

# **Myst, Might, Mayhem**

## **#Chapter 61 - Read Myst, Might, Mayhem Chapter 61**

Chapter 61

A dead boy's head was grasped by Mok Gyeong-un as he performed the Ritual of Binding.

Not long after, he absorbed all the remaining death qi from the boy.

'Nice.'

Mok Gyeong-un smiled.

He had absorbed the death qi of a whopping 16 people.

Even without sealing his meridians to gather it in his dantian, his entire body's blood vessels were brimming with qi.

He seemed to be quite lucky.

11 of them had died fighting each other from the start, and the remaining five were considerably fatigued.

As a result, he could kill them without exerting much effort.

"How convenient."

– Those fools have made a foolish move.

Cheong-ryeong agreed with Mok Gyeong-un's words.

Thanks to them sealing everyone's meridians with the Geummunsoe, it became advantageous for Mok Gyeong-un.

If they were in a situation where they could use their internal energy, it would have been difficult to kill the boys in this manner.

But thanks to that, he was easily securing death qi.

'Well, if they're going to die competing with each other anyway, it's better for them to become the death qi of that guy.'

After all, she was a vengeful spirit.

As such, she didn't particularly feel pity.

Besides, in a place where people were killing each other to pass through the barrier, it was meaningless to dwell on such matters.

– By the way, I suppose that must be the flag.

“Indeed.”

Mok Gyeong-un set down the severed head and approached the flag.

Although he had no intention of claiming the flag yet, his gaze was inevitably drawn to it as it was the objective of this barrier.

– What will you do with the flag? If you're not going to take it now, break it and throw it away.

“I should.”

– Or it might be more convenient to carry one around in advance for later.

“That's not a bad idea either.”

As he said that, Mok Gyeong-un reached to grab the flagpole but then stared intently at something.

Even though his internal energy was sealed, his five senses were far more developed than ordinary people.

– What is it?

“There's something written right below the flag, near the base of the pole.”

– What does it say?

“Hmm. ‘Three Forms Sword Technique, Breakthrough the Haze with Sword Light’...”

As Cheong-ryeong heard the mnemonic Mok Gyeong-un was reading, she immediately realized what it was.

– That... is a mnemonic for sword technique stances.

“Sword technique? Hearing it, it does seem that way.”

Mok Gyeong-un agreed as it was a mnemonic describing sword stances.

“But why would such a thing be written here?”

– Read the rest.

“‘Unattached Thread Connects, Sword and Man as One, Spirit Moves Unhindered’...”

As he continued reading, Mok Gyeong-un said:

“That’s it.”

– What? That’s it?

Cheong-ryeong questioned, and Mok Gyeong-un asked as if puzzled:

“Is there a problem?”

– The stances seem to be cut off midway.

“Cut off midway?”

– Yes. If these are the only stances, then the Gokji, Sinju, Gonryun, and Wijung acupoints would have gaps.

“So it’s an incomplete set of stances?”

– It doesn’t seem like that’s the case. Rather than an advanced sword technique, seeing how it focuses on the fundamentals and the stances don’t overlap...

“Seeing how?”

– It seems like it was created for a sword formation.

“A sword formation, like arranging swords in a formation?”

– Yes. But with only these stances, the weaknesses are glaringly obvious, so even if you make a sword formation, it would be shoddily put together.

“Shoddily put together? Ha. What an interesting expression.”

– I didn’t say it to be interesting. In any case, there must be a reason for deliberately writing an incomplete sword technique here.

Mok Gyeong-un nodded in agreement with Cheong-ryeong’s opinion.

Just as the steel marbles had numbers engraved on them, this was likely a hidden task of the barrier.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been intently staring at the mnemonic, said:

“There may be more to these flags than meets the eye.”

– Didn’t they say there were forty?

“That’s not what I meant. I’m talking about types.”

– Types?

“Yes. Could there possibly be other flags with the remaining stances written on them?”

– Oho. That’s quite a plausible idea.

This time, Cheong-ryeong agreed with Mok Gyeong-un’s words.

It was quite likely.

– If, as you say, the stances hidden on the flags are of two types, then those who discover this will inevitably try to find other flags rather than just defending their own.

“I think the same.”

Two types of flags.

It didn’t end with just finding one flag.

In the end, having eight people stay at the flag location until dawn was just the visible task, and the hidden task seemed to be completing the divided sword stances.

“Interesting.”

It was inciting a fight in one way or another.

Those who didn’t notice this would simply end it like that, but any slightly meticulous fellows would make a move to aim for the other flags.

The conclusion was that Mok Gyeong-un also had to find one flag of the other type.

And naturally, seven teammates had to be with that flag.

– It’s gotten a bit tricky.

“But now that we know how it works, we’ll have to select accordingly.”

As he said that, Mok Gyeong-un snapped the flagpole with the mnemonic written on it using one hand.

– Crack!

As Cheong-ryeong had said earlier, it was to dispose of the flag.

But at the moment he broke it,

– Flinch!

Mok Gyeong-un frowned while looking at the flag.

“Hah...”

– What’s wrong?

“There was spell power imbued in the flagpole.”

– Spell power?

Spell power.

It literally refers to the power of spells or techniques.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had become more sensitive to various types of qi after absorbing death qi with reverse cycling and learning spells, felt it.

However, Cheong-ryeong, who was inside a wooden puppet and unable to sense spell power, asked:

– Could it be a trap?

“It doesn’t seem like that.”

If it were a trap, the spell power would have remained intact.

But the fact that the spell power disappeared the moment the flagpole was broken meant that,

– Piiiiiii!

Just then, a sound like a horn echoed throughout the entire mountain.

Judging from the regularity of the sound, it seemed like a signal.

– Kkukukukuk!

Hearing this, Mok Gyeong-un lightly crushed the broken flagpole with one hand and muttered:

“There must be something else besides this.”

\*\*\*

Not far away.

At a place where a flag was planted on a mountain ridge, another battle for the flag was about to unfold.

A group of eight who had discovered it first was trying to defend the flag, while a group that arrived later was attempting to seize it from them.

The group of eight defending the flag here was none other than those led by a boy named Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley.

– Thwack!

“Ugh!”

A boy who was hit by Yeom Ga’s swift kick was sent flying backward.

‘shit. He’s too strong.’

The boy who was knocked back thought in dismay as he recovered.

Since internal energy was banned, he thought they could somewhat evenly match those from Vermilion Slaughter Valley.

However, their fundamentals were on a different level.

It seemed they had diligently trained in external techniques as well, as the power of the kick was no ordinary matter.

‘No wonder they’re from Vermilion Slaughter Valley.’

He started to think they might have picked the wrong opponent.

The other guys seemed somewhat manageable, but,

– Thud! Thud!

“Ack!”

Unfortunately, there wasn't much difference.

Anyone could see they were being pushed back.

They were no match from the beginning.

Even Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley seemed to realize the difference in skill level as he gestured and taunted:

“Hey. If you're going to charge in, at least show some persistence.”

‘shit!’

They were angry but couldn't do anything about it.

– Crack!

“Kuk!”

“No!”

One of the boys had his neck broken by a boy from Yeom Ga's group and was defeated.

Not much time had passed since they charged in, but two had already lost their lives.

If they suffered any more losses, their group would be annihilated.

The leader of the boys, judging that it was hopeless, shouted:

“Retreat!”

At the leader's cry, the other boys who had been desperately trying to seize the flag seemed to agree as they fled without looking back.

Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley smiled bitterly and muttered:

“Who says you can leave.”

Charging in was up to them, but did he seem like someone who would let them go easily?

He had to kill them all and make an example out of them so that other guys wouldn't thoughtlessly aim for their flag.

“Capture them all...”

– Thwack!

“Ack!”

‘!?’

Just then, Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley shut his mouth.

What was that just now?

A boy who was attempting to flee the fastest towards the opposite bushes suddenly disappeared with a scream as a dark shadow swept by.

A momentary silence fell.

From the boys who were trying to pursue with rising killing intent to the boys who were trying to escape, they all looked at where the shadow had passed with startled eyes.

– Crunch! Crunch!

The bushes rustled and sounds of something being chewed could be heard.

That sound was horrifyingly ominous.

“Wh-what?”

“What was that just now?”

The boys unknowingly took steps back at the unpleasant noise.

Then, a sound came from the rustling bushes.

– Oink oink!

What was that?

At first listen, it sounded like a pig’s squeal.

However, the bizarre glint faintly visible between the bushes was enough to make one shudder.

The fleeing boys were taking steps back when the bushes shook.

And then, something revealed itself from there.

'!?'

The expressions of the boys who saw it all stiffened identically.

– Thud!

What extended hook-shaped front legs was not human.

It resembled a wolf, but was also different.

It seemed to be about twice the size of an ordinary wolf, with red fur on its head and rat-like, completely black eyes.

'Wh-what is this?'

'A wolf? There are wolves like this?'

'It's... too big.'

– Oink oink!

The monstrous beast making pig noises opened its mouth, revealing razor-sharp teeth filling its entire maw.

– Gulp!

A boy who swallowed dryly out of tension shouted:

"Run away!"

The moment that cry ended, the boys turned their bodies to the right.

Then,

– Pounce!

The red-headed wolf beast instantly caught up to the boy at the very rear and,

– Chomp!

"Aaaahhhh!"

It bit into his calf.

Then, with tremendous jaw strength, it thrashed the boy around.

– Thud! Thud!

“Ugh!”

It only thrashed him around a couple times, but the boy had already lost consciousness, either dead or passed out.

His calf, nearly severed by the sharp teeth, was tattered.

The wolf-like beast approached the boy’s head and swallowed it whole.

– Crunch! Crunch!

‘!!!!!’

At that sight, the boys defending the flag turned deathly pale.

Right before their eyes, a beast was chewing on a person’s head, so it would be stranger not to feel fear.

This was the same for Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley.

‘shit!’

What rotten luck to have such a bizarre creature appear when internal energy was sealed.

It didn’t seem to be an ordinary monstrous beast.

Even against regular wolves, it would be difficult to face them barehanded when unable to use internal energy.

Let alone a beast of that size.

It went beyond difficult.

They might have to risk their lives.

‘Should we flee?’

It no longer seemed like a situation where they could defend the flag.

But it was also absurd to give up on the flag they had finally obtained because of that damn beast.

Right then,

– Oink oink!

The beast that had crushed and swallowed the boy's head now looked in their direction.

Then, as if it had chosen a target, it scraped its hind legs on the ground and tried to launch its body forward.

At this, Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley tried to shout:

“Run...”

– Pounce!

– Squeeeeeeaaal!

The moment the charging beast had only taken about five steps, it suddenly saw something and screamed, frantically stepping back.

Then, snorting and exhaling through its nose, it changed direction.

– Swish!

That direction was where the group of boys who had tried to seize their flag and ran away were.

A boy who was fleeing in a panic while screaming said:

“Wh-what? Why is it suddenly acting like that?”

At this, Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley irritably muttered:

“shit. How should I know.”

He also couldn't understand why the beast suddenly behaved that way.

It looked like it was startled after seeing something.

So he turned his head to look in the direction the beast had been looking, and that was,

‘The flag?’

\*\*\*

“Huff! Huff!”

“Uhhh.”

Three boys were running like crazy.

They weren't headed in a specific direction but just dashing towards whatever they could see.

The terrified boys felt like their hearts would burst.

'shit! shit! shit!'

While fleeing, another one of them was caught.

Since internal energy was sealed and they couldn't use lightness skills, their running speed was only slightly faster than ordinary adult men.

But that monstrous beast was different.

It seemed to be even faster than a galloping horse.

'At this rate, will we all die?'

As this was happening, the running boy's eyes caught sight of a figure standing on the opposite side.

He was momentarily startled and about to change direction, but realizing it was a person, he inwardly felt relieved.

'What? Who is that?'

And then, upon seeing him, he recognized him at a glance.

It was that guy who had passed through first with a brutal hand during the steel marble competition.

In a different situation, he would have ignored or avoided him, finding him unpleasant, but the boy shouted with a glimmer of hope:

"H-hey! Help us!"

Surely, that guy had also formed a group.

If they all helped, maybe they could somehow face this monstrous beast.

But what was with that guy's clothes, and why was there so much blood on his hands?

– Flinch!

Moreover, looking at them running over, the corners of his mouth curled into a smile reaching his ears.

## Chapter 62

A smile that reached his ears.

Sometimes, someone's smiling face can lower the other person's guard.

However, the moment the boy saw that smile in response to his plea for help, he felt a strong malice that went beyond mere repulsion.

– Flinch!

This caused him to falter in his steps.

But the other two boys weren't like that.

“Huff huff! Hey! Help us! Some monster-like wolf is chasing us.”

They ran towards Mok Gyeong-un, pleading for help.

At this, the boy shouted in alarm:

“W-wait a moment, stop...”

Before he could even finish his words.

The moment the boy who had run over to ask for help reached right in front of him, Mok Gyeong-un naturally grabbed his neck and twisted it.

– Crack!

“Kuk!”

With a final scream, the boy with the broken neck collapsed to the ground.

Startled by this sight, the other boy stumbled backward in shock.

“Hic!”

– Thud!

As Mok Gyeong-un approached the fallen boy,

“Y-you bastard, what are you doing?”

The boy who had stopped due to a bad feeling shouted.

In response, Mok Gyeong-un laughed nonchalantly and lightly leaped, pushing his palm and kicking the head of the fallen boy who was trying to dodge backward.

– Crack!

He kicked so hard that the boy's head was bent backward.

The way his mouth gaped open, he seemed to have met his end.

Seeing this, the boy was at a loss for words.

'This... this crazy bastard...'

Even if they were in a competitive relationship, this wasn't a situation where they were fighting over a flag.

Yet he killed the other party who asked for help as soon as they met.

What kind of madman does that?

It was absurd.

– Oink oink!

From behind, the sound of pig-like squeals could be heard.

Along with it, the bushes rustled.

"shit."

A rough sound escaped the boy's mouth.

He was truly caught between a rock and a hard place.

Behind him was a monstrous beast, and in front of him stood a madman indiscriminately slaughtering others.

No, perhaps the saying "a tiger in front and a wolf behind" was more fitting.

'Do or die.'

The boy, whose face was covered in cold sweat, chose neither the front nor the back but the steep cliff to the right.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

With a shout, the boy launched his body to the right.

– Tap!

Whether it was the front or the back, if he was going to lose his life either way, he had no choice but to take a gamble.

At that moment.

He felt a strange sensation of something pulling the back of his head.

With that, the body of the boy who was about to fall suddenly floated backward and flew back.

Then,

– Puck!

The boy’s head was grasped by Mok Gyeong-un’s hand.

‘!?’

The boy’s eyes widened.

What was this?

It wasn’t directly pulled by hand.

Could it be the so-called “empty space grasping” where a profound inner expert could pull objects or something with their true qi?

‘... That’s impossible.’

It was hard to believe.

How could this guy, who was the same age as him, possess such profound true qi?

Moreover, their meridians were currently sealed by the Geummunsoe.

So how did he do it?

At that moment.

– Oink oink!

Along with the pig-like squeals, a large wolf with a red head and rat-like eyes emerged through the bushes.

Between its bared sharp teeth was a mouthful of bloody flesh.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un raised an eyebrow and muttered:

“And what’s this?”

The boy whose head was grasped spoke hastily in a frightened voice:

“I told you. Some monster-like thing was chasing us.”

“So it was that?”

“This isn’t the time for that, we need to run away!”

Although he said that, it seemed too late already.

The distance between the monstrous beast and them was at most twenty to twenty-five steps.

It was too close to run away from that beast, which was as fast as a horse.

– Oink oink!

The beast walked forward, drooling profusely.

As if it thought it could catch them at any time, it narrowed the distance step by step.

Feeling extreme fear from this, the boy muttered in a dazed voice:

“shit. It’s all because of you...”

– Tap!

Before the boy could finish his words.

Mok Gyeong-un released his hand from the boy’s head and quickly formed hand seals.

– Puck! Puck! Puck!

Soldier! Fight! Rupture! Formation!

They were the hand seals of the Nine Character Vitality Technique.

‘what the .... is he doing?’

As the boy wondered, Mok Gyeong-un made a square with the index and middle fingers of both hands and aimed it at the approaching beast.

Then,

– Swoosh!

