."

Everyone remained silent in response to this question.

Of course, they all had one thing in mind.

'Successor.'

However, they couldn't openly voice it.

They had to avoid appearing presumptuous here.

But someone broke the silence and spoke up.

“Could it be that you summoned us all immediately after waking from your long illness to discuss the matter of your successor?”

Everyone looked at the speaker with slightly startled eyes.

It was Mok Gyeong-un.

‘You?’

‘He’s being straightforward?’

After glancing at Mok Gyeong-un, they cautiously gauged Manor Master Mok In-dan’s reaction.

They wanted to check if his mood had turned unpleasant.

Surprisingly, Manor Master Mok In-dan showed no sign of discomfort.

Rather,

“Yes. It is to designate my successor.”

He readily admitted it.

At this, everyone’s expressions grew tense.

Until he had awakened from his sickbed, the Manor Master had never personally mentioned the matter of his successor.

Yet, he was bringing it up for the first time.

‘Is he going to decide right here and now?’

‘Could it be that he gathered us all to pass the successor position to that Mok Yu-cheon?’

‘Is Father giving me a chance?’

Each of them became lost in thought.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un had no attachment to the Manor Master’s position, so he planned to simply go along with the atmosphere.

Perhaps because of this, he appeared the most relaxed among them.

However, this demeanor came as a surprise to the Manor Master.

‘Does he have no expectations? Or has he changed?’

The reaction, which was quite different from the other children, piqued his interest.

Coincidentally, the Manor Master had already heard about recent events from the Inner Manor Master.

[That child, Mok Gyeong-un, saved me?]

[Yes. Initially, even this subordinate found it hard to believe, but the Third Young Master prevented the Fang Assassin who was possessed by an evil spirit and tried to harm the Lord.]

It was quite unexpected.

He would have believed it if it had been the youngest, Mok Yu-cheon.

But of all people, it was this child, whom he had considered the most timid and lacking in talent, with no prospects, who had saved him.

[But that is merely the Third Young Master’s opinion, and the exact truth.....]

[That’s enough. That much is sufficient.]

[Pardon?]

[Summon all the children.]

[You mean the young masters?]

[That’s right.]

The Manor Master had gathered all the young masters less than half a shichen after waking up.

For the first time, he thought that the time given to him might not be long.

Lying on his sickbed for an extended period, he had expended a significant amount of his true energy, and this incident had nearly caused him to close his eyes forever.

If that had happened, the Yeon Mok Sword Manor would have been plunged into chaos and war among his children.

Even without experiencing it, that future was clear to him.

Thus, he made a decision.

“I will determine who is qualified to be my successor through a test.”

‘!!!!’

As he spoke those words, the Manor Master subtly glanced at Mok Gyeong-un.

‘I shall grant even you a modicum of opportunity.’

Chapter 44

We corrected the numbering of chapters from 250 to 270 (there are some errors in it, but the consistency of the chapters is correct, don't worry)

A man in navy blue martial arts robes, with two talismans of the Six Armors Total Symbol[1] on his forehead, chest, and abdomen, and one talisman of the Thunder supreme-ruler's Seal Symbol (雷公印符), continuously chanted spells with a tense expression.

“公公.....公.....公.....公.....公!”

The spell he was reciting was a type of concealment technique called the Western Mantra.

The man in navy blue robes, his face drenched in cold sweat, incessantly scanned his surroundings, maintaining vigilance.

While chanting the spell, no one could detect his presence.

The drawback was that he couldn't move and had to continuously recite the spell without rest.

‘shit.’

He was filled with regret.

He had thought that with his experience surpassing even Sak, and his ability to control the high-grade monster-level Two Demons and Two Spirits, he could thoroughly uncover the truth as long as he was cautious.

However, that had been his miscalculation.

‘How could this happen.....’

It wasn't at the Green ghost level.

There was absolutely no way that could be the case.

If it were a Green ghost, he could have somehow confronted it by combining his magical techniques with the power of his spirit servant, Go-jo.

Yet, in an instant, it had unraveled the binding technique he had cast and inflicted wounds upon him.

The man's back was soaked in blood.

'Go-jo.....'

The spirit servant, Go-jo, had lured that entity.

It was to buy time for him.

However, a problem had arisen.

Thanks to the admirable spirit servant, he thought he could escape this situation, but he couldn't understand what was happening.

-Rustle rustle!

Who were these masked individuals?

Thanks to the concealment technique, he could avoid their gazes, but they didn't seem to be the warriors of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

If they were, there would be no reason for them to enter wearing masks in the middle of the night.

"The dull and hidden form, leading the spirits and acting alone, moving swiftly without hindrance. The noble horse possesses majestic power, the heavenly soldiers march forward....."

It was a difficult situation.

Due to the blood loss from his back, his strength was gradually waning.

For some unknown reason, these masked individuals were thoroughly searching every corner of the surroundings, looking for something.

He had to endure until they disappeared, but it was extremely challenging.

'I must endure. Somehow.'

At that moment.

'What's that?'

A figure, distinctly different from the masked individuals searching the surroundings, revealed himself.

It was a man wearing an eye patch and holding a walking stick.

The moment he saw him, the man instinctively knew.

'A diviner?'

The extraordinary aura emanating from him.

This was one of the characteristics that manifested in those who had cultivated magical techniques for a long time.

Even if that weren't the case, the hand seal he had formed with his left hand alone was a fundamental of magical techniques.

'The Art of Pursuit?'

It was a spell used when one wanted to find a desired target.

The man furrowed his brow.

Seeing how the masked individuals naturally carried on with their task in the presence of the diviner, it was evident that they were all part of the same group.

However, there was a crucial rule among diviners.

They cultivated the principles of the Dao and practiced magical techniques, so they refrained from directly colluding with or joining any worldly organizations.

Until just ten years ago, this rule had been strictly adhered to.

However, it was broken by someone and a group of diviners.

'Could it be?'

These masked individuals.....

-Swish!

'Gasp.'

The man's breathing grew ragged.

It was because the man with the eye patch was standing right in front of him.

He was using a concealment technique, so it should have been impossible to detect him, but he couldn't understand what was happening.

As he was perplexed, the diviner with the eye patch spoke.

"If you wanted to use a concealment technique, you should have completely erased your traces."

'Traces? Ah!'

The man finally realized.

The blood flowing from his back was dripping onto the ground.

At that moment, the man with the eye patch chanted a spell and forcefully struck the ground with his walking stick.

"The spiritual eyes perceive, each possessing clear understanding. Hurry, hurry, in accordance with the law and order! Release (解)!"

-Thud!

-Whoosh!

Instantly, the space around the walking stick distorted, and along with it, the man's figure, which had been completely hidden from sight, was revealed.

Startled, the man leaped backward, attempting to cast another magical technique.

However,

-Clap! Clap! Clap!

Lín (臨)! Bīng (兵)! Jiē (皆)! Zhèn (陳)!

As the hand seals of the Nine Character Activating Method were formed, the man's feet stuck to the ground.

At the same time, his body went limp, and strength drained from him.

The man's eyes widened.

'To perform a technique of this level with just hand seals?'

Magical techniques are completed through various combinations.

Mantra (呪), Talisman (符), Word (言), Seal (印), Instrument (器).

These five elements harmonize exquisitely to form a technique (術).

Diviners with low proficiency need to utilize all four methods to achieve a technique, but those with higher levels of mastery can reduce them.

'At least level-Moon[2] or above.'

Diviners receive six levels of titles based on their proficiency.

From top to bottom, they are Divine (神), Sun (日), Moon (月), Technique (技), Profound (杳), and Conveying (輸).

The man was certain.

This man with the eye patch was a diviner with an extraordinary level of mastery in magical techniques, at least at the Fang Yue level or above.

The man spoke with extreme tension.

"I am Mo Go, the Diviner Assassin of the Ghostly Spirit Pavilion. You are....."

-Grip!

"Urgh!"

Before he could finish his sentence, the man with the eye patch grasped the mouth of the Ghostly Spirit Pavilion's Diviner Assassin, who had identified himself as Mo Go, with one hand.

Then, curling the corners of his mouth in a sinister manner, he spoke.

"How dare you interfere with the actions of our Primal Killing Pavilion? You must have been prepared to die."

'Primal..... Primal Killing Pavilion?'

Unfortunately, his ominous assumption had been correct.

A group of diviners who, despite being members of the Sixty-Four Diviner Sects, had joined a massive martial arts organization.

That was none other than the Primal Killing Pavilion[3].

Meanwhile, at the same time.

-Clang clang clang!

The sound of clashing weapons filled the area in front of the Main Hall.

-Thud!

“Wh- What is this?”

The Mok family brothers, led by Manor Master Mok In-dan, emerged from the room, unable to hide their bewilderment.

The interior of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, which had been peaceful just moments ago, had turned into a battlefield.

The warriors of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor and the unidentified masked individuals were entangled in combat, and it was difficult to fathom how this situation had unfolded.

“Madam. What in the world is going on?”

The Manor Master asked Lady Seok, the first wife, who was standing helplessly in front of the Main Hall.

The vassals and the Inner Manor Master, Jang Myeong-in, were engaged in battle with the masked individuals, so the only ones he could ask were her and the second wife, Lady Jang.

In response, Lady Seok spoke with a perplexed expression.

“I- I don’t know. It hasn’t been long since the outer courtyard guards suddenly shouted about an enemy attack, and in an instant, the masked individuals rushed in, resulting in this situation.”

“Sister-in-law is right. It happened so abruptly that we, too, are at a loss.”

At the wives’ words, the Manor Master’s expression darkened.

Even if it was a surprise attack in the middle of the night, for them to possess the strength to swiftly break through the defensive line of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor's outer courtyard and push their way in, they were no ordinary individuals.

-Shing!

Manor Master Mok In-dan drew his sword with his unfamiliar left hand.

Although he didn't know who these people were, it was too much for the vassals and warriors to handle alone.

The Manor Master unleashed a powerful roar, raising his sword energy

"Who dares to invade the Great Yeon Mok Sword Manor? You must be prepared to forfeit your lives!"

"Waaaaaaah!!!"

At the sight of the Manor Master, the warriors confronting the masked individuals let out a cheer.

With their lord, who had been bedridden for a long time, making an appearance, their morale couldn't help but soar.

"Let's go! Let's protect the Yeon Mok Sword Manor!"

-Swoosh!

As Manor Master Mok In-dan took the lead and leaped forward, the Mok family brothers and the two wives from martial arts backgrounds were also inspired and followed behind him, shouting.

"Protect the Yeon Mok Sword Manor!"

Of course, not everyone participated.

Mok Gyeong-un was the only one who didn't join the battlefield.

He naturally pretended to follow along, then slipped to the side and moved to a place with few watchful eyes.

'It's about time to leave.'

There was no need for him to defend this place.

He didn't care whether they fought the masked individuals and died or not.

Only one thing bothered him.

'The scar.'

The scar on the side of Manor Master Mok In-dan's body.

It resembled that mark.

He wanted to ask how he had acquired it, but coincidentally, an incident had occurred.

'Should I help?'

He was in a dilemma.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un felt a strange sense of fulfillment.

'This is..... Ah!'

It was none other than the energy of death.

Mok Gyeong-un closed his eyes, exhaled deeply, and savored the rapidly increasing energy of death.

'Excellent.'

It seemed that a considerable number of people had died in a short period.

Otherwise, there was no way the energy of death would be overflowing from all directions like this.

