

Myst, Might, Mayhem

#Chapter 71 - Read Myst, Might, Mayhem Chapter 71

Chapter 71

“I’ll accept the seven of you who survive as my teammates.”

‘!?’

The boys, who had been tensely waiting to see who Mok Gyeong-un would choose as his teammates, were dumbfounded for a moment by the words that came out of his mouth.

He was telling them to kill each other when the sun was about to rise?

‘T-This bastard?’

‘Seriously!’

From their perspective, they couldn’t help but be furious.

In the first place, they had stayed up all night until now to defend the flag.

But he suddenly appeared and was toying with the situation as if pulling out an embedded stone.

No, it was even worse than that.

“Are you seriously...”

Mok Yu-cheon, who had momentarily flared up like the others and tried to express his anger to Mok Gyeong-un.

However, the moment he saw Mok Gyeong-un’s face, he became speechless.

‘Ha.....’

That face with the corners of his mouth raised up to his ears was enjoying this situation.

It was far from the feeling of a joke.

It was a face that seemed to genuinely wish for them to kill each other.

-Shudder!

With that realization, goosebumps spread from Mok Yu-cheon's spine to his entire body.

Rather than questioning whether this guy was really that Mok Gyeong-un, it felt like he was looking at an existence filled with genuine evil.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth.

"You have too much leisure. The sun seems like it will rise soon."

The horizon in the eastern sky that Mok Gyeong-un was pointing at with his hand was dyed in crimson.

Everyone's expressions turned grave.

It really seemed like the sun would rise soon.

'Damn it.'

'Do we really have to do as that bastard says?'

Right at that moment...

One boy couldn't contain his anger and finally charged at Mok Gyeong-un, shouting.

"You son of a biiiiitch!"

The stone ax that Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave had thrown was gripped in the boy's hand.

The boy, whose eyes had gone wild, didn't care about the sun rising or not.

It was an impulsive action, feeling like he had to smash Mok Gyeong-un's head with this stone ax to vent his anger.

However...

-Clang!

"Huh?"

The boy's body froze, restrained by chains just three steps away from Mok Gyeong-un.

"T-This is..."

An alien sensation as if his whole body was bound.

Although nothing was visible, it was incomprehensible.

At that moment, the Green Soul Gyu Soha, who was reaching out her hand towards the boy, spoke in a chilling voice.

-Master. Shall I kill him?

Mok Gyeong-un shook his head at this.

It wouldn't be bad for Gyu Soha to kill him, but there was no need to reveal that the Spirit Devourer had reached a level capable of killing someone yet.

Therefore...

-Thud thud thud!

"L-Let me go. T-This isn't right."

The boy restrained by Gyu Soha's chains seemed to have regained his senses, trembling with a pale face.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un snatched the stone ax the boy was holding and raised it as if he would strike him down at any moment.

The boy pleaded in terror.

"Eek! I-I was wrong. I'll do as you say."

"You heated up like an iron pot and cooled down quickly."

"Please spare me."

"Then you should have targeted someone other than me."

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un brought the stone ax down on the boy's head.

-Splat!

"Urk!"

A grotesque scream flowed from the mouth of the boy whose head was crushed.

The expressions of the other boys watching this scene were a sight to behold.

They too had killed other boys to survive from the first gate until now, but that was ultimately murder for a purpose.

However, Mok Gyeong-un's actions had a different nature.

'C-Crazy bastard.'

It seemed like he was enjoying the act of killing itself.

A prime example was smiling so brightly while looking at the boy dying brutally with his head crushed, which was completely out of the ordinary.

"....."

Overwhelmed by the pressure, the boys no longer had any thoughts of trying to do something to Mok Gyeong-un.

That was completely out of their league.

With the situation turning out like this, the first one to move was...

-Smack!

-Crack!

"Urk!"

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave snapped the neck of a boy right next to him.

"You!"

The boys who followed Yeom Ga couldn't hide their consternation at the betrayal.

Then Yeom Ga spoke in an irritated tone.

"Fuck. Are you going to play friendship games after coming this far? If you bastards want to live too, it's best to do as that guy says."

"Urk!"

There was no other way to deny it.

Charging at that bastard Mok Gyeong-un would be of no use, so to survive now, they had to kill each other until only seven remained, as he said.

-Swoosh swoosh!

"Sorry!"

“Gasp! Y-You!”

The other boys also strangled and ambushed the boys next to them.

The boys who were even a little slow became prey.

This wasn't just limited to Yeom Ga's side.

“Aaaargh!”

The boys who had been scattered and defending the flag in a semicircular formation also pounced on the boys next to them, throwing caution to the wind.

-Swoosh!

“Die!”

“Y-You too?”

“Shut up! Is this the time to argue about that?”

It was hard to admit, but Yeom Ga was right.

‘We entered this competition killing each other anyway, so what friendship at this point.’

They had to survive.

If they died, cooperation or friendship was of no use.

They had to make it into the seven before the sun rose.

“.....”

Mok Yu-cheon, who was supporting Mo Ha-rang's shoulders, bit his lip at this sight.

In an instant, everything felt futile.

Although they weren't righteous individuals, the teammates he had shared life and death with for three hours to survive together had suddenly turned on each other to kill.

They were the ones who had said they would stick together until the end just two hours ago.

That's why Mok Yu-cheon, who had thought that people were people no matter where they were, felt that way.

However...

“Die! Die!”

“Aaaaahhhh!”

“P-Please spare me. I-I helped you too.”

“So what!”

They were killing each other as if nothing had happened.

Everyone’s eyes had changed.

-Grip!

Mok Yu-cheon’s tattered nails from the steel bead competition dug into his palm.

All of this was because of that guy.

Because of that bastard, the place where they had competed by joining forces had suddenly turned into a bloody pandemonium.

He had turned everyone into beasts with only the instincts of the strong preying on the weak, not humans.

He wanted to knock that guy down if he could.

However...

‘.....Energy points.’

His energy points were sealed, and it seemed like Mok Gyeong-un was using some strange technique.

Recalling what happened at Yeon Mok Sword Manor, it was probably some kind of illusion technique.

‘Damn it.’

He didn’t want to be dragged around by that guy, but there was no other way.

For a moment, Mok Yu-cheon unconsciously glanced at Mo Ha-rang, whose shoulders he was supporting.

Then, as if realizing his mistake, he shook his head.

'No.'

For a fleeting moment, he had unconsciously thought about killing her.

What had become of him?

As he was thinking this, he saw a boy approaching with murderous eyes.

"Huff.....Huff....."

"Ma-sang."

Mok Yu-cheon called his name.

He was one of the three who had survived with him from the beginning.

At some point, Ma-sang's hand gripped one of the two stone daggers that Mo Ha-rang had.

-Grit!

Mok Yu-cheon clenched his teeth.

Having already stained his hands with a lot of blood on the way here, he knew well that there was no way to persuade Ma-sang in this situation.

That's why he was so furious at this situation.

At that moment, Ma-sang swept his surroundings while exhaling rough breaths.

Then he opened his mouth.

".....Yu-cheon. Cut off Ha-rang's breath."

"What?"

Mok Yu-cheon's voice rose.

Thanks to Mo Ha-rang, they had escaped several crises, so he didn't expect Ma-sang to tell him to kill her without any hesitation.

Moreover, didn't she get injured while trying to help her teammates?

"No. Let's leave Ha-rang and fight each other instead."

"Huff....Huff....Stop talking nonsense and kill her."

“I said no.”

At Mok Yu-cheon’s words, Ma-sang shouted,

“You son of a bitch! She won’t survive with her injuries anyway. In that case, even if we have to kill her, you and I should survive!”

With a scream close to wailing, Mok Yu-cheon muttered with difficulty.

“I know. Damn it, I know.”

But he couldn’t do it.

He could understand fighting each other and killing someone, but he couldn’t cut off the breath of this girl who was in a dazed state.

Then...

“Then I’ll kill her.”

With those words, Ma-sang charged forward.

At this, Mok Yu-cheon hurriedly put down Mo Ha-rang and blocked Ma-sang.

The guy had already killed another boy, so he had no hesitation in killing the injured Mo Ha-rang to survive.

-Swoosh swoosh!

Although his energy points were sealed, Mok Yu-cheon was called a genius.

He threw his body towards the charging Ma-sang, grabbed his wrist with the Seizing Hand technique, and twisted it back.

-Crack!

“Let go of that!”

Mok Yu-cheon urged Ma-sang to let go of the dagger gripped in his hand.

“If you don’t let go, your arm will break.”

“Aaaargh.”

“Ma-sang. Calm down. Let’s join forces and deal with the guys from the other team instead...”

Before he could finish his words, Ma-sang said with a sneer,

“Aaaargh. What are you going to do when the sun is rising? And even if it’s not me, it’s already too late.”

At those words, Mok Yu-cheon raised his head.

And there, he saw a boy charging towards Mo Ha-rang, who was lying face down.

It was also a boy who had been on the same team.

The boy charging with an apologetic expression had a rock in his hand, as if he was going to shatter Mo Ha-rang’s head.

“Stop!”

Mok Yu-cheon shouted urgently.

But it was already too late.

‘Noooooooo!’

The boy’s crude stone was just a step away from crushing Mo Ha-rang’s head.

Right at that moment...

-Clang!

‘!?’

The moment the stone was about to touch, the boy’s body froze in that state.

“T-This is.....”

The alien sensation of something restraining his body.

It was that same thing as before.

-Thud!

“Ha.....Haa.....”

With the crisis averted at the last second, Mok Yu-cheon sat on the ground and exhaled rough breaths as if hyperventilating.

After being extremely tense, his breathing became uncontrollable as the tension suddenly dissipated.

If he had been just a little late, Mo Ha-rang would have died.

At that moment, the boy whose movements were restrained shouted as if possessed.

“What are you doing? Didn’t you say you’d give us a chance by fighting each other?”

He wasn’t spouting nonsense about sparing the injured or women, right?

As he was thinking this, a sound was heard.

-Clap clap clap!

He could move his head, so when he looked in that direction, he saw Mok Gyeong-un clapping his hands.

Wondering why he was doing that, Mok Gyeong-un said with a bright smile,

“Congratulations.”

“What?”

“The spots are all filled.”

At those words, the boy swallowed and looked around.

Mok Yu-cheon and Ma-sang, Mo Ha-rang and himself who tried to kill her, and Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave and two of his cronies had survived.

‘Ah!’

Forgetting how many of them had survived while trying to kill each other to reduce their numbers, they finally realized that only seven remained.

Human hearts were truly cunning.

“Haa.....”

“We survived.”

All of them who had been trying to kill each other until now had brightened expressions along with sighs of relief.

They were engulfed in the exhilaration that came from surviving the competition.

That exhilaration was so great that they completely forgot the fact that they had engaged in a massacre orchestrated by Mok Gyeong-un.

'Interesting.'

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

He felt a small amusement at the sight of them.

At that moment, the sun was rising.

The mountains of Corpse Blood Valley, which had been shaded in darkness, slowly brightened under the crimson sunlight slowly poking its head out.

And with that...

-Swish swish swish swish!

Before long, as if they had been waiting, warriors wearing red belts appeared, displaying their lightfoot skills.

The warriors who appeared looked around, checking the flags and the survivors.

Then, their expressions stiffened as they discovered something.

'!!!!'

It was because of the giant monster wolf, no, the monstrous beast demon wolf, lying dead with its snout torn off.

'.....Who on earth?'

This monstrous beast wasn't released to be killed.

It was released for them to survive against.

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The monster wolf, no, the monstrous beast demon wolf, lying dead with its snout torn off.

It wasn't released to be killed.

It was released for them to survive against it.

But to think it was dead...

'Ha.....'

It was truly unbelievable.

For a moment, everyone was at a loss for words at this sight.

Then, a red-belted warrior asked the exhausted boys,

"Who did it?"

At his question, the boys' gazes naturally turned towards a certain someone.

Although they all looked similar, there was one exceptionally handsome boy who was drenched in blood from head to toe.

It was Mok Gyeong-un.

'.....Is it that guy again?'

The eyes of the red-belted warriors flickered with interest.

Although they were already interested in him due to his performance in the steel bead competition, they couldn't help but be surprised by this.

"Senior... does this make sense?"

One warrior muttered as if he couldn't understand.

That was understandable. Even without the energy points being sealed, it seemed difficult for a decent warrior to handle a monstrous beast of that size.

But to think he did this to it in a state where his energy points were blocked?

'No matter how much one trains their outer force, this is...'

Impossible.

It was questionable whether one could face it even with proper gear.

The most senior warrior among the red-belted warriors looked Mok Gyeong-un up and down.

While the other boys looked haggard and exhausted, he alone had lively eyes.

No, he didn't even look tired.

'Could it be?'

The senior warrior's eyes narrowed with suspicion.

He then spoke.

"You. Come here."

"Is there a problem?"

"Who said you could talk back?"

"....."

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and approached the senior warrior.

Then the senior warrior roughly grabbed Mok Gyeong-un's wrist and checked the state of his body.

It was to confirm whether his energy points were blocked or not.

However...

'.....They're blocked.'

He wondered if the guy had somehow unblocked his energy points, but that wasn't the case.

They were still blocked.

Confirming this made it even more unbelievable.

'They raised such a guy in a mere place like Yeon Mok Sword Manor?'

No matter how famous the martial arts family was, it wasn't a major faction like the Nine Paths or the likes.

This was going to be quite controversial.

It was the first time since the operation of Corpse Blood Valley.

The robe-wearing diviner looked dumbfounded at the corpse of the monstrous beast demon wolf with its snout and head torn off, completely separated from its lower jaw.

To make matters worse, right when the sun rose, he had used a technique to signal the demon wolf to return.

But when it didn't return, the diviner, sensing something was off, had climbed up here.

Then someone spoke to him.

"Is this possible?"

"Pardon?"

"I asked if it's possible."

The one asking the question was none other than the Lord of Corpse Blood Valley wearing the demon mask.

Arriving late and climbing the mountain, he had received a report from the red-belted warriors and arrived here to check the demon wolf's corpse.

He, too, couldn't help but be inwardly surprised.

In the first place, the role of the monstrous beast demon wolf was to be an ordeal for the boys.

It was to push them to an even more extreme situation and maximize their will to survive.

But to think they killed it...

"This... Ha..."

The robe-wearing diviner couldn't give any answer.

If a warrior who had mastered martial arts had done this, he would have at least responded, "It seems he possesses quite an extraordinary martial prowess."

But this was truly unexpected.

'Should I even mention this?'

What was even more troublesome was the state of the demon wolf.

'.....It had already achieved maturity.'

He already thought it was getting close to a mature state anyway.

But he believed it wasn't ready yet and it would take a couple more months, so he had deployed this beast.

However, in that short time, it had become a fully mature body.

It had turned from a fierce beast into a monstrous beast.

'This is crazy. How did they do this?'

Even trained diviners and third-rate or second-rate warriors had a hard time dealing with ferocious beasts.

But if it became a monstrous beast-level, even first-rate masters would have a hard time catching it unless they joined forces.

He couldn't believe that one of the boys whose energy points were sealed had caught it.

He had to report this, but the diviner couldn't bring himself to do it.

That's because even ferocious beasts alone could be considered an extreme ordeal, but a monstrous beast-level would be close to a massacre, even with the protective space of the flag.

'Should I consider it lucky?'

It was fortunate that this beast was killed before it could cause more harm.

However, it was difficult to fully report this fact.

So he excluded this and said,

"To be honest, even I don't understand how they caught it."

"You don't understand?"

"In your opinion, which part of the human body possesses the greatest strength?"

".....Are you trying to say it's the mouth?"

"That's right. The biting force is the strongest. Let alone beasts or such beasts, do you think it would be any different? Those called beasts have lived wild lives unlike humans, and accordingly, they are equipped with jaws capable of chewing through even bones."