Four invisible pillars soared around the approaching beast.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un said softly:

“Four Peaks Linking Technique.”

Then, surfaces were created by the four pillars that had become terrifyingly thick.

The boy couldn’t see it, but it was clearly visible to the beast’s eyes that this had blocked it, so it stopped and rolled its eyes.

Then, as if it had decided to forcibly break through, it launched its body.

– Puck!

– Squeeeal!

The beast that had launched its body like that crashed into something and bounced back.

“Wh-what?”

The boy couldn’t understand this sight.

Nothing was visible, so why was that monster-like beast acting like that?

Could it be that this guy did something?

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un made a gesture of opening his palm towards the trapped beast and then clenching it.

“Contract!”

– Swoosh!

At that instant, the four surfaces trapping the beast rapidly compressed.

As the space narrowed, the beast seemed to panic and began thrashing around.

Seeing the beast like this, Mok Gyeong-un clenched his hand even tighter.

– Oink oink!

– Crack crack crack!

The intervals of the beast's thrashing narrowed.

At the moment when the intervals had narrowed to the point where it was difficult to move.

The beast bristled the red fur on its head, and then let out a tremendous roar.

– Squeeeeeaaaal!

“Ack!”

The sound was so loud that the boy covered his ears.

Mok Gyeong-un endured this and tried to clench his hand to crush the beast to death, but,

– Crack crack crack!

At that moment, cracks appeared on the compressing surfaces.

Then,

– Crash!

The Four Peaks Linking Technique shattered in an instant and the beast leaped out.

‘Damn.’

When a spell imbued with spell power is broken, the backlash is suffered by the caster.

Mok Gyeong-un's body was pushed back about two steps.

– Swish!

– Oink oink!

The beast that had leaped out excitedly scraped the ground with its feet and let out a fierce roar.

“Hic.”

At this, the boy who had been covering his ears panicked and tried to back away while supporting himself with his hands.

However, the beast that had leaped out, contrary to its fierce roar, stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un, then turned its body and disappeared into the bushes as if fleeing.

“Huff... huff... ha...”

Seeing that sight, the boy who had been frightened let out a sigh of relief.

It was hard to believe even after experiencing it.

To think he had driven away such a monster-like being in a bizarre way.

Then, a voice was heard near his ears.

“Why are you feeling relieved?”

‘!?’

The boy, whose eyes had widened, tried to hastily get up.

But it was already too late.

Mok Gyeong-un twisted the neck of the boy who was trying to get up.

– Crack!

After the boy died, Mok Gyeong-un absorbed the death qi starting from the boy he had killed first using the “tak” ritual.

It was because the longer it took, the more death qi would dissipate.

Only after finishing absorbing the death qi did he open his mouth.

“That red-headed wolf from earlier, what was it?”

– Well. It’s my first time seeing it directly, but judging from its appearance and pig-like squeals, it seems to be a Gal-jeo.

“Gal-jeo?”

– It’s a man-eating fierce beast that inhabits the northern sea near Mount Beihao.

“I know it’s a man-eating beast.”

Its appearance alone was completely different from ordinary beasts.

Moreover, being a man-eating beast, it must have been affected by sorcery.

Rather, seeing how it broke the Four Peaks Linking Technique, it didn’t seem to be a low-grade man-eating beast, so he asked.

“Judging from how it broke the spell, it doesn’t seem to be of a low grade.”

According to Sorcerer Jo Ui-gong, the Four Peaks Linking Technique was originally created to eliminate vengeful spirits, so it could only handle the lowest grade of monstrous beasts.

The grades of man-eating beasts were divided into vicious beasts, monstrous beasts, demonic beasts, devil beasts, spiritual beasts, and supreme beasts.

To Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Cheong-ryeong replied:

– I heard that a mature Gal-jeo is called a monstrous beast. However, based on its size earlier, it’s not fully grown yet.

“It’s not fully grown?”

– Yes. Even so, it will be incomparably stronger than ordinary vicious beasts. It probably possesses strength somewhere between a fierce beast and a monstrous beast.

“As I thought.”

That seemed to be the reason why the Four Peaks Linking Technique was broken.

It exceeded the capacity that the technique could handle.

For a man-eating beast like the Gal-jeo, it was nothing more than a way to buy time, so there was no need to use this technique.

Mok Gyeong-un got up from his spot and said:

“This is troublesome.”

– Why? Are you suddenly scared now that you can’t use your internal energy and the spells you learned don’t work well? If that’s really the case, I will...

“No. That’s not it. I think we need to hurry.”

– Hurry?

“Before that man-eating beast interferes with my meal, I should move more diligently. No, it might be better to deal with it first.”

– .....

Ah.

So that was his perspective.

He was worried that the man-eating beast would kill more boys than him.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue inwardly.

\*\*\*

Meanwhile, the group led by Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley was moving cautiously.

However, three of them were grunting while jointly carrying the lump of metal at the bottom of the flag, and the rest were sticking close to them in a circle.

One of the boys carrying the lump of metal complained:

“No. If we’re going to find a different type of flag, why do we have to carry this like this? Can’t we just break off the upper part and go?”

In response to the boy’s complaint, Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley urged:

“Stop grumbling and do as you’re told. If my prediction is correct, you guys will have to thank me.”

At these words, the boys shook their heads from side to side.

Did it make sense to them that the monster-like beast avoided them simply because it was scared of the flag?

No matter how much they thought about it, they couldn’t understand.

Rather than inefficiently carrying the flag like this, they thought it would be better to just break the flagpole and move quickly to seize or find another flag.

But then, as they were doing that, a sound was heard from somewhere.

– Oink oink!

Startled by the sound, they stopped in their tracks.

It was definitely that thing.

– Rustle rustle!

The bushes in the northwest direction rustled, and soon the beast revealed itself.

Seeing this, the boys were about to put down the flag they were carrying and prepare to run away, but,

“Stay still.”

Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley dissuaded them.

No, they should either run away or join forces to confront it, but what did he mean by staying still?

As they were thinking that.

The beast looked at the flag they were holding, then raised its ears in alarm, turned its body, and went back into the bushes.

“Huh?”

The beast really ran away after seeing the flag.

At this, Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley spoke in a triumphant voice:

“See?”

He confirmed that his judgment was correct.

But after confirming this, a sudden thought occurred to him.

‘If we do it well, we might be able to use it.’

There were probably few people who knew that the flag served as protection.

The corners of Yeom Ga from Vermilion Slaughter Valley’s mouth curled up bitterly.

Chapter 63

Not far from the valley where the steel marble competition took place and the mountain where the flag battle was unfolding.

There was another cave there.

– Creak! Creak!

Five carriages in a procession headed towards that cave.

Red-belted warriors were pulling the carriages and entering the cave illuminated by torches.

The carriages that had entered the cave like that stopped at a certain place.

There, numerous bodies of boys were lying down.

“Phew. Is this the last of them? Then shall we move them?”

The red-belted warriors who had pulled the carriages started the task of laying the corpses side by side.

The remaining carriages that arrived one after another were the same.

– Plop!

“Is it because we took them out late? The bodies are bloated.”

A red-belted warrior clicked his tongue while looking at a corpse that was swollen with water.

Although it was shallow valley water, there were deep parts, so it seemed the entire body had been submerged.

Then, a middle-aged man wearing a Taoist robe with yin and yang drawn on it approached and said:

“Exclude that one.”

“Isn’t this much fine?”

“We can’t perform the work with this.”

“Oh my.”

At this, the red-belted warriors moved the corpse to a carriage on the left side of the cave.

As they were moving the corpse to the carriage, one warrior couldn’t hold back and vomited.

“Blech.”

Seeing this warrior, the other warriors clicked their tongues.

“Tsk tsk.”

“As expected of a rookie.”

Of course, they said that, but they actually understood.

At least the corpses lying over there had few wounds, so they still retained human form.

However, the ones in the carriage were the “dropouts”.

None of them were intact.

Having crushed heads was common, and there were many missing a leg or with organs torn out.

It was so horrific that it made one want to vomit just by looking.

“Get it together. Rookie.”

“Ah, yes sir.”

The warrior who had thrown up the contents of his stomach barely got up and replied.

As the corpse sorting work was somewhat finished like that, the dropouts nearly filled three carriages.

Then, the middle-aged man in the Taoist robe from earlier approached the warriors and said:

“Let’s go.”

The Taoist-robed middle-aged man led the way, and the red-belted warriors pulled the carriages piled with corpses.

The carriages moved along a narrow sloped path and stopped in front of a cliff at the foot of the mountain after half a sichen.

The Taoist-robed middle-aged man took out a handful of something from his bosom.

They were talismans.

[Chain]

Was written on them, and the Taoist-robed middle-aged man said as he attached a talisman one by one to the dead corpses on the carriages:

“When throwing them, don’t look down the cliff.”

“Yes sir.”

The red-belted warriors, who answered nonchalantly, threw the corpses with talismans attached off the cliff one after another in a familiar manner.

Seeing this, the rookie warrior was inwardly baffled.

If they were unusable corpses, it would be cleaner to just burn them, but if they threw them all in a place like this, wouldn’t the bottom be overflowing with corpses?

Even in broad daylight, it would be too horrific to muster the courage to go down.

The rookie warrior asked his senior who was also carrying corpses:

“Senior. Why are we throwing them off this cliff instead of just burning them?”

“Just do as you’re told. Why are you being curious?”

“S-sorry.”

As the rookie shut his mouth in dejection, the senior clicked his tongue and said in a low voice:

“Listen and let it go in one ear and out the other. From what I’ve heard, the stream flowing down from this cliff connects to a branch of the cave below.”

“What does that have to do with this?”

“I told you I don’t know. Something about becoming nutrients or whatever, but for lowly folks like us, we just need to do as we’re told. You’ll only bring trouble upon yourself by needlessly having doubts. Got it?”

“... Yes sir.”

‘Nutrients?’

what the .... was becoming nutrients?

He couldn’t understand at all.

Come to think of it, they said they did this every time the barrier of the Corpse Blood Valley was conducted, so just how many corpses have been discarded below this cliff?

Even now, it exceeded a hundred.

– Shudder!

Without thinking, he looked down, and for a moment, goosebumps rose all over his body.

It felt like something ominous and unpleasant was creeping up from the darkness that seemed to suck him in.

– Tap!

“Gasp!”

Just then, someone grabbed his shoulder.

It was the man in the Taoist robe who had been attaching the talismans.

The man in the Taoist robe said to the startled rookie warrior in a low voice:

“What did I say earlier?”

“Pardon?”

“I asked what I said earlier.”

“Ah, not to look down the cliff...”

“Then it’s best to never look down.”

“Y-yes?”

To the flustered rookie, the man in the Taoist robe warned in a meaningful tone:

“You may be bewitched.”

Bewitched? What did that mean?

\*\*\*

It was around the time when a shichen and two ke had passed since the flag defense battle began.

As a considerable amount of time had elapsed, nearly half of the flags had been discovered by the boys, and the fighting to defend and seize them was in full swing.

However, an unexpected variable occurred within this flag defense battle.

That was,

Oink oink!

The appearance of the man-eating beast, the Gal-jeo.

It was already incomparably more brutal than regular beasts, and it could be said to be the worst variable for the boys whose internal energy was sealed and had no weapons.

In particular, the boys who were searching here and there alone to find flags without their teammates were being indiscriminately attacked and killed.

Chomp!

“Aaaargh!”

Another boy was caught by the Gal-jeo in the middle of the mountainside.

The Gal-jeo liked human heads, so it crushed and devoured them with its vicious teeth every time it caught one.

It didn't even eat the other parts.

As a result, corpses with crushed heads were being discovered in various parts of the mountain, heightening the boys' vigilance to an extreme level.

“shit. What is this? Are you sure they ended up like this from fighting?”

A group that had not yet found a flag was shocked upon discovering a corpse.

This was definitely not a trace of having died while fighting.

“Even if internal energy is sealed, they couldn't have been caught by a beast, right?”

“You're right. These are teeth marks.”

“No. No matter how much of a beast it is, can it completely chew up a head? Even a tiger would have gnawed on the skull, no?”

A corpse with its head completely missing.

No matter how they looked at it, they couldn't understand.

Mok Yu-cheon, who was with them, had dark circles under his eyes.

'Hah...'

This place was truly like hell.

While engaging in a flag seizing battle, he had lost three boys who were his comrades, and now the five of them were wandering around looking for another flag.

But in the process, he had seen over twenty corpses.

Among them, only about three seemed to have died while fiercely fighting over a flag, and the rest had met bizarre deaths.

Ten corpses without heads like this one.

And he had discovered seven corpses that had died cleanly.

'... Most of them had their necks broken.'

Not all of them had their necks broken, but most seemed to have been killed in a similar manner.

It didn't seem like they had engaged in hand-to-hand combat or fought fiercely, but rather died without being able to properly resist against someone.

'What the? Just what?'

Those who killed like this seemed to have lost their lives unrelated to the flags.

The problem lay in this.

The flag battle alone was already making everyone struggle with bloodshot eyes, but it seemed that unknown beings were killing boys left and right.

'Just who is doing these things?'

About two hundred jang east from where Mok Yu-cheon was, on the middle of the mountainside.

One of the culprits he was curious about had his hand on the chest of a headless corpse, absorbing death qi.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been quickly absorbing death qi, soon removed his hand.

And as if displeased, he muttered:

“It’s lacking.”

– You mean death qi?

“Yes.”

– Of course it would be. For corpses attacked by man-eating beasts, most of the qi they possessed rapidly depletes as it gets devoured.

At Cheong-ryeong’s words, Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue.

Even the qi that comes out upon death depletes this quickly.

It was quite troublesome.

“Hmm.”

He had diligently moved to kill more boys than the Gal-jeo, a man-eating beast, to obtain death qi, but he was falling behind instead.

“It’s starting to annoy me a bit.”

Unlike himself who needed time to absorb death qi, this Gal-jeo, a man-eating beast, would just gobble up the heads and go after another prey.

It should be full enough by now, but it kept eating endlessly.

“It feels like I’m eating someone else’s leftovers.”

– Hmm.

“Why are you doing that?”

– But this bastard... seems to be eating a lot more than I thought.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said:

“It doesn’t seem to be full.”

– No. It’s a lot even considering that. It should be full enough by now, but it’s eating quite a lot.

“It may be because it’s in a period of active growth.”

– ... I see.

“What is it?”

– It might be a fellow that’s right before becoming an adult.

“An adult?”

– Yes. Among man-eating beasts, there are those that require a lot of qi for reproduction or to become adults.

“So Gal-jeo is that type?”

– Perhaps?

At Cheong-ryeong’s words, Mok Gyeong-un stroked his chin as if troubled.

If this guy kept eating like this, his share would be significantly reduced.

Thus, Mok Gyeong-un decided to change directions.

“This won’t do. I’ll have to catch that Gal-jeo first.”

He had thought that leaving it alone would cause chaos around him and actually benefit him.

But in the current state, it was rather a hindrance.

So Mok Gyeong-un made up his mind to kill the Gal-jeo first.

– How?

“Can you help me?”

– You said you could do it alone, but even you can’t help it in this situation, eh?

Cheong-ryeong snorted and said:

– Then take me out of this cramped place.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un held the wooden puppet she was in, formed hand seals, and chanted a spell.

“The origin connects to the earth, the nine turns return to the source, release!”

– Swoosh!

Eventually, a large shadow appeared from the wooden puppet, and Cheong-ryeong slowly revealed herself holding a long pipe.

Having come out, she stretched and said as if refreshed:

– As expected, it's much better than being trapped. Phew.

Cheong-ryeong took a puff from the long pipe and exhaled a long trail of smoke.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un said:

“Can you confirm where that thing is? No, if you can eliminate it, Cheong-ryeong, that would be fine too.”

– I'll do that even without you pestering me. Just wait.

Poof!

Cheong-ryeong soon soared into the sky.

Unlike a demonic beast, she was of a higher class, so even without possessing a body, the range in which she could move was extremely wide.

Cheong-ryeong, who had flown higher than the treetops like that, surveyed the surroundings.

Her blood-red ghostly eyes slowly swept over the entire mountain.

‘Hmm.’

But Cheong-ryeong, who had been looking around, raised an eyebrow.

She had thought that if it was obsessed with eating humans to that extent, she would find it quickly, but contrary to her expectations, the beast was not visible to her ghostly eyes.