Thus, he couldn't possibly ignore it.

'I want to absorb it.'

Opportunities like this were extremely rare.

However, masked individuals were popping out from various places, so if he let his guard down even for a moment, it could be dangerous.

-Swish!

At that moment, someone appeared beside him.

It was a beautiful woman with an alluring appearance, the Protector Go Chan who had taken over Ha Chae-rin's body.

“Young Master. Are you alright?”

He had hurriedly searched for Mok Gyeong-un due to the sudden attack.

Finding him wasn't too difficult since their fates were connected.

In response, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said,

“This is perfect. Can you guard me for a moment?”

“Pardon?”

“Then, I'll leave it to you.”

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un sat cross-legged and closed his eyes.

He then began absorbing the energy of death, which was continuously flowing from the surroundings, through the Reverse Breathing Technique.

‘No. What is he doing?’

At this sight, Go Chan was momentarily dumbfounded.

Even if he had no attachment to this Yeon Mok Sword Manor, was he out of his mind, or was he truly this audacious?

To think of circulating energy in a place that was no different from a battlefield.

However, Go Chan had a sense of why Mok Gyeong-un was doing this.

‘He's absorbing not energy but this?’

Although he had possessed Ha Chae-rin's body, Go Chan was a vengeful spirit.

Therefore, he possessed the Eyes of the Spirit and could see the energy of the deceased rapidly being absorbed by Mok Gyeong-un from all directions.

In the Eyes of the Spirit, the yang energy or life force of living humans appeared clear and warm.

However, Mok Gyeong-un's appearance as he absorbed the energy of death was nearly the opposite.

‘Is he really human?’

To think he would discover this fellow's true nature only after dying.

For some reason, he became even more frightening.

At that moment.

-Swish!

'Huh?'

Suddenly, a hulking monk wearing a skull prayer bead necklace appeared from somewhere.

It was the Demonic Monk who had possessed the body of the Outer Manor Master.

But why had the Demonic Monk reappeared in the form of a vengeful spirit?

'Oh my.'

Momentarily startled by the sudden appearance, Go Chan recalled that Mok Gyeong-un had mentioned having another spirit servant besides Cheong-ryeong.

'I clearly heard that he had possessed the Outer Manor Master's body.'

Go Chan asked in bewilderment,

"Co- Could it be that you are senior Demonic Monk?"

-.....

The Demonic Monk nodded and said something.

It sounded a bit mumbled, but Go Chan understood what he was saying.

"You lost your body to a powerful opponent?"

Losing one's body meant that the possessed body had been defeated?

As far as Go Chan knew, the Outer Manor Master Sang Ung-baek was a supreme master at the early stage of the Transcendent Realm.

But if he had lost his body, just how powerful was the opponent.....

-Crunch!

"Ugh!"

At that moment, along with the sound of something being crushed, a death cry rang out, and a large man with a thick sword of the Taoist sect slung over his shoulder and a body covered in scars jumped over the pavilion.

He exuded an ominous aura, and the Demonic Monk frowned and pointed at him with his finger.

-.....

“What? That man?”

Was he saying that man had killed the Demonic Monk’s possessed body?

As they were conversing, the eyes of the scarred man and Go Chan met.

At that moment,

-Flinch!

‘Wh- What?’

The keen senses of Ha Chae-rin, who had reached the Peak of the Transcendent Realm, were strongly warning him.

They were telling him that the man before his eyes was an extraordinary master.

If Ha Chae-rin’s body was instinctively on extreme alert to this extent, just how high was his level of mastery?

It was impossible to gauge.

Chapter 45

-Whoosh!

The amount was incomparable to the energy generated by the death of a single person.

The death energy created by the deaths of dozens of people was not only vast in quantity but also deep in purity.

This was because it contained all the negative emotions at the very moment of death.

‘Excellent.’

While circulating energy using the Reverse Breathing Technique, it was far more than when he had absorbed the energy of the malevolent spirit, Gu Yeo of the Two Demons and Two Spirits.

This was unexpected.

The risk he had taken was worthwhile.

At this rate, he seemed likely to achieve his goal faster than originally anticipated.

‘Twice..... No, perhaps even three times.’

It was about expanding the diameter of his danjeon.

He was concentrating the high-purity energy flowing in through energy circulation, and if done well, it might be possible to triple it.

Of course, he had no idea what level of internal energy this corresponded to.

As Mok Gyeong-un focused on circulating energy, Go Chan, who was tasked with guarding him, was extremely tense.

‘.....It’s reckless.’

If Ha Chae-rin’s body, which had reached the Peak of the Transcendent Realm, was on such high alert, there was no chance of victory.

Where did such a monster appear from?

At that moment, the scarred man shifted his gaze from Go Chan to Mok Gyeong-un, who was immersed in energy circulation.

Then, with an intrigued expression, he spoke.

“Engaging in energy circulation amidst the chaos of an unknown enemy’s appearance and the spilling of blood. What an interesting child.”

He then began to approach with long strides.

It looked like he was merely walking, but he swiftly closed the distance from the pavilion in just a few steps.

‘Gasp!’

Startled, Go Chan felt it was futile and called out to Mok Gyeong-un.

“Young Master?”

He wanted to shake him and tell him to come to his senses, but if he accidentally disrupted him during energy circulation, it could lead to Qi Deviation.

“Young Master?”

Go Chan called out to Mok Gyeong-un once more.

However, there was no response.

Instead, he seemed to be in a state of self-transcendence, accelerating his energy circulation even further.

-Whoosh!

All the surrounding death energy was visibly being absorbed at a tremendous speed, making it difficult to interrupt the process midway.

In the end, Go Chan concluded that his only option was to buy time.

Come to think of it, he was already dead.

He couldn't let Mok Gyeong-un come to harm out of concern for the possessed body getting injured.

-Whoosh!

Go Chan sent energy to his feet acupoint and stomped his foot.

At that moment, Ha Chae-rin's possessed body shot forward at an incredible speed.

It was incomparably faster than his original body.

-Tap tap tap tap!

In an instant, he circled the scarred man's vicinity twice.

“Hoho. Quite fast indeed.”

The scarred man muttered.

However, it didn't sound like praise at all, and he wasn't even assuming a defensive stance.

Go Chan bit his lower lip.

'He's looking down on me, isn't he? Flying Kill Martial Arts, 3rd Stance, Engraving Silent Performance!'

A martial arts technique naturally came to mind.

The unique martial art that Flying Killing Yama's Guest took pride in, the Flying Kill Martial Arts 3rd Stance, Engraving Silent Performance[1], instinctively unfolded from his body.

-Swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh!

Go Chan somersaulted in the air and unleashed his leg techniques towards the scarred man.

Six windmill-like kicks accurately targeted the vital points along the center line.

He thought the man would dodge or block them in some way, but...

-Shudder!

Suddenly, startled by the sharp killing intent, Go Chan twisted his body to the side.

-Swish!

Severed strands of hair scattered in all directions.

'When?'

If he had been a moment later, that huge Taoist sword would have sliced his body in half.

As he twisted his body, Go Chan threw three Lustrous Jade Flying Needles, which he had drawn from his bracelet, towards the face of the scarred man.

-Swish swish swish!

-Clang clang clang!

However, the man easily deflected them with his Taoist sword.

Moreover, as if that wasn't enough...

-Thud!

"Ugh!"

With an invisible angle, he accurately struck Go Chan's abdomen with his left fist.

Go Chan let out a dying scream as he was sent flying backward, tumbling several times.

-Thud thud thud!

"Cough!"

Blood flowed from his mouth as he coughed.

The difference in skills was evident after just a single exchange.

However, Go Chan's eyes gleamed with surprise.

It wasn't because the scarred man was incredibly strong, but because the pain from that strike wasn't agonizing.

'What is this?'

Strangely, his stomach churned, and he felt nauseous.

Yet, the sensation of pain itself was still absent.

Because of this, Go Chan could recognize that he was possessing someone else's body.

'It feels strange.'

But now wasn't the time to dwell on this peculiar feeling.

Go Chan trembled as he raised his body.

Even if the sensation of pain itself was absent, the fact that his body had suffered an impact remained unchanged.

Thus, his legs wouldn't properly support his weight.

"Woman. If you try to stop me one more time, you'll die."

The scarred man warned in a low voice.

Those words made Go Chan feel somewhat offended.

"Who are you calling a woman....."

"Stop right there!"

-Swish swish swish!

At that moment, someone shouted and leaped forward.

He then blocked Go Chan's path and aimed his sword at the scarred man.

It was none other than Mok Yu-cheon.

"Young Master Mok?"

"Miss, are you alright?"

'Huh?'

At those words, Go Chan's expression turned blank.

Goosebumps were about to rise all over his body.

Glancing at the dumbfounded Go Chan, Mok Yu-cheon spoke with a forceful tone.

"Ahem. Miss, please step back as it's dangerous. I will handle this man."

"....."

As a man, he could tell.

Mok Yu-cheon was putting on quite a show.

Because of that, Go Chan couldn't bear the cringe.

Regardless, Mok Yu-cheon politely bowed to the scarred man, perhaps to make a good impression, and said,

"I am Mok Yu-cheon, the fourth son of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor. May I ask for what reason you have entered our clan and caused this commotion?"

At Mok Yu-cheon's words, the scarred man chuckled.

Then, he looked Mok Yu-cheon up and down and spoke.

"Interesting. To think I would encounter two promising individuals in a place like this."

"What do you mean?"

"Young lad. You have no right to question me."

With those words, the scarred man exuded a strong oppressive aura.

He merely revealed his killing intent, but Mok Yu-cheon's heart raced.

'Strong.'

As a supreme master at the early stage of the Transcendent Realm, Mok Yu-cheon could gauge how powerful the man before him was.

Perhaps he was a master on par with his father before he lost his arm.

It had been a long time since he felt such trembling.

The scarred man then asked him,

"Mok family. Where is your father?"

"Do not address my father so casually."

Mok Yu-cheon raised his voice, seemingly angered by the scarred man's words.

Seeing his reaction, the scarred man smirked and said,

"Don't shout. Trying to conceal your fear only makes you appear weaker."

"What?"

Unable to restrain himself, Mok Yu-cheon leaped forward, intending to unleash his sword technique.

"So naive."

To be provoked by such a trivial taunt.

-Swish!

In an instant, as if the ground had pulled him, the scarred man's figure reached Mok Yu-cheon's front.

'What speed.....'

It was imperceptible.

The startled Mok Yu-cheon tried to twist his body to the left and change the trajectory of his sword technique.

At that moment, the man's hand moved as flexibly as a snake, reaching towards Mok Yu-cheon's face.

"Huh?"

Mok Yu-cheon hastily raised his left arm.

The man's palm lightly touched his wrist.

The instant it made contact, a majestic energy penetrated, and Mok Yu-cheon's body was sent flying as if it were a feather.

-Bam!

"Ugh!"

The force was so strong that he flew more than five zhang before coming to a stop.

Mok Yu-cheon tumbled several times on the ground and spat out blood.

"Cough."

Even though he had tried to circulate his body's protective energy upon contact, the opponent's internal energy had penetrated his viscera.

It was a high-level emission technique called Penetrating Force[2].

It exhibited exceptionally effective power against martial artists weaker than oneself, and Mok Yu-cheon was such an existence to the scarred man.

'To not even be treated as an opponent.....'

The Taoist sword he held in his right hand remained slung over his shoulder.