Humans cut hard bones and eat them.

However, many of the creatures called beasts eat bones whole.

In that case, naturally, the shape of their teeth and their biting force had to develop accordingly.

“If they were lucky and pierced its core, which could be called its heart, with something sharp, I could understand. But this is impossible with just a bit of strength.”

To tear it apart, one needed a force that surpassed the biting power of the monstrous beast demon wolf.

The demon mask nodded at this.

“I see.”

“Who did it? Please tell me...”

“That’s enough.”

“Pardon?”

“Didn’t you hear me? I said that’s enough. Take that corpse with you.”

He had heard what he wanted.

So there was no need to mention it further.

“.....I understand. Then I’ll borrow a few men.”

“Do as you please.”

As the diviner took the corpse with the help of a few warriors, the senior warrior who served as his assistant approached him with a frown and said,

“I checked.”

“Are the Golden Gate Lock still in place?”

“Yes. With the energy points blocked, the true energy couldn’t circulate through his body.”

“But he did that.”

“Calling him strong is an understatement. He might be even stronger than that child of the Esoteric Realm Gate.”

“Hmm.”

Was this something that could be explained by him being strong?

The demon mask had experience fighting against what was called a fierce beast in his younger days.

If he referred to those memories, it was still questionable.

To think he did this without inner energy.

'I'll have to keep an eye on him.'

He thought he was no ordinary fellow, but this made him even more interested.

There seemed to be something about him that couldn't be explained just by his background from a famous martial arts family.

The demon mask changed the subject.

"Have the rest all gathered?"

"Yes."

"What's the total number?"

"The total number of survivors is 259."

Out of the total of 468, about half had died.

Upon receiving this report from the senior warrior, the demon mask nodded and moved his feet.

Climbing to the top of the mountain ridge, there was a large clearing where the boys were sitting in rows and columns.

But this was just the number of survivors; they were divided into two groups here as well.

Out of the 259, 200 were on the right side, and the remaining 59 were on the left side. The majority of 200 had relaxed faces, while the remaining 59 were pale and trembling.

The reason was that they were the ones who failed to find a flag until sunrise.

'Damn it.'

'Is this how we die?'

That's why they were afraid.

The result had already been foretold.

It was death.

The demon mask, standing in front of them, opened his mouth.

"I congratulate you on successfully defending the flags. The fifty-nine pieces of trash on the left side have also worked hard to survive the night without being able to do anything."

Even the words that were supposed to be respectful were different.

In fact, these words didn't register with the 59 boys.

They just wanted to live.

As they were doing so, the demon mask turned his head towards them.

-Thump! Thump! Thump!

Their hearts pounded loudly.

The moment the demon mask gave the order, it seemed like the red-belted warriors would immediately behead them.

However...

"The fifty-nine pieces of trash, follow that diviner down the mountain."

'!?'

At this order from him, the eyes of the 59 boys widened.

They naturally thought they would be killed on the spot, but being told to follow that robe-wearing diviner down the mountain made them puzzled.

Could it be that they were being spared?

-Murmur murmur!

The faces of these boys began to light up.

Seeing this, the red-belted warriors shook their heads.

Being told to follow the diviner was by no means a good thing.

They didn't want to tell them what was to come, as they were so happy about briefly extending their lives.

"Shut up and get lost."

At the demon mask's scolding, the rejoicing boys shut their mouths.

Of course, they were still smirking.

And so, the 59 boys followed the procession collecting the corpse of the demon wolf and the bodies of the dead, pulling a cart down the mountain.

'Why are they making those expressions?'

'There must be something.'

Although those who went down wouldn't know, the 200 boys who roughly grasped the situation by looking at the expressions of the red-belted warriors felt fortunate.

That they weren't included in that group.

As they were doing so, the demon mask spoke again.

"Now. It's time for another selection."

'Selection?'

The faces of the boys, who had been relieved at the word 'selection,' became puzzled.

Of course, not all of them were like that.

Some teams were inwardly cheering as if they had guessed the situation.

As they were doing so, the demon mask pointed to the left side and said,

"Those who have grasped the true meaning of the flags, move to the left side."

"True meaning?"

"What is he talking about?"

-Murmur murmur!

The boys stirred.

Then some of them got up from their seats.

And with a triumphant expression, they moved to the left side.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un's team was no exception.

Seeing the boys who had moved, a few teams tried to follow suit to the left side without knowing the reason, thinking, "Oh well, I don't know."

However...

"If you follow without knowing the true meaning and get caught, you'll be executed on the spot."

-Flinch!

They had no choice but to stop at this warning.

And so, the boys were divided into left and right sides once again.

Out of the 200, 80 boys were on the left side, and 120 boys were on the right side.

'What the hell is this true meaning?'

'Does this mean we didn't pass?'

The 120 boys on the right side couldn't hide their anxiety.

It was due to the fear that if they didn't pass here, they might die, as the term 'selection' was used.

As they were doing so, the demon mask looked at the boys remaining on the right side and said,

"This is the limit for you lot."

"....."

"But be grateful. You lot have now become low-ranking warriors of the Heaven and Earth Society."

'!?'

At this declaration from the demon mask, the boys' eyes widened.

They were the ones who had been afraid that they would die for failing to pass the gate.

But it was a completely unexpected result.

However, relieved that they wouldn't die but had survived, some of the boys sat down on the ground as if their legs had given out.

“Haa.....”

“W-We survived.”

Corpse Blood Valley, where most of those who entered were known to leave as corpses.

The exhilaration of surviving here was too great.

On the other hand, about half of them didn't seem to be in a good mood, their expressions souring.

That was because...

‘Damn it!’

‘A low-ranking warrior.’

The goal of most of those entering Corpse Blood Valley was never to become a mere low-ranking warrior.

The purpose of risking their lives to pass the gates was to be chosen.

But they had failed at this.

‘Stupid things.’

‘You took the test too simplistically.’

Seeing them, the 80 who had grasped the true meaning of the gates looked at them with mocking expressions.

They had gained the qualifications to go to a higher place.

As they were doing so, the demon mask took something out of his bosom.

It was a silver tablet with the character “Two” written on it.

‘Ah!’

The eyes of a few, including Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave, sparkled upon recognizing this.

It was a badge given to the one who passed the gate at the top of the class.

'Is he going to determine the top scorer?'

If that was the case, they couldn't help but be interested.

They had prior information that having that badge would be quite advantageous in the end.

But unlike the steel bead competition, there was nothing particularly superior about this one.

The only thing was the fact that they had discovered there were two types of flags, but even this was too many with 80 people.

'What will he do?'

As they were wondering about this, the demon mask muttered,

"How should I determine the top scorer? Should it be the one who memorized the verse?"

At these words, a few, including Yeom Ga, perked up their shoulders.

That was because they were the ones who had succeeded in memorizing the verses in advance, having secured the two types of flags with verses early on.

If it was like that, they were confident.

"Or should it be the one who can best demonstrate the verse?"

With the following muttering, some of the perked-up shoulders sank.

Although they had barely memorized the verses while defending and seizing the flags all night, they didn't have time to practice.

This was the same for Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave and Yeon Moo-woong of the Esoteric Realm Gate.

They could immediately demonstrate the stances according to the memorized verses, but they weren't confident in demonstrating them perfectly, as it would be their first time.

In fact, it would be the same for anyone.

'Still, the conditions are the same.'

If they were told to demonstrate the stances, they were going to try it no matter what.

As they were doing so, the demon mask said,

"Good. Let's do it this way. Is there anyone among you who can properly explain what kind of verse is on the flag?"

At that question, someone raised their hand and stood up first, as if they had been waiting.

-Swoosh!

"It's a sword technique!"

At this shout, snickers burst out from here and there.

That was because anyone who had memorized or at least seen the verse would know that it was a sword technique.

"Is that even worth mentioning?"

Just by looking at the demon mask's cold gaze, the boy realized he had made a mistake and quietly sat down.

Then Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave raised his hand and stood up.

"It's a swift sword art where offense and defense are integrated, targeting three acupoints on the centerline and six major acupoints, and the variation of stances is diverse depending on its use."

'Ah.....'

At Yeom Ga's explanation, Yeon Woo-woong of the Esoteric Realm Gate smacked his lips regretfully.

The others felt the same way.

He had concisely and accurately explained the characteristics of the sword technique.

No further explanation was necessary.

'How about that?'

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave looked at Mok Gyeong-un and Yeon Woo-wong of the Esoteric Realm Gate in turn with a triumphant expression.

There was no need to even look at Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall, as she was lying down receiving treatment.

He was confident that this badge would be his.

The demon mask opened his mouth.

“To think you figured it out to that extent in the midst of all this, not bad.”

‘Got it.’

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave inwardly cheered.

Judging by the demon mask’s reaction, what he had figured out seemed to be correct to some degree.

Mok Yu-cheon’s eyes flickered with interest.

He didn’t speak up first because he had no particular desire for the top spot.

However, more than that...

‘He has a keen eye for reading the verses.’

It was almost identical to what he had grasped.

Although the guy was cunning, his talent in martial arts definitely didn’t fall behind his own when compared.

He became curious about what level he would be at once the Golden Gate Lock were removed.

“Hmm.”

As they were doing so, the demon mask glanced at the senior warrior of the captain rank.

Then the senior warrior also nodded his head.

In any case, these were people who had fought in the flag defense battle for nearly three hours without resting or sleeping, engaged in a fight to the death.

It was plenty impressive that they had figured it out to this extent.

The demon mask held out the silver tablet and said, "Good. This gate..."

Before he could even finish his words...

"Isn't it a sword formation rather than just a sword technique?"

'!?'

The demon mask frowned and turned his head.

Who just said that?

As he was wondering, the one who said those words was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

'Ha!'

At this, the demon mask clicked his tongue as if dumbfounded.

That was because this sword technique had simple stances, so it was impossible to distinguish whether it could be demonstrated as a sword formation or not just by looking at the verses.

At the very least, it was difficult to notice unless one was a swordsman who had reached a high level with the sword.

But a greenhorn brat distinguished this just with the verses?

'W-What?'

Yeom Ga, who had inwardly sneered at the abrupt mention of sword formation from Mok Gyeong-un's mouth, was taken aback.

But what the hell was this reaction from the demon mask?

'Could it be?'

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave frowned, feeling uneasy inside.

The reaction to Mok Gyeong-un's words about it being a sword formation was unusual.

If it wasn't the case, there would have been no reason to react like that in the first place.

'That can't be.'

Yeom Ga denied it inwardly.

A sword formation, as the name suggests, is a formation deployed using swords.

Formations typically have fixed rules and precise variations in stances to interlock with each other, which was difficult to achieve with just the sword technique verses.

That meant the verses' stances had to be adapted, but this was impossible to envision in one's head just by looking at the verses unless one was at a considerable level.

'Is that guy such a master of the sword?'

To be able to notice this just from the verses, one had to be a sword master of the caliber of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave's Valley Master, Yeom Ga's father.

That's why Yeom Ga hoped it wasn't the case.

However, contrary to his wish...

"Why do you think it's a sword formation?"

The demon mask asked Mok Gyeong-un in a serious tone.

Mok Gyeong-un then nonchalantly said,

"Judging by how the stances of the sword technique adhere to the basics and each one is arranged so that the movement paths don't overlap, I thought it could be demonstrated as a sword formation."

"The movement paths don't overlap....."

The demon mask's eyes narrowed.

Even if one could physically demonstrate the sword technique multiple times or visualize the sword in one's mind, it was quite difficult to trace the movement paths to the point of combining them into a sword formation.

It was more than observing one's own movements.

"Hmm."

The demon mask stroked his chin.

To be honest, it was hard to believe.

A guy who was merely 17 or 18 years old had insight on par with someone who had reached the pinnacle of swordsmanship?

Of course, if he possessed innate talent, it could be possible.

However...

‘Those hands.....’

The palms of Mok Gyeong-un’s hands that the demon mask was looking at were not like that at all.

Those were not the hands of an exceptional swordsman.

The shape of a swordsman’s thumb, index finger, and pinky naturally changed after gripping a sword for a long time.

But looking at Mok Gyeong-un’s hands, there weren’t even any calluses on his thumbs.

‘Those aren’t the hands of someone who has mastered the sword.’

Yet such insight emerged from him.

If a sword master had given him pointers, it would be understandable.

But there was no way such a person existed here in Corpse Blood Valley.

That’s why it was even more puzzling.

Was this guy’s discernment really on par with someone who had reached the pinnacle of swordsmanship?

The demon mask, who had been staring intently at Mok Gyeong-un, said,

“If a sword formation were to be deployed with this verse, how many people do you think would be most efficient?”

It was already impressive that he had guessed it was a sword formation.

But could he really figure this out as well?

If he got this right too, one could truly say his insight regarding the sword was on par with a master.

At this question, Mok Gyeong-un remained still for a moment and then answered,

“Eight.”

The demon mask’s eyes flickered with interest at those words.

He had accurately stated the minimum number required to deploy a sword formation.

Then Mok Gyeong-un continued,

“Sixteen or thirty-two should also be possible.”

“.....”

At those words, a small gasp escaped the demon mask’s mouth.

It would have been impressive if he had only said eight, but he even accurately guessed the numbers that could form the sword formation.

“Do you think it would be difficult to go beyond that?”

“If they were to combine, the formation would start to overlap from that point on.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the demon mask sincerely clicked his tongue.

The Heaven and Earth Eight Resonance Formation.

That was the name of this formation.

It was an absolute formation based on the variations of the Eight Trigrams, developed by the previous Society Leader of the Heaven and Earth Society, allowing sixteen to thirty-two swordsmen to launch a combined attack.

‘Look at this guy.’

He even got this right.

Did he really possess the eyes and insight of a swordsman who had reached the pinnacle?

If that was the case, he was genuinely intrigued.

‘.....’

He didn’t care at all that Mok Gyeong-un was from an upright martial arts family.

The demon mask, who had been staring intently at Mok Gyeong-un, licked his lips.

He wanted to satisfy that greed right away, but now, during the ongoing examination, was not the time.

-Smack!

The demon mask threw something at Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un caught it and opened his palm to find a silver tablet with the character “Two” engraved on it.

The demon mask said,

“You are also the second-place scorer.”

-Murmur murmur!

At those words, the boys watching this stirred.

With Mok Gyeong-un claiming the second-place position following the first, it naturally became a topic of discussion.

Just who was this guy?

What was his background that he had already taken the second-place position?

-Grit!

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave gnashed his teeth.

He had naturally thought the second place would be his, but he didn't expect it to be snatched away like this.

He was one of the three most promising disciples from the major factions in this Corpse Blood Valley.

But now he looked pathetic.

‘.....Mok Gyeong-un.’

That guy's name was completely etched into his mind.

It seemed like he would only feel better if he could somehow get back at him for this humiliation.

‘Just wait and see.’

Once the Golden Gate Lock sealing his energy points were removed, that guy better be prepared.

As they were doing so, the demon mask spoke,

“I sincerely congratulate the eighty of you who have passed the second gate. You have gained the qualifications to become middle-rank warriors of our Heaven and Earth Society.”

‘Middle-rank warriors!’

At his words, exhilaration filled the eyes of some boys.

That was because starting from middle-rank warriors, the treatment within the Heaven and Earth Society changed.

Among the middle-rank warriors, those with exceptional skills could gain the qualification to lead a unit of low-rank warriors as a unit leader.

The demon mask continued speaking to them, whose eyes had come alive despite their exhaustion.

“To be a middle-rank warrior, one must have the ability to lead a unit and be able to execute a sword formation. As you just heard, the verse on the flag is the verse of a sword technique that requires at least eight people to deploy as a sword formation.”

At those words, everyone’s eyes flickered with interest.

The examination wasn’t simply composed of extreme trials.