If it was right before becoming a monstrous beast, its appetite should be overflowing, so it was strange.

‘Where the hell did it go?’

Was it not in this vicinity?

Thus, Cheong-ryeong flew even higher.

It was because she thought the Gal-jeo might have moved to a more distant place.

As she was looking around like that,

– Flinch!

Her gaze was fixed on somewhere.

‘Ha!’

An exclamation naturally flowed out of Cheong-ryeong’s mouth.

When she was inside the wooden puppet, she couldn’t sense the external qi, so she had no way of knowing this.

But now, she couldn’t help but see it.

No, it would be strange if her eyes and ears weren’t drawn to this tremendous thing.

From the distant cliff she was looking at, countless screams were spreading upward.

So she immediately descended.

Mok Gyeong-un asked:

“Did you find it already?”

– No. I didn’t see it. More importantly, you better quickly follow me now.

At her somewhat excited voice, Mok Gyeong-un couldn’t hide his puzzlement.

Regardless of that, Cheong-ryeong flew ahead as if guiding him somewhere.

So Mok Gyeong-un followed her.

\*\*\*

It wasn’t that far.

That place, two ke away, was located deep in the boundary of the mountain towards a certain cliff.

Looking at the ground,

‘Wheel tracks?’

The sloped path was full of wheel tracks as if carriages had been pulled.

As he was proceeding with bewilderment,

Flinch!

Mok Gyeong-un's steps momentarily faltered at the ominous qi spreading from ahead.

'What in the world is this...'

Ever since his ghost eyes opened and his sixth sense awakened, he couldn't help but become sensitive to such things, so why hadn't he noticed this until now?

With suspicion, he surveyed the surroundings.

Then he discovered something.

'Ah...'

The talismans and carved spells attached between the cliffs and trees.

They were controlling the ominousness flowing out so it couldn't escape outside.

But even with this many talismans attached, as he approached closer, just what was there for such tremendous ominousness to leak out to this extent?

When he reached the place where the wheel tracks ended, he saw Cheong-ryeong sitting on the edge of the cliff smoking a long pipe.

– Do you see it?

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un's flesh trembled.

Kyaaaaaaaa!

Aaaaaaargh!

Save meeeee!

Please! Please!

The endless screams spreading from below.

Along with those sounds, ominous qi that made the skin feel prickly was crashing upwards as if desperate to climb up but unable to do so.

– Take a closer look.

Mok Gyeong-un approached the edge of the cliff and looked down.

“Ahhh.”

It was like a bottomless pit.

Countless resentments were intermingled, spewing out endless malice and ominousness.

Even with talismans attached all over the cliff, if it was to this extent, those with weak mental strength might lose consciousness just by looking at it.

– Kid. Do you know what gu poison is?

“... How could I not know?”

There was almost nothing he didn't know about medicinal herbs and poisons.

Of course, he had never directly seen gu poison, but he remembered what he heard from his grandfather.

It was a secret art originating from the Nanman region where dozens or hundreds of poisonous creatures were put into a jar and the lid was not opened until only one survived.

The worst one that survived like that was called gu poison.

“Why are you asking that?”

Cheong-ryeong said with the corners of her mouth twitching:

– There's gu poison down there.

## Chapter 64

Dozens or hundreds of poisonous creatures are put into a jar and the lid is not opened until only one survives.

The worst one that survives like that is called gu poison.

Mok Gyeong-un, looking down at the cliff that was like a bottomless pit, asked in a puzzled voice:

“Gu poison...?”

– Yes. Can't you hear them? These screams.

He could hear them.

Very clearly at that.

Kyaaaaaaa!

Aaaaargh!

Save meeeee!

Please! Please!

The screams of vengeful spirits suffering in agony were soaring upward.

This was the first time he had seen this many vengeful spirits wailing together.

If taken individually, they were only at the red spirit level and nothing special, but with hundreds, no, thousands of vengeful spirits gathered in one place, it was truly a scene of hell.

– Take a closer look. Your eyes should be able to see it.

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un stared intently at the bottom.

The vengeful spirits wailing there were stretching their hands upward as if yearning for freedom, but iron chains were bound to their ankles and wrists.

Clang clang!

“Those are...”

– You should know well since you learned sorcery. You've done it once too, kid.

At her words, Gochan flashed through Mok Gyeong-un's mind.

Originally, Mok Gyeong-un had used sorcery to turn a soul that would naturally go to the afterlife into a vengeful spirit.

The method wasn't very difficult.

It was enough to somehow hold the departing soul in this world and taint it with the qi of death.

“Ha!”

The corners of Mok Gyeong-un's mouth twitched.

It was quite a sight to behold.

That enormous number of dead souls were trapped under this narrow cliff and transformed into vengeful spirits.

This was absolutely not something that happened by chance.

It occurred forcibly.

It couldn't be anything but a horrific deed.

However, while looking at this, Mok Gyeong-un was more intrigued than surprised.

'Truly peculiar.'

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

No matter how she looked at it, this guy's thinking was far from that of ordinary humans.

But it didn't matter.

Right now, her only thought was that whether it be an evil spirit or whatever, as long as it could resolve her deep resentment, it was fine.

Cheong-ryeong said:

– You should know that there are grades even among vengeful spirits, right?

“... That's right.”

– How strong of an obsessive grudge did they have before dying? How long did they hold that resentment? It's influenced by such things.

“...”

– But that's not the only way grades are determined.

“It can also be achieved in other forms?”

– Yes. Don't you see it now?

Cheong-ryeong pointed somewhere with her long pipe.

That place was the darkest spot at the bottom of the cliff that was like a bottomless pit.

That one spot was particularly invisible.

But upon closer look, an astonishing sight could be seen.

“... They’re being dragged.”

– Yes.

The screaming vengeful spirits.

Those vengeful spirits were being forcibly dragged to that one place as if being absorbed.

The vengeful spirits were desperately resisting, but due to the chains restraining them, they were being sucked in one by one.

Every time that happened, the dark space kept growing larger and larger.

“I understand what you mean now.”

Mok Gyeong-un now grasped the meaning of what she had said.

The meaning of the word “gu poison”.

– When vengeful spirits are together in one place, there may be cases where they don’t clash. But if they are restrained and confined in one place, unable to escape...

“They’re harming each other. No, I should say they’re devouring each other.”

– Yes.

Mere ghosts were devouring each other and transforming into the worst form in one place.

And that transformation into the worst was probably that dark spot.

A darkness that made one shudder just by looking at it.

“Gu poison, huh...”

It was a fitting name.

How much had the vengeful spirit that remained alone like that transformed into the worst form?

At the very least, it was definitely above a yellow spirit, no, a green spirit.

Mok Gyeong-un glanced at Cheong-ryeong.

‘Perhaps.’

It might be the process of forming a vengeful spirit on par with her.

As that thought occurred to him, he suddenly drooled.

Then Cheong-ryeong said:

– Now’s the chance.

“Chance?”

– A complete gu poison hasn’t been born yet. I don’t know how much of the worst they’re trying to create, but if you can absorb even a little of that qi, it will have a greater effect than killing them one by one.

This was the reason Cheong-ryeong had brought Mok Gyeong-un here.

Killing boys and absorbing death qi was naturally a way to become stronger, but the bottom of this cliff was a concentration of vengeful spirits to create gu poison.

The qi formed in that process had a different potency than ordinary death qi.

– It’s already overflowing, so if you perform the Art of Binding here, you’ll be able to sufficiently receive the qi.

“I suppose so.”

– Hurry up and do it.

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head.

– What? Don’t tell me you’re scared.

“No.”

– Then why are you refusing to do it?

“I’m not refusing. Rather than doing it here, I’m more tempted by that.”

‘!?’

What Mok Gyeong-un pointed at was none other than the dark spot.

At this, Cheong-ryeong furrowed her brows.

Then she spoke as if it was absurd:

– Are you crazy and want to die?

“Pardon?”

– That place is the very torrent where vengeful spirits are devouring each other and transforming. And you’re saying you’ll go there as a living being?

“Is it not possible?”

– Hey, brat.

“Yes.”

– There are still hundreds of individual vengeful spirits that haven’t been devoured. And if you enter that whirlpool, you may end up being devoured instead. Discard your unnecessary bravado.

It was a sincere warning.

Even if they were restrained, they were vengeful spirits.

If those things came surging like a wave all at once, there was no telling what would happen.

– You’ll die showing off with the meager sorcery you’ve barely learned. Be satisfied with the overflowing qi here as I told you.

At Cheong-ryeong’s words, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly.

Then he approached the edge of the cliff.

– Hey!

Cheong-ryeong urged the approaching Mok Gyeong-un.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un said while looking at the dark spot:

“Even if I take the risk, if I can absorb that concentrated qi, won’t I become much stronger than now?”

– ... You crazy bastard. You may die before becoming strong. If it seemed easy from the beginning, do you think I would stop you?

The vengeful spirits that were not only trapped but also devouring and being devoured had become agitated.

That alone was dangerous, yet he was going to take that risk?

This guy had really lost all sense of fear, too much at that.

It had been like that since their first encounter, but he too easily risked his life if necessary.

– You and I are one and the same. I don't want us to recklessly commit double suicide.

“As if I would ever wish for Cheong-ryeong to die.”

– Then back away.

“Didn't you say it, Cheong-ryeong?”

– What?

“That with my current strength, I can't do anything within Heaven and Earth Society.”

– ...

“Even if the risk is great, wouldn't it be better to seize the opportunity in any way possible? Enduring hardship and tasting bitterness or whatever, waiting idly doesn't suit my nature.”

Poof!

As soon as those words ended, Mok Gyeong-un jumped off towards the side of the cliff where the slope was relatively gentle.

– You!

Cheong-ryeong waved her hand, trying to pull Mok Gyeong-un back up.

But she was blocked by the qi of the vengeful spirits rising from the cliff.

Rather, a useless vengeful spirit was pulled up and,

Aaaaaahhhh!

Sizzle!

It got caught in the barrier blocking the top of the cliff and was incinerated.

At this, Cheong-ryeong burst out in anger.

– Damn you, kid!

He finally went down there.

She had warned him not to, but he ignored it.

If it weren't for being bound by the cord of the flesh-eating supreme-ruler, she would have wanted to leave him to die like that.

But she couldn't leave him like that.

– You're making me annoyed.

– Whoosh!

Cheong-ryeong launched her body downward, following Mok Gyeong-un.

The spell power of the talismans was enveloping the surroundings, making even considerable oddities reluctant to pass through, but she forcefully parted it.

Crack crack crack!

\*\*\*

It's a flesh body!

A living one!

It's alive!

It was a mess as he descended along the gentle slope.

The cries of vengeful spirits echoed in his ears.

'It's incomparable indeed.'

At the top of the cliff, numerous talismans were attached, suppressing the qi.

But when he actually came down, it was tremendous.

It was as if he had entered a torrent.

The vengeful spirits noticed his presence and quickly approached, and each and every one of them was coveting Mok Gyeong-un's flesh body.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been descending the cliff as if sliding, brought his hands together and formed hand seals.

Puck! Puck! Puck! Puck!

Presence! Soldier! Fight! Those! All! Formation! Lineup! At! Front!

They were the hand seals of the Nine Character Vitality Technique.

By performing all nine hand seals consecutively, the spell varies according to the final hand seal.

Here, if he performed the Hapjangin (Anjali Mudra) with his palms joined together,

Swoooooosh!

Numerous threads connected around Mok Gyeong-un, forming a sphere.

This was a barrier to repel oddities.

To properly perform the Nine Character Hand Seals of the Nine Character Vitality Technique, a medium was needed to aid the talismans or spells, and Mok Gyeong-un had a ring on his left index finger.

It was given to him by diviner Jo Ui-gong.

It contained a spell that allowed him to use the full range of the Nine Character Vitality Technique.

'Is this a barrier? It's quite useful.'

A barrier refers to tying a certain space according to a purpose.

Crack crack crack crack!

– Can't approach.

– What is this?

– It's blocked.

The vengeful spirits at the ghost level that had been approaching closely were bounced off.

The hand seals of the Nine Character Vitality Technique could easily handle and repel even red spirits.

Like that, while maintaining the Hapjangin with his hands joined, Mok Gyeong-un slid all the way down and felt the slope becoming steeper at a certain point.

'I think I need to grab on.'

It seemed he had to grab the cliff and climb down.

But when he looked below, he saw water pooled there.

It wasn't visible from above, but if it was that deep, it seemed sufficient to jump into.

Puck!

Mok Gyeong-un pushed off with both feet.

And he jumped towards the place with water.

Splash!

'As expected.'

The water wasn't very deep.

Should he say it was about twice his height in depth?

So he tried to swim up, but,

Ahhhhh!

Uhhhhh!

The screams of vengeful spirits reached his ears.

They came from the bottom of the water, and before he knew it, something white was visible around him.

'Hands?'

They were hands.

Pale white hands, as if swollen with water, without a hint of blood.

Just looking at them was extremely eerie.

Those hands suddenly wriggled and rose up, trying to grab Mok Gyeong-un's ankles.

Crack crack crack!

But since he hadn't released the Hapjangin yet, they were blocked by the barrier of the Nine Character Vitality Technique.

'Good thing I didn't release it.'

He thought, but something was quite different.

The red spirits at the ghost level had easily bounced off the barrier.

But the palms had bounced off the barrier yet didn't give up trying to grab him.

Then soon,

Tap tap tap tap!

The palms adhered to the barrier like an octopus's suckers.

'!?'

They were enduring the barrier.

Suddenly, he remembered what he had seen in the Basic Writings of the School of Yin and Yang.

[Oddities in water are more dangerous than ordinary oddities.]

'So this is what it meant?'

At this level, they weren't red spirits but vermilion spirits.

Judging it to be somewhat dangerous, Mok Gyeong-un kicked his feet while maintaining the Hapjangin.

He had to somehow rise to the surface.

Splash splash splash splash!

Then, before he knew it, numerous hands surged up from the bottom.

They grabbed the spherical barrier surrounding Mok Gyeong-un and tried to pull it down.

Aaaaargh!

'This... is troublesome.'

At this rate, he wouldn't be able to reach the surface.

Although he could hold his breath better than ordinary people, it would be dangerous if it prolonged.

Crack crack crack!

Just then, cracks appeared on the barrier where numerous palms were clinging.

It seemed like it would shatter at any moment.

Mok Gyeong-un frowned.

'In that case.'

Puck!

Mok Gyeong-un changed the hand seal from Hapjangin to Geumgangji (Vajra Mudra) by raising only his middle fingers.

At that moment,

Swoooosh!

The spherical barrier burst out, and a strong force simultaneously pushed away the palms.

Not missing this opportunity, Mok Gyeong-un kicked his legs powerfully and rose out of the water.

He tried to swim to the shore, but he felt the hands that had been bounced off from below all rushing up to grab him at once.

Swoooosh!

Right at that moment.

Woong!

Mok Gyeong-un's body suddenly floated by something.

Then he was sent flying to the shore.

Thud!

Roughly flying over, Mok Gyeong-un rolled on the ground twice and got up.

Someone gracefully descended next to Mok Gyeong-un.

It was none other than Cheong-ryeong.

– Damn you, kid. You really won't listen to my words.

As she expressed her annoyance, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and said:

“Phew. You came just in time.”

– What? Just in time?

“I thought Cheong-ryeong would surely help me.”

– Tch!

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Cheong-ryeong was about to smack his head with her long pipe but held back.

The impudent kid was desperate to use her.

Anyway, it seemed to be her fate to be entangled with this guy.

Just then,

Swoosh swoosh!

The white hands rose from the water and approached in the direction where Mok Gyeong-un was.

At this, Cheong-ryeong turned her head and glared at the hands with her blood-red eyes.

And in a low voice, she said:

– He's mine. Scram, you young ones.

No sooner had those words ended.

The numerous hands that had been targeting Mok Gyeong-un trembled as if having a seizure, then promptly went back into the water.

Chapter 65

'Is it the difference in grade?'

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes gleamed with interest at the pale white hands returning to the water after just one warning.

Indeed, with her grade reaching the level of a blue spirit, even her overwhelming presence alone dominates ordinary vengeful spirits.

"You're truly amazing as expected."