The gap was too overwhelming.

However, he couldn't give up here.

This situation wasn't a friendly spar or training.

'A real battle.'

This man was an enemy who had invaded the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

If he yielded here, it would be the end.

Mok Yu-cheon regulated his breathing and raised his body.

Then, Go Chan approached his side, assuming a bow stance, and said,

“Young Master. We need to attack together.”

“Miss?”

‘This bastard!’

For a moment, Go Chan felt the urge to tell him not to call him “Miss,” but he let it go.

It was only natural since he was possessing a woman’s body, and now wasn’t the time to quibble over forms of address.

As the two of them prepared to launch a joint attack, the scarred man grinned sinisterly.

“What foolish actions.”

With that, he attempted to take a step towards them.

It was at that very moment.

“Haa!”

With a resounding shout, someone appeared and brought down a single strike on the scarred man.

The scarred man, who hadn’t fully unleashed his abilities when facing the two of them, grabbed his Taoist sword and swung upward.

-Clang!

The clash of sword and blade reverberated in all directions.

The energy of the two supreme masters was so strong that fierce winds swirled around them.

However, even between them, there was a disparity.

-Bam!

The one who had delivered the downward strike was eventually sent flying backward, pushed back by about five steps.

“Fa- Father!”

That person was none other than the Manor Master of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, Mok In-dan.

-Drip drip!

Black blood trickled from the corner of Mok In-dan's mouth.

Having risen from his sickbed not long ago, he had expended a significant amount of true energy, and being unaccustomed to using his left hand, he couldn't even muster half of his prime strength.

"Father!"

As Mok Yu-cheon tried to approach, Mok In-dan extended his hand and shook his head.

"Stand back. He's not your opponent."

"But....."

"Ah!"

With those words, Mok In-dan's eyes glanced at Mok Gyeong-un, who was sitting cross-legged and circulating energy.

Why was that child doing that?

Was he injured?

He appeared to be fine on the outside.

After a moment of puzzlement, Manor Master Mok In-dan shifted his gaze to the approaching scarred man and spoke.

"Who are you to invade our clan?"

"Invade? Hahahaha!"

At this question, the scarred man burst into laughter and took something out from his bosom.

Seeing it, Mok In-dan's expression instantly hardened.

It was none other than a seal.

'A seal?'

Mok Yu-cheon's eyes narrowed.

No matter how he looked at it, it seemed to be a seal, but why was his father so startled?

As they pondered, the scarred man tossed the seal upward and caught it repeatedly, then spoke.

"You should know well what this is, Manor Master Mok."

".....How did you obtain that?"

"How, you ask? Hahahahaha! Manor Master Mok, you're quite the actor. To say such a thing after arbitrarily seizing 'that,' which is no less than our society's treasure."

'Seize?'

Mok Yu-cheon looked at Mok In-dan with an expression of incomprehension.

At that moment, a shocking revelation emerged from Mok In-dan's mouth.

".....Are you from the Heaven and Earth Society?"

In response to this question, the scarred man grinned.

It was a sign of affirmation.

'!!!!!!'

At this, not only Mok Yu-cheon but also Go Chan's eyes widened.

The reason for their astonishment was simple.

The Heaven and Earth Society.

It was one of the colossal forces that currently divided the martial arts world of the Central Plains into three factions.

Revering only the existence of the strong, they had once plunged the martial arts world into chaos, claiming to unify it.

At that time, countless wandering warriors had lost their lives.

Thus, the martial arts world still couldn't help but tremble in fear upon hearing the name of the Heaven and Earth Society.

'The- The Heaven and Earth Society?'

Go Chan was dumbfounded.

No wonder there weren't many forces that would dare to commit such a brazen act against the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, a renowned martial arts family in Anhui Province.

But if it was truly the Heaven and Earth Society, it was a grave situation.

No matter how much the Yeon Mok Sword Manor had gained fame as a martial arts family, if they were determined to attack, they would have to be prepared for the annihilation of their clan.

"Ah..."

A sigh escaped from Manor Master Mok In-dan's mouth.

To think it would be the Heaven and Earth Society.

Mok In-dan's gaze turned to his youngest son Mok Yu-cheon, Mok Gyeong-un who was circulating energy, and the warriors of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor fighting nearby.

'Is this my karma?'

Why had he been greedy back then?

If only he hadn't brought that thing, such a situation wouldn't have occurred.

Mok In-dan spoke with difficulty.

".....If we hand that over, will you withdraw from our clan?"

'Father?'

At those words, Mok Yu-cheon looked at Manor Master Mok In-dan with surprised eyes.

Although the Manor Master's words were meant to save everyone, they were almost equivalent to surrender.

His heart ached at the sight of his father's weakened appearance, which he had never witnessed before.

"I shouldn't have revealed the identity of our society. I was hoping for a bit more resistance."

The scarred man muttered as if he was disappointed.

Seeing his attitude, Mok Yu-cheon couldn't hide his inner fury.

Unless they looked down on them to an extreme degree, they wouldn't display such an attitude.

Manor Master Mok In-dan sent a glance and shook his head.

It meant not to act rashly.

'Even if you're angry, endure it, my son. The opponent is the Heaven and Earth Society.'

In any case, the situation was extremely unfavorable from the moment such a monster had arrived.

Apart from being weakened, even if his body were intact, Manor Master Mok In-dan had no confidence in handling the scarred man.

The scarred man rested his Taoist sword on his shoulder and asked,

"Where is it? That thing."

"Let's make a promise, man

"Make a promise, man to man, first," Mok In-dan demanded.

The scarred man replied, "Manor Master Mok, you're not lacking in capacity as a leader. Very well. I, Son Yun, the Bright Blade King, one of the Five Kings of the Great Heaven and Earth Society, shall make a promise. If you hand that over, I will refrain from causing further harm to the Yeon Mok Sword Manor and withdraw."

'.....One of the Five Kings.' Mok In-dan was inwardly astounded. To think that Son Yun, the Bright Blade King, one of the eight executives leading the Heaven and Earth Society, had made a move. If that were the case, there was no doubt he had come with the intention of annihilating the clan if things went awry. At this realization, cold sweat trickled down Mok In-dan's back.

The scarred man, or rather, Son Yun, the Bright Blade King, one of the Five Kings of the Heaven and Earth Society, asked, "Where is it?"

In response to that question, Mok In-dan pointed somewhere and said, "Over there lies our clan's Medicinal Hall. Among the herb containers in the Medicinal Hall, if you open the drawer marked with 'Five Elements,' an underground entrance will be revealed."

"Hoho."

“Inside, there is a stone door engraved with the character ‘jeong’ (丁). The passage contains mechanical traps, so you must either break through twenty steps at once using lightness skills or traverse by grasping the ceiling.”

“Well hidden indeed.”

“In that place, there should be a wooden box with talismans attached to it.”

“Did you hear that?” Son Yun, the Bright Blade King, asked one of the masked individuals beside him.

“Yes,” the masked individual replied.

“Bring it.”

“Understood!”

The masked individual promptly vanished in the direction of the Medicinal Hall.

‘.....He said it’s hidden in a secret space inside the Medicinal Hall?’ Go Chan furrowed his brow with a perplexed expression, surreptitiously glancing at Mok Gyeong-un, who was still absorbing the death energy. He had a feeling that things were becoming thoroughly entangled.

Chapter 46

The fight between the warriors of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor and the masked individuals was temporarily halted by the shout of Son Yun, the Bright Blade King, one of the Five Kings of the Heaven and Earth Society.

However, it was still not a situation where they could let their guard down.

The Heaven and Earth Society remained a violent organization that had not abandoned its ambition to unify the Central Plains, so if the Bright Blade King Son Yun were to change his mind midway, the battle would resume.

“.....This is serious,” Lady Seok, the first wife, whispered to the guard Ho-aeng.

From what she had heard, it seemed that they were after a secret manual or something similar that the Manor Master had found somewhere, and it was said to be in a hidden space within the Medicinal Hall.

-Glance!

She surreptitiously glanced at Mok Gyeong-un, who was still circulating energy.

That child..... It appeared that he had found the Manor Master's exclusive secret manual in the Medicinal Hall.

Otherwise, how could he have bargained with her while never leaving the Medicinal Hall?

At this, the guard Ho-aeng said to her,

"Madam..... Shouldn't we inform the Manor Master about this?"

"We should, but....."

Lady Seok's eyes took on a peculiar expression.

If she were to consider the future of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, informing the Manor Master now would allow him to quickly address the situation.

However, a clever idea crossed Lady Seok's mind.

'That child said he had only given me two stances of the Ignited Wood Sword Formation and that the rest of the oral formulas were all in his head.'

If that were the case, given that cunning fellow's personality, there was a high probability that he had also memorized and destroyed the secret manual.

She was convinced that was likely the case.

Then, there was no need to inform the Manor Master right now.

If someone had memorized a secret manual precious enough for the Heaven and Earth Society to consider it a treasure, how would they react?

"I think it will be fine to inform him a little later," Lady Seok said, the corners of her mouth curling up slightly.

If things went well, she might be able to rid herself of a troublesome tumor here.

As the situation had progressed to this point, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been immersed in the energy circulation, finally opened his eyes.

"Young Master!" the guard Go Chan, who had been standing guard beside him, called out in a low voice.

Mok Gyeong-un glanced at him once, then surveyed the surroundings.

Seeing the situation in a standstill, Mok Gyeong-un smacked his lips as if disappointed.

'No wonder the death energy was cut off midway.'

It was because the fighting had ceased.

Mok Gyeong-un was actually disappointed that no more people were dying.

However, it seemed that assessing the situation took priority at the moment.

"What happened?"

Come to think of it, why was the Demonic Monk in the form of a vengeful spirit, abandoning the body of the Outer Manor Master?

"Well....."

As Mok Gyeong-un looked puzzled, Go Chan whispered in his ear, explaining what had transpired.

Mok Yu-cheon glanced at Mok Gyeong-un with a somewhat envious gaze.

'When did that bastard acquire such a guard?'

He had never seen Go Chan before, so he couldn't help but be curious when he was introduced as Mok Gyeong-un's guard.

Not only was his appearance outstanding, but Mok Yu-cheon was particularly amazed by his martial arts prowess.

Regardless, having grasped the situation to some extent, Mok Gyeong-un stroked his chin and let out a soft groan.

"Hmm."

'What are you going to do about this?' Go Chan looked at Mok Gyeong-un with a perplexed expression.

It was literally a situation where they were caught between a rock and a hard place.

Soon, the masked individual from the Heaven and Earth Society who had gone to search the secret place in the Medicinal Hall would return.

When that happened, a catastrophe could unfold.

"Young Master..... The Heaven and Earth Society is a truly dangerous organization. If we're not careful....."

“Wait a moment.”

“Yes?”

While Go Chan was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un approached Manor Master Mok In-dan, who was waiting with an anxious expression.

Mok In-dan admonished him in a low voice,

“If you’re injured, just rest quietly. Right now.....”

“May I ask who inflicted that wound on your side?”

“What?”

Manor Master Mok In-dan furrowed his brow at Mok Gyeong-un’s sudden question.

As if the uncertain situation ahead wasn’t enough, why was this child asking such a thing?

The Manor Master sighed and said,

“Now is not the time to discuss that.....”

“There’s nothing in the underground of the Medicinal Hall.”

At those words, the Manor Master was momentarily flustered and almost blurted out a response, but he managed to hold back and surveyed the surroundings with his eyes.