From the beginning, there was a reason why they had to be divided into teams of eight.

“Now, if you have a keen eye, you should be able to guess what the third gate is.”

“.....”

“You there.”

At the demon mask’s nod, a boy abruptly stood up from his seat.

“Yes!”

“What do you think the third gate is?”

“That’s.....”

“Speak properly.”

“It’s for the eight members who passed to deploy a sword formation and eliminate the target!”

At the boy's words, most of them nodded slightly, thinking the same thing.

That was the only thing they could guess at this point.

As they were doing so, the demon mask gestured for him to sit down and opened his mouth.

“Correct. The third gate is for a team of eight to perfectly deploy a sword formation and eliminate the target.”

At his words, the boys inwardly felt relieved.

The first and second gates had made them harm each other and exhausted them mentally and physically.

If they were told to do it twice, it would be an experience they never wanted to go through again.

“However, there are conditions and restrictions here as well.”

‘Conditions and restrictions?’

“First, you will be given a day of rest, so decide on a team leader during that time. Of course, you must also form a team of eight, including the team leader.”

‘Huh?’

At the demon mask's words, the boys furrowed their brows.

This meant that the eight who had defended the flag didn't necessarily have to be on the same team.

In this case, they could reorganize the teams.

‘Great!’

At this, a few openly cheered.

Among them were Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave and Mok Yu-cheon.

In fact, most of them who had been inwardly dreading being on the same team as Mok Gyeong-un again showed similar reactions.

“By the way, the one who becomes the team leader naturally passes the third gate regardless of the sword formation test, and...”

-Swoosh!

The demon mask took out a square wooden tablet that looked like an identity plate from his bosom and showed it.

The words "Unit Leader" were engraved on it.

'Oh? Could it be?'

'Unit Leader's plate?'

The boys' eyes focused on the wooden tablet.

Then the demon mask chuckled and continued,

"They will also be given the qualification of a unit leader."

'!!!!!!'

At the demon mask's words, the boys couldn't hide their excitement even though their mouths were closed.

Only a select few among the middle-rank warriors who had the qualifications of a senior could become unit leaders.

But were they deciding the unit leaders here?

However, a question arose in everyone's mind as they were getting excited.

'Then won't everyone want to be the team leader?'

Who among those who had come this far wouldn't want to be the team leader?

Realizing this, sighs of distress naturally mixed into the boys' breaths.

They thought this gate might be a bit better, but in the end, it seemed like they would have to fight again.

'Damn it.'

'There are eighty people, so only eight will qualify.'

'Even that's uncertain.'

'If someone dies while fighting for the team leader position, that team will be eliminated.'

If even one person met with an accident, seven others would be eliminated together.

It couldn't be considered easier than the second gate by any means.

As they were doing so, the demon mask spoke,

"Now I will state the restriction."

"....."

"The restriction is no killing."

'!?'

At those words, everyone was puzzled.

Did the restriction of no killing literally mean they couldn't kill each other?

Everyone looked at the demon mask in confusion.

They thought he would clarify the reason behind it.

However...

"That is all."

'That's it?'

'So we have to decide on a team leader without killing?'

Everyone was dumbfounded by the simple yet different restriction compared to before.

On the other hand, Mok Gyeong-un smacked his lips as if he was disappointed.

He thought he could enjoy it like the second gate, but with the restriction on killing, the fun was gone.

'.....This guy. Why is he disappointed?'

Seeing his reaction, the boys next to him clicked their tongues inwardly.

Shouldn't he consider it fortunate instead?

At least in this gate, there wouldn't be any loss of life.

-Clank!

At that moment, the red-belted warriors began taking out a peculiar-shaped iron object from a wooden box.

The demon mask pointed at it and said,

“Before heading to the lodgings beyond the mountain, we will collect the Golden Gate Lock.”

‘Ah!’

At those words, everyone’s expressions brightened.

They had been wondering how long they would have to wear the Golden Gate Lock, but they were finally being freed from them.

The restriction of not being able to use inner energy made them more uncomfortable than they had thought.

‘Finally.’

The lips of Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave twitched.

He had waited so long, and the restriction on his inner energy was finally being lifted.

Yeom Ga glared intensely at the back of Mok Gyeong-un’s head in front of him.

He couldn’t respond to that strange technique due to the restriction on his inner energy, but now that the restriction was being lifted, the situation would change.

‘I’ll make you crawl between my legs.’

The restriction on killing was in place, but it didn’t matter.

As long as he didn’t kill him, it was fine.

Thinking about this, his mood became so good that the corners of his mouth curled up cruelly.

Beyond the mountain, there was a lodging building where they could rest.

It was structured so that two people could rest in one room, so the boys each found someone they liked and chose their rooms.

It didn’t take very long.

During this one-day rest period, the behavioral tendencies of the boys were divided into two.

The boys of the first tendency ate the snacks prepared in the room to satisfy their hunger, and then, without exception, they all began circulating their energy.

They had fought a bloody battle all night, exhausting their minds and bodies, so they tried to restore their bodies to normal as much as possible through energy circulation.

The boys of the second tendency were different from them.

Although they also had a strong desire to rest, they judged that it was better to move first and secure teammates.

Therefore, they attempted to approach the boys who were originally on the same team as them or those they had in mind.

They were making a move in advance as the competition would intensify soon.

And here, a third tendency also existed.

-Crack!

Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave, who had satisfied his hunger, stretched his body.

He strongly wanted to circulate his energy like that guy sitting on the bed out of fatigue, but he judged that now was the right time, so he had to hurry.

'Now is the chance.'

His target was that bastard Mok Gyeong-un.

As long as he didn't kill him, he could turn him into a cripple, and then he wouldn't have to worry starting from this gate.

The other guys couldn't match up to him anyway.

However, that guy's strange technique and his unusually annoying presence bothered him.

'So I'll strike first.'

Now that the restriction was lifted, he was confident.

Although that guy had learned a strange technique, Yeom Ga had reached the Peak Realm and had also mastered the Vermillion Slaughter Cave's secret arts.

'Then, shall we start the hunt?'

After stretching, Yeom Ga grabbed the door and opened it.

However...

'!?'

Mok Gyeong-un was standing in front of the door with a smile on his face.

"You....."

"Oh my. It seems we had the same thought."

A smile filled with malice.

For a moment, Yeom Ga, who had been confidently stepping out, felt a chill run down his spine.

Chapter 74

Inside a red room illuminated by candlelight.

This place was a brothel located on the outskirts of the outer fortress of the Heaven and Earth Society.

On the table were red and white powder, along with brushes for applying makeup.

There was someone looking at these with a serious expression.

It was Ha Chae-rin, the prospective leader of the Flying Killing Sect, one of the three major assassin groups, or rather Go Chan who had possessed her body.

-Thud!

Go Chan, with his interlocked fingers supporting his chin.

The face reflected in the mirror was so captivating that it could be called beautiful.

However, this was not his own appearance.

'.....Do I have to go this far?'

Looking at the cosmetic tools on the table, Go Chan fell into self-loathing.

How did it come to this point?

As a servant spirit, his fate was tied to Mok Gyeong-un, so he had chased after him all the way to the Heaven and Earth Society.

In fact, if it were up to him, he wanted to run away, but since his life and death were tied to his master Mok Gyeong-un, he had no choice.

'Damn it.'

Go Chan let out a deep sigh.

Somehow he had made it all the way to the outer fortress of the Heaven and Earth Society.

But when he actually tried to infiltrate the Heaven and Earth Society, he didn't know the security would be this strict.

'It's impossible.'

Even during his assassin days, he occasionally had infiltration missions.

No, most assassinations required stealthy infiltration to be carried out.

However, the scale of the Heaven and Earth Society, which currently controlled one-third of the martial world, was beyond imagination, and it was on a completely different level from the small and medium-sized sects he had infiltrated before.

"Haa."

With trembling hands, Go Chan reached for the brush to apply the powder.

The reason he was grasping these cosmetic tools was simple.

It was to infiltrate the Heaven and Earth Society.

-Shudder!

As he gripped the brush, Go Chan felt goosebumps all over his body.

It was due to the deep-seated aversion inherent in his soul.

The thought of him, a man, coming to this brothel to disguise himself as a courtesan made him feel so strongly repulsed that he even felt nauseous.

However, there was no other way.

In order to infiltrate, Go Chan had wandered around the outer fortress of the Heaven and Earth Society, gathering information.

He had also considered the method of secretly entering the carts carrying supplies or food, but it was impossible because they thoroughly inspected them at the gates of the Heaven and Earth Society.

In the end, the best method was to make contact with an insider and enter that way.

[Oho. So you're saying the young lady has come of age and wants to meet the heroes of the Heaven and Earth Society, is that right?]

[Th-that's right.]

Even though it was to gather information, to think he had to say such things.

Even as he said those words, he felt uncomfortable.

[But it won't be easy to meet gentlemen of the rank of team leaders or division leaders, not just low-level warriors of the Heaven and Earth Society.]

[Is there no way?]

[Do you want to know? Ahem.]

Subtly extending his hand.

As expected of an information broker, he had a keen eye for money.

At this, Go Chan placed silver coins in his hand.

After receiving the silver coins, the information broker readily divulged the method.

[Do you know Crimson Orchid House?]

[Crimson Orchid House?]

[That's right. It's a brothel located on the eastern outskirts of the outer fortress, and there.....]

-Bang!

[Are you telling me to become a courtesan!]

For a moment, it was so absurd that he almost snatched the money back from the information broker.

The information broker appeased Go Chan and said,

[Oh my. Listen to people until the end. Although Crimson Orchid House is a brothel, it's not an ordinary pleasure district.]

[What's the difference between a brothel and a pleasure district...]

[The courtesans there are not only outstanding in appearance but also excel in academics, arts, and skills, and possess dignity, so even high-ranking gentlemen from inside the fortress visit.]

[.....Is that true?]

[After receiving the silver coins, would I lie? With the young lady's appearance, Crimson Orchid House will welcome you with open arms.]

Trusting these words, Go Chan eventually infiltrated Crimson Orchid House.

As the information broker said, he had concerns, but he succeeded in entering Crimson Orchid House.

When asked if he had any skills, he recalled the times he had disguised himself as a musician during his assassin days and played the geomungo, and they truly welcomed him enthusiastically.

[You have artistic skills! We always welcome female musicians.]

On top of that, they mentioned that a few courtesans had become concubines of the Heaven and Earth Society's division leaders, creating vacancies.

'Concubines.....Ha!'

It seems infiltration into the inner fortress is possible somehow.

Go Chan swallowed dryly.

And after hesitating several times, he finally picked up the brush and started applying powder to his face.

Before long, the voice of the head courtesan of Crimson Orchid House could be heard from outside the door.

-Are you ready?

“Uh...um, well....”

Go Chan, who was applying red powder to his lips, fumbled.

Then, as if impatient from waiting outside, the head courtesan finally opened the door and entered.

-Creak!

“What’s taking you so long to do your makeup? Since you have a pretty face, you can do it roughly. Let’s see. How well did you do it?”

At these words, Go Chan looked at his own face in the mirror and couldn’t hide his perplexity.

He had tried his best, recalling Ha Chae-rin’s memories, but his hands must have shaken too much due to the instinctive aversion.

The head courtesan approached and looked at Go Chan’s face.

Then she soon frowned and muttered.

“.....Oh my goodness.”

He had applied so much powder that his face was as white as a corpse.

He had applied the ink so sloppily with the small brush meant for darkening the eyes that black tears were running down below his eyes, and he had drawn the red powder on his lips too long, making it look like his mouth was torn up to his ears.

“You’ve made yourself look like a demon.”

Go Chan no longer looked like a beauty but a ferocious demon.

At the sight of the head courtesan clicking her tongue, Go Chan gritted his teeth.

How did he end up doing something like this?

‘Seduction my ass.’

It might have been better to risk his life and infiltrate instead.

Mok Gyeong-un was standing in front of the door with a smile on his face.

Seeing him like that, Yeom Ga was momentarily taken aback and at a loss for words.

A smile filled with malice.

The moment their eyes met, Yeom Ga felt a chill down his spine.

'This is.....'

The restrictions were lifted, allowing him to freely use his internal energy, so why was he being overwhelmed by the ominous aura emanating from this guy?

In an instant, Yeom Ga gritted his teeth.

He had intended to step forward, vowing to make the guy a cripple, but he was suddenly taken aback and felt like his momentum was stolen because the guy had appeared out of nowhere.

As his displeasure intensified, Yeom Ga spoke with a terrifyingly distorted face.

"What do you mean by having the same thought?"

"Is there any other reason?"

"What?"

"I thought you looked useful, so I was considering taking you as a teammate."

-Grit!

Yeom Ga ground his teeth and slowly raised his internal energy.

And he spoke to Mok Gyeong-un in an agitated voice.

"You're going to take me as your teammate?"

"Yes. Actually, I've been wanting to kill you since yesterday, but since the restriction of no killing is included in this gateway, I thought it would be better to just exploit you."

Yeom Ga's eyes fiercely darted around.

What nonsense was this impudent bastard spouting?

Saying he wanted to kill him but it's better to exploit him?

-Grit!

His teeth involuntarily ground together.

Now that the internal energy restriction was lifted, how many among the boys did he think could compete with him?

Yeom Ga couldn't hold back any longer.

-Swish!

Yeom Ga, who had already completed the circulation of internal energy throughout his body, reached out his hand toward Mok Gyeong-un's neck.

He intended to grab his neck with his right hand, suppress his acupoints with his left hand in an instant, and drag him into the room.

However,

-Thwack!

"Ugh!"

Before he could do that, Mok Gyeong-un's foot struck Yeom Ga's abdomen.

It happened so fast that he couldn't even see it.

Veins bulged on Yeom Ga's face, and his skin turned red as if it would burn.

"You.....you bastard....."

"Aren't legs longer than arms?"

-Smack!

Yeom Ga tightened his abdomen and kicked his toes toward Mok Gyeong-un's femoral nerve.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un bent his leg and slightly retreated backward.

Not missing that moment, Yeom Ga pushed off with his opposite foot, rotated his body, and tried to strike down on the top of Mok Gyeong-un's head.

'Whirling Kick.'

It was the third stance of the Vermillion Heaven Foot Technique, which the Vermillion Slaughter Cave prided themselves on.

It was a stance that deceived the path by raising the kick upward and then instantly rotated the body to strike downward.

It was difficult to dodge because it was extremely fast and mixed with feints.

However,

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un lightly moved half a step and twisted his body to avoid the Whirling Kick.

'!?'

Yeom Ga's eyes narrowed.

He never thought he would be able to dodge it so easily.

But a stance is meant to be connected, so the next one was ready.

-Whoosh!

Yeom Ga twisted his body and thrust his sword fingers toward Mok Gyeong-un's Adam's apple.

Having reached the Peak Realm, he could form sharpness with his energy, even if not as much as an actual sword.

This is called Piercing Energy.

-Swish!

However,

-Whoosh!

The Piercing Energy was about to pierce through Mok Gyeong-un's Adam's apple.

But before it could even touch,

-Thwack!

Mok Gyeong-un's foot kicked Yeom Ga's leg like lightning.

It was just a simple kick, so Yeom Ga didn't dodge it and instead sent internal energy to his leg to form a repulsive force.

Based on his senses, he was superior to this guy in terms of internal energy.

So if he protected his leg with internal energy, he thought he could sufficiently endure it.....

-Thwack!

“Ugh!”

Yeom Ga’s body, whose leg was kicked, instantly half-rotated to the side and his head slammed into the floor.

For a moment, Yeom Ga was dazed.

What on earth just happened?

He couldn’t understand why he couldn’t dodge this guy’s kick.

It was fast, but the moment they collided, the repulsive force scattered.

‘What.....’

While he was doing that, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“You’re weaker than I thought.”