At Mok Gyeong-un's praise, Cheong-ryeong, who had chased away the water vengeful spirits, spoke in an annoyed voice:

– Do you think I said it was dangerous because of these low-grade ones?

"Of course not."

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders.

Naturally, if they were just red spirits or vermilion spirits, she wouldn't have warned him.

What she was warning about was that thing transforming into the worst gu poison by devouring each other.

Gooooooooo!

The area about forty jang away was covered in a thick fog.

It was so dark that the inside was barely visible.

If it were a simple fog, it would be better, but a pitch-black fog was swirling like a huge torrent, and just looking at it felt extremely ominous.

– That's not the only problem.

"... Are you also talking about those?"

Besides that thing that had engulfed an entire space, there were also smaller ones.

Those also formed small fogs and were chaotically entangled, and something seemed amiss about them.

Cheong-ryeong spoke while looking at those:

– Low-grade vengeful spirits that are no match for me will feel fear and hasten to flee like those just now. But those are different.

“What do you mean by different?”

– Vengeful spirits that have coveted and devoured each other see nothing.

“What does that mean?”

– They are devouring each other to survive and become stronger. Those things see nothing right now. They only have the thought that they must devour.

That’s why Cheong-ryeong advised not to approach them closely.

No matter how much lower their grade is and how weak they are compared to her, if those that have gone mad and turned into hungry ghosts rush at them all at once with determination, it becomes difficult to protect.

– Hey, kid. Do you think you can penetrate through those and absorb that?

“I’ll have to try.”

– You reckless bastard.

That was too dangerous.

Rather, there was a possibility of being devoured, so she wanted to forcibly pull him up even now.

While she was thinking that, Mok Gyeong-un looked around.

There was only an ominous feeling, and not a trace of human presence could be felt at all.

Thus, Mok Gyeong-un muttered:

“I think it’ll be fine here.”

– What are you saying?

At Cheong-ryeong’s question, Mok Gyeong-un suddenly fumbled around the back of his waist near his spine and placed his palm there.

Then he pressed down at a spot with his finger.

“Phew.”

– ... What are you trying to do now?

“Should I say I’m half-believing and half-doubting since it was something I had been contemplating whether to try or not?”

– What?

As she questioned back.

Mok Gyeong-un’s back curved, and then he slightly furrowed his brows.

He was someone who wouldn’t even blink an eye at ordinary pain, so how much pain must it be for him to act like this?

– Just what are you...!?

Cheong-ryeong’s eyes gleamed with interest.

It was none other than the needle, about the size of a finger joint, dangling from Mok Gyeong-un’s finger.

– Ha!

The end of this needle, shaped like a hook, was none other than the Golden Gate Lock.

It was used to seal meridians and restrict internal energy.

Originally, this Golden Gate Lock could only be removed using a special tool with strong magnetism, but Mok Gyeong-un removed it using the Art of Binding.

‘To utilize the Art of Binding in this way...’

The meridian near the spine where the Golden Gate Lock was inserted was extremely dangerous.

Therefore, even though it could be risky, he removed it by adjusting the Art of Binding without any hesitation.

It could be called bold.

– You really are...

“Wait a moment. I need to remove the remaining two first.”

– ...

Mok Gyeong-un removed the remaining two Golden Gate Lock just like he had done earlier.

Inserting the Golden Gate Lock into the acupoints of the spine is painful, but removing it is even more agonizing, yet there was no change in his expression even the second time.

It could be called tremendous endurance.

Puck!

The moment Mok Gyeong-un completely removed the inserted Golden Gate Lock,

Swoosh!

The sealed meridians opened, and the restriction was lifted.

The death qi he had gathered until now circulated throughout his body, and his energy became abundant.

'Look at this.'

Cheong-ryeong's eyes narrowed.

When his meridians were closed, the qi wasn't manifested, so she couldn't estimate how much death qi he had gathered, but this exceeded her expectations.

It had already surpassed twice the amount of death qi he originally possessed.

If he could digest that, his internal energy alone would reach the beginning of the peak stage.

'It's almost miraculous.'

Death qi differs from ordinary qi.

It could be said to be almost the opposite, and Mok Gyeong-un would be the only human possessing that much of the qi of death.

No, was that guy really human?

In the first place, it was strange for him to be fine while possessing such an enormous amount of the qi of death.

Flinch!

Cheong-ryeong looked around and smirked.

The low-grade vengeful spirits nearby were feeling fear from the tremendous death qi emanating from Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un stretched and said:

“It feels refreshing. It was suffocating to keep this damn thing inserted.”

– Did you endure it on purpose?

“Yes. Just in case.”

He had heard that highly skilled experts could sense the qi of inferiors.

That’s why Mok Gyeong-un had thought of this method from the moment the Golden Gate Lock was first inserted, but he had been enduring it.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue and said:

– So you didn’t come down here recklessly.

With this much, apart from that huge one, there were only a few entities here that could directly threaten Mok Gyeong-un.

Of course, those devouring each other would indiscriminately target him.

“Risking one’s life and committing suicide are different.”

– You’re good with words. But it’s still dangerous nonetheless. Even if it’s not complete yet, that thing may be more dangerous than me in some sense.

Its purpose wasn’t possession.

It was to indiscriminately devour and complete its transformation.

It would try to devour him in any way possible.

– Will you deal with the surrounding ones first?

Cheong-ryeong asked, pointing her head towards the small whirlpools.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head.

Then, looking at the huge whirlpool, he said:

“When eating fish, you should start with the head.”

– You crazy bastard. Is that a fish?

To call that thing “eating fish starting with the head”.

It’s a saying that the head of a fish is the most delicious part.

If he was indirectly expressing his opinion to go after the strongest one first, it was typical of him.

– Excessive greed is overambition. But if you can make that yours as you said, it could cut down ten years.

“Can you help me?”

– Before being a supreme-ruler of gluttony, do you think I’ll let my disciple die?

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and said:

“Because if that disciple dies, Cheong-ryeong the master will also die.”

– ... Cut the unpleasant talk.

“Yes, yes.”

– Phew.

Cheong-ryeong took a long puff from her pipe, exhaled smoke, and pointed at the huge whirlpool of fog, saying:

– I’ll gather their attention here. Just focus on running forward.

“I’ll be counting on you.”

– Eat to your heart’s content.

As soon as those words ended, Cheong-ryeong struck the ground with her pipe.

Then, with her blood-red eyes glinting, she opened her mouth.

– Blood Realm.

Gooooooooo!

At that moment, blood began to form on the ground centered around her palm.

Drip drip!

Blood droplets rising as if falling in reverse.

The blood droplets shot up towards the sky, dyeing the surroundings red.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un thought to himself:

'Ghost Realm.'

A barrier created by a high-grade vengeful spirit.

That could be called the Ghost Realm.

Unlike the barriers deployed by sorcerers, this Ghost Realm was constructed by the vengeful spirit's resentment and madness converging into a space.

'Was it to this extent?'

Nearly several dozen jang around were dyed in a bloody color.

The low-grade vengeful spirits nearby trembled their spirit bodies at her resentment spreading and creating this Ghost Realm.

Some even scattered, unable to endure it.

Sizzle sizzle!

Puck! Puck!

Just then, the small whirlpools that had been busy devouring the surrounding vengeful spirits suddenly moved.

Wooooo!

Their target was none other than Cheong-ryeong.

By intentionally opening her realm and revealing her power, the transformed vengeful spirits that had been focused on devouring showed intense interest.

Go.

Poof!

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un turned to the side.

Even if the attention of the transformed vengeful spirits was focused on Cheong-ryeong, if he passed right in front of them, they might change their target.

Therefore, he had no choice but to go around from the side.

Tap tap tap tap!

When he used lightness skill, the speed was tremendous.

The surroundings swiftly passed by, and before long, he reached the front of the huge whirlpool.

The bloody realm exquisitely didn't reach here.

If it had, this too would have turned its attention to Cheong-ryeong.

'It's amazing.'

Swoooooosh!

Mok Gyeong-un inwardly exclaimed at the sight of the black fog swirling like rough waves.

It evoked a fear that if swept away by it, one might never return.

Most people, no, even considerable sorcerers would never dare to enter this.

However, Mok Gyeong-un had one other thing.

He had no emotion called fear.

Poof!

Mok Gyeong-un stepped into the violently raging torrent of vengeful spirits.

The moment he entered, a scream that seemed to tear his eardrums echoed.

Kyaaaaaaaaa!

And a stench of rotting corpses vibrated from all directions as if to numb his nose.

It was as if his entire flesh would peel off, and it was painful to move even slightly.

"Phew."

So this was why Cheong-ryeong had warned him.

It felt as if he would be swept away by the evil and brutal qi far beyond his expectations.

However, to avoid being swept away by this, Mok Gyeong-un circulated the death qi throughout his body using reverse cycling.

Right at that moment.

Clank!

Suddenly, a chain flew out from somewhere and coiled around Mok Gyeong-un's waist.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un focused death qi into his hand and struck down.

Chiiing!

The chain was severed.

'Huh?'

But this wasn't the end.

Swoooosh!

Countless chains flew in and instantly restrained Mok Gyeong-un's limbs.

It happened in an instant, so he couldn't even avoid or resist.

Grip!

'This... strength...'

The chains coiled around his entire body except for his head.

The binding force of these chains was so strong that no matter how much strength he used or pulled out death qi, they wouldn't budge at all.

Swoooosh!

The chains that had restrained Mok Gyeong-un like this began to drag him towards the center of the black fog whirlpool.

It wasn't something he could resist with strength.

As he was being dragged, another scream was heard from somewhere.

Aaaaaargh!

Save me!

Please! Please!

It was a scream close to pleading.

But as that sound got closer, something began to appear in his blurry vision.

Crunch! Crunch!

The sound of something being eaten was heard from there.

Wondering what it was eating,

'!?'

The lower half of a vengeful spirit in human form was seen kicking upside down.

But its upper body was inside the wide-open mouth of a bizarre entity covered in chains.

It was a sight that made one shudder just by looking at it.

Glub! Glub!

The sound of the vengeful spirit being eaten came from inside the mouth, and it didn't last long.

Because the lower half was also sucked into the mouth in an instant.

Devouring wasn't a euphemism.

It was literal.

Uoooooooooh!

The bizarre entity covered in chains that had devoured a vengeful spirit whole let out a roar.

The surroundings shook as if an earthquake had occurred.

Save me!

Please!

The vengeful spirits held by chains screamed and pleaded even more at this.

They were insanely terrified.

At that moment.

Tremble tremble!

Mok Gyeong-un's entire body began to tremble.

Was he feeling the emotion of fear for the first time in his life?

At this, the bizarre entity covered in chains that had been roaring slowly turned its gaze.

Woooooo!

Two eyes visible through the gaps in the chains emitted a gaze.

-I'll eat. You.

An eerie voice echoed in all directions.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been trembling, raised his head.

But his face didn't have an expression of being consumed by fear.

As if all of this was exciting, his lips twitched, and soon the corners of his mouth spread to his ears.

-!?

The pale white eyes gleamed with interest.

Mok Gyeong-un spoke to that bizarre entity covered in chains:

"Seems like our opinions coincide."

Chapter 66

It was on the verge of completing its transformation, so it was gradually regaining its reason.

Of course, even though reason had returned, it was still consumed by madness, so it couldn't help but feel endless hunger.

That's why it indiscriminately devoured whatever it encountered.

The only thing it could devour was the vengeful spirits in the same predicament as itself.

For over a decade, it ate and ate these vengeful spirits trapped under this cliff, screaming and suffering.

It wasn't like this from the beginning.

When the vengeful spirits were devouring each other, it only ran away and hid out of the desire to survive.

However, the desire to live eventually led to an explosion of resentment and madness.

Consumed by madness, it had been devouring indiscriminately for over a decade, but amidst that repetitive cycle, something different intervened.

It looked at the entity bound by chains as if puzzled.

'Human?'

Could it be a living being?

For a long time, this place had been filled only with vengeful spirits.

Periodically, new vengeful spirits would be added, but never had any living being appeared.

But for a living being to appear in this hell-like place?

Tremble tremble!

It couldn't contain its excitement.

This ravenous hunger born from madness couldn't be quelled with just dead vengeful spirits.

But a living being appearing like this was enough to stimulate its curiosity.

'Be afraid.'

Thus, it tried to bestow fear and terror upon him.

The fear and dread emanating from a living being was a great source of nourishment for a vengeful spirit.

However,

"It seems like our opinions coincide."

what the .... was this human?

He was smiling in this situation.

And that smile contained enough malice to be quite unpleasant.

If even a little force was applied, his limbs bound by chains would be torn off, yet his relaxed attitude was utterly unpleasant.

Haha, if that's the case, I shall enjoy the sight of you suffering as I tear off your limbs one by one and devour you.

Clang!

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been bound by chains, was forcibly dragged by its gesture.

Knowing that strength was useless anyway, Mok Gyeong-un didn't resist at all.

In the process, he still had a smile on his lips.

It became even more enraged because he was so nonchalant.

Thus, it pulled the chains right in front of it and said:

– I will tear off all your skin, peel your flesh one by one, and devour you down to the bones.

At its threat, Mok Gyeong-un smirked and said:

“You have quite a noble hobby.”

– Noble?

Impudent human.

To act relaxed right in front of it.

Fine. Then let's see if you can still do that after experiencing pain.

Puck! Swoosh!

In an instant, one of the chains pierced into Mok Gyeong-un's left shoulder.

Whether his liver was sticking out or he was numb to fear didn't matter.

If he experienced pain, it would eventually be different.

However,

“Is this all?”

His expression didn't change at all, and he was still smirking.

If this wasn't enough, fine.

As it gestured, the chains filling the ground like wriggling snakes moved as if alive.

Clang! Swoosh!

Puck puck!

One chain pierced Mok Gyeong-un's right shoulder, and two others pierced his thighs.

As if that wasn't enough, one dug into his abdomen.

Puck!

It wouldn't be pain that could be endured with just willpower.

The chains felt extremely cold and hot, accompanied by pain that seemed to burn and freeze the moment they touched flesh and organs.

Everything originated from the mind.

This human would be tasting the worst pain he could experience...

‘!?’

What was with this bastard?

His expression still hadn't changed at all.

Rather, he was staring intently at it while snorting.

How could a living being bound by the shackles of flesh endure this pain so nonchalantly?

As it was astonished, Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth.

“Do you think I'll be afraid or in pain from something like this?”

— ...

“You’re doing something pointless.”

– Grrrrrr!

As soon as Mok Gyeong-un’s mocking words ended, the entire space violently shook as if an earthquake had occurred.

It was greatly enraged.

How dare a lowly being ridicule it?

Fine. Then as you wish, I shall devour you alive.

Swoosh!

The chains pulled, and Mok Gyeong-un’s body with his limbs bound was dragged right in front of it.

Then it opened its mouth wide.

The mouth that opened between the gaps in the chains was far from human.

Having been transformed by devouring countless vengeful spirits, hundreds of sharp thorns protruded, and violet smoke flowed from inside its mouth.

Grrraaargh!

Its mouth widened enough to swallow Mok Gyeong-un whole.

Swoosh!

The chains piercing his body loosened one by one.

With a clank, Mok Gyeong-un’s body approached the inside of the creature’s mouth.

Swoosh!

It was around the time when his head to his shoulders nearly reached the gaping mouth.

At that moment, something foreign fell from Mok Gyeong-un.

Plop!

It thought it was just blood or flesh falling off and didn’t pay much attention.

But the moment it passed through its throat,

Sizzle!

Its throat felt like it was burning with pain.

Kuk! You! What did you!

“You shouldn’t let your guard down just because you caught everything.”

The ring on Mok Gyeong-un’s finger was no longer visible.

That’s right.

What had entered through its throat was the ring containing the spell made by diviner Jo Ui-gong.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un made a hand seal with one hand and shouted loudly.

Crack crack crack!

“Commanding the Ink supreme-ruler’s Mantra, the Divine Obscurity Responds to the Spirit, Forming the Myriad Phenomena, the Divine Obscurity Subdues Demons Like a Thunderbolt, Urgent Urgent As Commanded!”

It was the Imperial Ink Divine Spell.

The moment that shout resounded, a bright light burst out from inside its mouth.

Woooo!

It was a spell that invoked a supreme-ruler into the ring containing the spell and caused a strong force to explode, subjugating the vengeful spirit.