The Bright Blade King Son Yun was standing with his arms crossed, leaning against the wall and looking at him.

Conscious of him, the Manor Master lowered his voice even more and whispered,

“What do you mean by that? There’s nothing in the underground of the Medicinal Hall, what on earth.....”

“It’s exactly as I said. So, if you tell me where, how, and by whom you received that wound on your side, I will handle this situation.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Manor Master Mok In-dan’s eyes turned fierce.

Mok In-dan glared at Mok Gyeong-un and said,

“Did you perhaps go to the underground?”

“Yes.”

“How did you..... Ha!”

For a moment, he wanted to grab the back of his neck.

How did this kid find out about that place and go there?

And he couldn't understand why he was so fixated on this wound.

But that wasn't what mattered right now.

“Don't tell me you tampered with that?”

“Please tell me first.”

“You!”

The Yeon Mok Sword Manor was in a life-or-death crisis, so what kind of behavior was this?

With anger surging, Manor Master Mok In-dan grabbed Mok Gyeong-un's wrist.

And applying force, he said,

-Grip!

“Where is it? Tell me right now. The future of our clan is at stake. I can't tolerate your mischief in this situation.....”

“Does it seem like mischief to you?”

‘!?’

Manor Master Mok In-dan frowned.

Was this really the same child he knew?

He was gripping his wrist so tightly and imposing his authority, yet the child didn't avert his eyes at all and showed no sign of fear.

“You.....”

It was at that very moment.

-Tap tap tap tap!

A masked individual was seen rushing over in a hurry.

Seeing this, Manor Master Mok In-dan's expression hardened.

It was the masked individual he had sent to the Medicinal Hall.

The Bright Blade King Son Yun, who had been leaning against the wall, straightened his body and said,

"Did you find it?"

"It's here."

The masked individual knelt on one knee and respectfully presented an old wooden box with talismans pasted all over it.

Son Yun also received the wooden box with both hands, unable to hide his excitement.

"It has returned to the hands of our society once again."

Seeing this, Manor Master Mok In-dan asked Mok Gyeong-un,

"You..... Did you lie to your father?"

Otherwise, there was no way the wooden box would be there so intact.

Mok In-dan, who had been worried that a big commotion would occur, let out a sigh of relief as the tension seemed to dissipate.

If they took that and left, there would be no further damage.....

-Click!

At that moment, the Bright Blade King Son Yun raised one eyebrow and opened the lid of the wooden box.

It seemed he wanted to check if the contents were inside.

However,

-Whoosh!

Instantly, an immense killing intent erupted from the Bright Blade King Son Yun.

The force was so strong that everyone, whether from the Yeon Mok Sword Manor or the masked individuals, flinched for a moment.

'Why all of a sudden?'

Manor Master Mok In-dan, who had been feeling relieved, was baffled.

Mok In-dan looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

Could it be that the contents were missing?

"I did tell you."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Mok In-dan was not only angry but also dumbfounded.

Was this kid really in his right mind?

However, unlike him, there was one person who welcomed this situation.

It was none other than Lady Seok, the first wife.

'Perfect!'

She had wondered if Mok Gyeong-un hadn't tampered with the wooden box.

But judging by that man's reaction, it seemed that wasn't the case.

Now was the opportunity.

Lady Seok took a step forward.

And just as she was about to open her mouth, the Bright Blade King Son Yun took something out of the wooden box with his thumb and index finger.

It was,

'An earring?'

It was a lavish earring made of jade and silver.

There was only one, and it looked like something women would wear.

'!!!!!!!'

Seeing this, Lady Seok couldn't hide her bewilderment.

That was because it should have been in her jade ornament box.

But why was it there?

It was enough to make even ghosts wail.

'Wait, could it be?'

Startled, Lady Seok looked in the direction where Mok Gyeong-un was.

She had intended to look at Mok Gyeong-un, but her eyes met with Manor Master Mok In-dan, who was standing next to him.

Mok In-dan had an expression that asked what on earth was going on.

And for good reason,

'Of all things, that one.....'

It was one of the ornaments she had received as a gift from Manor Master Mok In-dan.

It was only natural for Mok In-dan to show suspicion.

As she was flustered, she noticed Mok Gyeong-un chuckling and shrugging his shoulders beside him.

'You!'

Only then did she confirm that it was Mok Gyeong-un's doing.

He was the only one who had gone to that place.

At that moment, the Bright Blade King Son Yun held up the earring towards Manor Master Mok In-dan and blatantly exuded killing intent as he spoke,

"Manor Master Mo. What is this?"

Mok In-dan was at a loss for words at that question.

It was already a problem that the secret manual wrapped in the prayer beads was missing, but he couldn't say that the earring belonged to his wife.

"You've finally chosen to be punished."

-Shing!

The Bright Blade King Son Yun drew the Taoist sword he had been carrying on his back.

The masked individuals followed suit.

As they put away their weapons and drew their swords again, the warriors of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor also pulled out their weapons with tense expressions.

It was a situation on the brink of explosion.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un shouted,

“First Madam! When our clan is in danger, do you intend to keep your mouth shut and remain still? Isn’t that earring yours?”

‘!?’

Lady Seok was momentarily at a loss for words.

She had already been at a loss because she knew it was her earring, but she hadn’t expected Mok Gyeong-un to suddenly bring her into the situation.

“You! Wh- What are you.....”

“Hoho. So this earring belonged to the Manor Master’s wife?”

The Bright Blade King Son Yun glared at Lady Seok as he spoke.

Feeling fear from his sharp gaze and aura, Lady Seok staggered and took a step back.

She waved her hands and said,

“W- Warrior Son. I think there’s some misunderstanding. This is.....”

“Eldest Madam! You can end this without bloodshed, so why are you doing this? If you have the secret manual, please give it quickly.”

‘This bastard!’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s shout, she felt like she was going crazy.

She wanted to rip Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth apart right then and there, but that monster-like supreme master from the Heaven and Earth Society, whom even the Manor Master couldn’t handle, was glaring at her as if he would kill her, so she couldn’t open her lips.

-Grip!

Manor Master Mok In-dan grabbed Mok Gyeong-un’s wrist and urged him in a low voice,

“Enough!”

“Pardon?”

“What is happened are you doing? No matter how much she’s not your birth mother, how could you.....”

“You’re more naive than you look.”

“What?”

“That woman even called a diviner to find out from your mouth where the Manor Master’s exclusive secret manual was, and then she tried to have you killed. And you still think of protecting her?”

‘!?’

At those words, Mok In-dan’s expression hardened.

What in the world was this about?

As he was perplexed, Mok Gyeong-un whispered with a curl of his lips,

“So, you don’t have to feel too guilty. If, by some stroke of luck, we can save everyone with the sacrifice of that one woman, wouldn’t that be a good thing in its own way?”

It was like a devil’s tempting whisper.

At this, Manor Master Mok In-dan felt a chill run through his entire body.

Chapter 47

Could this be described as merely a change?

Mok Gyeong-un, who nonchalantly suggested sacrificing Lady Seok, who was, despite their poor relationship, still his mother in name, left Mok In-dan momentarily shocked to the point of sending chills throughout his body.

Beyond being different, it seemed as if he had become a completely different person.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un whispered in a sweet voice,

“She’s a woman who left the Manor Master to die and tried to give everything to her own son. Is there any value in hesitating?”

‘This kid.....’

Whether it was true or not wasn’t important.

Mok Gyeong-un was providing him with an emotional justification to make a cruel choice.

It was a justification that could sufficiently tempt him, both as a leader trying to save a group and as a person.

However,

'No.'

Mok In-dan bit his lip firmly.

And releasing Mok Gyeong-un's wrist, which he had been holding, he urged in a low voice,

"I cannot trust your words."

"It's the truth."

"..... Even if what you say is true, I cannot say it's right to sacrifice someone to save others. And....."

Manor Master Mok In-dan looked at the face of Lady Seok, who was taking a step back.

Her fearful eyes showed strong denial.

He knew her well as his wife.

If she had done something, she would have feigned ignorance rather than reacting like this.

'As I thought, it's not.'

If that was the case,

"If that was your doing, let me tell you it was a foolish act."

"A foolish act?"

"Yes. And now is not the time to deal with you."

-Swoosh!

With those words, Mok In-dan tried to block the Bright Blade King Son Yun, who was approaching Lady Seok.

But before he could do so,

-Crunch!

Son Yun, who had been walking towards her as if he was about to do something, tightly clenched the earring in his hand.

Scattering the crushed earring on the ground, Son Yun said,

“It seems there is someone here who dislikes the Manor Master’s wife.”

“Wh- What?”

Overwhelmed by the intense killing intent emanating from Son Yun, she stammered in a cold sweat.

Son Yun scoffed and said,

“Someone among the Yeon Mok Sword Manor’s inner circle either wanted to frame you or have you killed by borrowing someone else’s blade.”

Borrowing someone else’s blade to kill[1].

It literally meant borrowing someone else’s sword to kill.

At Son Yun’s words, her tension dissipated, and her legs gave out, causing her to collapse to the ground.

Son Yun exuded killing intent and glared at the people of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor with sharp eyes, saying,

“Do you think I’ll fall for such a trick?”

At those words, Manor Master Mok In-dan gritted his teeth and sent a glare at Mok Gyeong-un.

‘Look.’

This was the foolish act he had mentioned.

If one looked at the bigger picture rather than focusing on the details, the situation would become apparent to some extent.

What kind of culprit would leave their traces so blatantly?

It was more like revealing that an enemy had left them.

'He made a bad move.'

No matter how cunning he tried to be, this was the limit of a scheme devised by a mere seventeen-year-old's mind.

Mok In-dan frowned at Mok Gyeong-un and whispered,

"The situation has worsened. This can't go on. Hand it over."

"How unfortunate."

"What?"

"I was hoping for good luck."

"Now is not the time for such words....."

It was at that very moment.

-Swish!

The Bright Blade King Son Yun swung his Taoist sword and beheaded one of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor's warriors.

It happened so swiftly that there was no time to stop it.

"Bright Blade King!"

-Clang!

Manor Master Mok In-dan shouted in anger as he drew his sword.

Son Yun shrugged his shoulders and joked,

"You're the ones who broke the promise, yet you're angry at me. I declare to the people of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor."

-Declare! Declare! Declare!

His voice, infused with internal energy, echoed loudly like a reverberating sound.

Those nearby covered their ears, agonizing over the ringing in their eardrums.

'He wasn't using his full strength.'

Mok In-dan's expression darkened.

During the earlier exchange of blows, he had underestimated Son Yun's profound mastery of internal energy.

Even if his body were intact, Son Yun was not an opponent he could defeat.

Regardless, Son Yun continued his speech.

"I'll give you one last chance. If you want to live, either hand over that thing. Or tell me who would benefit the most from the death of the Manor Master's wife."

At his shout, the corners of Lady Seok's mouth trembled as she knelt on the ground, regulating her breathing.

She hadn't expected to suffer such humiliation because of that damn Mok Gyeong-un.

Originally, she had kept her mouth shut out of consideration for the Manor Master, but now that things had turned out this way, she was in no position to hold back.

Lady Seok parted her lips.

"Warrior Son....."

Before she could finish her sentence.

At that moment, someone raised their hand and shouted,

"I know who did this!"

The one who shouted was none other than Ho-aeng.