“You bastard!”

Yeom Ga, whose anger had risen to the top of his head, flicked his arm and rose to his feet while simultaneously aiming his kick technique at Mok Gyeong-un’s neck,

-Swoosh! Smack!

Mok Gyeong-un easily dodged it, then grabbed Yeom Ga’s head and slammed it into the floor.

-Crash!

The floorboard shattered, and Yeom Ga’s head dug into the floor.

It was painful, but Yeom Ga couldn’t bear the humiliation, so he pulled up his internal energy to the fullest to try to raise his head again.

But strangely, the energy focused on his neck and head scattered little by little, and he felt his strength drain instead.

'What, what is this?'

It was difficult to understand what phenomenon this was.

While he was doing that, Mok Gyeong-un grabbed Yeom Ga's hair and pulled it.

-Yank!

As the embedded head was pulled out, sharp wooden splinters pierced various parts of his face, and blood flowed down.

Looking at Yeom Ga's face like this, Mok Gyeong-un smirked as if satisfied.

"Your face looks a bit better now."

"You.....what did you do?"

"What do you mean what did I do?"

"Don't tell me you used something like Scattered Energy Poison?"

"Scattered Energy Poison?"

At Yeom Ga's words, Mok Gyeong-un countered with a puzzled expression.

He prided himself on knowing almost everything about poisons unless it was unusual, but it was the first time he had heard of something called Scattered Energy Poison.

Scattered Energy Poison.

It was a strange poison made through a special manufacturing method that scattered internal energy once the conditions were met.

"Don't play dumb! If it's not Scattered Energy Poison, then why is my internal energy scattering whenever I come into contact with you?"

Whenever he collided with Mok Gyeong-un, the internal energy in that area scattered.

At first, he thought it was just a coincidence, but when it happened twice, he couldn't help but think of Scattered Energy Poison.

"Hmm. Was there such an interesting poison?"

'Is this bastard toying with me now?'

Yeom Ga, whose anger had reached the top of his head, soon gritted his teeth.

Now that it had come to this, he thought he had no choice but to use the secret technique of Vermillion Slaughter Cave.

The secret technique was an assassination move that inevitably killed the opponent, so he was told not to use it unless it was an exceptional case, but he couldn't bear it any longer.

-Thump thump!

Yeom Ga concentrated his internal energy toward his chest.

Then, the strange patterns drawn on his upper body glowed red.

But at that moment,

-Thwack!

“Ugh!”

Mok Gyeong-un pulled Yeom Ga's hair back and smashed his fist down.

But that wasn't the end.

As if he was going to shatter Yeom Ga's face, Mok Gyeong-un kept striking with his fist.

-Thwack!

“Ack. St-stop.....”

-Thwack!

“Sto....p....”

-Thwack! Crack!

The sound of his nose breaking and teeth shattering could be heard, but he didn't stop.

-Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

There was no time to use the secret technique or anything.

With the continuous strikes to his face, Yeom Ga had already lost consciousness.

“Huh!”

At that moment, hearing a sound from behind, Mok Gyeong-un turned his head with his fist raised.

There was a boy who had woken up from the sound of fighting while circulating energy and refining his breath.

'What, what is going on?'

The boy couldn't hide his bewilderment when he saw Yeom Ga with his hair grabbed by Mok Gyeong-un's hand and his face turned into a bloody pulp.

Toward this boy, Mok Gyeong-un waved his blood-stained hand and said with a smile,

"Ah. Don't mind me and just continue what you were doing."

[TL/N: I forgot Go Chan existed for a moment. Ng!]

Chapter 75

"Ah. Don't mind it and just continue what you were doing."

Mok Gyeong-un, who was flicking his blood-stained hand and speaking nonchalantly.

At this sight, the boy didn't know what to do.

He was already happy to be staying in the same room as Yeom Ga from the Vermillion Slaughter Cave even for a short while, but in no time at all, he ended up in that state.

'Wh-what the hell is that guy?'

He fully acknowledged that Mok Gyeong-un had particularly stood out until the second gateway.

But now, the restriction on internal energy was lifted.

Yet, to do that to Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave, whose internal energy restriction was lifted, not just anyone else, was that guy a monster?

Mok Gyeong-un paid no attention to the boy's reaction.

Rather, as if he was done with his business, he grabbed the hair of the unconscious Yeom Ga and dragged him out into the corridor.

"Ah!"

As the boy tried to get up, thinking he should stop this,

“Why? Do you want to follow along too?”

Mok Gyeong-un asked.

At this, the boy faltered and, in his bewilderment, involuntarily shook his head rapidly.

“Th-that’s not it…….”

“You’re wise. Then just stay there.”

-Thud!

As the door closed, the boy slumped onto the bed as if the strength had left his legs.

He had no confidence to follow and help Yeom Ga.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had come out of the room, looked at Yeom Ga’s face and let out a small groan.

“Hmm.”

The face that had been reduced to a pulp was quite prominent.

The moment he saw Yeom Ga’s tattoo glow red, he instinctively felt that the opponent was trying to kill him, so he had made him like this.

-You shouldn’t have been so rough.

“That’s true.”

At the Blue Spirit’s voice, Mok Gyeong-un muttered softly.

He had intended to beat him moderately and make him a teammate, but this went beyond the moderate level.

However, apart from this result, there was one thing that differed from his expectations.

“Was the Peak Realm this weak?”

After the restriction on internal energy was lifted, among the 80 boys, there were 7 who were estimated to have reached the Peak Realm.

One of them was Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave.

The reason Mok Gyeong-un had chosen Yeom Ga as his first target was not only to have him as a teammate but also to test his own strength against him, who was showing explicit hostility toward him.

But he was weaker than expected.

'He was slow.'

Even when he was in the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, even if he could see the movements of those called first-class masters, his body's reaction was slow.

But now, the movements of Yeom Ga, who could be called the Peak Realm, felt slow.

-.....

'That's what I want to say, mortal.'

The Blue Spirit was also inwardly surprised by the unexpected result.

Although he had opened the middle danjeon through the subtle principles of the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques and his murderous energy had reached the Pinnacle of Peak Realm in terms of internal energy, she had predicted that he would be on par or slightly ahead because he lacked enlightenment.

However, Mok Gyeong-un had completely overwhelmed Yeom Ga.

'Is this guy's martial talent far exceeding my expectations?'

After confirming this, the excitement wouldn't subside.

Although it was still far off, if this rate of progress continued, it was definitely worth looking forward to.

Inwardly, she wanted to reveal her thoughts, but if the mortal became arrogant and neglected enlightenment.....

-Don't jump to conclusions. Although he subdued him quite easily, this time, that stupid guy's carelessness played a big part in it.

At the Blue Spirit's words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders.

There was some truth to her words.

It was too early to determine the skill of a master who had reached the Peak Realm based on Yeom Ga alone.

-But it's getting interesting.

"What is?"

-I was curious how the energy of death would work, and now it has been confirmed.

At these words, Mok Gyeong-un recalled what Yeom Ga had said.

[If it's not Scattered Energy Poison, then why is my internal energy scattering whenever I come into contact with you?]

Those words had been quite puzzling.

"Can you tell why that is?"

-It seems to be offset by the energy of death.

"Offset?"

-Yes. You said you experienced the phenomenon of energy dispersing when others injected true energy to occupy your acupoints or check your body's condition, right?

"Yes."

-The energy you possess is completely opposite to the energy of living humans.

"So you're saying that energy was offset because it's completely opposite?"

-That's how it should be seen. The energy of yang and life will invigorate vitality, but your death energy rather brings death.

Perhaps that further caused the energy to disperse.

That had been the assumption so far.

Since this was unprecedented in the history of the martial world, even she couldn't know exactly how this death energy would affect things in the future.

But if this energy could really play the role of scattering the opponent's energy like Scattered Energy Poison, it was as if a tremendous natural enemy had appeared for martial artists.

"It seems quite useful."

To Mok Gyeong-un, who was pleased, the Blue Spirit said,

-Just in case, make sure to control it.

“Control?”

-Yes. If it becomes known that you can scatter the opponent’s energy, you may face the vigilance of everyone before you fully mature.

“Hmm. That could be the case.”

As she said, martial artists might become wary.

If they were to fight Mok Gyeong-un, their internal energy would scatter during the fight, putting them at a significant disadvantage unless they possessed superior strength.

“How do I control it?”

-.....Phew. Your learning order is really a mess.

The Blue Spirit clicked her tongue.

If he had reached the Peak Realm through the normal path, he would have properly grasped the method of transmitting energy.

But despite being at the pinnacle, Mok Gyeong-un couldn’t even perform the external meridians, which transmit energy directly, or the internal meridians and foot meridians that send energy within the body.

‘I’ll have to keep beating it into him whenever there’s a chance.’

Now that the order was already messed up, there was no other way.

While that was happening, they arrived at the lodging room.

There was no one in the room.

While everyone else was using a room for two, Mok Gyeong-un was an exception.

Everyone unanimously refused to share a room with Mok Gyeong-un, but fortunately, there was a vacant room, so he ended up using it alone.

“Ugh.”

Just then, Yeom Ga, who had been unconscious, woke up, letting out a groan.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un looked down at him as if it was fortunate and made eye contact.

-Flinch!

Yeom Ga, who saw Mok Gyeong-un's face as soon as he woke up, momentarily felt nauseous.

That's because while being beaten by Mok Gyeong-un to the point where his face became like this, he had fallen into extreme fear that he might die.

As a result, he couldn't help but react like this.

"Have you come to your senses?"

"You....what the hell.....ugh. Ptooi."

Yeom Ga felt pain and a foreign sensation in his mouth and spat something out.

It was his broken tooth.

His entire mouth was numb and filled with the taste of blood, as if he had bitten his tongue several times.

"Does it hurt a lot?"

"....."

Is that even a question?

Yeom Ga looked at Mok Gyeong-un with an absurd expression.

To him, Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head and said,

"I hit you a bit too hard even though I wasn't going to kill you. But it doesn't seem too bad since you've gotten a more manly face."

'This bastard now.....'

Is he toying with him?

Even slightly moving his facial muscles hurt as if it was being burned by fire.

He had made his face like this to the point where it was difficult to even open his eyes, yet the words he was saying sounded like he was provoking him.

To such Yeom Ga, Mok Gyeong-un said,

"How about it? Do you want to join my team?"

Yeom Ga gritted his teeth and barely squeezed out his voice.

“F.....uck off!”

He would rather die than ever be with this bastard.

Although he knew he was no match, Yeom Ga didn't want to submit to his opponent just because he had lost.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un lightly clapped his hands and said,

-Clap clap!

“An unyielding will that doesn't submit.”

“.....”

“What a pity. I thought you would be quite useful, so I wanted us to be on the same team.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Yeom Ga, who had been inwardly tense, let out a sigh of relief.

He was already worried that this crazy bastard might kill him regardless of the rules if he was in a bad mood.

But it seemed he wasn't that impulsive.

That was fortunate at least.

‘Let's not associate with him.’

He had clearly realized it through this incident.

This bastard was a crazy one who possessed ominousness itself, just as he had first felt.

He knew that nothing good would come out of getting involved or provoking him.

-Tremble tremble!

Yeom Ga tried to get up to leave the room as soon as possible.

But then, Mok Gyeong-un placed his finger on Yeom Ga's forehead and lightly pushed.

It wasn't much force, but Yeom Ga, who was trying to get up, fell back down.

-Thud!

“What.....are you.....doing?”

“Who said you could go?”

“What?”

What is he talking about now?

He had just spoken as if he was giving up on having him on his team, hadn't he?

Then there was no reason for him to stay here.

But what was he doing now?

-Swish!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un took out a wooden puppet from his bosom.

And then, with one hand, he formed a hand seal and chanted an incantation.

“The origin of fate, the cycle of reincarnation, release (解)!”

‘!?’

What did he do just now?

Yeom Ga, who didn't know much about sorcery techniques, couldn't hide his bewilderment at Mok Gyeong-un's strange behavior.

So he tried to draw out the energy from his danjeon,

‘Damn it!’

He hadn't noticed, but at some point, his acupoints had been occupied.

No wonder he couldn't put any strength into his body.

While that was happening, a sudden eerie sensation sent chills down his spine.

-Seep seep!

It felt like something was seeping into his body, and the sensation was so unpleasant and chilling that it was hard to endure.

“Urgh. You....you? What are you doing to me? Ugh.”

-Twitch twitch!

Yeom Ga’s lower back curved like a shrimp.

To him, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“I’ll make good use of that body.”

“Wh-what the hell is that.....ugh!”

-Thump thump!

Black veins were bulging out all over Yeom Ga’s neck and face, and his appearance was nothing short of hideous.

But it didn’t last very long.

Yeom Ga’s body, which had been twisting and turning, his eyes rolling back and convulsing, had somehow returned to normal.

Of course, when he opened his eyes, someone else had taken residence inside.

“How is the body? Demonic Monk.”

“It seems usable.”

The vengeful spirit that had possessed him was none other than Demonic Monk.

Demonic Monk, who had obtained a young body that had reached the Peak Realm, showed a satisfied expression.

“You should have given it to me in a more intact state.”

At those words, Demonic Monk touched his face a few times, and the broken nose bridge straightened, and the face somewhat returned to its original form.

“Oho.”

This seemed quite interesting.

While the broken parts couldn’t be greatly fixed, it had improved considerably.

At Mok Gyeong-un’s reaction, the Blue Spirit said,

-Adjusting the possessed body to a desired state to some extent is not a difficult task. Unlike humans whose souls are bound, we can freely manipulate the bodies we occupy.

“It seems so.”

There seemed to be a way to make use of this as well.

While that was happening,

-Thump thump!

At the sound of approaching footsteps, Mok Gyeong-un looked toward the door.

Someone was approaching the room he was in.

The footsteps were light in weight, but judging from the somewhat unnatural sound, the condition of the approaching person didn't seem too good.

-Knock knock!

At that moment, someone who had arrived in front of the door knocked.

“Come in.”

At this, the door opened, and an unexpected person revealed themselves.

It was none other than Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall.

Although she had received treatment, he thought she would be focusing on restoring her body while circulating energy and refining her breath due to her injuries, so why had she come here?

At that moment, the Green Spirit Gyu Soha's voice reached Mok Gyeong-un's ears.

-Master! Master! Give me that human's body!

It seemed he liked Mo Ha-rang's body.

At this, the Blue Spirit said,

-You brat. You insisted you were a man, so why are you clamoring for a woman's body?

-.....

Gyu Soha shut her mouth.

Not paying attention to their conversation, Mok Gyeong-un said with a light smile,
“What brings you here?”

-Swish!

At that question, Mo Ha-rang’s gaze turned to Demonic Monk, who had possessed the body of Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave behind Mok Gyeong-un.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un nonchalantly said,

“Ah. This person has agreed to join our team.”

At those words, Demonic Monk nodded his head, pretending to be Yeom Ga.

Seeing this, Mo Ha-rang turned her head toward Mok Gyeong-un and said,

“.....What did you do?”

“What do you mean what did I do?”

“That’s not Yeom Ga.”

At those words, one of Mok Gyeong-un’s eyebrows slightly rose.

What confidence did this woman have to say such a thing?

Mok Gyeong-un nonchalantly said,

“What are you talking about?”

“.....That guy with a strong sense of pride wouldn’t easily submit to you. And Yeom Ga is not the type to go under someone else.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un smirked.

Come to think of it, he recalled that she was quick-witted enough to quickly deduce his purpose just by seeing his actions during the flag battle.

And,

‘Didn’t she say their eyes met?’

Mo Ha-rang had said that her eyes had met with the Green Spirit Gyu Soha.

At that time, he didn't pay much attention to it, thinking it could have been a coincidence.

But if that was true, could this woman also have the talent of a diviner?