Since it was a ring containing a spell and it exploded from the inside, its power was,

Aaaaaargh!

Enough to make even it, who had been endlessly transformed, suffer from the exploding spell power.

However, this wasn’t enough to subdue it, whose grade was high.

Its body, which had been suffering, temporarily distorted but still retained its form.

Swoosh!

But thanks to being momentarily weakened, the chains binding its body scattered and disappeared.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un launched his body towards its mouth that was opening in pain.

– !?

what the .... was this?

Jumping into its mouth with his own feet?

It tried to chew up Mok Gyeong-un, who had jumped in, without missing this opportunity.

Just then, Mok Gyeong-un reached out his hand towards its throat.

Puck!

And,

‘The mortals are not eternal, and the two forms are like a dream. The five aggregates are all empty, and the myriad phenomena are like an illusion.’

He chanted the mnemonic of the Art of Binding.

It was a gamble.

The most direct way to absorb the death qi of this huge lump of resentment.

It was targeting the inside of its body.

From the outside, there was no other way because he was bound by chains.

However,

Swoosh!

Mok Gyeong-un’s body, performing the Art of Binding, was sucked deep into its mouth as if pushed by weight rather than absorbing its qi.

As if there was a hidden space inside its mouth, Mok Gyeong-un’s body fell deep inside.

Swooooosh!

Into the darkness like a bottomless pit.

Mok Gyeong-un's body was sucked towards its origin.

In the process, fragments of its memories flowed in like a montage.

[Big brother! Big brother! I will always be with you.]

[I will support our family as your right-hand man. Don't worry.]

A brightly smiling younger brother following him.

And a strict father.

[This is for the long-cherished wish of our society. The successors of the other Five Kings have all agreed to participate, so you must also take the lead and join.]

[I will keep that in mind.]

Soon, a familiar place appeared in the memories.

As if repeated numerous times, this place visible in the darkness was the valley where the steel marble competition took place.

[Huff huff... Big brother...]

[Take it.]

[But isn't this the one you found?]

[You go ahead first. I can find another one quickly.]

[Big brother...]

And another memory continued, crawling.

Someone strikes the back of his head with a sharp rock.

Gasping for breath, he turns his head, and there, the younger brother who had been brightly following him was looking down at him with a cold gaze.

[Y-you... How...]

[Damn bastard. If only you die, everything will be solved.]

[You... You...]

[You always acted superior, pretending to sympathize with me just because you had everything...]

[I... I wasn't...]

[You were just born before me, that's all.]

With those words, the younger brother struck its face with the rock.

As if not satisfied with just once, he struck several times and then disappeared.

Along with it, a surging emotion of anger was felt.

Soon, the following vision was quite different.

It seemed to be a memory continuing after death rather than a memory from when it was alive.

Let me eat. Let me eat you.

Die! Die!

I said die!

Vengeful spirits rushing in like crazy.

Feelings of extreme fear and despair were felt.

It gradually intensified.

Why... Why me? Why do I have to be eaten like this even after dying?

Did I live just to suffer this much?

Am I meant to be eaten?

I...

I... can't... be... eaten...

I... will... devour... everything!

Its madness exploded as it was being bitten and eaten by those vengeful spirits.

Uwaaaaaa!!!!

The resentment of madness was so strong that it felt like it would be devoured in an instant.

At the same time, an unimaginable amount of death qi rushed in through his palm, and the screams of countless resentments echoed in his head.

I will devour you too!

Its madness was conveyed.

Mok Gyeong-un felt like his head would shatter from the heart-wrenching wails, but he didn't stop the Art of Binding.

'The mortals are not eternal, and the two forms are like a dream. The five aggregates are all empty, and the myriad phenomena are like an illusion.'

\*\*\*

Crunch! Swoosh!

The vengeful spirit's head was crushed and eventually incinerated into ashes in the air.

The owner of the hand holding the crushed head was none other than Cheong-ryeong.

Cheong-ryeong, emitting a blood-red gaze, shouted at the whirlpools narrowing in as if to surround her:

– If you're desperate to be annihilated, come at me as much as you want. You young ones.

At her shout, the whirlpools stopped moving as if hesitating.

She thought they were finally feeling fear after she had annihilated about seven entities equivalent to the yellow spirit level, but,

Swoosh!

At that moment, a tremendous amount of death qi spread in all directions.

At this, she frowned and looked.

'Could it be?'

The origin of this was none other than the huge whirlpool.

Cracks suddenly appeared in that whirlpool nearing the end of its transformation, and all the power it had been condensing burst out.

These whirlpools had stopped moving in response to this.

And they all moved towards that thing trying to reveal its form as the cracks widened and split.

– shit!

She had barely diverted their attention, but it was quite troublesome.

If it was like this, there was no point in deliberately deploying the Ghost Realm, the Blood Boundary.

At that very moment.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Countless chains emerged from the split cracks and indiscriminately restrained the whirlpools approaching it and the numerous vengeful spirits nearby.

Their strength was so great that the vengeful spirits undergoing transformation couldn't move an inch.

Even the few entities reaching the green spirit level were the same.

Aaaaah!

Kuk!

Even they couldn't resist the chains and soon,

Swoosh!

They were sucked into the place where the cracks had opened while still bound.

She could instinctively guess why this phenomenon occurred.

'Is it trying to be completed?'

Finally, the gu poison was about to be born.

It was trying to fill in the lacking parts by devouring whatever it encountered and transform into the most ideal, no, the worst form.

Just then, a thick chain flew towards her.

Not satisfied with devouring the whirlpools, it was targeting Cheong-ryeong.

– In the end, it failed?

She muttered while looking at the flying chain.

The red thread connecting them was shaking violently.

This was a phenomenon indicating that the life of the master was in a critical state.

If the red thread kept shaking like this and incinerated, she would also be annihilated in the same way.

Swoosh!

The chain tried to coil around her body.

Then she swung her long pipe.

At that moment, the tip of the chain that was about to touch her crumbled and started burning up.

Poof!

Cheong-ryeong's body also followed the crumbling chain and launched towards the whirlpool where the cracks were opening.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Numerous chains spewed out to catch her, but,

Puck! Puck!

They were all repelled by the long pipe she swung.

Eventually, she passed through the place where the cracks had opened and entered inside.

In the center of the place where the qi of resentment was swirling like a torrent as if a storm was raging, an entity covered in chains was visible.

The screams of the resentments that had been dragged in first echoed in her ears like a resonance.

Run away. Run away. Run away.

The resentment has reached its end.

A being with deep despair's blue malice is being born.

Green malice.

It meant that its grade had reached the green spirit level.

Originally, it was the worst vengeful spirit that could only be born after a hundred years or when that deep resentment continued, but it was artificially being completed into a gu poison by making them devour each other.

Swoosh!

As even the screaming vengeful spirits were sucked in, the chains covering the entity became thicker.

At this, she snorted and muttered:

– The young one is being presumptuous. As if someone hasn't experienced that.

Along with that, as Cheong-ryeong set foot on the ground, blood droplets surged upward from the center.

With each step, it spread in all directions.

Then, as it collided with the realm of the chained entity, the space rippled here and there, and blue flames rose like tree roots burning.

Crack crack crack!

Cheong-ryeong's blood-red eyes gradually deepened.

– If you don't hand over that kid, you will be annihilated here the moment you are born. You young one.

Goooooo!

The qi greatly intensified.

Right at that moment. As Cheong-ryeong was about to take another step, the chained entity suddenly twisted its body back and forth.

Condensed qi of resentment was strongly spewing out through the gaps.

Clang! Clang!

Was it doing that because the gu poison was about to be completed?

As she was thinking that.

The chains surrounding the creature tightened around itself.

As if strangling itself.

'What?'

The process of transformation was exceedingly bizarre.

As she wondered, cracks suddenly appeared on the chains that had been constricting.

– Crack!

A single crack.

It became two and slowly, rapidly multiplied.

Soon, the cracks reached the point where the chains shattered and clattered to the ground.

Was the completed gu poison finally revealing itself?

– Swoosh!

Cheong-ryeong raised her long pipe and prepared to face it.

At that moment, as all the chains fell off, a figure revealed itself.

It was none other than,

– Kid!?

Mok Gyeong-un.

Her eyes narrowed.

– Gooooooo!

The tremendous death qi emanating from his body was condensed as if it would explode at any moment.

Could it be that the completed gu poison had taken over his body?

Cheong-ryeong spoke with a voice tinged with anger, aiming her long pipe.

– Foolish thing. Were you finally devoured?

At that question, Mok Gyeong-un's lips twitched, then he opened his mouth while looking at Cheong-ryeong.

“I wasn't devoured, I devoured it.”

‘!!!!!!’

Chapter 67

Mok Gyeong-un, revealing himself from the chains.

Gooooooo!

His appearance was not ordinary.

Could it be that he was devoured by the completed gu poison?

Cheong-ryeong spoke with a voice tinged with anger, aiming her long pipe.

– Foolish thing. Were you finally devoured?

At that question, Mok Gyeong-un's lips twitched, then he opened his mouth while looking at Cheong-ryeong.

“I wasn't devoured, I devoured it.”

– !?

At those words, Cheong-ryeong's expression momentarily went blank.

Just by hearing his distinct way of speaking, she could clearly tell that his body hadn't been taken over and it was Mok Gyeong-un himself.

“Why are you like that?”

– ... Did you really devour that thing?

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and replied:

“As you can see.”

– Ha!

Truly astounding.

Even if he had multiple lives, the probability of failure was higher.

But this ignorant kid finally managed to do it.

“It’s just that I feel like my stomach will burst from overeating.”

– Your stomach will burst?

“Yes. I think I ate a bit too much.”

Somehow, after pushing and pulling with the creature, he succeeded in absorbing its qi.

But a problem arose here.

He clearly absorbed the qi, but the resentment and death qi the creature possessed was incomparable to the amount he had received until now.

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

‘Come to think of it, this guy is human.’

Cheong-ryeong realized her mistake.

Having been a vengeful spirit for over 100 years, her thinking from when she was human must have become rigid.

The human body could be considered a type of vessel.

Vessels have a limit to what they can handle.

‘More important than accepting internal energy is expanding the size of that vessel through enlightenment.’

However, Mok Gyeong-un lacked enlightenment.

He hadn't grasped the method of utilizing qi as a top expert, and even though he had learned the secret of the Moon Sword Technique, which could be called the secret of the peerless swordless technique, his understanding of the sword was low.

If he had gained enlightenment step by step through the normal path, the limit of internal energy he could accept would have naturally increased as well.

But now, Mok Gyeong-un was not like that at all.

Cheong-ryeong spoke with a somewhat serious voice:

– Expel the qi you can't handle right now.

“Pardon?”

– Too much is as bad as too little. If you accept qi to a level your body can't handle, it will instead become poison to you, kid.

“Ah. Is that so?”

– Yes.

“Then it would be better to pass on the excess qi.”

– What?

As she was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un bent his waist and searched for something on the ground.

She wondered what he was looking for, and Mok Gyeong-un exclaimed “oh” and lifted up what he found.

It was none other than a skull with the face and forehead area shattered and in a mess.

Strangely, an old talisman was attached to the skull's head, and although it seemed quite old, it was curious how it was maintained without damage.

‘It must be because of the spell power.’

She guessed it was probably that.

Of course, that guess was correct.

Mok Gyeong-un removed the old talisman with the word “chain” written on it from the skull he was holding.

And.

Wooooo!

– What are you doing now?

No. Not only is he not expelling it, but why is he infusing qi into that thing?

In her ghostly eyes, she saw an entity crouching inside that skull.

It was a vengeful spirit hiding in fear.

– Why are you giving qi to that...

Before Cheong-ryeong could finish her words.

As death qi was already injected into the skull, the vengeful spirit inside reacted.

Goooooooo!

Like dried seafood regaining vitality when water is added, the crouching vengeful spirit absorbed the death qi and soon revealed itself.

It was none other than,

Clank clank!

A girl with a cold impression, wearing thin chains like clothes all over her body, revealed herself.

Judging from her youthful face, she looked to be at most around 15 years old.

A peculiar thing was that half of her hair had turned white, making it truly half-white.

Seeing her appearance, Cheong-ryeong frowned and said:

– What? It was a wench?

Hearing those words, the girl bit her lips tightly, then suddenly shouted:

– Who are you calling a wench? This young master is a man.

– ... What?

At the girl's words, Cheong-ryeong raised an eyebrow.

Then she muttered in a tone of disbelief:

– You’re joking, right?

No matter how she looked at it, it was a wench.

However,

– This young master is a man!

The girl, who was getting heated claiming to be a man, was stared at intently by Cheong-ryeong, who then reached out her hand.

Then the girl’s body was forcibly sucked into Cheong-ryeong’s hand.

Swish!

– Uh?

Puck!

Cheong-ryeong, grasping the girl’s neck, spoke in a somewhat chilly voice:

– How dare a young thing raise her voice to an adult. Do you want to die so badly?

– !!!!!!!

The girl was momentarily speechless at Cheong-ryeong’s tremendous overwhelming presence.

It seemed that vengeful spirits could sense each other’s rough grade, and the girl could also guess it from the qi emanating from Cheong-ryeong.

However, she didn’t seem to be the type to yield easily as expected,

– E-even if I look like this, it’s been about fifteen years since I died, so in age, I’m thirty-three... Kuk.

Cheong-ryeong’s hand tightened.

She pulled the girl close and said,

– If you don’t want to hear “young thing” from me, come back after living a hundred more years.

At Cheong-ryeong’s words, the girl’s expression stiffened.

Just from what she said, the girl could guess how many years she had lived and what her grade was.

Cheong-ryeong turned her head towards Mok Gyeong-un and said:

– Why did you revive this one by giving her qi? You should have just killed her.

“She seemed useful.”

– Useful?

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the girl frowned.

Then she said to Mok Gyeong-un:

– Who are you calling useful right now? A mere human...

Grip!

Kuk!

– Who told you to open your mouth.

The girl, who couldn’t speak while being suppressed by Cheong-ryeong’s grip, wasn’t actually suffocating, but it felt like it.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un held the skull he was holding with both hands.

Then, showing it to the girl, he said:

“This is your head, right?”

The girl glanced at Cheong-ryeong.

At this, Cheong-ryeong nodded with a displeased expression.

Then the girl answered:

– ... Yes. It is, so just leave it alone.

“Why?”

– What’s there to gain by messing with a dead person’s bones.

“Something to gain? There is.”

– What?

Crack!

At that moment, cracks appeared on the girl's skull.

Seeing this, the girl panicked and reached out her hand, shouting:

– S-stop!

“Why?”

– No. Why are you trying to break that?

Unlike the girl who was desperately trying to stop him, Cheong-ryeong was enjoying it with twitching lips.

She had wondered why this kid revived this wench, but it seemed he did it to torment her again in this way.

That skull could be considered the origin of that wench.

If it was shattered, she would suffer tremendous pain.

‘Anyway, he’s a vicious one.’

While that was happening, the girl shook off Cheong-ryeong’s hand and tried to rush at Mok Gyeong-un.

However, she couldn’t shake it off because she was outmatched in grade.

Rather, by Mok Gyeong-un’s hand, the skull,

Crack!

– Aaaaaaargh!

The girl let out a heart-wrenching scream.

The pain of having one’s living body shattered was hard to describe in words.

But here, she witnessed a sight that was not only painful but also shocking.

Sizzle sizzle!

Mok Gyeong-un finely crushed her skull with his hand and put the powder into his mouth, not just holding it.

Even Cheong-ryeong didn't expect this, and her eyes widened.

Who would have thought he would put bone powder into his mouth?

– Y-youuuu!

The girl screamed.

Mok Gyeong-un didn't care and rubbed the shattered skull fragments with both palms, crushing them even finer and putting all the remaining powder into his mouth.

– You bast... Aaaaaargh!

At that moment, something strange happened.

The girl's spirit body shook violently as if she was having a seizure.

Then, a red thread-like thing appeared from the girl's body and connected to Mok Gyeong-un.

– !?

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong was dumbfounded.

'This guy...'

He ate the origin of the vengeful spirit and forcibly made it his supreme-ruler of gluttony.

It was just a simple act, but the result was not simple at all.

How could something like this happen?

It was unbelievable even after seeing it.