Seeing her, Lady Seok closed her mouth approvingly.

It was better for Ho-aeng, the guard, to truthfully report the facts out of loyalty rather than Lady Seok herself.

"You know who it is?"

"Yes."

The Bright Blade King Son Yun wiped the blood from his Taoist sword and spoke in a voice filled with killing intent,

"If it's a lie, you'll have to forfeit your life."

“If the First Madam is harmed, it will also put the eldest young master of our clan in a difficult position. Therefore, there are those who would benefit in the succession structure.”

Although unintentional, the gazes of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor’s warriors naturally divided between two individuals.

They were none other than the second son, Mok Eun-pyeong, and the youngest, Mok Yu-cheon.

As humans, it was inevitable for their gazes to momentarily shift.

Mok Eun-pyeong shouted in surprise,

“Wh- What nonsense are you spouting now?”

Mok Yu-cheon was no different.

“How rude, Guard Ho. Why would I do such a thing?”

The two of them reacted with a sense of injustice.

It was only natural for them to do so.

After all, they hadn’t committed the deed themselves.

However, the curious thing was that not a single person looked at Mok Gyeong-un upon hearing Ho-aeng’s words.

‘This.....’

Manor Master Mok In-dan frowned.

Judging by Mok Gyeong-un’s attempt to bargain with him, if anyone had plotted something, it had to be this child.

But when Ho-aeng mentioned those who would benefit in the succession structure, no one among the Yeon Mok Sword Manor’s people looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

That was because he had the least power and potential.

At that moment, the Bright Blade King Son Yun alternately glanced at the second son, Mok Eun-pyeong, and the youngest, Mok Yu-cheon, and spoke,

“It sounds plausible, but how can I believe that?”

“There is something that can be considered evidence.”

“Evidence? Hoho. Do tell, woman.”

‘Evidence?’

At the guard Ho-aeng’s words, Lady Seok furrowed her brow.

Was there anything that could be considered evidence?

As she wondered, Ho-aeng said,

“In the underground of the Medicinal Hall, along with the item Hero Son is looking for, there were also secret manuals that only the Manor Master of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor could cultivate. The one who possesses them must have been behind this!”

‘!!!!!!’

At Ho-aeng’s words, two individuals simultaneously failed to hide their bewilderment.

They were the youngest, Mok Yu-cheon, and Lady Seok, who possessed the original secret manuals, the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Method and the Ignited Wood Sword Formation, albeit only the cover and two pages.

Startled, they shouted simultaneously,

“No!”

“Ho-aeng, you!”

Having shouted at the same time, they realized their mistake as attention focused on them and became flustered, not knowing what to do.

They shouldn’t have reacted like this to Ho-aeng’s words.

It was obvious that they would search their residences.

‘Ha!’

Seeing their reaction, Manor Master Mok In-dan looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok In-dan’s eyes trembled at the sight of Mok Gyeong-un, who was looking at the scene as if it were an entertaining spectacle.

[If, by some stroke of luck, we can save everyone with the sacrifice of that one woman, wouldn’t that be a good thing in its own way?]

[How unfortunate. I was hoping for good luck.]

The words Mok Gyeong-un had spoken flashed through his mind.

The luck this kid had mentioned wasn't the kind of meaning he had understood.

"You....."

Mok Gyeong-un whispered with a smile on his lips,

"This is quite a big problem. Instead of ending it with one, everyone is getting involved. At this rate, whether it's the secret manual or whatever, that scary fellow might go on a rampage and kill everyone."

[What? You want me to put this earring in that wooden box?]

[Yes.]

[Are you stupid, mortal?]

[What do you mean?]

[If you put it in there, who would believe it was that old mortal woman? They would suspect it was the doing of someone targeting that Lady Seok or whatever her name is.]

[Yes. That's the intention.]

[What?]

[Why do you think I gave them the secret manual that's practically just a shell?]

[You..... Don't tell me?]

[Let's just say it's a small precaution in case the Manor Master wakes up. Well, it's a harmless prank.]

[A harmless prank? You sure know how to use your wits.]

Originally, it was a precaution in case the Manor Master woke up and checked the secret place.

Although it differed from his intention, thanks to that, the chaos intensified.

Mok Gyeong-un curled the corners of his mouth and said,

“Rather than regretting after losing one or two, wouldn’t it be better to tell me about that wound now?”

-Clench!

Manor Master Mok In-dan gritted his teeth.

‘This bastard, what on earth.....’

The thought of him being his son had disappeared.

He had never encountered someone so terrifyingly cunning.

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un hold the danger to the Yeon Mok Sword Manor hostage to obtain what he wanted left Mok In-dan not only dumbfounded but also exasperated to the point of feeling nauseous.

“What will you do?”

There was no longer any room for choice.

Mok In-dan said,

“.....Bring the secret manual and hand it over to that man. Then I will tell you.”

“That’s not how a negotiation works.”

“You really!”

“We don’t have much time.”

Mok In-dan, who had been glaring at Mok Gyeong-un with a distorted face, parted his lips with trembling cheeks.

“Seventeen years ago, in Yongmun, Guangdong Province, I suffered this wound from the one called the Ghost Blade[2].”

“Ghost Blade?”

“You..... Don’t tell me you don’t know the Ghost Blade?”

There was no way he would know.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had only recently started learning martial arts, had no way of knowing about the ecology of the martial arts world.

“Who is the Ghost Blade.....”

Before he could finish his sentence.

-Jingle jingle!

The sound of bells ringing could be heard.

In an instant, everyone’s gaze turned towards the source of the sound.

“Diviner Jo.”

The Bright Blade King Son Yun called out to someone entering the pavilion.

It was a middle-aged man wearing an eye patch with a snake design and holding a walking stick.

However, more puzzling than this man’s appearance was the fact that the bells at his waist were ringing on their own, without even shaking.

‘What is happened?’

As they pondered, the middle-aged man with the eye patch, called diviner Jo, spoke,

“An evil spirit is playing tricks.”

“An evil spirit?”

“The evil spirit is trying to steal a human’s shell.”

-Pak!

At that moment, the middle-aged man swung his walking stick in the air and formed a hand seal with his left hand, chanting a spell.

“.....!”

-Boom!

As soon as the spell ended, the middle-aged man struck the ground with his walking stick.

Along with it, an invisible shockwave was generated, and a strong wind suddenly blew through the surroundings.

-Whoosh!

“Aaaaargh!”

Then, Ho-aeng, Lady Seok’s guard who was hit by the sweeping wind, suddenly grabbed her head and screamed like a madwoman.

Those around her couldn’t hide their astonishment for a moment.

Black veins bulged grotesquely around Ho-aeng’s neck, making it extremely bizarre.

“Wh- What?”

-Thud thud thud!

Ho-aeng’s eyes rolled back, and her entire body convulsed wildly.

Everyone was startled and distanced themselves from her.

-Gulp gulp!

Although not to the same extent as Ho-aeng, there was one person who felt his stomach churning: Go Chan.

The moment the wind swept by, he felt an unpleasant sensation and the urge to vomit.

However, as soon as he circulated his internal energy and activated his body’s protective energy, he felt somewhat better.

“Huff... Huff...”

Go Chan looked at Ho-aeng.

In Go Chan’s ghostly eyes, he could see the Demonic Monk suffering in agony inside Ho-aeng’s body.

Because the body was merely second-rate and he had just possessed it, he couldn’t endure it.

Eventually,

-Aaaaargh!

He was ejected from the possessed body.

Ho-aeng, who had been convulsing and suffering, collapsed on the spot as if she had fainted.

-Thud!

Seeing this, the corners of the middle-aged man with the eye patch, called diviner Jo, curled up.

“I shall exorcise you.”

He then took out a talisman of the Imperial Command Spell from his waist, attached it to his walking stick, and shouted,

“.....!”

With that, he threw the walking stick.

-Swish!

Surprisingly, the walking stick extended straight and flew like an arrow.

To everyone’s eyes, it appeared to be flying towards an empty space where no one was present, but the Demonic Monk was still there, staggering in pain.

However, before the walking stick imbued with a mysterious power could reach the Demonic Monk,

-Pak!

Someone caught the walking stick midway.

“You’re doing something troublesome.”

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

At this sight, the middle-aged man with the eye patch, diviner Jo, couldn’t hide his astonishment for a moment.

‘What?’

To catch a walking stick imbued with the Imperial Command Spell and incantations with his bare hands, even if he was from a martial arts family, he was no ordinary person.

However, what was truly astonishing wasn’t that.

Diviner Jo frowned and glared at Mok Gyeong-un, saying,

“You..... can see vengeful spirits.”

At those words, the surroundings stirred.

Chapter 48

We corrected the numbering of chapters from 250 to 270 (there are some errors in it, but the consistency of the chapters is correct, don't worry)

What is the talent of a diviner?

There would be several qualifications.

Among those qualifications, a sense of spiritual energy is naturally included.

As a simple example, everyone has probably experienced the sudden appearance of goosebumps or chills at least once.

It could be a natural bodily phenomenon, but that is the basis of spiritual sensation.

When in contact with something spiritual, the soul within the body reacts, affecting the five senses.

However, ordinary people find it difficult to discern this.

This is because the boundary between the living and the dead is clear.

This could only be developed through innate spiritual talent or training.

However, among these talent requirements, there existed the ultimate talent that only a select few were born with.

‘You possess the eyes.’

That is none other than vision

The eyes that can accurately see beyond the boundary, unlike other senses.

diviners regarded possessing the eyes that could distinguish this as the highest.

The middle-aged man with the eye patch, diviner Jo, saw Mok Gyeong-un precisely looking at the evil spirit before catching the walking stick he had thrown after attaching the Imperial Command Spell and infusing it with incantations.

'It's certain.'

The kid possessed the highest qualifications as a diviner.

Even he, who could barely perceive the form with the naked eye after training under the best master, didn't possess the talent that this child from a martial arts family had.

"You..... can see vengeful spirits."

-Murmur murmur!

At his words, the surroundings stirred.

He can see vengeful spirits? What does that mean?

'Vengeful spirits, does that refer to ghosts or evil spirits?'

Manor Master Mok In-dan and the Mok family brothers frowned and looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

In fact, most of their reactions were similar.

'This has become troublesome.'

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue inwardly.

He had acted on impulse, not wanting to lose the Demonic Monk, but it seemed to have complicated matters.

Should he have given up even if it was a waste?

However, it was too late for that now.

'A diviner?'

It seemed to be the case.

Some of the spells he had chanted earlier were seen in books related to magical techniques left behind by Fang Assassin Sak.

They were typical techniques for exorcising evil spirits or the Two Demons and Two Spirits.

However, a part of the incantation was different.

If that was the case,

'He's from a different group than that woman Sak.'

He seemed to belong to this organization called the Heaven and Earth Society.

At that moment, the middle-aged man with the eye patch, diviner Jo, said,

"Since when were you able to see vengeful spirits?"

"Pardon?"

"You can see vengeful spirits, can't you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un's feigned ignorance, the middle-aged man with the eye patch, diviner Jo, raised one eyebrow in puzzlement.

Does that child want to hide his eyes?

However, if that were the case, he shouldn't have intervened in the first place.

Diviner Jo scoffed and changed his question.

"Interesting. Fine, I'll change the question. Why did you prevent the exorcism of the vengeful spirit?"

"Hmm. I have no idea what you've been talking about since earlier."