Mok Gyeong-un, who had become interested, pointed at Yeom Ga with a hand gesture and opened his mouth.

"Then, if this person is not Yeom Ga, what is he?"

".....I don't know."

"If you don't know, why did you say that?"

"I saw it."

"Saw what?"

"That....."

"That?"

"Ghost-like thing that was wearing chains next to you."

She spoke as if she herself was half-believing whether this was true or not.

She wanted to know if what she saw was real.

If it was true, then this man could be said to be manipulating a ghost, a strange being.

"Ghost-like thing, you say....."

"At that time, my mind was hazy, but I saw you conversing with it."

Even as she said these words, she trailed off as if she herself wasn't confident about what she had seen.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un stared at her with a smiling face.

Mo Ha-rang became confused by that sight.

As someone from the Demon Fire Hall, known as one of the four major assassin groups, she had undergone numerous training, which included the skill to read people's psychology through their expressions and eyes.

'.....I can't read him.'

However, Mok Gyeong-un's expression and eyes were impossible to gauge.

She could read simple emotions, but anything beyond that was impossible.

At this, she bit her lip tightly.

'Is it a misunderstanding?'

She was telling him about her speculations and what she had seen, but Mok Gyeong-un showed no particular reaction.

Rather, he only showed eyes that seemed intrigued.

Because of this, she thought that she might be doing something unnecessary.

Therefore, in the end, she said,

"Sorry. I must have been seeing things because of the severe bleeding at that time."

With those words, she tried to turn around and leave the room.

But then,

-Papapak!

"The origin of fate, the cycle of reincarnation, release (解)."

A sound resembling chanting an incantation was heard from behind.

At this, Mo Ha-rang stopped in her tracks and slowly turned her head.

-Shudder!

As she turned her head, goosebumps rose all over her body.

Next to Mok Gyeong-un, she saw a translucent and blurry figure of a girl with half-white hair, wearing chains.

'Ah!'

What she had seen at that time was real.

While she was feeling amazed, the Green Spirit Gyu Soha stretched out her hand, and chains swiftly wrapped around Mo Ha-rang's body.

As her body was restrained by the chains, Mok Gyeong-un spoke with a smile filled with malice.

"The price for seeing what you wanted is quite steep, but are you okay with that?"

Note: And we have caught up!!!! From next chapter on we are ahead the manhwa!!!
LESSS GOOO!!!

Note 2: I have made the editorial decision as the editor of this work myself(lol) that the spirits talking with the mc will be taken in "Italics" while spirits that possess the body and are openly 'talking' with me in a way that it is possible for others to hear will be "normal text"

"Ah. Don't mind it and just continue what you were doing," Mok Gyeongwoon flicked his blood-stained hand and spoke nonchalantly.

At this sight, the boy didn't know what to do. He was already happy to be staying in the same room as Yeom Ga from the Vermillion Slaughter Cave even for a short while, but in no time at all, he ended up in that state.

"Wh-what the hell is that guy?"

He fully acknowledged that Mok Gyeongwoon had particularly stood out until the second gateway. But now, the restriction on internal energy was lifted.

Yet, to do that to Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave, whose internal energy restriction was lifted, not just anyone else, was that guy a monster?

Mok Gyeongwoon paid no attention to the boy's reaction. Rather, as if he was done with his business, he grabbed the hair of the unconscious Yeom Ga and dragged him out into the corridor.

"Ah!" As the boy tried to get up, thinking he should stop this.

"Why? Do you want to follow along too?" Mok Gyeongwoon asked.

At this, the boy faltered and, in his bewilderment, involuntarily shook his head rapidly, "Th-that's not it..."

"You're wise. Then just stay there."

Thud

As the door closed, the boy slumped onto the bed as if the strength had left his legs. He had no confidence to follow and help Yeom Ga.

Mok Gyeongwoon, who had come out of the room, looked at Yeom Ga's face and let out a small groan, "Hmm..."

The face that had been reduced to a pulp was quite prominent. The moment he saw Yeom Ga's tattoo glow red, he instinctively felt that the opponent was trying to kill him, so he had made him like this.

"You shouldn't have been so rough."

"That's true," at the Blue Spirit's voice, Mok Gyeongwoon muttered softly.

He had intended to beat him moderately and make him a teammate, but this went beyond the moderate level. However, apart from this result, there was one thing that differed from his expectations.

"Was the Peak Realm this weak?"

After the restriction on internal energy was lifted, among the 80 boys, there were 7 who were estimated to have reached the Peak Realm. One of them was Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave.

The reason Mok Gyeongwoon had chosen Yeom Ga as his first target was not only to have him as a teammate but also to test his own strength against him, who was showing explicit hostility toward him.

But he was weaker than expected.

'He was slow!'

Even when he was in the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, even if he could see the movements of those called first-class masters, his body's reaction was slow. But now, the movements of Yeom Ga, who could be called the Peak Realm, felt slow.

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"That's what I want to say, mortal. The Blue Spirit was also inwardly surprised by the unexpected result.

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After confirming this, the excitement wouldn't subside. Although it was still far off, if this rate of progress continued, it was definitely worth looking forward to. Inwardly, she wanted to reveal her thoughts, but if the mortal became arrogant and neglected enlightenment...

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At the Blue Spirit's words, Mok Gyeongwoon shrugged his shoulders. There was some truth to her words. It was too early to determine the skill of a master who

had reached the Peak Realm based on Yeom Ga alone.

"But it's getting interesting."

"What is?"

"I was curious how the energy of death would work, and now it has been confirmed."

At these words, Mok Gyeongwoon recalled what Yeom Ga had said, "If it's not Scattered Energy Poison, then why is my internal energy scattering whenever I come into contact with you?"

Those words had been quite puzzling.

"Can you tell why that is?"

"It seems to be offset by the energy of death."

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"Yes. You said you experienced the phenomenon of energy dispersing when others injected true energy to occupy your acupoints or check your body's condition, right?"

"Yes."

"The energy you possess is completely opposite to the energy of living humans."

"So, you're saying that energy was offset because it's completely opposite?" "That's how it should be seen. The energy of yang and life will invigorate vitality, but

your death energy rather brings death."

Perhaps that further caused the energy to disperse. That had been the assumption so far. Since this was unprecedented in the history of the martial world, even she couldn't know exactly how this death energy would affect things

in the future.

But if this energy could really play the role of scattering the opponent's energy like Scattered Energy Poison, it was as if a tremendous natural enemy had

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To Mok Gyeongwoon, who was pleased, the Blue Spirit said, "Just in case, make sure to control it."

"Control?"

"Yes. If it becomes known that you can scatter the opponent's energy, you may face the vigilance of everyone before you fully mature."

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There was no one in the room.

While everyone else was using a room for two, Mok Gyeongwoon was an

exception. Everyone unanimously refused to share a room with Mok Gyeongwoon, but fortunately, there was a vacant room, so he ended up using it

alone.

"Ugh," just then, Yeom Ga, who had been unconscious, woke up, letting out a groan.

At this, Mok Gyeongwoon looked down at him if it was fortunate and made eye contact.

Flinch

Yeom Ga, who saw Mok Gyeongwoon's face as soon as he woke up, momentarily felt nauseous. That's because while being beaten by Mok Gyeongwoon to the point where his face became like this, he had fallen into extreme fear that he

might die.

As a result, he couldn't help but react like this.

"Have you come to your senses?"

"You... what the hell... ugh. Ptooi," Yeom Ga felt pain and a foreign sensation in his mouth and spat something out.

It was his broken tooth. His entire mouth was numb and filled with the taste of blood, as if he had bitten his tongue several times.

"Does it hurt a lot?"

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Is that even a question? Yeom Ga looked at Mok Gyeongwoon with an absurd expression.

To him, Mok Gyeongwoon scratched his head and said, "I hit you a bit too hard even though I wasn't going to kill you. But it doesn't seem too bad since you've gotten a more manly face."

"This bastard now..!"

Is he toying with him? Even slightly moving his facial muscles hurt as if it was being burned by fire. He had made his face like this to the point where it was difficult to even open his eyes, yet the words he was saying sounded like he was provoking him.

To such Yeom Ga, Mok Gyeongwoon said, "How about it? Do you want to join my team?" Yeom Ga gritted his teeth and barely squeezed out his voice, "E... uck off!" He would rather die than ever be with this bastard. Although he knew he was no match, Yeom Ga didn't want to submit to his opponent just because he had lost.

Clap *Clap*

At this, Mok Gyeongwoon lightly clapped his hands and said, "An unyielding will that doesn't submit."

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"What a pity. I thought you would be quite useful, so I wanted us to be on the same team."

At Mok Gyeongwoon's words, Yeom Ga, who had been inwardly tense, let out a sigh of relief. He was already worried that this crazy bastard might kill him regardless of the rules if he was in a bad mood.

But it seemed he wasn't that impulsive. That was fortunate at least.

'Let's not associate with him.'

He had clearly realized it through this incident. This bastard was a crazy one who possessed ominousness itself, just as he had first felt. He knew that nothing good would come out of getting involved or provoking him.

Tremble *Tremble*

Yeom Ga tried to get up to leave the room as soon as possible. But then, Mok

Gyeongwoon placed his finger on Yeom Ga's forehead and lightly pushed. It wasn't much force, but Yeom Ga, who was trying to get up, fell back down.

Thud "What... are you... doing?"

"Who said you could go?" "What?"

What is he talking about now? He had just spoken as if he was giving up on having him on his team, hadn't he? Then there was no reason for him to stay here.

But what was he doing now?

Swish

At that moment, Mok Gyeongwoon took out a wooden puppet from his bosom.

And then, with one hand, he formed a hand seal and chanted an incantation.

"The origin of fate, the cycle of reincarnation, release(!)"

!!?

What did he do just now?

Yeom Ga, who didn't know much about sorcery techniques, couldn't hide his bewilderment at Mok Gyeongwoon's strange behaviour. So, he tried to draw out the energy from his Danjeon,

'Damn it!'"

He hadn't noticed, but at some point, his acupoints had been occupied. No wonder he couldn't put any strength into his body. While that was happening, a sudden eerie sensation sent chills down his spine.

Seep

Seep

It felt like something was seeping into his body, and the sensation was so unpleasant and chilling that it was hard to endure.

"Urgh. You... you? What are you doing to me? Ugh."

Twitch

Twitch

Yeom Ga's lower back curved like a shrimp.

To him, Mok Gyeongwoon smiled and said, "I'll make good use of that body."

"Wh-what the hell is that.....ugh!"

Thump

Thump

Black veins were bulging out all over Yeom Ga's neck and face, and his appearance was nothing short of hideous. But it didn't last very long.

Yeom Ga's body, which had been twisting and turning, his eyes rolling back and convulsing, had somehow returned to normal. Of course, when he opened his eyes, someone else had taken residence inside.

"How is the body? Demon Monk."

"It seems usable," the vengeful spirit that had possessed him was none other than Demon Monk.

Demon Monk, who had obtained a young body that had reached the Peak Realm, showed a satisfied expression. "You should have given it to me in a more intact state."

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to a desired state to some extent is not a difficult task. Unlike humans whose souls are bound, we can freely manipulate the bodies we occupy."

"It seems so."

There seemed to be a way to make use of this as well.

While that was happening,

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Thump

At the sound of approaching footsteps, Mok Gyeongwoon looked toward the door.

Someone was approaching the room he was in. The footsteps were light in weight, but judging from the somewhat unnatural sound, the condition of the

approaching person didn't seem too good.

Knock

Knock

At that moment, someone who had arrived in front of the door knocked.

"Come in."

At this, the door opened, and an unexpected person revealed themselves. It was

none other than Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall. Although she had received treatment, he thought she would be focusing on restoring her body while circulating energy and refining her breath due to her injuries, so why had she come here?

At that moment, the Green Spirit Gyu Soha's voice reached Mok Gyeongwoon's ears, "Master! Master! Give me that human's body!"

It seemed he liked Mo Ha-rang's body.

At this, the Blue Spirit said, "You brat. You insisted you were a man, so why are you clamouring for a woman's body?"

".." Gyu Soha shut her mouth.

Not paying attention to their conversation, Mok Gyeongwoon said with a light smile, "What brings you here?"

Swish

At that question, Mo Ha-rang's gaze turned to Demon Monk, who had possessed the body of Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave behind Mok Gyeongwoon.

At this, Mok Gyeongwoon nonchalantly said, "Ah. This person has agreed to join our team."

At those words, Demon Monk nodded his head, pretending to be Yeom Ga.

Seeing this, Mo Ha-rang turned her head toward Mok Gyeongwoon and said, "...

What did you do?"

"What do you mean what did I do?"

"That's not Yeom Ga."

At those words, one of Mok Gyeongwoon's eyebrows slightly rose. What

confidence did this woman have to say such a thing? Mok Gyeongwoon nonchalantly said, "What are you talking about?"

"...That guy with a strong sense of pride wouldn't easily submit to you. And Yeom Ga is not the type to go under someone else."

At her words, Mok Gyeongwoon smirked. Come to think of it, he recalled that she was quick-witted enough to quickly deduce his purpose just by seeing his actions during the flag battle.

'Didn't she say their eyes met?'

COMMENT

Mo Ha-rang had said that her eyes had met with the Green Spirit Gyu Soha. At that time, he didn't pay much attention to it, thinking it could have been a coincidence. But if that was true, could this woman also have the talent of a Shaman? Mok Gyeongwoon, who had become interested, pointed at Yeom Ga with a hand gesture and opened his mouth, "Then, if this person is not Yeom Ga, what is he?" "...I don't know."

"If you don't know, why did you say that?"

"I saw it."

"Saw what?"

"That..."

"That?"

"Ghost-like thing that was wearing chains next to you." She spoke as if she herself was half-believing whether this was true or not. She

wanted to know if what she saw was real. If it was true, then this man could be said to be manipulating a ghost, a strange being. "Ghost-like thing, you say..."

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...'I can't read him.'

However, Mok Gyeongwoon's expression and eyes were impossible to gauge. She could read simple emotions, but anything beyond that was impossible. At this, she bit her lip tightly.

'Is it a

misunderstanding?"

She was telling him about her speculations and what she had seen, but Mok Gyeongwoon showed no particular reaction. Rather, he only showed eyes that seemed intrigued. Because of this, she thought that she might be doing something unnecessary.

Therefore, in the end, she said, "Sorry. I must have been seeing things because of the severe bleeding at that time."

With those words, she tried to turn around and leave the room.

Papapak

"The origin of fate, the cycle of reincarnation, release (#)." A sound resembling chanting an incantation was heard from behind. At this, Mo

Ha-rang stopped in her tracks and slowly turned her head.

Shudder

As she turned her head, goosebumps rose all over her body. Next to Mok Gyeongwoon, she saw a translucent and blurry figure of a girl with half-white hair, wearing chains.

'Ah!'

What she had seen at that time was real. While she was feeling amazed, the Green Spirit Gyu Soha stretched out her hand, and chains swiftly wrapped around Mo Ha-rang's body.

As her body was restrained by the chains, Mok Gyeongwoon spoke with a smile filled with malice, "The price for seeing what you wanted is quite steep, but are you okay with that?"

Chapter 77

-Tighten!

The eyes of Mo Ha-rang of the Demon Fire Hall trembled.

The faint form of chains enveloping her body looked like an illusion, but when she tried to move, they tightened further and restrained her.

She tried to draw up her internal energy, but Mok Gyeong-un approached her and said,

“The price for seeing what you wanted is quite steep, but are you okay with that?”

A smiling face.

But that smile was truly filled with malice.

There was no killing intent, so how could he smile like that?

In an instant, she recalled a story she had heard before.

[Among thousands and tens of thousands, there are those born with a murderous nature.]

[What is that?]

[It's a disposition that finds joy, pleasure, and the reason for existence in death and destruction.]