On the other hand, Mok Gyeong-un's mouth curled up bitterly as he saw that the attempt he had made on a whim really worked.

'It worked.'

If given the chance, he wanted to test it out.

To see if his guess was correct.

But it really worked.

– This... This is...

The girl couldn't hide her bewilderment as she looked at the red thread.

Having been a vengeful spirit for a long time, she naturally came to know everything without anyone teaching her.

So she could immediately tell that this was the thread of a supreme-ruler of gluttony, establishing a master-servant relationship.

– How can this...

The girl tried to grab the red thread with a flushed face.

But there was no way it could be grasped.

Swish swish!

– This young master! How can this young master become a lowly human's supreme-ruler of gluttony!

Mok Gyeong-un asked the girl who was frantically waving her hands:

“What's your name?”

– Shut up! You bastard, what are you to this young ma...

“What's your name?”

The girl, who was about to get fiercely angry, suddenly softened her expression at Mok Gyeong-un's repeated question.

Then, her lips twitched, and she soon spoke to Mok Gyeong-un with a much gentler face:

– It's Gyu Soha. Master.

'This one?'

Cheong-ryeong was inwardly surprised.

Even if they become a supreme-ruler of gluttony, vengeful spirits don't readily reveal their own names.

The reason was because of the power that names hold.

When one becomes a spirit body, they approach the realm of supreme-rulers, and then they become bound by their true name.

So vengeful spirits don't reveal their names.

But as if completely submitting, even her expression changed and she revealed her true name.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at the girl and said:

“It's a good name.”

– Thank you. Master.

“Soha. Can you become my loyal dog?”

– Ah! That is my utmost desire.

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the girl showed an intense expression as if moved, and Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue as if it was unbelievable.

This was even more than a demonic beast.

In the end, even though she didn't reach it, a green spirit who almost became a blue spirit grade was submitting to this extent.

It was a sight of submission almost down to the roots of her mind.

‘... Is it the influence of the strengthened death qi?’

Gooooooooo!

It was clearly visible to her ghostly eyes.

Mok Gyeong-un's death qi had become incomparably stronger than before.

But even after infusing enough qi to restore this Gyu Soha to this extent, it was still overflowing like this?

Moreover, she had been feeling strange from earlier, and the qi seemed to be subtly overlapping.

So she asked:

– You... Your qi is a bit strange. Why does it seem to be overlapping?

“Ah. Can Cheong-ryeong see it?”

– See what?

“A new mnemonic came to my mind anyway.”

– A new mnemonic?

“The Eight Forms of Thought Destruction.”

– What?

She couldn't hide her surprise.

In the midst of that, he came up with a new mnemonic for the Eight Forms of Thought Destruction?

So Cheong-ryeong asked:

– What mnemonic did you come up with?

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un gestured to Soha and said:

“The myriad phenomena are like an illusion, the acupoints have no extremes, the two forms are like a dream, the five aggregates are all empty, the myriad phenomena are an illusion, the five aggregates are all empty.”

‘!?’

Hearing this, Cheong-ryeong's pupils shook.

‘This guy... He realized a mnemonic I didn't know.’

The reason Cheong-ryeong was surprised was exactly that.

What Mok Gyeong-un said was a mnemonic she had never known before.

Even she, who possessed a natural talent, had only grasped four forms in the Eight Forms of Thought Destruction.

But this mnemonic was something she didn't know.

She asked, hiding her inwardly excited heart:

– Ahem... This is a form I haven't mastered. What profound principle does it hold?

"I became able to disperse the danjeon into two places."

– What?

"I could disperse the qi near the Baihui acupoint in the head and near the center close to the heart."

'!!!!!!'

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, she showed an expression of disbelief.

Right now, Mok Gyeong-un wouldn't know what he was talking about.

'Ha.'

Until they surpass the wall, all martial artists cannot escape the shackles of the lower danjeon.

But the moment they gain enlightenment and surpass the wall, they open the middle danjeon.

Those who have opened the middle danjeon like this could be said to be extremely few even in the martial world.

But this kid, without enlightenment, says that his middle danjeon has opened due to the profound principle of the Eight Forms of Thought Destruction.

## Chapter 68

Inside a room with walls covered in talismans and numerous ritual instruments.

A white-haired Taoist priest who had been meditating with his eyes closed inside a formation of candles arranged in the direction of the five elements opened his eyes.

'!?'

Shaking pupils.

The sharp-featured white-haired Taoist priest couldn't hide his bewilderment.

'It can't be.'

The white-haired Taoist priest, gripped by a bad feeling, got up from his seat.

Then he left the room and walked down the corridor.

The feeling just now was the backlash that should have returned when the spell he had set up was broken.

But that couldn't be.

'Even if the gu poison was completed, it couldn't have broken this chief's technique.'

Eventually, the white-haired Taoist priest stood in front of a door.

The priest opened the door.

The expression of the priest who opened the door stiffened.

On the floor of the room was drawn what seemed to be a formation for a barrier, and inside it was a thick jar with a talisman attached and chains tied to it.

However,

Tremble tremble!

As if anger had surged, the white-haired old man's beard trembled violently.

And for good reason, as the talisman attached to the candle was torn off and the chains were severed.

The old man approached closely and grabbed the severed chains with trembling hands.

Then he closed his eyes and chanted a spell.

"Connecting the origin to the profound realm, the supreme beings without masters, urgent urgent as commanded."

Tremble tremble!

The chains shook violently.

'Just what happened? Show me the reason.'

Swish swish!

Something was drawn in the mind of the old man with his eyes closed.

It was the process of countless vengeful spirits devouring each other and transforming.

On the days when the Corpse Blood Valley was conducted, he checked this periodically two or three times a day to see if there were any problems.

Wasn't it just like that until now?

But what on earth happened?

At that moment, something completely black was seen approaching the gu poison that was being completed.

"The supreme beings without masters, urgent urgent as commanded!"

'Show me. Just what is it?'

He needed to know what variable had occurred.

As he infused more spell power through the incantation like that,

Crack!

At that moment, blood flowed from the old man's left eye, and the broken chains he was holding completely turned to powder and scattered.

The old man momentarily staggered and was pushed back.

'...'

What was that just now?

Something vicious covered in the qi of death intervened with the gu poison that was being completed.

It definitely wasn't an oddity in the form of a dead soul like a vengeful spirit.

In that case,

'Did a man-eating beast break through the talisman barrier of the cliff and enter?'

The old man wiped the blood tears flowing down with his sleeve.

If it was a man-eating beast that could break the talisman of the cliff and touch a vengeful spirit that had transformed and risen in grade to that extent, even though it wasn't complete, it would surpass a monstrous beast.

'Could it be that a demonic beast or a devil beast appeared?'

No.

A devil beast was too much.

If it had reached that level, he would have noticed it right away no matter how far the distance was.

If a devil beast appeared here, even if it was a martial sect, the sacrifice would have been considerable.

Grr!

But even if it wasn't that level of grade, he couldn't contain his anger.

The gu poison that he had been trying to slowly complete over a span of 15 years had turned to foam in an instant.

Bang!

The old man roughly pushed open the door and left the building, passing through the corridor.

Someone was seen kneeling there.

It was none other than diviner Jo Ui-gong.

As the old man emerged, Jo Ui-gong raised his head with a delighted face.

"Master, no, Pavilion Master!"

The sharp-featured white-haired old man.

He was In Seo-ok, the master of the Primal Killing, which was in charge of sorcery consultation under the Heaven and Earth Society.

And he was also Jo Ui-gong's master and a Sun-level, one of only fourteen sorcerers who had reached the highest level of sorcery.

Excluding the Six Directions supreme-ruler, who was called the pinnacle among the Divine Sun Moon Technique, he was a skilled practitioner who was unrivaled by anyone in sorcery.

"Pavilion Master. Are you reporting this to the sect leader?"

At Jo Ui-gong's question, Pavilion Master In Seo-ok shook his head with a terrifyingly stiff face.

At this, Jo Ui-gong couldn't hide his disappointment.

Among the talents he had seen so far, that guy was the best.

That's why he was trying to get him out of the Corpse Blood Valley no matter what, even by requesting the pavilion master.

But it wasn't that his mind had changed.

'Ahh...'

While that was happening, In Seo-ok said:

"That's not the problem right now."

"... What do you mean by that?"

"A high-grade man-eating beast sprinkled ashes on the fully cooked rice."

"Don't tell me..."

"This chief's Spirit supreme-ruler Gu Poison Technique has been broken."

'!!!!'

Diviner Jo Ui-gong couldn't hide his shock.

The Spirit supreme-ruler Gu Poison Technique was something his master and chief In Seo-ok had devoted himself to for a whole 15 years, wasn't it?

"How can such a thing happen? No matter how much of a man-eating beast it is, breaking through the Chief's barrier and entering..."

"It means it's above a demonic beast."

"A demonic beast!"

A man-eating beast that surpasses the grade of a vicious beast and a monstrous beast.

Even a monstrous beast requires at least sorcery to deal with, but if it's a demonic beast beyond that, it would be difficult to handle even for a sorcerer who has received the title of Bangwol, depending on the type.

'Wait a moment, the cliff valley where the Spirit supreme-ruler Gu Poison Technique is being performed...'

It was adjacent to the Corpse Blood Valley.

Even if the Spirit supreme-ruler Gu Poison Technique wasn't broken, if a demonic beast appeared on that mountain, it was a situation that couldn't be left unchecked.

Pavilion Master In Seo-ok clicked his tongue and said:

“Immediately prepare talismans and ritual instruments and get ready to go to the Corpse Blood Valley.”

At his master's order, diviner Jo Ui-gong thought to himself that it was fortunate.

Although his master was upset because the Spirit supreme-ruler Gu Poison Technique was broken, this could be used as a justification to stop the barriers of the Corpse Blood Valley.

\*\*\*

Mok Gyeong-un entered reverse cycling to absorb the remaining death qi here.

Seeing him like this, the eyes of Gyu Soha, who had become his new supreme-ruler of gluttony, gleamed with interest.

And for good reason, as in Gyu Soha's ghostly eyes, Mok Gyeong-un's qi was not circulating normally but in reverse.

Not only that, he was circulating the qi of death, not the qi of yang or life.

'Is the Master really a living human?'

That had been a question all along anyway.

It was a strange thing for a human to accept that tremendous death qi and still be fine like this.

Gyu Soha glanced to the side.

Cheong-ryeong was sitting leisurely on a large rock, smoking a long pipe.

At this, Gyu Soha carefully approached and opened her mouth.

– Ahem. Excuse me...

– Excuse me? Hmph! Call me Eo...

As she was about to tell the girl to call her “–Eoreushin” (respectful term for an elder), Cheong-ryeong stared intently at Soha and snorted, saying:

Just call me -Eonni (older sister).

Whether she was a green spirit or whatever, it was quite embarrassing to be called “Eoreushin” by that young wench.

Of course, even calling her “Eonni” had a huge gap in years and grade.

However,

– This...

– This what? Are you going to impudently blurt out “This young master” again?

– This one is a man... -yo.

– ... If you keep spouting nonsense, I’ll just annihilate you whether that guy made you his supreme-ruler of gluttony or not.

– No. This one is...

Cheong-ryeong raised her long pipe with a snap.

At this, Gyu Soha tightly closed her eyes and raised both hands upward.

Although her half-white hair was peculiar, anyone would see her as a girl of about fifteen.

– Don’t talk nonsense in front of me. Tsk! If you utter one more word about being a man or whatever, I won’t show any mercy.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue and waved her hand as if telling her to scam.

In the end, Soha couldn’t even ask what she wanted to ask and couldn’t regain her pride.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un opened his eyes as if he had finished absorbing all the qi.

“Phew.”

– Did you absorb everything?

“Yes. Gathering the remaining qi was quite a lot.”

Gathering all the death qi remaining on the cliff, he was able to collect at least as much as killing about fifty people.

It could be said to be much more efficient than hunting around the entire mountain.

‘The qi has stabilized to some extent.’

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue inwardly while looking at Mok Gyeong-un.

He finally made that much death qi his own through reverse cycling.

The level of his middle and lower danjeon had almost reached the perfection of the peak in terms of internal energy, surpassing it to reach the extreme.

‘It’s absurd.’

The order was completely messed up.

He had almost no understanding or enlightenment about qi, so he didn’t even know how to handle sword qi or explosive force, but his internal energy level had reached the extreme of the peak.

This was also due to the strange profound principle of the Eight Forms of Thought Destruction.

‘... It’s like having the internal energy of the extreme peak doubled. However, in the case of the middle danjeon, since it can only be obtained after surpassing the wall, its potential is also unknown.’

Right now, even she had difficulty definitively determining Mok Gyeong-un’s exact level.

She was certainly curious.

Just how high-level experts this guy could handle.

While that was happening, Mok Gyeong-un asked:

“How much time has passed?”

– Uh... Since the Master has been here...

– If you’re asking how much time is left until dawn, there’s not even an hour left. At most, about three-quarters?

Interrupting Gyu Soha’s words, Cheong-ryeong spoke.

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un looked up at the night sky.

Indeed, the sky that had been completely dark had somehow changed to a pale indigo color.

“Hmm.”

Contrary to the plan, it seemed he had wasted a lot of time here.

Of course, even so, it wasn't a loss.

He had collected several times more death qi than killing the boys searching for flags, and he had even gained a green spirit with powerful strength.

However, there wasn't much time left now.

Mok Gyeong-un licked his lips.

“It's unfortunate.”

– What is?

“I was trying to leave only seven, but three quarters of an hour is too tight.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

Anyway, his ideas were different.

Originally, the purpose was to secure more death qi, but now it seemed that it wasn't just that, but also to drastically reduce the total number of people.

Cheong-ryeong, who had been clicking her tongue, said:

– Instead of that, you should find the flag and teammates first.

If he was simply looking for a flag, it would be fine, but he had to find the one with the other half of the sword technique mnemonic written on it.

If he was unlucky, he might only find flags with the same mnemonics.

And he also needed guys who were worth accepting as teammates.

So he had to hurry.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un took something out of his bosom.

– What are you doing when you're busy?

“I have to insert it again.”

What Mok Gyeong-un took out was none other than the needles of the Golden Gate Lock that he had removed from the acupoints of his spine.

If he didn't insert them again, it would arouse suspicion.

– I can do that for you.

“Pardon?”

Whoosh!

As soon as the questioning ended, Cheong-ryeong lightly waved her hand.

Then the needles of the Golden Gate Lock on Mok Gyeong-un's palm flew and simultaneously pierced the meridian points on his spine.

Puck puck puck!

“Hiss.”

Inserting the needles was painful, just like removing them.

It hurts to insert even one, but inserting them simultaneously like this, even Mok Gyeong-un, who had strong endurance for pain, couldn't help but let out a loud breath.

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong spoke with a satisfied expression:

– I can do this much for you, although a tool is needed to remove them. But you...

Cheong-ryeong's gaze turned towards Mok Gyeong-un's chest.

That was near where his middle danjeon was located.

Unlike the lower danjeon that was cut off and scattered when the meridians were blocked, the middle danjeon was still alive.

\*\*\*

Like that, after quarter an hour,

Mok Gyeong-un discovered a group that had secured a flag.

There were exactly eight of them, and they seemed to have successfully defended the flag a couple of times, as the corpses of nine boys were scattered around.

A boy who recognized Mok Gyeong-un immediately laughed and said upon discovering him:

“Hey. Where did you sell your teammates and why are you wandering alone?”

“Hahahahaha.”

“That’s right.”

At his question, the teammates with him all sneered in unison.

They showed this attitude because they were confident that Mok Gyeong-un alone couldn’t handle them as dawn was not far away.

After laughing together like that, the boy who provoked Mok Gyeong-un waved his hands and said:

“We’re full here, so get lost.”

“You’re full here.”

“Are you deaf? I said get lost quickly. Ah, right. There’s only about two ke left until dawn, so I don’t know if you can even find a group worth accepting...”

Thud!

“Urk!”

Thump!

At that moment, the boy collapsed in the middle of his speech.

Mok Gyeong-un was in a posture of having thrown something, and a rock was embedded in the center of the boy’s face.

He seemed to have died instantly after being hit by it.

“Wh-what is this...”

“How is this possible when we can’t even use internal energy?”