Mok Gyeong-un feigned ignorance nonchalantly.

diviner Jo chuckled and then formed a hand seal, saying,

"You don't know? Then I suppose it's fine if I exorcise that evil thing again."

-Pak! Pak! Pak!

Bīng (兵)! Dòu (鬪)! Liè (裂)! Zhèn (陳)!

It was the hand seals of the Nine Character Activating Method.

'Different.'

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed.

He had memorized all the books possessed by diviners Myo-sin, Sak, and others.

However, the hand seals he was forming were new to him.

Moreover, he was only forming hand seals without incantations, yet the spiritual energy in the surroundings was becoming strangely abundant.

-Tremble tremble!

However, it was not visible to others.

They only saw him bringing his hands together, bending and extending his fingers, overlapping them.

At that moment, diviner Jo formed a square by aiming with his index and middle fingers.

Then,

-Whoosh!

Four invisible pillars shot up from the surroundings.

The pillars precisely enclosed Mok Gyeong-un and the Demonic Monk, gradually thickening.

The middle-aged man with the eye patch, diviner Jo, muttered softly,

“Four Peaks Linking Technique[1].”

As soon as he finished, walls formed from the four thickened pillars.

The Demonic Monk, unable to escape anywhere, looked around in bewilderment.

“Shrink (縮)!”

diviner Jo extended his palm towards the Demonic Monk and made a grasping gesture.

-Whoosh!

At that moment, the four walls enclosing the Demonic Monk began to compress and slowly shrink.

If they were to shrink completely, the Demonic Monk might be crushed.

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes turned sharp.

This man’s level was clearly different from the diviners he had encountered so far.

He had never seen such a magical technique before.

'No choice.'

Since he didn't know what kind of technique it was, there was only one way to break it.

Attack the caster, the diviner.

-Tap!

"Take it back."

Mok Gyeong-un gripped the walking stick like a spear and threw it towards diviner Jo, who was performing the magical technique.

-Swish!

If the caster is disrupted or killed midway, most magical techniques will unravel.

However, the masked individuals wouldn't let this happen without interference.

-Clang!

One of the masked individuals near diviner Jo swiftly leaped forward and struck down the flying walking stick with the blade of his sword.

"You impudent brat!"

The masked individual tried to charge directly at Mok Gyeong-un, who had targeted diviner Jo.

However, diviner Jo stopped him.

"Enough!"

"Pardon?"

"No need for you to intervene."

"Understood."

The masked individual stopped the attack without any objection.

It was a group with a clear hierarchy of command and obedience.

diviner Jo said to Mok Gyeong-un,

“You don’t seem to be possessed or bewitched, so if you explain why you’re trying to protect the vengeful spirit, I can pause the technique for now.”

‘He’ll have no choice but to surrender eventually.’

In any case, the situation was in his favor.

Even if he had the eyes, without training, it was of no use.

Judging by that child’s appearance, he hadn’t received proper training as a diviner.

That much was evident at a glance.

Moreover, the Four Peaks Linking Technique was a high-level technique that required at least the Fang Yue level to perform, making it difficult to break with ordinary techniques.

However,

‘!?’

diviner Jo’s expression hardened as he looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

It was because...

-Pak! Pak! Pak!

Mok Gyeong-un was forming the exact same hand seals that diviner Jo had just formed, without a single discrepancy.

Bīng (兵)! Dòu (鬪)! Liè (裂)! Zhèn (陳)!

‘What?’

It was the hand seals of the Nine Character Activating Method.

diviner Jo was dumbfounded by Mok Gyeong-un’s hand seals.

No matter how he looked at it, this child seemed to be an ordinary person with no knowledge of magical techniques.

Yet, he imitated the hand seals so accurately?

‘What an absurd child.’

Does he think he can stop it by imitating it?

If it were that easy, everyone would have done it.

'Forming hand seals without incantations or talismans is only possible for those at the diviners level-Moon or above.....'

-Whoosh!

At that moment, diviner Jo doubted his own eyes.

Four small pillars, invisible to ordinary people, were formed.

The shape was blunt and quite crude, but it was unmistakable.

"Ha....."

A soft exclamation escaped diviner Jo's mouth.

It was a level of magical technique achieved through long years of practice.

Yet, he imitated it after seeing it once and actually succeeded?

'.....Could it be that this fellow has learned magical techniques?'

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un muttered,

"Four Peaks Linking Technique (四峰聯鎖術)."

Then, walls connected the four pillars.

It was an unbelievable sight to behold.

However, what was even more surprising was the location where Mok Gyeong-un had performed the Four Peaks Linking Technique.

-Pak pak pak pak pak!

He had used the Four Peaks Linking Technique inside the Four Peaks Linking Technique that was being compressed by the Shrink (縮) command.

As a result, the compression of the Four Peaks Linking Technique stopped as it collided with the newly formed Four Peaks Linking Technique from within.

'This fellow..... Look at that.'

Not only did he imitate the technique, but he also blocked it in this manner.

It demonstrated remarkable adaptability.

At this point, he couldn't help but have doubts.

“Who taught you magical techniques?”

“Why would I..... need to learn such a thing?”

It wasn't a lie.

He hadn't learned it from someone, but had self-studied it from books related to magical techniques.

-Tremble tremble!

Mok Gyeong-un shook his hands with the Nine Character Activating Method's hand seals in the Zhèn (陳) state.

It was to block diviner Jo's shrinking Four Peaks Linking Technique.

Although he had somehow managed to block it with a quick response, the difference in mastery was undeniable.

Seeing this, diviner Jo's eyes took on a peculiar expression.

‘Did he really not learn it?’

The adaptability and the ability to immediately imitate and manifest the hand seals.

All of this was nearly impossible without an exceptional master.

Diviner Jo stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un, and then...

-Clap!

He released the hand seal and said,

“Release (解).”

With those words, the Four Peaks Linking Technique that had been compressing disappeared.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at him with puzzled eyes.

Diviner Jo burst into laughter.

“Hahahahaha!”

Why was he suddenly acting like this?

As he wondered, diviner Jo turned his head and said to the Bright Blade King Son Yun,

“Bright Blade King. You may kill everyone else, but leave this child to me.”

‘!?’

Everyone’s eyes widened.

He seemed to be a diviner of the Heaven and Earth Society, but he suddenly asked to hand over Mok Gyeong-un. What did this mean?

As they pondered, Son Yun clicked his tongue and said,

“You’re doing something unnecessary again.”

“I should have that much authority.”

The Bright Blade King Son Yun shrugged his shoulders, indicating agreement.

He then raised his large Taoist sword, aimed it at the people of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, and spoke in a menacing voice,

“I was going to leave if you had obediently handed over that thing, but now it’s over. You brought this upon yourselves, so regret it in the afterlife.”

Son Yun thought so.

There was no need to sort out who had taken the secret manual one by one.

If he beat them all to death, someone would eventually speak up.

In any case, the secret manual was within the clan residence.

Son Yun shouted,

“Kill them all.....”

At that moment, someone interrupted and shouted,

“I have the secret manual that was wrapped in the prayer beads inside the wooden box.”

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

“Ha.....”

A sigh of relief escaped from Manor Master Mok In-dan, who had been tense, thinking that Son Yun might not keep his promise.

If they handed over the secret manual, they could overcome this situation.

At that moment, the Bright Blade King Son Yun approached Mok Gyeong-un with a terrifying aura and said,

“You have it?”

“Yes.”

“If it’s another lie, regardless of diviner Jo’s request, I will tear your limbs apart.”

“Why would I deny having it?”

Son Yun’s eyes gleamed at Mok Gyeong-un’s fearless demeanor.

However, it was short-lived.

“Then hand it over. No, tell me where it is.”

He asked for the location, as Mok Gyeong-un might play another trick.

However,

“I should probably apologize first.”

“Apologize? You, right now.....”

“You seem to desperately want it, but I burned that secret manual.”

“What?”

At those words, the masked individuals erupted in anger instead.

That secret manual was a treasure of the Heaven and Earth Society.

Hearing that he had burned such a secret manual, it would have been stranger not to be angry.

However, Son Yun raised his hand slightly to restrain them and scoffed.

“Ha!..... For a renowned martial arts family, you’ve got nothing but scammers. Do you think that can be burned with fire?”

What does he mean?

Both the masked individuals and the people of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor were puzzled.

Does he not believe the fact that the secret manual was burned with fire?

At that moment, Son Yun aimed his Taoist sword directly at Mok Gyeong-un’s neck.

-Pak!

“You know nothing. You’ve never even seen the secret manual. You wasted my time, so as promised.....”

“Does it sound like a lie?”

Son Yun frowned fiercely and raised his Taoist sword.

“How dare you, in front of this elder.....”

“Only the cover made of human skin doesn’t burn, but the inner pages with the contents burn well.”

‘!?’

At those words, Son Yun’s expression, which had been filled with anger just moments ago, changed.

The fact that the cover was made of human skin was known only to a few executives within the Heaven and Earth Society.

“You.....”

“Ah! By the way, the contents inside are here.”

Mok Gyeong-un tapped his head with his index finger.

Son Yun’s expression hardened.

‘!?’

Was it because Mok Gyeong-un had not only burned their treasure but also memorized it?

As he was thinking that, Son Yun spoke in disbelief,

“You..... saw that?”

Chapter 49

“You..... saw that?”

Mok Gyeong-un sensed bewilderment in the Bright Blade King Son Yun’s expression.

In the world of martial arts, he had recognized the importance of secret manuals to a certain extent.

However, judging by this man’s reaction, it was quite different from the anger of seeing someone who had viewed a secret manual that was no less than a treasure to them.

It was a reaction of disbelief.

‘What is it?’

At that moment...

-Swish!

The sharp blade of Son Yun’s large Taoist sword was pressed against his neck.

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

He had been watching the movements clearly with his eyes, yet he hadn’t noticed it until it touched him, as if he hadn’t perceived it.

‘..... Is this a true master?’

Amazing.

It made sense why the Manor Master Mok In-dan was so tense and submissive.

However, that was the extent of his admiration.

In reality, if one let their guard down, they could be stabbed to death by a five-year-old child while sleeping.

It was right to be wary of everything.

Son Yun looked straight into Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes and spoke,

“You saw that and survived.....”

“Pardon?”

“Then it’s one of two things.”

What is happened is he talking about?

As he wondered, Son Yun continued in a chilling voice,

“Either a lie or heaven’s fortune.”

“A lie or..... heaven’s fortune?”

“Until now, almost no one has remained alive and breathing after seeing the contents inside.”

“..... What do you mean by that?”

No one remains breathing?

Aren’t I right here?

Son Yun scoffed and slightly pressed the blade against his neck, saying,

“It’s exactly as I said. So I find it hard to believe that you’re alive and well like this.”

“As you can see, I’m alive.”

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders.

Son Yun clicked his tongue at his attitude.

He had a sword pressed against his neck, yet there was still no change in his demeanor.

Had he lost all fear? Or was he audacious?

“Looking at you, I can’t tell if you’re spouting lies out of brazenness or taking a gamble.”

“If I’m going to die anyway, what’s the point of taking a gamble?”

“.....”

Son Yun stared intently into Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

If he were even slightly tense or anxious, his eyes would have wavered, but they didn't.

[Make sure to retrieve it.]

He couldn't disobey that order.

Then there was only one way.

"Fine. Then prove it by reciting the oral formula or demonstrating the stances. Then we'll know for sure."