[.....Isn't that dangerous?]

[It is dangerous. But if they can be properly tamed, they can be said to be the best material for assassins.]

[The best?]

[Yes. Those with a murderous nature have no hesitation in killing someone. That's why they don't get swayed emotionally.]

[So that can become a talent.]

That was still when the Demon Fire Hall was called one of the four major assassin groups.

She thought that perhaps Mok Gyeong-un might be the murderous nature her father had spoken of back then.

If that was the case, she might have touched on something dangerous.

But that didn't matter.

Mo Ha-rang looked straight into Mok Gyeong-un's eyes and said,

“I will pay any price.”

“Any price?”

“If it means uncovering a secret, I’m prepared for it.”

“Prepared.....but there’s only one life, so can there be any price?”

Mok Gyeong-un still had a smiling face.

But the words coming out were extremely brutal.

-Master. Give me this human’s body.

The Green Spirit, Gyu Soha, said with a greedy gaze.

Hearing this voice, Mo Ha-rang flinched in surprise and looked at Gyu Soha.

At this, Gyu Soha tilted her head and muttered,

-Human. You can hear my voice too?

-Oho.

At those words, the Blue Spirit also showed interest.

That’s because although she deliberately revealed her appearance, she didn’t make her voice audible.

But being able to hear this meant,

-It seems the Spiritual Eye has opened.

“Spiritual Eye?”

-Yes. Unlike you, who has opened the Demon Eye to see the inner essence, it seems you have gained the eye to see souls at the crossroads of life and death.

The Blue Spirit called it the Spiritual Eye.

Perhaps unable to hear her voice, Mo Ha-rang couldn’t take her eyes off Gyu Soha.

Mo Ha-rang cautiously parted her lips.

“Are you.....really a ghost?”

-What? Do I look like a mere human to you?

Gyu Soha raised the corners of his mouth.

The fear of living humans was no different from nourishment for vengeful spirits.

However, Mo Ha-rang showed a different emotion than fear.

“Ahhh.”

It seemed elevated somehow.

It was close to the emotion felt when seeing something one had been wanting to find.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un said to her,

“You’re showing an interesting reaction. Is seeing the dead your wish or something?”

“No. No. That’s not it.”

Mo Ha-rang’s voice trembled.

She turned her head to look at Mok Gyeong-un, and then, as if making a resolution, she spoke with force in her neck.

“I will pay any price you want. Even if it means my life.”

“.....”

At her words, the interest in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes faded away.

Having seen countless deaths, he had come to be able to distinguish to some extent between those who were truly prepared for death and those who weren’t, and she was closer to the former.

She was prepared to stake her life if necessary.

To such Mok Gyeong-un, she continued,

“But help me in return.”

“.....Hmm. Help you, you say.”

Mok Gyeong-un muttered as if annoyed.

And then, bringing his finger to her throat, he said,

“Why should I do that? It’s just a bother.”

-Press!

His finger pressed into where her Adam's apple was.

At this, she spoke with unwavering eyes.

"Body.....That ghost said it wants a body, right? If you grant my request, I'll give you this body as much as you want."

"It seems like you're trying to make a deal, but even now, I can take your body without having to do that."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Mo Ha-rang's eyes sharpened.

At that moment, a sharp energy spread from her body.

-Clang! Clang!

Then, the chains created by Gyu Soha's spiritual power were cut off.

At some point, sharp daggers were held in both of Mo Ha-rang's hands.

The daggers were imbued with flickering killing energy, which was honed much sharper than that of Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave.

-Step back.

The Blue Spirit warned.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un stepped back about half a step and slightly shook his head to the side.

At that moment, several trajectories drew lines in front of his eyes and narrowly grazed past Mok Gyeong-un.

If he had been a little late, a part of his body, including his chin, would have been cut off.

No, it was slightly cut.

-Trickle!

A drop of blood flowed down where the trajectory had passed.

'Thread?'

It was much thinner than thread but had elasticity.

This thread-like thing tied behind the hilt of the dagger embedded in the floor surrounded the area to prevent movement.

Mo Ha-rang spoke in a chilling voice.

“Don’t underestimate me too much.”

Killing intent was emanating from her voice.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un smirked and said,

“You had a hidden trick up your sleeve.”

While that was happening, the Blue Spirit’s voice was heard.

-I thought I had seen that dagger technique somewhere before, but she has inherited the lineage of the Killing King.

“The lineage of the Killing King?”

As soon as Mok Gyeong-un’s question ended, a glint appeared in Mo Ha-rang’s eyes.

She spoke in a tone of incomprehension.

“What are you?”

Mo Ha-rang was genuinely amazed.

She never thought the words “lineage of the Killing King” would come out of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth.

-It would be stranger not to think of the Killing King after seeing the Linked Kill and the Flash Shadow Flying Dagger Technique.

Mok Gyeong-un directly repeated those words of the Blue Spirit.

“It would be stranger not to think of the Killing King after seeing the Linked Kill and the Flash Shadow Flying Dagger Technique.”

‘!?’

At those words, Mo Ha-rang’s eyes widened.

Many people knew about the Linked Kill, so there were few who didn’t know about it.

However, the Flash Shadow Flying Dagger Technique was different.

This was a secret technique that only the sect leader of the Demon Fire Hall could learn.

It was literally a secret technique, and since it was not used unless the opponent had to be killed or was too difficult to handle, it was hardly known.

And,

'The Killing King is the predecessor of our sect. It's a story passed down only orally within our sect, known only to the sect leader and the successors, so how does he know that?'

It was in that moment of her confusion.

Mok Gyeong-un strongly stomped on the floor.

Then, the floorboard was pressed down, and the part where the dagger was embedded rose upward.

At the same time, the thin threads tightly surrounding the area loosened.

-Swish!

In this instant, Mok Gyeong-un flew toward her in one breath and grabbed her neck.

Of course, Mo Ha-rang didn't just stand still either.

The moment Mok Gyeong-un charged, she immediately came to her senses and stabbed the dagger toward Mok Gyeong-un's heart, as she had practiced thousands and tens of thousands of times.

No, to be precise, only the tip of the dagger slightly penetrated.

'Fast.'

-Grab!

If Mok Gyeong-un hadn't grabbed her wrist with his left hand, it would have penetrated even deeper.

That's how fast her movements were, making it difficult to respond even when seen with the eyes.

It was clear that Mo Ha-rang was much stronger than Yeom Ga of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave.

-Crack!

-Tremble!

As Mok Gyeong-un applied more strength to his hand, she frowned at the pain that felt like her wrist would break.

Even in the midst of that, seeing her not let out a single moan, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

“You’re strong. When did you put this around my neck?”

-Slide!

A silver thread was somehow wrapped around Mok Gyeong-un’s neck.

The dagger that had been embedded in the floor and bounced upward was hanging from the ceiling, and if Mo Ha-rang pulled her hand, his neck would have been tightened.

“Why aren’t you pulling it?”

“You’re not...squeezing...my neck...either.”

Just as she said, Mok Gyeong-un was gripping Mo Ha-rang’s neck with his right hand but wasn’t applying strength.

That’s why she hadn’t pulled the thread either.

Honestly speaking, if she pulled this, Mok Gyeong-un’s neck would be cut off, so she had refrained from doing so.

Beyond this point, it was truly the territory of killing each other.

‘If I kill him, it’s a violation of the restriction in this gateway.’

And she still had something she wanted from Mok Gyeong-un.

That’s why she couldn’t kill him....

-Swish!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un released his hand from the neck he was holding and lightly touched her thread with his finger.

In that instant, the taut thread soon became limp.

'!?'

Mo Ha-rang's eyes widened.

She was definitely sending true energy through the thread, but as if it had dispersed, the thread no longer obeyed her.

'What is this?'

She couldn't understand.

While she was doing that, Mok Gyeong-un said,

"You seem quite useful."

"What?"

"I was going to give you to Soha as a body, but it doesn't seem bad to just use you myself."

"What are you talking about now....."

"You said you would pay any price for what you want, right?"

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Mo Ha-rang momentarily hesitated.

She had definitely agreed to that, but perhaps because of Mok Gyeong-un's suddenly changed attitude, she found herself hesitating for a moment.

But then, Mok Gyeong-un suddenly grabbed her collar and pulled her.

"Ah!"

-Crack!

And then, he forcibly moved her wrist that had stabbed the dagger and twisted it in the direction he was in.

She wanted to draw up her energy to block this, but the true energy she sent to her wrist kept dispersing, draining her strength, and she couldn't do anything about it.

-Crack!

At some point, the dagger she was holding was pointed toward her face.

Was he really trying to kill her?

While that was happening, something fell and wet her lips.

It was none other than a drop of blood.

-Drip drip!

Mok Gyeong-un's blood, which had been on the tip of the blade, was about to fall into her mouth.

When she tried to close her mouth, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Open it.”

‘!?’

What was he talking about?

She couldn't understand why he was doing this.

However, judging that he wasn't trying to kill her, she soon opened her mouth without questioning it.

Then, the drop of blood that had been on the tip of the dagger fell into her mouth.

“Swallow it.”

She did as she was told.

The moment she swallowed the drop of blood that had entered her mouth,

“Haah!”

Her chest became extremely hot.

A burning pain was engulfing her body, and it was so agonizing that she forcibly shook off the hand Mok Gyeong-un was holding and immediately tried to sit cross-legged.

‘Poison.....it's poison.’

A pain that twisted her internal organs.

She was convinced that this was poison.

As a descendant of the Demon Fire Hall, known as one of the four major assassin groups, she was somewhat well-versed in poisons and had even ingested some deadly poisons to build up resistance to them.

However, Mok Gyeong-un's blood was incomparable to that.

'How can blood have such poison.....'

The poison was too strong, as if numerous poisons had been concentrated.

The word "deadly poison" was insufficient.

'If I don't circulate energy quickly.....'

-Smack!

As she tried to sit cross-legged, Mok Gyeong-un kicked her stomach with his foot.

"Ugh!"

The pain of her internal organs twisting was already agonizing, and being kicked in the abdomen made her so distressed that she felt like killing Mok Gyeong-un right away.

"You!"

-Smack!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un pressed down on her shoulder near the collarbone with his foot and said,

"You said you would pay any price. Then, from this moment on, I'd like you to become a faithful dog."

"You don't have to go this far....."

"Ah ah ah. No, that won't do. I never trust people."

Mo Ha-rang's eyes trembled.

She felt like she had made a huge mistake.

This person was more twisted than she had imagined.

It couldn't be defined as a murderous nature or whatever, it was truly evil itself.

The boys who had given up even circulating energy and resting in order to gather teammates and were going around the rooms.

They couldn't hide their surprise when they saw a group walking down the corridor.

'Oh?'

'.....Is this for real?'

'What? No way.'

They doubted their own eyes.

The two, a man and a woman, followed behind Mok Gyeong-un on both sides.

They were the descendants of the Vermillion Slaughter Cave and Demon Fire Hall, who were called the most promising in this gateway trial of Corpse Blood Valley.

Now that the restriction on internal energy was lifted, everyone had expected that each and every one of them would naturally become the team leader and lead others.

But what was this?

Could it be that those two team leader-level individuals had joined under that guy?

Chapter 78

-Swoosh!

A faint haze rose along with sweat from the muscles of Mok Yu-cheon's bare upper body.

As energy circulated through his exhausted muscles and internal organs from the long-overdue energy circulation and breath refinement, the fatigue gradually subsided.

Now that the restriction was lifted, he realized even more the preciousness of internal energy.

'I think I'll live.'

The difference between circulating energy and not was stark.

Simply sleeping could alleviate the tiredness, but by circulating energy, the accumulated fatigue throughout the body was also released.

-Sting! Sting!

As he circulated energy, his fingers started to ache.

After doing a few small revolutions, he opened his eyes and saw his messed up hands.

Broken nails and bruises covered his fingers, back of the hands, and palms, with not a single spot unscathed.

‘.....’

Seeing this, Mok Yu-cheon had a strange thought.

Although he wasn’t very old, had he ever worked this hard to fiercely survive since he was born?

No. It was the first time.

It was his first real battle and his first time killing someone.

Not long ago, all he did was train alone in the martial arts hall, sweating.

But now, it felt like he had fallen into an abyss in an instant.

-Clench!

Mok Yu-cheon clenched his hands full of wounds.

No matter what, he would somehow survive this place.

The only one he could trust was himself.

‘Mok Gyeong-un.....’

He decided not to have any more false hopes about that guy.

He didn’t know what made that guy change so much, but that guy didn’t care about him, and he had no reason to either.

The fact that they were half-brothers was meaningless.

‘Survival of the fittest.’

This was such a place.

He still couldn’t understand why he, who had entered as a hostage, had to struggle and risk his life like this against them, but to survive, he had to become stronger.

‘The world is vast.’

Once the energy point was unblocked, he believed there would be no one among the boys who could defeat him.

However, he couldn't hide his inner surprise at the energy stimulating his senses here and there.

He thought that among his peers, besides himself, only the later-generation disciples from major sects would have reached the Peak Realm.

But that was a misconception.

-Tap!

Mok Yu-cheon got up from his seat.

Then, glancing at Ma-sang who was circulating energy on the bed, he quietly assumed the basic stance of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

The human psyche was truly peculiar.

Even in this extreme situation where one could die at any moment, a strong competitive spirit arose instead.

Seeing this, he thought that he might be a martial artist to the bone.

'I need to become stronger.'

To do that, training was the only answer.

Anyway, even if he gathered internal energy through energy circulation and breath refinement for a day or two, it wouldn't have a significant impact.

It was enough to just recover his body.

The rest of the time, it was important to gain insight through training.

-Pak!

Mok Yu-cheon slowly unfolded the basic stances of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

This slow-paced martial arts practice, less than half the original speed, was one of the training methods called Flying Consecutive Kick Technique, aimed at improving the precision of the stances.

It was to train as much as possible without disrupting Ma-sang's energy circulation, as they were sharing the same room.

-Papak!

Even with slow movements, sounds spread from where the fists landed.

Mok Yu-cheon had trained in the Flying Consecutive Kick Technique method for a long time, so he could fully exert strength even when slowly unfolding the stances.

It was at that moment when he was concentrating on training.

“I thought it might be, but it really was the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.”

‘!?’

Startled by this voice, Mok Yu-cheon stopped and turned his head.

The owner of the voice was Ma-sang.

The boy with whom he had shared life and death from the beginning to the end of the second gateway.

Although they clashed briefly at the end, they understood each other’s feelings, so they decided not to blame each other and share a room.

Although he was from the evil faction, he was a guy with loyalty and seemed decent, so he was a friend Mok Yu-cheon felt somewhat close to.

However,

“.....How do you know that?”

“How I know isn’t important. Why is someone from the righteous faction in Corpse Blood Valley?”

“Th-that’s.....”

Mok Yu-cheon was momentarily at a loss for words.

No matter the reason, him being here was no different from a disgrace as a member of the righteous faction.

That’s why he couldn’t speak.

To him, Ma-sang said,

“Did the Yeon Mok Sword Manor betray the righteous faction?”

“What are you talking about!”

In an instant, Mok Yu-cheon raised his voice as if he was upset.

He might not know other things, but he had not yet lost his pride as a member of the righteous faction.

It was because the Manor Master, his father, had also chosen to seal the sect not to surrender but to save everyone.

“The Yeon Mok Sword Manor is.....the Yeon Mok Sword Manor is forever a part of the righteous faction.”

At Mok Yu-cheon’s words, Ma-sang scoffed and said as if it was ridiculous.

“Don’t say such nonsense. A guy who has come all the way to Corpse Blood Valley says he hasn’t betrayed the righteous faction? Aren’t you here to become a direct disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society’s executives in the end?”

“What?”

At Ma-sang’s words, Mok Yu-cheon’s eyes trembled.

What is this about?