The boys who were the boy’s teammates couldn’t hide their bewilderment.

Who would have imagined that he would kill a teammate just by throwing a mere rock?

While that was happening, Mok Gyeong-un raised the corners of his mouth and smirked.

“Oh dear... A spot opened up in your group.”

Chapter 69

Killing Valley → Vermilion Slaughter Valley

Esoteric Gate → Esoteric Realm Gate

Also, I noticed some terms being mistranslated in chapter 67. In fact, Gyu Soha is a green spirit (4th-level), whose strength almost reaches to a Blue spirit. And, as you all know, Cheong-ryeon is a Blue spirit (5th-level).

To remind everyone about the spirit levels, here's a recap, from lowest to highest (at this point).

Red

Orange

Yellow

Green

Blue

\*\*\*

“Ah.....There's an empty spot in that garden.”

The boys were dumbfounded by Mok Gyeong-un's mocking words.

Who could have predicted that someone would throw a rock and kill a teammate in such an urgent situation?

Mok Gyeong-un spoke again to the shocked boys.

“What will you do?”

“.....”

The boys were at a loss for words at this question.

At most, there were only two hours left until sunrise.

If they were lucky and someone showed up, they could replace the dead boy. But if no one appeared...

“shit.”

“What should we do?”

The boys muttered softly.

They were angry that a boy who had shared life and death with them had died, but they had to think rationally.

They couldn't fully blame him, as he too had made what he thought was the right decision.

“There are still two hours left.”

“That's true, but what if no one comes?”

“.....”

“He's right. Let's just accept him.”

“But.....”

“Do you think that guy will give up?”

“Still, even if it's just this once, we have a sense of loyalty to this guy who's been with us.....”

At that moment, they saw Mok Gyeong-un picking up another rock.

He wasn't just picking up one, but grabbing as many as he could hold.

The boy who was speaking swallowed dryly and said,

“.....Let's accept him. That bastard picked up rocks.”

“That crazy bastard.”

If they didn't accept him, he looked ready to throw rocks at the other boys too.

In the end, they had no choice but to accept Mok Gyeong-un as a teammate.

Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly as if nothing had happened and said,

“Thanks everyone. You’re all so kind.”

‘Son of a bitch.’

They all cursed Mok Gyeong-un inwardly.

If only he hadn’t shown up now, they could have gotten a result satisfactory to everyone.

They had learned what teamwork was by uniting as one.

But now, they had to begrudgingly accept this crazy bastard in order to pass the gate.

-Swoosh!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un placed his hand on the flagpole.

One boy suppressed his emotions as much as possible and said,

“Be careful. Even with two hours left, the flag must remain intact.”

“I know.”

“If you know, then don’t touch it.”

Despite the boy’s words, Mok Gyeong-un didn’t stop touching the flag.

The boy was angry but couldn’t say anything more.

Seeing the monstrous strength Mok Gyeong-un displayed in the steel bead competition and how he almost pierced someone’s face with a rock just now, the boy didn’t have the confidence to pick a fight.

‘.....Let’s see what happens once the Golden Gate Lock are released.’

According to the information, the Golden Gate Lock would be removed once they got past the initial part of the gate.

When that happened, he was determined to deal with this guy one way or another.

As he was thinking this, Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth.

“By the way, did you find any other flags besides this one?”

“Other flags?”

The boy shook his head at Mok Gyeong-un’s question.

They had been lucky.

After finding this flag, two teams had attacked them, but they had defended it to the end.

“We never lost and protected this flag.”

The boy spoke with pride in his voice.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un sighed.

“Whew.”

“What? What’s with that sigh? You lost not only your flag but also your teammates.”

One boy finally couldn’t hold back and confronted Mok Gyeong-un about this.

Then Mok Gyeong-un shook his head and approached the boy.

The boy flinched for a moment but then stood his ground.

“What! What are you trying to do? Are you in a bad mood? But it’s the truth. And although we had no choice but to accept you, to pass the gate, fighting is unnecessary, at least...”

-Smack! Crack!

At that moment, the boy’s neck was twisted.

Without finishing his words, the boy collapsed with his life extinguished.

‘!!!!!’

The other boys were stunned.

“T-This crazy bastard, is he really insane?”

“No matter what, this is too much. The sun will rise soon, so what will we do if you kill a teammate like this? Are you in your right mind...”

-Thwack! Crack!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un’s hand struck the neck of the shouting boy.

With the sound of muscles and bones snapping, the boy's neck was bent at an angle as he let out a dying groan and passed away.

Having already killed two, the boys couldn't hide their consternation.

'H-He's lost it.'

'what the .... is he doing?'

Did he really have no intention of passing the gate?

As they were thinking this, Mok Gyeong-un reached out towards another one of them.

-Smack!

"Eek!"

One boy was caught, unable to dodge in time.

The other boys' minds went blank.

The only thought in their heads was that in order to survive, they had to run away no matter what.

So without helping the captured boy, they fled.

Mok Gyeong-un threw a rock with all his might at one of the fleeing boys.

-Thwack!

"Urk!"

The flying rock pierced through the back of the head of one of the running boys.

Naturally, the boy who was hit in the head died and collapsed on the spot.

-Thud!

Mok Gyeong-un picked up another rock, but the remaining three had already scattered and entered the bushes.

'Getting all of them will be tough. Then...'

"Just deal with two of them for me."

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un threw a rock with full force towards the bushes.

From within the bushes, a scream of anguish was heard, followed by the sound of someone collapsing.

It seemed he had hit his mark.

The captured boy, trembling with fear, said,

“W-Why are you doing this? You know what will happen if we can’t pass the gate. If you kill teammates like this...”

“You guys won’t be able to pass anyway.”

“What?”

“I said you won’t pass.”

“W-What kind of nonsense is that? If only you hadn’t done this...”

“You were so focused on protecting it that you didn’t properly examine the flag.”

“What are you...”

-Smack!

Mok Gyeong-un grabbed the confused boy’s head with both hands.

The boy begged for his life,

“S-Spare...”

-Crack!

But Mok Gyeong-un snapped his neck without changing his expression.

Then, grabbing the pole of the flag stuck in the ground, he crumpled it with one hand and muttered,

-Crunch!

“Things have gotten a bit pressing.”

There was only one hour left.

In that time, he had to find a different type of flag.

The characters engraved on this flag were identical to the ones Mok Gyeong-un had memorized.

\*\*\*

Same time, halfway up the mountain.

With not much time left until sunrise, two teams were facing off in a battle.

“Huff...Huff...”

Rough breathing could be heard from all around, as everyone seemed exhausted.

Peculiarly, this confrontation was particularly different from other typical flag defense battles.

That’s because both sides had flags.

One side had firmly planted their flag into the blocked mountain wall and formed a semicircular formation to protect it, while the other side had two people guarding their flag as they carried it around, with the remaining six targeting the semicircular formation.

‘This isn’t good.’

On the defending side were Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall and Mok Yu-cheon, the youngest of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

Mo Ha-rang, who had set out to find a new flag, somehow ended up joining Mok Yu-cheon’s team and had been defending the flag until now.

Seeing how bright the sky had gotten, there wasn’t much time left until sunrise.

If they were lucky and someone showed up, they could replace the dead boy. But if no one came...

“shit.”

Mok Yu-cheon cursed inwardly as he glared at the opposing team.

The shirtless boy wielding a stone ax with unique patterns all over his body was Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave.

‘That bastard.’

Mok Yu-cheon glared at him and cursed inwardly.

He didn't understand why they were targeting the flag.

Because one of the boys guarding the flag had a broken flagpole tucked into his belt.

That meant...

'They already found both types, so why are they doing this?'

It was completely incomprehensible.

If they kept fighting like this and even one teammate was taken out, they would fail the gate.

Taking on such a risk just to reduce their numbers by one seemed like a foolish decision.

Mok Yu-cheon whispered quietly to the boys next to him and Mo Ha-rang.

"Let's hold out just a little longer."

At those words, the boys and Mo Ha-rang nodded.

Once the sun rose, this kind of behavior would become meaningless.

However, Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave faction sneered at their strategy.

'You think you can just hold out?'

If that's what they thought, it was a miscalculation.

They had a surefire strategy.

It had already been proven effective by wiping out three teams using this giant wolf monster.

Yeom Ga raised his left hand.

Then...

"Waaaaaaaaahhhh!"

"Yaaaaaaaaahhh!"

The two boys guarding the flag suddenly began screaming loudly.

Not only them, but the boys who were fighting also raised their voices and shouted even louder.

‘What the?’

‘Crazy! Why are they suddenly doing that?’

The defending side couldn’t understand why they were acting this way.

They were screaming way too loudly.

Since they were halfway up the mountain, their shouts echoed through the surroundings.

‘What kind of ploy is this?’

Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall glared at Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave, who was smirking.

As soon as that scrawny bastard raised his hand, they started doing this.

There had to be an ulterior motive behind it.

‘.....’

In the end, she decided she couldn’t just leave them be.

Rather than simply focusing on defending the flag, she thought it would be better to kill one or two of them.

That would make them back off.

She gripped her sharply honed stone dagger tightly and said in a low voice,

“Don’t any of you step outside the semicircular formation, no matter what.”

“What, you can’t mean...”

Mok Yu-cheon urgently tried to dissuade her, but...

-Swoosh!

Mo Ha-rang had already dashed towards one of the boys.

Although her energy points were blocked, everyone knew of her incredible dagger skills that defied imagination for a woman.

So when she made her move, they stepped back to maintain distance.

This was the moment.

'I've been waiting for this!'

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave didn't miss this opening and charged at the boys forming the semicircular formation.

Mo Ha-rang changed directions in response.

'I knew it.'

She had also anticipated this.

She was the strongest one among them.

She figured someone like Yeom Ga would try to lure her away before targeting the semicircular formation.

-Whoosh!

Mo Ha-rang threw her sharply honed stone dagger at Yeom Ga's back as he was running.

Then one of the boys from Yeom Ga's team threw himself to block it.

-Stab!

"Urk!"

The stone dagger lodged between the boy's left chest and shoulder.

But thanks to this, Yeom Ga was able to swing his stone ax down at the head of one of the boys in the semicircular formation without hindrance.

"No!"

At that moment, Mok Yu-cheon slid and aimed for Yeom Ga's legs.

Yeom Ga chuckled at this and threw his body to the side, hurling the stone ax.

'Huh?'

Yeom Ga's real target wasn't the boys.

'This is bad!'

It was none other than the flag they were protecting.

The hurled stone ax spun as it flew towards the flagpole.

It was sheer luck.

The stone ax grazed the flagpole and bounced off.

Although it got a little nicked, thankfully the flagpole didn't break because it was only grazed.

Seeing this, the boys felt relieved.

"Phew."

If that had snapped, they would have had to switch from defending the flag to trying to take the flag from them at all costs.

'I'll kill him!'

-Swoosh! Tap tap tap!

Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall dashed towards Yeom Ga.

Compared to the other guys, this one in particular had to die now.

He was the most troublesome, using his wits and not hesitating to resort to any means necessary.

"Demon Fire Hall girl. Are you saying you want to take me on?"

Yeom Ga, who had rolled and gotten back up after throwing the ax, took a fighting stance as Mo Ha-rang charged at him.

Putting aside the fact that she was a girl, she was one of the opponents he most wanted to face off against.

Right at that moment...

-Thump! Thump!

A strange sound was heard from somewhere.

The two people who were charging at each other stopped in their tracks.

The boys from the two sides who had been confronting and fighting also stopped.

-Thud! Thud!

The sound of the ground shaking.

It felt like something massive was approaching.

The day had brightened considerably, so they could see a giant shadow forming between the bushes.

Then the boys on Yeom Ga's side moved in unison as if they had been waiting for this.

They ran towards the two boys who had the flag, as if taking shelter.

-Rustle rustle!

At that moment, a massive creature appeared from behind them.

'!!!!!!'

Everyone's faces stiffened.

-Slurp!

The creature that appeared, drooling profusely.

It had blue fur on its head, pointed ears, and sharp hook-shaped claws.

Its appearance resembled a wolf, but its size...

"W-What is that?"

"what the .... is this?"

It looked nearly three times larger than an ordinary wolf.

It was a monster that seemed like it could swallow even an ox whole in one bite, emanating a tremendous pressure.

Seeing this, Mok Yu-cheon broke out in a cold sweat.

'It...It got even bigger.'

While wandering the mountain and struggling, he had encountered that monster.

He was lucky to survive it, but compared to when he saw it then, it had gotten much bigger.

What is happened happened in the meantime?

“T-That’s the monster wolf.”

Another boy who had been on the same team as Mok Yu-cheon spoke in a voice filled with fear.

Two of their teammates had fallen victim to that thing, so they knew better than anyone how dangerous it was.

-Tap tap tap!

At that moment, Yeom Ga ran and stuck close to where their flag was.

Seeing this, the boys forming the semicircular formation on Mo Ha-rang’s side had puzzled expressions.

They were closer to that monster than Mo Ha-rang’s team.

In this situation where they should abandon the flag and flee for their lives, they were sticking close to the flag as if determined to defend it at all costs.

‘What’s going on?’

As they were finding this strange, the unthinkable happened.

-Swoosh!

The monster wolf, which they thought would attack Yeom Ga’s team first, avoided them and moved.

And then, it approached not Mo Ha-rang and the boys forming the semicircular formation in front of the mountain wall, but Mok Yu-cheon and the boys?

‘What the?’

‘Why?’

They couldn’t fathom the reason.

Why was that monster passing them by and targeting Mo Ha-rang’s team?

Was it discriminating between people?

'The flag?'

But there was one person who roughly guessed the reason.

It was none other than Mo Ha-rang.

Mo Ha-rang found it odd that despite the appearance of such a monster, they weren't on guard and instead stuck close to their flag.

So on a hunch, she shouted,

"Stick close to the flag!"

At that moment, the monster wolf charged at them, who were backing up towards the flag, at a tremendous speed that didn't match its massive body.

"Ahhh!"

"Eek!"

"R-Run!"

Everyone frantically threw themselves aside as the monster wolf charged, regardless of whether they were close to the flag or not. However, one boy ended up getting trampled by the monster wolf.

-Thud!

"Ack!"

Blood spewed from the trampled boy's mouth. Not only was the weight of that giant body a factor, but the hook-shaped claws dug into his back and tore his internal organs.

"shit!"

Seeing this, Mok Yu-cheon twisted his body, stopping mid-escape. His instincts were telling his legs to run away, but that boy had accepted him as a teammate and they had shared life and death together. That's why he couldn't just abandon him and flee.

-Smack!

Mok Yu-cheon picked up a rock from the ground and threw it at the monster's face.

-Thwack!

The monster wolf, hit in the face with the rock, jerked its head around.

-Kwueeeek! Kwueeeek!

It let out a pig-like squeal, and the moment they heard it, goosebumps shot up all over their bodies. The monster wolf stared directly at Mok Yu-cheon.

‘shit.’

Had he done something foolish? Should he have just run away instead?

Right as he was thinking this...

-Swoosh!

At that moment, someone leaped high, landed on the monster wolf’s back, climbed up to its neck, and tried to drive a sharply honed stone dagger into its eye. It was none other than Mo Ha-rang.

However...

-Swipe!

Before Mo Ha-rang’s dagger could pierce its eye, the monster wolf violently swiped at the area above its head with the opposite front paw. She tried to jump off and dodge, but it grazed her back. Flesh was torn from her back where it was caught by the hook-shaped claws, and blood instantly soaked her back.

And then...

-Thud thud thud!

She tumbled several times.

“Ha-rang!”

After tumbling, Mo Ha-rang staggered and tried to get up. But having suffered such an injury with her energy points sealed and no protection, it was nearly impossible for her to easily get back on her feet.

-Thud!

One of her knees sank to the ground. Seeing this, Yeom Ga’s teammates huddled around their flag and laughed mockingly, feeling elated. Was this what they called borrowed murder? They had already turned three teams into food for that monster wolf using this method.

‘Don’t feel too resentful, Demon Fire Hall wench.’

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave curled his lips into a cruel smile. Here, there was no such thing as being fair and square. The true winner was the one who survived till the end by any means necessary and eliminated their rivals.

-Growl growl!

The monster wolf walked towards her, baring its fangs. It wasn't a simple beast. As if intending to fill her with terror, this monster wolf was slowly taking one step at a time.