At his proposal, Manor Master Mok In-dan and all the members of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor looked on with tense gazes.

Initially, when Mok Gyeong-un had revealed that he possessed it, they had felt a strong sense of betrayal.

However, in the current situation, Mok Gyeong-un was the only one who could save them.

'Please.'

They desperately hoped it wasn't a lie.

"It shouldn't be difficult."

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un was about to recite the oral formula.

He considered deceiving them with an incomplete formula, as he had done with Mok Yu-cheon, but they were the rightful owners of that secret manual.

If he tried to deceive them, his head might roll.

As he was about to open his mouth,

-Mortal.

A familiar voice echoed in his mind.

It was Cheong-ryeong.

Mok Gyeong-un rolled his eyes and surveyed his surroundings.

However, he couldn't see her anywhere.

He was already puzzled by her absence when he had called for her earlier.

-Look at the roof across from you.

'Roof?'

At those words, he looked up at the roof.

Cheong-ryeong was standing there.

Why wasn't she coming closer?

Could it be that she was keeping her distance out of wariness of this monster-like man and that diviner?

It seemed to be the case.

However,

'What is it?'

Cheong-ryeong's demeanor was somewhat different from usual.

The crimson glow in her eyes as she stood on the roof was incredibly deep.

No, it felt like a blazing flame.

He could tell through their connected fate.

'Anger?'

The emotion he sensed from her was immense anger.

It was an intense anger that could drench this entire place in blood, but she was suppressing it with tremendous self-control.

Why was she acting like this?

As he wondered, Cheong-ryeong spoke.

-The moment you recite that oral formula, you will die.

What?

Was she trying to dissuade him out of concern for that?

Of course, if he recited the entire formula, they could strike him from behind.

It would be better to recite half of it and handle the rest in a different way.....

-Mortal. Follow the oral formula and posture that I recite exactly.

Mok Gyeong-un slightly furrowed his brow.

What did she mean by following her oral formula and posture?

They would know what was written inside, so if he recited a different formula, they would surely know it was wrong.

However,

-Don't overthink it and trust me for now.

'Hmm.'

-If you die, mortal, I will die too.

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un pondered numerous thoughts in an instant.

The moment the oral formula was wrong, his head would roll, but if he recited the formula she taught him.....

As he was contemplating, the Bright Blade King Son Yun said,

"Why aren't you doing it?"

"....."

After deliberating, Mok Gyeong-un finally reached a conclusion.

He then clenched his sword fingers.

And he imitated Cheong-ryeong, who was assuming a bow stance on the roof with the moonlight at her back.

From a distance, the postures of the two became identical.

Cheong-ryeong opened her mouth.

-The source of non-existence, the order of the Dao. The eagle soars through the clouds, the hawk catches the hare. The sword descends like a falling leaf.

Along with that, she slowly performed the first stance while extending her sword fingers forward.

It was as if a beautiful woman was performing a sword dance.

The phrase “a beauty under the moon” came to mind.

Her fluttering red robe swayed in sync with her stances, resembling scattered flower petals.

‘.....’

It was a movement that naturally captivated the soul.

If only the situation weren’t like this, he would have loved to watch leisurely.

Mok Gyeong-un then opened his mouth.

“The source of non-existence, the order of the Dao. The eagle soars through the clouds, the hawk catches the hare. The sword descends like a falling leaf!”

And he followed Cheong-ryeong’s movements.

Exactly as he had received them.

He reproduced them without a single difference.

-Ache! Ache!

Some untrained muscles cried out in pain, but he ignored it and focused on her every fingertip.

-Swish! Swish swish swish!

‘!!!!!!!’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s sword technique, the Bright Blade King Son Yun’s eyes wavered.

He wasn’t the only one.

Manor Master Mok In-dan also couldn’t take his eyes off the first stance Mok Gyeong-un was demonstrating.

‘How..... could this be.....’

He couldn’t help but be astonished.

It was truly a peerless sword technique.

Each stance was flawless, and it was difficult to find any defects.

Since it was a secret manual guarded by the Heaven and Earth Society, he had expected it to be remarkable to a certain extent, but it was truly incredible.

However, what was even more surprising was...

'This child..... How can he move like this?'

Mok Gyeong-un's current movements were not something a mere third-rate martial artist could achieve.

Although he moved slowly without infusing internal energy, everything from his fingertips seemed as if a peerless swordsman who had reached the realm of the sword was demonstrating a sword dance.

A swordsman of that level could clearly discern it.

'Ha.'

If he was like this, how could Son Yun be any different?

Son Yun also couldn't hide his admiration at Mok Gyeong-un's display.

Not only did he recognize and view the stances, but the swordplay he demonstrated was a movement that absolutely couldn't be achieved at that child's level.

'Is it talent?'

It was an incomprehensible talent.

Based on his perception, he was at most a third-rate or barely second-rate level.

Yet, he demonstrated the stances as if a peerless swordsman was performing for someone to see?

It was at that moment.

-Murmur murmur!

The sound of stirring could be heard among the masked individuals.

Son Yun knew why they were reacting like that.

"The evil perishes under the heavenly light, nothing can resist the Dao. The swordsman....."

Mok Gyeong-un was about to recite another oral formula and demonstrate the second stance.

'Oh no!'

He had to stop him.

They couldn't let others hear any more of the stances' oral formulas.

Son Yun hurriedly shouted,

"Enough!"

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been extending his sword fingers diagonally, halted his movement.

And he checked Son Yun's reaction.

He had been following Cheong-ryeong's movements on the roof with extreme concentration, so he hadn't noticed the reaction.

'Huh?'

Mok Gyeong-un was inwardly puzzled upon seeing the Bright Blade King Son Yun's expression.

This time, it was truly a gamble.

After all, the oral formula wasn't the one written in the secret manual.

However, judging by Son Yun's expression, it didn't seem like he had made a mistake at all.

If that weren't the case, they would have already beheaded him.

Mok Gyeong-un asked,

"Are you convinced now?"

"....."

At this question, Son Yun stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un without uttering a word.

In his mind, an image of someone else demonstrating the same stances as Mok Gyeong-un was painted like a picture.

It was utterly villainous.

However, the sword technique Mok Gyeong-un had demonstrated was completely different in nature.

If that was the case,

‘Without a doubt.’

It was definitely the secret manual.

There was no room for doubt.

Son Yun tried his best to hide it, but his heart was pounding.

Although it had turned out differently than expected, to think he would witness the sword formula of the Moon Lineage (月脈) that was said to have been severed a hundred years ago.

It was hard to contain his excitement.

However, Son Yun quickly suppressed that emotion.

[Make sure to retrieve it.]

Retrieving the original secret manual was the best course of action.

However, if what this fellow said was true, the original had already disappeared from the world.

This fellow’s mind was the only secret manual.

“Bright Blade King.”

At that moment, the voice of the middle-aged man with the eye patch, diviner Jo, was heard.

Although he didn’t say anything else, judging by diviner Jo’s slight head shake, Son Yun seemed to understand what he meant.

He was probably telling him not to kill the kid.

‘He must be tempted.’

It was intriguing for him as well.

This brat had accomplished what no one in the society had been able to do.

Most of them had lost their lives.

If that was the case, either the cursed secret manual had chosen that child, or there was something special about him.

'But the secret manual must not be learned by anyone other than the permitted individual.'

Therefore, the right course of action was to extract the contents from his mind and kill him.

However, it felt like a waste.

Seeing his contemplative demeanor, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed.

'There's something.'

They were unaware of the true contents within the secret manual.

However, judging by their reactions, they seemed convinced that the oral formula of the stances Cheong-ryeong had taught him was the content inside.

If that weren't the case, they would have already beheaded him.

But that expression of considering something while looking at him...

'Is he reconsidering?'

There was only one thing he could guess.

Perhaps, since it was a secret manual precious enough for them to call it their treasure, it shouldn't be learned by outsiders.

If that was the case, now that they had confirmed it was genuine, were they planning to extract it from his mind and then kill him?

Mok Gyeong-un glanced at diviner Jo.

Judging by his reaction, he seemed to have considerable interest in him.

In that case,

“Considering you went through the trouble of coming all the way here to find the secret manual, it must be a valuable item, right?”

“What?”

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un leaped towards a nearby warrior of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

And he practically snatched the sword from him.

“I’ll borrow this for a moment.”

“Wh- What?”

Mok Gyeong-un placed the sword he had snatched against his own neck and said,

“If I die, all your efforts in coming to find it will be in vain.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, one of the Bright Blade King Son Yun’s eyebrows rose.

Was this brat trying to bargain with his own life?

Son Yun scoffed and said,

“Do you have the courage to take your own life while saying such things?”

In response to that question, Mok Gyeong-un smiled faintly.

“It’s not particularly difficult.”

-Stab!

The blade of the sword pierced Mok Gyeong-un’s neck.

‘!?’

For a moment, Son Yun was dumbfounded.

He had naturally assumed that Mok Gyeong-un would try to bargain with his life to survive against him.

But that bastard was now trying to behead himself without hesitation.

“Stop!”

Son Yun shouted a reprimand infused with internal energy.

“Ugh!”

“Urgh!”

At the resounding sound that echoed, everyone momentarily covered their ears.

Mok Gyeong-un also frowned and staggered from the pain and dizziness caused by the sound infused with internal energy, but he didn't let go of the sword piercing his neck.

Despite the discomfort, he endured it.

‘This bastard?’

Son Yun then shouted,

“Stop!”

-Swish!

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un relaxed his strength and stopped pushing the sword into his neck.

Blood flowed down his neck, staining his collar red.

Son Yun spoke in a dumbfounded tone,

“You're insane, you bastard.”

If it were anyone else, he would have scoffed at the brat's foolish actions.

But this fellow was different.

Not only his eyes but also the way he didn't hesitate to take his own life, as if he had no attachment to it.

“It's hard to live in this world without being a little insane.”

“You talk as if you've experienced the world, you young brat. What do you want?”

-Tap tap!

Mok Gyeong-un tapped his forehead with his finger and said with a smile,

“Now that you know how valuable the contents in my mind are, I have no intention of easily revealing them. So, don’t bother assessing this and that, and take the secret manual nicely.”

“What?”

“That diviner over there also wants that, doesn’t he?”

Son Yun’s expression turned peculiar.

‘Take it nicely?’

Is this bastard not asking to be spared in exchange for revealing the secret manual, but instead suggesting he will willingly follow them to their headquarters?

As Son Yun was dumbfounded, a glint of interest flickered in his eyes.

‘Ha. Look at this bastard.’

Chapter 50

The Bright Blade King Son Yun, who had been glaring at Mok Gyeong-un, burst into laughter and said,

“Hahahahaha! This one is quite the character.”

It had been a long time since he encountered such a brazen fellow.

Even those who knew of his notoriety, whether outside or within the society, couldn’t muster the audacity to behave in such a manner.

No, it was hard to even consider it audacity.

‘He’s different.’

The Yeon Mok Sword Manor was a renowned martial arts family.

To think he would encounter such a lunatic-like fellow in a place that was no different from a righteous sect.

For some reason, this brat seemed closer to their side than the other.

That’s why it was intriguing.

After laughing for a while, Son Yun shook his head and said,

“A living secret manual willingly coming to our headquarters, there’s no reason to refuse. Very well. I hope you don’t regret those words.”

At his words, Lady Seok, the first wife, and the second son, Mok Eun-pyeong, couldn’t hide their inner joy.