Becoming a direct disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society’s executives?

He couldn’t understand.

At Mok Yu-cheon’s reaction of incomprehension, Ma-sang’s eyes narrowed.

“What? Don’t tell me you didn’t know?”

At that question, Mok Yu-cheon had a perplexed expression for a while before opening his mouth.

“I don’t know. I was just dragged here without any notice and didn’t know anything. Really.”

“You didn’t know anything?”

“.....Yeah.”

At these words, Ma-sang spoke with a suspicious look.

“That’s absurd. To enter Corpse Blood Valley without knowing anything.”

“I told you it’s true.”

“Would you believe it if you were me?”

“What the hell is this place? Why is everyone risking their lives and causing this chaos?”

He couldn’t understand it from the beginning.

Those warriors in red belts who didn’t care even as so many of them died, and the boys who risked their lives to carry out the gateways they ordered.

Not a single thing was within the realm of understanding.

“Why are we risking our lives, you ask? Corpse Blood Valley is the shortest path to becoming a direct disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society’s executives. Why do you think everyone is risking their lives? If you overcome that risk, you get a chance to be chosen by the eight executives of the Heaven and Earth Society and become their direct disciple. Even if you don’t become one, the more gateways you pass, the more benefits you get to become a team leader or division leader. Do you think opportunities like this come easily?”

‘The Heaven and Earth Society.....a chance to become a direct disciple of the eight executives?’

Mok Yu-cheon’s eyes trembled severely.

Now he seemed to understand why they were risking their lives to such an extent to carry out the gateways.

Becoming a disciple of the eight executives, known as the top masters of the Heaven and Earth Society that dominated the martial arts world, was an opportunity to rise to a status that could control the martial arts world in the future.

For them, it was worth risking their lives.

But he was different.

‘Damn it.’

Mok Yu-cheon bit his lip tightly.

Then, all this time, his struggling to survive meant he had been striving to become a direct disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society, which could be called the archenemy of the righteous faction.

‘What the hell am I doing?’

If that really happened.....

'Ah.....'

The Yeon Mok Sword Manor would not be sending hostages but sending their children to the Heaven and Earth Society's talent nurturing center.

Doing something to survive was poisonous to the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

Mok Yu-cheon was genuinely confused.

What should he do?

Was it a trap that the Heaven and Earth Society had sent him here?

It was at that moment when he was dumbfounded.

"You.....it seems you really didn't come here of your own will."

Ma-sang's tone suddenly became quite serious, unlike before.

At this, Mok Yu-cheon couldn't hide his bewilderment.

"How did you come here?"

At that question, Mok Yu-cheon hesitated.

He had learned that his entry into Corpse Blood Valley was no different from a trap, and he thought it was dangerous to say anything to people under the Heaven and Earth Society, who were practically enemies.

While he was doing that, Ma-sang poked at the wound again.

"It is betrayal, isn't it?"

At those words, Mok Yu-cheon's face flushed with anger.

If it weren't for this situation, he would have wanted to slap Ma-sang's face, but he barely held back.

Then, he eventually revealed the truth.

"It's not betrayal. I was just taken as a hostage."

"Hostage?"

“Yeah.”

“Nonsense. Why would they send a hostage to Corpse Blood Valley?”

“I don’t know either! I thought they would just keep me nicely. Like you said, I didn’t know Corpse Blood Valley was a place like this.”

“You didn’t know?”

“If I knew, I wouldn’t have struggled like this....I would have rather tried to escape somehow.”

“Escape? Can you say that to me?”

“.....I don’t know. Right now, I don’t even know what I should do. The more I put in effort to survive here, the more likely it is that the Yeon Mok Sword Manor will be branded as having betrayed the righteous faction. If that’s the case.....”

For the honor and family as a member of the righteous faction, committing suicide might be the right thing to do.

Escaping from here was virtually impossible anyway.

He clearly realized that as soon as the energy point was unblocked.

‘Monster.’

The man wearing the demon mask was a master beyond imagination.

He couldn’t do anything at his level.

‘Suicide.....’

If this was the only answer, it was frightening.

He had only lived for sixteen years, and it was a scary thing to end his life for the sake of his family.

As he became aware of death, Mok Yu-cheon involuntarily shivered.

Ma-sang, who had been staring intently at him like that, suddenly got up from the bed, closed the window, checked outside the door, then closed the door and locked it.

Then, he approached Mok Yu-cheon and spoke in a whisper with a serious face.

“You really didn’t betray, did you?”

“.....I told you I didn't.”

“Shh. Keep your voice down.”

At his words, Mok Yu-cheon furrowed his brows.

Why was he suddenly doing this?

While he was puzzled, Ma-sang spoke again in a whisper.

“I'm sorry for not believing you from the beginning. Even though the Yeon Mok Sword Manor has been a renowned righteous faction for a long time, I couldn't help but consider the possibility.”

“What are you talking about now.....”

“Listen quietly. I'm a spy sent by the Righteous Alliance.”

'!?’

At his words, Mok Yu-cheon's eyes widened.

A spy sent by the Righteous Alliance?

While he was amazed, Ma-sang continued,

“Have you heard of Silent Strides?”

“Ah, Silent Strides?”

He had heard of it before.

The Righteous Alliance boasted four main organizations.

One of them was the Silent Strides.

It was a secret organization known to exist as the dagger of the Righteous Alliance in the shadows and darkness, not in visible places.

As a secret organization, it was literally an organization that should not be known.

However, due to a certain incident, the existence of this Silent Strides was revealed.

Although the name of the organization became known, the Righteous Alliance strongly denied the existence of this organization, so opinions were divided among people about its existence.

But Ma-sang was saying he was from that Silent Strides?

“The Silent Strides might not be a real organization.....”

“It’s real. The Righteous Alliance, which pursues righteousness, denied it only because they couldn’t acknowledge the existence of an organization in charge of intelligence and assassinations.”

“.....Ha.”

So the Silent Strides really existed.

It was truly surprising.

“Really.....to think the Silent Strides existed.....but is it okay to reveal your identity like this.....?”

Mok Yu-cheon spoke to him in a respectful manner.

Then, Ma-sang shook his head and replied,

“Just speak normally.”

“Still.....”

“It will only raise suspicion.”

“.....I understand. But is it okay to reveal your identity to me?”

“Actually, in most cases, we’re not allowed to reveal our identities even to people from the same righteous faction.”

“But why?”

“The first reason is to identify allies and enemies.”

“Identify?”

“Since the gateways of Corpse Blood Valley often require us to kill each other and everyone around us is an enemy, we need to make you aware that we are allies.”

“Ah.....”

Is that why he revealed his identity?

But revealing it just for that seemed a bit too casual for a secret organization.

Come to think of it, didn't he say 'we' just now?

Does that mean there are more people from Silent Strides besides Ma-sang?

While Mok Yu-cheon was puzzled, Ma-sang said,

"The second reason is that, unlike our objective, too many of our infiltrated personnel have died."

"Infiltrated personnel?"

As expected, it seemed there were more people from Silent Strides besides Ma-sang.

"Then there are more besides you?"

"That's right. Originally, about fifty people had infiltrated."

"Fifty people?"

Mok Yu-cheon's eyes widened.

They infiltrated with that many people without getting caught by the Heaven and Earth Society?

While he was thinking that, Ma-sang said,

"But 70% of them were filtered out by the Heaven and Earth Society's information network and were blocked or killed in advance."

"Ah....."

"The number of people who successfully entered Corpse Blood Valley is fifteen."

As a result, it meant that among the approximately 800 challengers of Corpse Blood Valley, 15 were spies from the Righteous Alliance's Silent Strides.

Mok Yu-cheon, who didn't know the nature of an intelligence organization, couldn't judge whether this was a large or small number.

However, judging from Ma-sang's tone, it sounded like even having this many people enter was quite successful.

However,

"But a problem arose."

“What problem?”

“In the first gateway, all fifteen passed, but in the second gateway, eleven died.”

If eleven died, that meant only four survived.

Considering there were still gateways remaining, the probability of failure had become extremely high.

He seemed to know why Ma-sang revealed his identity.

“Could it be…….”

“That’s right. It’s to ask for your help, Mok Yu-cheon.”

“…….”

At his words, Mok Yu-cheon shut his mouth.

It was because he was at a loss for how to react.

Who would have imagined a situation where a member of the Righteous Alliance’s shadow organization, Silent Strides, would reveal their identity and ask him for help?

“I think it’s hard for you to accept. But there was no other way.”

“…….”

“Based on the experience and information from past failed infiltrations, we only sent personnel capable of fighting against others with external techniques even without internal energy, but even we didn’t know this situation would happen.”

He seemed to know.

That monster, the wolf-shaped creature that made pig-like cries.

Chapter 79

Silent Strides (暗踐).

It was a secret organization created by the Righteous Alliance, which could be called the main axis of righteousness.

Only a very small number of people within the Righteous Alliance knew the exact time of its establishment, and not many knew exactly what they did.

Those who knew about Silent Strides called them the shadow of the Righteous Alliance.

They were in charge of tasks that should not be revealed in the unseen darkness, so they could never rise to the light.

Within Silent Strides, there was an even more special group.

The 4th (jeong) Group (丁團), which existed apart from the regular groups: the 1st (gap) Group (甲團 – Internal Audit), the 2nd (eul) Group (乙團 – Intelligence), and the 3rd (byeong) Group (丙團 – Assassination).

[Monsters.]

Even among the agents of Silent Strides, that's what they were called.

This included a measure of the strength of the 4th group agents, but there was another reason as well.

It was because they were different from ordinary humans.

Neung Hwa-yang, the vice-commander of the 13th Squad of the 4th group.

She was also one of the members and one of the three 4th group agents dispatched for this mission.

[It's a request from the 2nd group. Show the skills of the 4th group agents.]

Corpse Blood Valley was a mission that the 2nd group had failed several times.

That's why the 4th group sent agents this time to achieve results in the intelligence field as well.

Neung Hwa-yang snapped her fingers and gestured seductively to Mok Gyeong-un.

“Let's have a conversation with our bodies.”

‘Mok Gyeong-un.’

Thanks to that guy, seven of the dispatched agents lost their lives.

Because of this, an order was given.

[Sever his tendons and destroy his danjeon.]

It wasn't a difficult task.

The task she had been specializing in was assassinating important figures.

Especially in the case of men, it was even easier.

With a little seduction, they would fall for it and embrace her, so she could enjoy it moderately, and all that was left was to take their lives as a finish.

‘He’s quite handsome.’

This was the first time she had seen him up close.

But seeing his face, he was extremely handsome beyond being good-looking.

Although he was smiling, there was a sense of decadence, and in many ways, it was a face that women would like.

‘What a pity.’

It was a waste to enjoy it once and then make him a cripple.

However, there was no choice for the sake of the mission.

Not only did agents die because of this guy, but he was also the most disruptive factor for future missions.

-Thud!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un closed the slightly open door.

Then, he slowly walked over and said,

“What is this conversation with the body?”

“Why are you asking when you know?”

She spat out the words in a coquettish tone and sat on the bed, slightly crossing her legs.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and approached, saying,

“I really don’t know.”

“Are you pretending to be naive? Or are you deliberately trying to tire me out?”

“Who knows.”

Mok Gyeong-un stood right in front of her, two steps away.

Neung Hwa-yang raised the corners of her mouth with a smile.

What man wouldn't fall for it when a woman with such curves is naked?

She thought he would be no exception.

-Swish!

Neung Hwa-yang naturally stretched one of her legs toward Mok Gyeong-un.

The tip of her foot was aimed at his crotch.

It was to stimulate him.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un grabbed the tip of her foot.

Then, kneeling down, he gently stroked her ankle.

A glint appeared in Neung Hwa-yang's eyes.

'He doesn't seem to be naive.'

No matter how handsome he was, she thought he might be a naive virgin since he was a boy who wasn't even an adult yet.

In that case, it wouldn't be fun.

When using her body to eliminate or deal with the target, shouldn't she enjoy it to some extent?

It seemed she could put aside that concern.

"Haa."

She deliberately exhaled roughly.

There was no way she would get excited just by the act of stroking her ankle, but making such sounds was to stimulate the man.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un's hand moved from her ankle, past her shin and knee, all the way up to her thigh.

As his hand reached her thigh, her eyes also became sensual.

It seemed she could properly enjoy it.

'It won't be bad for you either.'

Before becoming a cripple, being able to hold a woman like this could be considered a reward of sorts.

Neung Hwa-yang spoke in a coquettish voice.

"You undress too."

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un lightly smiled.

Then, instead of continuing to stroke, he crossed his index and middle fingers and walked them up her thigh.

At this, Neung Hwa-yang's face reddened.

This guy seemed to have some experience despite being young.

Most men had no foreplay and just went straight for it as soon as she undressed.

But looking at it, this guy seemed to know women.

It would have been less fun if he just pushed in there, especially when she had become dull in that sense.

While that was happening, Mok Gyeong-un said,

"You look delicious."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, she let out a moan and said,

"Haa.....I look delicious? Then hurry up and devour me. You don't have to hold back."

Are you excited?

Hearing such words would drive him crazy.

While that was happening, Mok Gyeong-un crossed his two fingers and walked them up, saying,

"I need to savor the taste slowly. Beautiful things should be made to heat up slowly to truly enjoy the flavor."

“Haa.....you.....I like you.”

“I feel the same. Thinking about the screams that will come out of your heated mouth already makes me tingle.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Neung Hwa-yang was genuinely heated up.

This guy knew how to excite a woman.

Crossing his fingers like that while stimulating her imagination with words, it was making her feel good for the first time in a while.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un’s hand, which had been moving up for a while, reached her smooth stomach.

At this, Neung Hwa-yang smacked her lips as if she was a bit disappointed.

Was he trying to heat her up more?

This guy was an expert.

‘Not bad.’

She was curious to see how he would turn out, being called a lunatic.

But to think he was a guy who was so delicate and knew how to treat a woman.

Mok Gyeong-un’s hand, which had been gently caressing her abdomen, was now heading toward her voluptuous breasts.

“Haa.”

She let out a heavy breath.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“It’s heating up nicely and softly. I wonder what expression you will make when I peel off the shell of your entire body.”

“I’m already completely naked, what more is there to undress here?”

-Swish!

“Right here.”

Mok Gyeong-un pulled her skin.

At his words, Neung Hwa-yang momentarily frowned slightly.

What nonsense is he spouting when things were going well?

Does this bastard think he can excite her with these words?

At this, Neung Hwa-yang spoke without showing it.

“You’re good at joking too. Hohoho.”

“It’s not a joke.”

“.....What?”

Neung Hwa-yang momentarily made an absurd expression.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un raised the corners of his mouth to the point where they almost touched his ears and said,

“From the moment I first saw you, I wanted to peel off your entire skin and see what’s inside.”

“.....Are you saying that to get me excited?”

“Aren’t you excited?”

“Are you kidding me?”

“I once peeled off the entire skin of a guy who kept his mouth shut and made him see his own insides, and he screamed so much that he fainted. The sight of blood vessels and real muscles intertwined was really nice to see.”

‘!?’

Neung Hwa-yang’s expression hardened.

At first, she thought he was trying to do some excessive verbal foreplay.

But that malice-filled smile and his eyes were truly sincere.

He wanted to peel off her shell and see inside.

-Shudder!

For a moment, a chill ran down Neung Hwa-yang's spine.

She had been killing the guys who crawled into her embrace like a queen spider and always enjoyed the process.

Because she got so excited every time she killed the men who were in her arms.

Seeing them suffer, it seemed like her numb senses came back to life.

'This bastard.....is he the same kind as me?'

She thought, how crazy could he be even if he was insane?

But experiencing it firsthand, he seemed even crazier than her.

A beauty is seducing him naked, but he wants to peel off her shell and see her suffer.