"Huff...huff..."

'The sun will rise soon.'

Mo Ha-rang bit her lower lip as she looked up at the sky. With only about an hour left, was she going to lose her life like this without passing the gate? Her vision was blurring from the blood loss from her back.

-Thud!

-Thud!

-Thud!

The monster wolf approached right in front of her. Mok Yu-cheon and another boy could be seen shouting and desperately trying to distract it, but it was too late. This monster wolf's next prey was her.

'Do I...look...tasty to you?'

-Grit!

Mo Ha-rang clenched her teeth and tried to stand up. Even if she died, she thought she had to stab this monster wolf's flesh at least once so she wouldn't die feeling resentful.

Right at that moment... As if it had been waiting, the monster wolf tried to throw itself at her.

-Swoosh!

'Come!'

That's when it happened.

-Smack!

The monster wolf's body suddenly stopped mid-lunge.

'!?'

Rather than stopping of its own will, it was as if it was bound by something, with its two front paws lifted and fixed in place. She had no idea what was going on.

"W-What?"

"What's happening to it?"

As everyone looked on in bewilderment, something bizarre appeared in Mo Ha-rang's blurring vision. Numerous chains had burst out from the ground and were restraining the monster wolf's entire body.

-Clang! Clang!

-Kwueeeeeeeek!

The monster wolf howled and tried to break free, but the chains constricted it even more tightly, preventing it from moving.

'What the?'

What is happened were these chains? As she was wondering this, a voice was heard from somewhere.

"Ahhh. What a relief. To think everything I need is gathered here."

At that voice, she turned her head. There, she saw someone walking over with the corners of his mouth turned up.

'That guy is...'

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un. But right next to him, what was that transparent yet blurry figure?

-Shudder!

It was a girl with chains wrapped around her entire body and half her hair white. The moment their eyes met, goosebumps shot up all over Mo Ha-rang's body.

Chapter 70

The giant monster wolf, frozen in a posture as if about to leap at Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall.

Everyone's eyes widened at this bizarre sight.

Then, a voice was heard from within the bushes.

“Ahhh. What a relief. To think everything I need is gathered here.”

‘!?’

Everyone’s gaze turned in that direction.

‘That guy?’

The person emerging from the bushes was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

Because he had left such a strong impression with his brutal tactics in the steel bead competition, everyone recognized him at a glance.

And...

‘.....As I thought, he was alive.’

Mok Yu-cheon looked at Mok Gyeong-un and let out a sigh of relief without realizing it.

Although he disliked the guy, he didn’t wish for him to die in a place like this deep down.

So he felt relieved, but the timing of his appearance was bad.

‘You idiot! What happened to your teammates and why did you show up alone?’

They were supposed to find the flag and have all eight members waiting until sunrise.

But of all times, he showed up alone leisurely when that monster wolf was rampaging here. His luck was truly rotten.

However, now was not the time to worry about that guy.

-Tap tap tap tap!

Mok Yu-cheon ran towards Mo Ha-rang.

He didn’t know why that monster wolf was acting like this, but now was the chance to save her.

At that moment, Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave shouted,

“Hey! You crazy monster wolf. What are you doing right now?”

Yeom Ga didn’t care whether Mok Gyeong-un appeared or not.

He didn't know why the monster wolf that had been moving well according to their strategy suddenly couldn't move in that posture, but he hoped it would hurry up and kill them.

That's why he was shouting.

-Kwueeeeeeeek!

However, contrary to his wishes, the monster wolf howled but couldn't budge an inch.

Its fur that had been standing up as if restrained by something was pressed down.

'what the .... is it doing?'

As he was getting frustrated...

-Swoosh!

Mok Yu-cheon slid and pushed Mo Ha-rang, who was right in front of the monster wolf, out of the way.

And he caught her shoulders as she fell forward.

"Get a grip."

Mok Yu-cheon urged Mo Ha-rang, who had a blank expression.

Then she spoke.

"Do you see this?"

"See what?"

She was gesturing towards the monster wolf with her eyes.

Of course he could see it.

He didn't know why it was acting like this, but it couldn't move at all.

But then, incomprehensible words came out of her mouth.

"It's bound by chains."

'!?'

Mok Yu-cheon furrowed his brows.

What is happened was she talking about?

What chains? Why was she saying such nonsense?

'Ah!'

Mok Yu-cheon bit his lip as he felt the wetness on her back.

It seemed she was seeing things due to excessive blood loss and faintness.

"Mo Ha-rang! Get a grip. We've endured until now, but if you collapse here, it's death."

"I'm...still...conscious."

"Then walk."

Mok Yu-cheon hoisted her shoulders and urged her on.

Then she looked in Mok Gyeong-un's direction with an expression that said she couldn't understand at all.

Was she really seeing things because of severe blood loss?

But something felt off.

Who was that half-white haired girl with a blurry form next to him that didn't seem human?

As she was wondering this, she saw the half-white haired girl moving her lips.

'!?'

Seeing this, her pupils trembled.

As someone from the Demon Fire Hall, once known as the Four Great Assassins, she had learned lip-reading.

Lip-reading was a technique to read the other person's conversation through the movements of the lips, face, and tongue.

She could see it.

'That...person seems to be able to see me?'

At those words, a chill ran down Mo Ha-rang's spine for a moment.

Then she saw Mok Gyeong-un also muttering while looking at her with an intrigued expression.

'Ohhh is that so?'

Mo Ha-rang became confused.

Was she really seeing things due to blood loss?

But why were that blurry existence and Mok Gyeong-un conversing?

Right then...

-Kwueeeeeeeeeek!

At the tremendous howl that spread like a shockwave, Mo Ha-rang, Mok Yu-cheon, no, all the boys covered their ears in pain.

"Urk!"

"W-What is that sound?"

It was a howl no different from a lion's roar imbued with inner force.

And with the howl, the ground the monster wolf was standing on shook nearly five jang and sank in.

-Rumble rumble!

At that moment, the frozen monster wolf moved.

'Yes! That's how it should be!'

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave, covering his ears, inwardly cheered.

In any case, since they were within the protection range of this flag, it didn't matter to them, but the other guys didn't have that advantage.

So they had to die here.

"shit!"

A rough sound escaped from Mok Yu-cheon, who was supporting her shoulders.

He thought now was the chance, but it seemed he was wrong.

Right at that moment...

-Clang clang clang clang!

Dozens of chains burst out not from right below but from around five zhang away, once again restraining the body of the monster wolf, no, the demon wolf.

-Kwueeeeeeeek!

This time, perhaps because the restraining force was too strong...

-Thud!

The chains tangled and pulled, smashing the demon wolf's head into the ground.

"Huh?"

To the baffled Mok Yu-cheon, Mo Ha-rang said,

"You really...can't...see it?"

"What are you talking about? At a time like this..."

Before he could even finish his words...

Mok Gyeong-un had already approached the demon wolf pressed against the ground, unable to move its chin, no, its entire body.

Then...

"I should repay you for targeting what's mine, right?"

With those words, he grabbed the demon wolf's upper teeth with both hands, pressed the inside of its mouth with his foot, and...

-Riiiiip!

He tore its palate.

The demon wolf, whose mouth was forcibly opened, thrashed its body and tried to twist its head as if in pain, but the chains' restraining force was too strong for it to move.

Thanks to that...

-Rip rip rip!

-Kwueeeeeeeek!

Its mouth was completely torn off.

The demon wolf's wailing as it shed bloody tears also stopped as if nothing had happened once the upper part of its head was completely ripped off.

'!!!!!!!!'

Mok Yu-cheon, who was closest to this scene, and everyone else were at a loss for words.

Who could have imagined that the monster wolf that had devoured so many boys would end up like this in an instant?

'T-This bastard, what the ....?'

Mok Yu-cheon was the most shocked.

Was this really the same cowardly guy he knew?

Mok Gyeong-un tossed aside the torn upper snout and head of the demon wolf.

-Thud!

There was a thud sound, perhaps due to the weight of the bones.

"Whew."

The surroundings fell into silence at the sight of Mok Gyeong-un drenched in the demon wolf's blood that spurted out as its snout was torn in two.

what the .... was with this guy?

Why did this monster wolf become unable to move and die like this as soon as this bastard appeared?

Moreover, what was that strength to tear its mouth off when inner force was sealed and unusable?

Everyone couldn't hide their confusion.

However, there was one person who quickly snapped out of it.

'shit.'

It was Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave.

He too was equally shocked by this unbelievable outcome.

But how this situation came to be wasn't important.

The sun would rise soon.

They had to defend the flag no matter what, so they needed to retreat right now.

Yeom Ga whispered to his teammates.

"We have to fall back."

His teammates understood this too, so they carefully tried to lift the iron lump of the flag.

But right at that moment...

"Bind them all."

As soon as Mok Gyeong-un muttered softly...

-Clang clang clang clang!

Chains rose from the ground, instantly restraining the bodies of everyone present.

-Clink!

"W-What is this?"

"Something is restraining my body?"

The restrained boys couldn't hide their consternation.

Although invisible, everyone could feel something like a rope, no, cold chains binding them.

They had no idea what was going on.

"Aaaaargh!"

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave tried to break free with all his might.

However, with his inner force sealed in the first place, and no matter how much he had trained his outer force, his strength couldn't surpass that of the monstrous demon wolf.

Naturally, this attempt was nothing more than a waste of energy.

-Thud!

Trying to force it, his body tilted forward and his knees sank to the ground.

Yeom Ga's face flushed with humiliation.

'You son of a bitch, what the .... did you do?'

As this was happening, Mok Gyeong-un approached the flag right in front of the mountain wall.

The eyes of the boys who had been defending it but fled trembled.

Could it be that he was targeting their flag?

As they were thinking this, Mok Gyeong-un examined the flagpole and then...

"Ahhh. This one too?"

He muttered and then broke the flagpole without any hesitation.

-Snap!

"Nooooooooo!"

"Y-You bastard!"

The boys screamed as if wailing.

Although they had abandoned the flag and fled to escape the monster wolf, if that was gone, they would be eliminated from this gate.

But they didn't expect Mok Gyeong-un to damage it like that.

-Grit!

"You son of a bitch!"

Mok Yu-cheon also couldn't contain his anger and called out to Mok Gyeong-un.

He wanted to run over and punch him in the face right away.

But his body was restrained by something invisible and he couldn't move an inch.

“This won’t do either.”

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue and this time approached where Yeom Ga was.

At this, Yeom Ga shouted with bulging veins in his neck.

“Are you going to break this one too?”

In response to that question, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and shook his head.

Then he examined the flagpole and frowned.

[Don’t tell me this one too?]

Although the people around couldn’t hear it, Mok Gyeong-un could hear Cheong-ryeong’s voice in his ears.

As she suspected, the characters were identical this time as well.

Mok Gyeong-un licked his lips as if troubled.

‘What a coincidence.’

He didn’t expect all three flags he found to have the same characters he had memorized.

Now the sun was truly about to rise at any moment.

Even if he hurried, there wasn’t enough time to secure a flag.

[What will you do? Command that Soha girl to search for flags nearby right now.]

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un was about to nod, but then thought of another method.

Come to think of it, wouldn’t it be better to confirm this first?

Mok Gyeong-un was about to ask Yeom Ga and his teammates, who were bound by Soha’s chains and unable to move.

“By any chance...”

Before he could even start his question...

Someone shouted at that moment.

“I’ll...tell you...the remaining...characters...so let’s make a deal.”

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un turned his head towards the one who shouted.

The one who shouted was none other than Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall.

Although her face was so pale, she was somehow still breathing and mustering her remaining strength.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at her with intrigue.

“It seems you figured it out.”

“I checked...it...twice...”

Even she had thought Mok Gyeong-un breaking their flag they were defending was simply to forcefully eliminate them from the gate.

However, seeing him frown while examining the flag of Yeom Ga’s team, she realized it.

Mok Gyeong-un was searching for a different type of flag.

‘Characters?’

Yeom Ga also belatedly realized this fact at her words.

So he hurriedly shouted at Mok Gyeong-un.

“L-Let’s make a deal!”

“A deal?”

“Yeah. I also know the other characters, and we even have an intact flag and teammates here. It looks like you don’t have teammates, but if you join us, you can pass too.”

Yeom Ga thought this was fortunate.

At first, he was angry because his strategy was ruined because of this guy.

But in the end, this bastard played the role of that monster wolf for them.

He broke their flag for them, so if they just accepted this guy, the Demon Fire Hall bunch would naturally be eliminated.

At that moment, one of the boys said in a fluster,

“W-Wait a minute. We’re all fine. If we accept that guy...”

“Shut up.”

Yeom Ga reprimanded the boy.

Then he said to Mok Gyeong-un,

“I’ll take care of one guy myself, so will you make the deal or not? You need teammates, flag, and characters anyway, don’t you?”

He probably wouldn’t be able to refuse anyway.

It was more rational for them to make such a clear proposal.

But then, Mok Gyeong-un reached for the waist of one of the boys.

-Grab!

It was the broken flagpole.

“The characters are here.”

‘!?’

At this, Yeom Ga was momentarily taken aback.

Carrying around the pole with the other set of characters written on it had backfired.

A few of them hadn’t memorized it all, so he didn’t dispose of it, but who knew it would turn out like this?

Yeom Ga hurriedly said,

“T-That’s ours too. So you’ll make a deal with us, right?”

“Huh?”

“Huuuh?”

“This is mine.”

Mok Gyeong-un nonchalantly said while waving the flag he had taken.

Seeing this, veins bulged on Yeom Ga’s forehead.

“You!”

“And this flag here is also mine.”

Mok Gyeong-un lifted the flag with one hand.

At this, the boys’ eyes widened.

Even with their inner force sealed, it took two of them to barely lift it, but he lifted it so easily?

Mok Gyeong-un moved away from them, holding the flag with a satisfied expression.

“S-Stop!”

“I said it’s mine.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s mockery, Yeom Ga got angry but barely suppressed it and said,

“Y-You still need teammates!”

“Ahh. That’s right.”

Mok Gyeong-un nodded as if convinced.

Then this time, Mok Yu-cheon, who was supporting Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall, shouted,

“Mok Gyeong-un, don’t trust that cowardly and weak bastard! They’ll stab you in the back. If that’s the case, accept us as teammates instead!”

He shouted on her behalf as Mo Ha-rang’s condition worsened.

In fact, he didn’t want to ask Mok Gyeong-un due to his pride, but there was no other way.

Once the sun rose, everything would be over.

To survive, he had to abandon his pride.

At that moment, Yeom Ga also shouted,

“What bullshit are you spouting? Everything this guy collected was what we defended. What have you bastards done to demand to be accepted?”

“You have the nerve to run your mouth after doing such cowardly things, even using a monster like that without any skill? Mok Gyeong-un! Ignore what that guy says and...”

“Hey. No, did you say Mok Gyeong-un? If you help me this time, I will definitely repay the favor. There are still gates left, so being indebted to me, someone from Vermillion Slaughter Cave, shouldn’t be bad...”

“Don’t listen to him! Although we may be half-brothers...”

“Shut up, you bastard!”

Then at some point, everyone started shouting at Mok Gyeong-un, who was holding the flag, pleading to be accepted as his teammates. Their voices mixed together, making it confusing to tell who was who.

Right at that moment...

-Clap clap!

Mok Gyeong-un clapped his hands.

At this, everyone’s gaze turned to Mok Gyeong-un. Since he was the one holding their lifeline here, they had no choice but to focus on him.

As they looked at him, Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth.

“This is quite a dilemma. With everyone wanting to join me like this, I’d like to accept all of you as teammates if I could, but rules are rules.”

-Gulp!

The boys swallowed dryly. It seemed he had made a decision on who to accept as teammates.

Mok Yu-cheon stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un. No matter how much they disliked each other, brothers were still brothers. He inwardly hoped that in the end, he would accept him as a teammate. But then...

“In a situation like this, it seems unfair to prioritize and look after certain individuals... So let’s do this instead.”

Mok Gyeong-un glanced to the side and nodded his head.

Then...

“Huh?”

“My body?”

The bodies of the restrained boys moved.

Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly at them and said,

“Kill each other.”

“What?”

“I’ll accept the seven of you who survive as my teammates.”

‘!!!!!!’

In an instant, everyone’s expressions stiffened.