The Heaven and Earth Society was known for its notoriety, so they had been worried about the worst-case scenario, but this was the best outcome.

How wonderful was it that everything was resolved with that Mok Gyeong-un alone?

However, Manor Master Mok In-dan felt differently.

-Clench!

The hand gripping his sword tightened.

This sense of powerlessness was a first for him.

If he could, he wanted to shout at them to release Mok Gyeong-un immediately.

Whether he liked him or not, he was his son.

However, the situation was ambiguous.

‘He had memorized the secret manual.’

When he first learned of that fact, he had been greatly surprised.

That was because he, too, had tried various means to view the secret manual but had been unable to even untie the prayer beads.

Thus, he had naturally assumed that Mok Gyeong-un possessed the secret manual rather than having memorized it.

Since he hadn’t seen the secret manual in the first place, he thought there would be no problem if they just returned it.

However, that had completely gone awry.

‘.....Having memorized the secret manual, they will never let him go.’

If an outsider had secretly memorized the Yeon Mok Sword Manor’s secret manual, it was only natural to demand their life as punishment for that crime.

That’s how important a secret manual was to martial artists.

Therefore, Mok Gyeong-un's judgment might be correct in this situation.

It was the only way to stay alive, even if only slightly.

'I'm sorry.'

As the Manor Master, he had no choice but to bear the responsibility for everyone's lives.

If they fought to protect Mok Gyeong-un, they would surely be annihilated.

That Son Yun was a monster to that extent.

'.....Endure it for a while.'

Once they left, he planned to seek help from the Righteous Alliance.

The Righteous Alliance was one of the three major factions in the current martial arts world, along with the Heaven and Earth Society.

He had some high-level connections and friendships, so he was determined to retrieve his son by borrowing the power of the Righteous Alliance.

However, an unexpected event occurred at this point.

-Swish!

At that moment, Son Yun's figure blurred, and he suddenly appeared behind Mok Gyeong-un.

Then, like a flash of lightning, he sealed his acupuncture points.

-Pak pak pak pak pak!

Mok Gyeong-un, whose acupuncture points had been sealed, collapsed to the ground, losing consciousness.

Son Yun caught him with his hand and called out to a masked individual.

"Take care of this fellow."

At this, Manor Master Mok In-dan shouted,

"What is the meaning of this?"

“What is this? Even if he willingly came with us, did you think I would let him continue to bargain with his own life?”

At Son Yun’s words, Mok In-dan gritted his teeth.

As expected, he was not an easy opponent.

Objectively speaking, it was a natural response.

“Well, putting that aside, now that we have retrieved the secret manual, shall we settle the remaining debt?”

“Debt?”

“Manor Master Mo. Did you really think that after tampering with our society’s item, you could simply return it and move on as if nothing happened?”

At those words, everyone in the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, who had been inwardly relieved, tensed up again.

They had a feeling that things wouldn’t be resolved so easily.

At that moment, Manor Master Mok In-dan assumed a bow stance and spoke,

“Will you break your promise?”

“Promise?”

“That’s right. If that child learns that you have broken your promise, do you think he will reveal the secret manual he has memorized?”

“Hahahahaha! That’s ridiculous. Will it matter whether you live or die?”

The strong aura emanating from him.

It was so powerful that the expressions of everyone in the Yeon Mok Sword Manor darkened.

“So you’ve finally come to this?”

As he spoke, Manor Master Mok In-dan drew true energy from his danjeon.

It was a situation on the brink of explosion.

The Bright Blade King Son Yun aimed his Taoist sword at him, grinned, and said,

“But since this elder is in a good mood today, I’ll give you one last chance.”

“Chance? What do you mean?”

“I’m saying I’ll give you a way for the Yeon Mok Sword Manor to survive.”

“A way to survive?”

“That’s right.”

At Son Yun’s words, Mok In-dan frowned and asked,

“What is it?”

“I’ll give you two choices. If you refuse all of this, the Yeon Mok Sword Manor will be annihilated tonight.”

“.....What are those choices?”

For now, he decided to hear him out.

If they fought, there was a ninety percent chance that the Yeon Mok Sword Manor would be annihilated.

“First. Surrender to our Heaven and Earth Society and become a subordinate sect.”

‘!!!!!’

At the Bright Blade King Son Yun’s words, the Yeon Mok Sword Manor side stirred.

That was because although the Yeon Mok Sword Manor was a renowned martial arts family that upheld righteousness, the Heaven and Earth Society was not.

They walked their own path of villainy, neither righteous nor evil.

Therefore, surrender was tantamount to abandoning their pride as righteous individuals.

-Grit!

It was only natural for them to be furious to the point of stirring, even while fearing them.

They would have preferred death, but they couldn’t do that.

“Even if it means dying, we will resist until the end.”

“You have integrity.”

Son Yun had naturally expected them to refuse the first proposal.

“Then, for the second, seal your sect for ten years and hand over your successor as a hostage.”

“.....”

The moment they heard the second proposal, the entire Yeon Mok Sword Manor fell silent.

Manor Master Mok In-dan's expression was also grim.

He had expected them to make a difficult proposal.

That ominous premonition had been correct.

Sealing the sect[1].

It literally meant sealing off martial arts activities for ten years.

Typically, when a sect was defeated in a war between sects or when a sect fell, they would seal their sect.

‘Sealing the sect.....’

It was more realistic than the previous proposal.

It was the only way to acknowledge defeat without compromising their last shred of dignity.

However, during those ten years, the Yeon Mok Sword Manor would gradually weaken, unable to engage in external activities, and they would be unable to interact with other sects or anyone else.

‘If we seal the sect, our clan will decline.’

However, it was a better choice than everyone dying.

As he was contemplating, someone approached him.

“Father.”

It was none other than the eldest son, Mok Yeong-ho.

The first son, known as a debauchee, had only brought disappointment to him by indulging in wine and women.

For him to speak up at this crucial moment, Mok In-dan couldn't help but be puzzled.

"What is it?"

"They say to sleep on firewood and taste gall. Although it may be difficult, please accept this proposal."

Sleeping on firewood and tasting gall[2].

It meant enduring humiliation and suffering for the sake of the future.

At Mok Yeong-ho's words, a glint of surprise flashed in Manor Master Mok In-dan's eyes.

'This kid.....'

It wasn't his usual demeanor.

He had thought he had lost his spirit by indulging in wine and women.

However, looking at his eyes and expression now, he could see him barely restraining his shame.

He seemed even angrier than himself.

As he was inwardly puzzled, Mok Yeong-ho said,

"Please send me. As the eldest son of our clan, am I not the closest to being the successor?"

"What?"

He volunteered to go himself?

Was this really the same child who had only brought disappointment by indulging in wine and women?

As he was astonished, Mok Yeong-ho whispered softly,

"Fortunately, you haven't made that youngest child the successor yet."

'!?'

Manor Master Mok In-dan's eyes wavered.

With those words, Mok In-dan understood Mok Yeong-ho's true intentions for the first time.

Mok In-dan's eyes reddened.

'Ah..... Yeong-ho. Yeong-ho. All this time, you indulged in wine and women for that reason?'

Was it to yield the succession to the youngest, Yu-cheon?

Was that why he had brought disappointment by indulging in wine and women?

Mok In-dan clutched his chest, overwhelmed by shock.

It pained his heart that he had only scolded this child without trying to understand his true feelings.

He was so different from his mother.

"Father. I apologize for causing you distress all this time. Please take care of your health."

Mok Yeong-ho politely bowed and turned to the Bright Blade King Son Yun, speaking in a loud voice,

"The Manor Master has accepted Hero Son's second proposal. I, the eldest son and successor of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, will be the hostage....."

"No."

At that moment, Son Yun interrupted him.

He then pointed at someone with his finger and said,

"Where are you trying to deceive me? I will take that child."

'Oh no!'

The eldest son, Mok Yeong-ho, bit his lip firmly.

The one Son Yun pointed to.

It was the youngest, Mok Yu-cheon, whom he had been trying to protect by sacrificing himself.

They had overlooked something.

Unlike the righteous martial arts world, which prioritized the firstborn eldest son or the first accepted disciple in terms of respect, the Heaven and Earth Society strictly followed the law of the strong.

Therefore, in their eyes, the successor of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor was naturally Mok Yu-cheon, who possessed the most outstanding martial arts talent.

-Rattle! Rattle!

Inside the carriage, there was a masked warrior and two people lying motionless, their eyes covered and bound.

They were none other than Mok Gyeong-un and Mok Yu-cheon.

As hostages or prisoners, their treatment was not very good.

'They're thorough. Sigh.'

Mok Yu-cheon let out a sigh.

Unlike Mok Gyeong-un, his acupressure point for fainting hadn't been sealed, so he hadn't lost consciousness, but the acupressure points for paralysis and muteness had been sealed, rendering him unable to move.

As if that wasn't enough, they had also blindfolded him and tied his entire body, arms, and legs with thick ropes.

They were meticulous in their precautions.

'How far have we gone?'

They seemed to have traveled for about a few shichen.

Although sunlight didn't enter the carriage, it must have been daylight.

He had thought they would camp at some point since it was late at night, but they continued to move without rest.

'Hostage.....'

Mok Yu-cheon had been reflecting on his predicament throughout the journey.

When Manor Master Mok In-dan had awakened, he had been elated with hope that he might become the successor, but in an instant, he had become a hostage.

Moreover, he was a hostage of the Heaven and Earth Society, the most dangerous group in the martial arts world.

He had no choice.

‘..... What will happen from now on?’

A hostage was no different from a prisoner.

If it were a hostage exchange between groups of similar standing, he might expect good treatment, but it was difficult to expect that from the Heaven and Earth Society.

Even now, he was treated less than human.

-Thud!

As the carriage climbed a slope, someone’s body naturally touched him, and he felt their weight pressing against him.

Even though he couldn’t move his body, his sense of touch hadn’t disappeared.

‘Mok Gyeong-un.’

It was probably Mok Gyeong-un.

Was he in a better situation than this fellow for now?

No, maybe it was better to be unconscious.

At least in that moment, he was no different from being asleep without any worries.

Right at that moment, the carriage came to a stop.

-Creak!

The sound of the carriage’s rear door opening was heard.

And a soft voice spoke,

“We’ll..... rest here for a while..... So..... go take care of any business you have.”

“Understood!”

-Creak!

With the sound of the door closing, the presence disappeared.

It was hard to hear clearly, but it seemed they were taking a short break here.

After all, they had been moving for half a day without rest.

Even if they had cultivated martial arts, their stamina wasn't infinite.

'How long do I have to stay like this?'

As he was pondering, at that very moment...

-Swish!

A very faint movement was felt beside him.

'!?'

What was that?

Right now, only he and Mok Gyeong-un were in this carriage, as the masked guard had temporarily left.

But who was moving?

As he was wondering, he felt someone squirming behind his back.

'Could it be?'

It couldn't be.

Not only had he been struck on his acupressure points, but his entire body was also restrained.

Moreover, unlike himself, wasn't it that monster-like man, the Bright Blade King, who had personally sealed Mok Gyeong-un's acupressure points?

As he found it strange, someone lifted the cloth covering Mok Yu-cheon's eyes.

'What?'

Mok Yu-cheon's eyes widened.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

'How?'

Surprisingly, Mok Gyeong-un was moving freely, and not only that, he had somehow untied the ropes that had been restraining him.

How on earth did this fellow release the acupressure point sealing?