-Tremble tremble tremble!

'Crazy bastard.'

She changed her mind too.

She was going to watch him be happy in her arms and then see that happiness break, but now she wanted to see this lunatic beg for his life.

Neung Hwa-yang smiled faintly.

"I need to hear your screams too."

-Pak!

Having made that decision, she wrapped her legs around Mok Gyeong-un's arm like a snake.

Then, she pressed his neck and back with her legs.

If he moved wrongly, his elbow would be broken in an instant, so he wouldn't be able to resist.

-Tighten!

"It's best if you stay still. If you resist recklessly, your elbow bone will pop out....."

-Crack!

'Huh?'

What is this?

Mok Gyeong-un lifted his body with her clinging to him.

She, who had reached the Pinnacle stage of Peak Realm and exerted nearly 6-star power with her legs to perform the Bone-Breaking Technique. But somehow, this brat was forcibly enduring her?

'This bastard!'

She drew up even more energy, trying to shatter Mok Gyeong-un's elbow.

But Mok Gyeong-un's arm didn't bend at all.

Then,

-Thud!

Mok Gyeong-un suddenly took an unexpected action while holding her.

-Crunch!

'!!!!!!!!'

For a moment, she doubted her eyes.

Mok Gyeong-un forcibly turned his neck and bit into her thigh muscle on the opposite side of the knee she was tightening.

Although she couldn't feel pain, she could still distinguish the teeth sinking in.

And the part he had bitten off now was dangerous.

If done wrong, she wouldn't be able to walk.

-Pak!

Neung Hwa-yang released the strength in her legs and kicked Mok Gyeong-un's head.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un's body was pushed back.

She also fell to the floor and looked at the back of her knee, spitting out rough sounds.

But that part was torn off.

-Twist!

Seeing her left knee not straightening properly, it seemed the muscle was torn off.

“You son of a.....”

-Munch munch!

Suddenly, she was at a loss for words.

She saw Mok Gyeong-un chewing on her torn thigh muscle.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been chewing with blood on his lips, soon swallowed it down his throat.

-Gulp!

Along with that, Mok Gyeong-un wiped the blood on his lips with his tongue and said,

-Lick!

“Hmm. The taste of blood is okay, but it’s a bit tough.”

‘This.....this crazy.....’

Neung Hwa-yang was momentarily speechless.

She was called a crazy bitch even within the 4th group and acknowledged it herself due to her bad taste that came from being unable to feel pain.

But this went beyond that scope.

This wasn’t the concept of being crazy, but wasn’t it being a demon or having a murderous nature?

Feeling extreme fear, she unknowingly took a step back.

Then,

“Ah ah ah. No. Tie her up.”

It was faster than the end of those words.

-Swish!

Something wrapped around her entire body, restraining her from moving.

“Wh-what is this.....”

Startled, she tried to draw up her energy and shake it off.

But then, Mok Gyeong-un made a shushing gesture with his hand instead of sealing his lips.

Then,

“Mmph!”

She couldn’t open her mouth.

Unable to even scream or do anything, her face turned pale.

Mok Gyeong-un approached her and said,

“You said you can’t feel pain? That’s great. I have a mirror here too. I was wondering what reaction you would show if you saw your own shell being peeled off one by one.”

Along with that, the corners of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth reached his ears.

It was an expression of being thrilled to death.

‘This guy.....is serious.....seriously.’

-Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Her heart was beating fiercely and not listening.

“Huff huff huff huff.....”

After exhaling roughly, she soon foamed at the mouth and her eyes rolled back.

“Oh?”

At this, Mok Gyeong-un showed a disappointed expression.

Chapter 80

When a person is overwhelmed by extreme fear, they say the sphincter and bladder become uncontrollable.

Neung Hwa-yang, who had fainted with eyes rolled back and foaming at the mouth, had even pissed herself.

-Trickle!

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue.

“Hmm. It seems pain tolerance and fear are separate matters.”

As if disappointed, Mok Gyeong-un smacked his lips. Then, Cheong-ryeong’s voice rang in his ear.

-I think I know your true calling, you fiend.

“Pardon?”

-You’d make a perfect torturer. Terrorizing people like that, no one could possibly withstand it. No, they’d probably confess everything before you even start torturing them.

“You think so?”

-You’re exceptionally skilled at instilling fear. You really have a knack for this sort of thing.

“I wasn’t just trying to scare her, though.”

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged nonchalantly as he spoke.

-.....

What?

Then was he really intending to peel off all her skin right before my eyes?

If so, he has shockingly depraved tastes.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue as if dumbfounded.

-You’re utterly out of your mind.

Hearing her reaction, Mok Gyeong-un laughed and said,

“I’m kidding. Just kidding.”

-As if.

“No, really. No matter how much I enjoy seeing blood, I wouldn’t do something so inefficient.”

-Inefficient?

“Yes. You could call it a waste of time. It takes far too long. Plus, if she dies while I’m skinning her, it takes the fun out of it.”

-.....

I get the feeling he’d do it given the chance.

It’s suspicious.

I wonder if this brat even perceives humans as different from animals, insects, or inanimate objects.

This Mok Gyeong-un’s concept of death is completely different from others.

As Cheong-ryeong was pondering this, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

“But I did learn one thing.”

-And what’s that?

“It seems even without pain, you can’t do anything about fear.”

Since the woman had boasted about being immune to pain, he had tested whether she would also be fearless.

If that were truly possible, it would have been quite interesting.

However, contrary to Mok Gyeong-un’s hopes, Neung Hwa-yang had fainted, unable to overcome her terror.

Cheong-ryeong then remarked,

-For a living being, emotions are a realm that cannot be fully controlled no matter how much one trains.

“Perhaps you’re right.”

He couldn’t deny it.

And not just fear, either.

The latent anger buried within him since his grandfather’s death had not diminished over time but only continued to grow.

It was like surging lava.

At this rate, he couldn't predict what he might end up doing.

"Ah, anyway, I wonder why this woman came to my room to do this?"

-What? You mean why she tried to mate with you, you mortal?

"...What a blunt and amusing way to put it."

-Why are you acting innocent all of a sudden?

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged.

She then spoke in a mocking tone.

-Anyway, whether it was mating or whatever else, if it was a honey trap, it was truly a wasted effort.

The Mok Gyeong-un she had observed was not someone who would fall for such things.

He never takes anything at face value.

Even if it's well-intentioned without any ulterior motives, Mok Gyeong-un harbors deep suspicions.

In a sense, he's quite difficult to deceive.

"In any case, I'll have to wake her up and ask why she did this. I don't think she would have done something like this for no reason."

-I agree with that.

From the moment the woman approached him knowing his name, she had a purpose.

And that purpose was definitely not physical intimacy.

-Thud!

Mok Gyeong-un pressed down hard on the center of her chest with his foot.

"Now, time to wake up."

At that, the woman who had fainted soon woke up coughing.

“Cough, cough!”

Upon waking, she blankly stared ahead for a moment, then made eye contact with Mok Gyeong-un and immediately looked away in fright.

The fear that had taken hold did not dissipate in an instant, as if deeply embedded in her heart.

She hastily touched her skin with her hands.

Then she felt relieved.

‘Whew.’

If she had woken up to find her skin peeled off, it would have been truly unbearable.

Fortunately, that wasn’t the case yet.

Looking down at her, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“You seem relieved?”

-Shudder!

“You need to be awake for me to see your expression when I peel off your skin.”

‘This, this madman...’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, goosebumps rose all over her body.

After becoming unable to feel pain, she thought fear had vanished.

But this guy was completely beyond normal bounds.

His way of thinking was utterly different.

-Thump! Thump! Thump!

Her heart began beating wildly again.

Mok Gyeong-un then spoke again with a snicker.

“It would be troublesome if you fainted again.”

At those words, she involuntarily blurted out something she shouldn’t have.

“P-please!”

‘Huh?’

What was she saying right now?

Did she really just beg?

During the process of becoming a Silent Strides agent, she had undergone so much training.

If captured by enemies, no matter what torture she endured, she must never open her mouth, and in the worst case, take her own life.

That was the fundamental directive for Silent Strides agents, regardless of rank.

-Bite!

Neung Hwa-yang bit down hard on her lip.

It was humiliating.

After becoming unable to feel pain, her emotions had withered, and she filled that void with the thrill of others’ suffering and death.

Amidst that, she thought she feared neither pain nor death.

But it seemed that wasn’t the case after all.

That emotion called fear had been lurking in a corner of her heart.

‘In the end, I’m no different.’

She, too, was just an ordinary human, nothing special.

As she wore a blank expression, she soon looked at Mok Gyeong-un and spoke as if she had made up her mind.

“Just kill me.”

“That might be difficult. The constraint for this checkpoint is ‘no killing’.”

“.....”

“Instead, I can make one promise.”

“Promise?”

“If you answer my questions, I’ll skip this enjoyable process and just let you go.”

A tone as if offering a favor.

For a moment, it seemed like a tempting proposal.

However, Neung Hwa-yang gave no response.

Seeing her attitude, Mok Gyeong-un grinned and asked,

“The question is simple. Did you come here of your own accord? Or did someone send you?”

“.....”

“Suddenly at a loss for words, I see.”

“.....”

She had barely overcome her fear and composed herself, so how could she readily open her mouth?

A Silent Strides agent does not divulge information even at the risk of death.

With a defiant look in her eyes, she spoke.

“I’ll be waiting in hell.”

With those words, she opened her mouth and stuck out her tongue.

Then she tried to bite down on it.

However,

-Clang!

“Urk!”

Something solid coiled between her teeth, preventing her from biting her tongue.

‘Wh-what?’

She couldn’t see anything.

Yet this thing caught between her teeth was incredibly solid.

What was it?

As she felt perplexed, Mok Gyeong-un spoke words she couldn't comprehend.

"Soha. You said you wanted a body, right?"

'!?'

What was he talking about?

Could there be someone else here besides them?

She sensed no presence at all.

-Shiver!

Just then, a chill ran down her spine.

Something cold and eerie seemed to be caressing her hair, and she felt nauseous.

At that moment, Neung Hwa-yang doubted her own eyes.

-Flicker!

Before her eyes, a blurry figure appeared upside down.

It was a girl with graying hair, but her pupils were white, which was deeply unnerving.

As this upside-down girl drew closer, she didn't feel human at all.

'G-ghost...'

"Mmph!"

Neung Hwa-yang tried to twist her body and sit up.

But not only was Mok Gyeong-un stepping on her, something was restraining her entire body, preventing her from moving at all.

'Don't come! Don't come!'

Her fear had reached its peak, bursting blood vessels and turning the whites of her eyes red.

-Slither!

Finally, for the first time in her life, she experienced something possessing her body.

It was a sensation on a whole different level from the five senses.

“Urgh... Urk.”

Before long, black, bulging veins popped up all over her body as she convulsed violently.

Two men were swiftly walking through the corridor.

They were Mok Yu-cheon and the emissary of the Righteous Alliance’s Silent Strides, Ma-sang.

Their hurried destination was none other than Mok Gyeong-un’s room.

“Damn it. We better not be late.”

Ma-sang muttered in an irritated tone.

Mok Yu-cheon gave no response to his words.

That was because he had finally confessed to Ma-sang that Mok Gyeong-un was his half-brother.

He didn’t want to talk about it if he could help it.

However, he couldn’t bear to leave the guy to die helplessly with his energy channels and danjeon destroyed.

So he had prostrated himself in apology to Ma-sang and revealed the truth.

At first, Ma-sang couldn’t contain his anger.

[That lunatic is the third son of Yeon Mok Sword Manor?]

He even found it absurd.

But in the face of Mok Yu-cheon’s continued apologies, he barely suppressed those emotions.

Who would have thought that the one who had driven the Silent Strides agents to their deaths would be the scion of a renowned righteous faction?

Ma-sang spoke in a hushed voice.

“Mok Yu-cheon. Can you keep your word?”

“...I'll try my best.”

“Trying your best isn't enough. If the situation weren't like this, I would have classified him as an obstacle to the mission and eliminated him, regardless of your request.”

This was true.

Righteous faction or not, they had suffered too much damage because of Mok Gyeong-un.

He was extremely dangerous, and for the sake of the future, it was right to remove him.

However, there were only four Silent Strides agents left.

The probability of successfully completing the mission had become far too low.

“You must persuade Mok Gyeong-un. For the sake of ensuring the deaths of those who fell by his hands were not in vain.”

“I understand.”

Mok Yu-cheon reaffirmed in a firm voice.

The acting emissary of the Silent Strides, Ma-sang, wanted only one thing.

Not Mok Gyeong-un's heartfelt apology, but for the brothers to become temporary emissaries alongside them and fulfill the mission.

‘Can I persuade him?’

To be honest, he wasn't just half-hearted but lacked confidence.

However, he had to accomplish it.

Even if the guy had changed from before, Mok Yu-cheon didn't think his ability to make rational judgments had diminished.

If that were the case, he wouldn't have survived here.

'Even if he's changed, he's still from a righteous faction.'

He believed the guy hadn't forgotten those roots.

Mok Yu-cheon thought he should emphasize this point to persuade him.

Perhaps this was an opportunity.

If they aided the emissaries of the Righteous Alliance's Silent Strides and played a crucial role in the downfall of the Heaven and Earth Society, they might be able to shed the disgrace of being expelled from the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

'Yes. He'll want that too.'

As Mok Yu-cheon sorted out in his mind how to approach the conversation, they arrived in front of Mok Gyeong-un's room.

However,

'Huh?'

The two men standing at the door looked at each other in bewilderment.

No presence could be felt from inside the room.

Mok Yu-cheon asked,

"...Didn't you say one of the agents had already made a move?"

"I did. That's why we're rushing here."

They had hurried here with quick steps, not wanting to attract attention by using lightness techniques in the corridor.

The perplexed men decided to open the door.

'Huh?'

As expected, there was no one inside.

However, the bed in the room was broken, and it was quite a mess.

It was evident at a glance that something had happened here.

Seeing this, Mok Yu-cheon spoke with a darkened expression.

“Could we be too late?”

“.....”

Inspecting the room, Ma-sang replied to that question.

“We don’t know for certain yet. If that woman completed her mission, Mok Gyeong-un should be lying on the bed, half-crippled.”

“But neither of them is here.”

“...Perhaps she took him to the captain.”

“Captain?”

“Yes.”

Among the surviving emissaries of the Silent Strides, there was a captain who commanded them.

It was he who had ordered them to deal with Mok Gyeong-un.

Ma-sang spoke in a slightly apologetic tone.

“We still don’t know, so just bear with it for a bit. Let’s go see the captain.”

“...Alright.”

They closed the door to Mok Gyeong-un’s room and headed downstairs.

The captain of the Silent Strides emissaries who had infiltrated this place was said to be staying in the room at the far right end of the 2nd floor.

They were on the 4th floor.

As they were heading down,

-Murmur murmur!

Boys had gathered in the center of the lower floor, and there was some commotion.

Wondering what was going on, Ma-sang hesitated and couldn’t go down, looking disconcerted.

“What’s wrong?”

“Damn it all...”

“What?”

Warriors with red belts were dragging out a blood-soaked boy.

Moreover, not only that, but another boy with one leg severed was also being held by both arms by the red-belted warriors.

Looking at them, Ma-sang was at a loss.

Mok Yu-cheon whispered a question.

“What the hell is going on?”

In response, Ma-sang gritted his teeth and whispered back.

“...They’re both our agents.”

‘!?’

Those two were none other than Silent Strides agents.

Just what was the meaning of this?

As they were pondering,

“Hahahaha! Finding the emissaries is all thanks to you!”

The red-belted warriors who had caught them laughed heartily, patting someone’s back and praising them.

It was none other than,

‘Mok Gyeong-un?’

Mok Yu-cheon’s face instantly stiffened.