

Mayhem 141

Chapter 141 – Annihilating Poison King (2)

Thanks to the Annihilating Poison King, Baek Sa-ha, observing a three-year mourning period, no one had succeeded in making contact with him.

The same was true for Wi So-yeon, the third disciple of the Society Leader.

Even if she had the qualifications to be the next Society Leader, her authority didn't reach that of the Five Kings, who could be considered high-ranking executives of the Heaven and Earth Society.

Thus, without a proper justification, she hadn't had the opportunity to contact the Annihilating Poison King.

However, she finally had a chance to meet him.

It was none other than the first birthday celebration of Baek Sa-ha's grandson, Baek Oh-chan.

'If I miss this opportunity, it will be difficult until the three-year mourning period ends.'

Among the high-ranking Five Kings, only Bright Blade King Son Yun supported her.

If she gained the support of the Annihilating Poison King, Baek Sa-ha, here, she would secure a supporting force that could rival Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple, to some extent.

However,

"Young Lady."

A man in his mid-thirties with a stylishly grown beard gestured with his chin.

As she turned her head,

‘Ah...’

She saw a group walking from the southwestern path.

That group was none other than Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple, and his subordinates.

The Five Mountains Alliance.

Enduring Tyrant Fist, the Grand Clan Leader of the Hegemon Fist Group, and the first-ranked member.

Wi Maeng-cheon, the Blind Swordsman and the second-ranked member.

Ho Jong-hyeok, the Grand Clan Leader of the Destruction Clan and the third-ranked member.

Seo Hye-in, the leader of the Grass Smoke Group and the fourth-ranked member.

Jeo Mo-pal, the fifth-ranked member and practitioner of the Geo-am Fist.

They were all young masters of the later generation with high reputations within the Heaven and Earth Society.

Among them, the one considered the best was undoubtedly Enduring Tyrant Fist, the first-ranked member.

He was one of the Five Tigers, called the best masters of the later generation in the Heaven and Earth Society, and his father was Ko Yeon-byek, one of the Three Society Guardians and the Guardian who oversaw all of the Heaven and Earth Society's defenses.

‘He brought all his subordinates... No, only four of them?’

The second-ranked member, Wi Maeng-cheon, was not present.

Despite being blind, he was famous for his tremendous swordsmanship.

Anyway, judging by the fact that he had brought his subordinates, their purpose seemed to be the same.

‘... The Annihilating Poison King.’

It was to bring Baek Sa-ha to their side.

However, she frowned with strong hostility.

‘Why is he doing that?’

The reason was that Jang Neung-ak was glaring at her and Woo Ho-rang, who was standing to her right, with eyes filled with murderous intent.

She didn’t know, but Jang Neung-ak had a reason for doing so.

‘Could it be him?’

The man in his mid-thirties with a short beard who Jang Neung-ak was glaring at.

He was Woo Ho-rang, the chief disciple of Bright Blade King Son Yun, one of the Five Kings, and the Grand Clan Leader of the Residence Destruction Group.

He was Wi So-yeon's subordinate and one of the Five Tigers, the supreme masters of the later generation in the Heaven and Earth Society.

He had reached the supreme stage in his mid-twenties, and it was no exaggeration to say that his martial prowess had already reached the executive level.

Yang Il, the junior leader of the Transient Sword Group, and Gi Ok-ryeon, the eldest daughter of Gi Hae, the Valley Master of Sun Rock, who followed behind him, were also quite skilled as high-ranking masters of the later generation.

However, in Jang Neung-ak's eyes, only Woo Ho-rang stood out.

'If you are the one who killed Maeng-cheon, this young master will also cut off your head and soak that wench Wi So-yeon's bed with your blood.'

Sensing this strong murderous intent and hostility, Woo Ho-rang also became more vigilant.

As his hand unconsciously reached for his sword handle,

"Maintain your composure."

"Ah."

At Wi So-yeon's low warning, he lowered his hand again.

If he fell for the provocation and caused a commotion here, it would disrupt their plan.

He wasn't the only one thinking this.

"My lord, please calm down for now. We can't confirm the culprit yet, and if we create a disturbance here, it will be disrespectful to the Annihilating Poison King."

“... Understood.”

At the advice of Ko Yeon-hu, the first-ranked member, Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, nodded his head.

No matter how agitated he was, he wasn't lacking in judgment to that extent.

As they were approaching, someone caught Jang Neung-ak's attention.

“Oh, Mok Gyeong-un.”

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

Similarly, Wi So-yeon, who had been too focused on being wary of Jang Neung-ak, also noticed Mok Gyeong-un at the entrance of the Annihilating Poison King's estate.

‘Mok Gyeong-un?’

Why was he here?

He hadn't even joined anyone's faction yet.

As she was puzzled, Jang Neung-ak waved his hand with a smile towards Mok Gyeong-un.

“Are you doing well?”

Seeing him act friendly as if they were close, Wi So-yeon frowned.

What?

She clearly remembered that things didn't go well between them, so why was her martial brother acting so favorably as if they were close friends?

Could it be that he had tried to win him over again in the meantime?

Feeling a slight unease, she quickly acknowledged Mok Gyeong-un.

"It's been a while. Have you been well?"

'It's been a while?'

At Wi So-yeon's greeting, it was Jang Neung-ak's turn to furrow his brows.

What was she saying now?

Could it be that this wench had made contact with the kid he had his eyes on?

How dare she covet what was his?

With such thoughts, Jang Neung-ak's anger was about to rise again.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un bowed his head with a polite gesture and greeted them.

"Mok Gyeong-un, a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master, greets Young Master Jang Neung-ak and Young Lady Wi So-yeon."

"Yes."

“Alright.”

At his greeting, the second disciple Jang Neung-ak and the third disciple Wi So-yeon unintentionally found themselves looking at each other as they responded simultaneously.

Wi So-yeon clasped her hands together, slightly bowed her head, and greeted politely.

“Greetings to my martial brother.”

“Hmph, you look quite lively.”

Unlike Wi So-yeon, who had greeted respectfully as she had to uphold the etiquette towards her senior despite their mutual wariness, Jang Neung-ak openly acted coldly.

She was already used to this attitude of his, so she didn’t particularly mind.

“The same goes for you, senior brother.”

“What?”

Jang Neung-ak’s voice rose slightly, as he was already suspicious of her due to the incident of Wi Maeng-cheon’s death.

Concerned about this, Ko Yeon-hu once again quietly dissuaded him.

“My lord, this is not the place.”

-Creak!

At those words, Jang Neung-ak gnashed his teeth and shook his head.

It was difficult for him to calm his anger easily since the incident had occurred just a few hours ago.

However, for the sake of their grand endeavor, he had to endure it for now.

Jang Neung-ak turned his head away from Wi So-yeon as if he couldn't stand the sight of her and said to Mok Gyeong-un,

"You have a lot to do to gain trust, so what brings you here?"

At that question, Wi So-yeon also looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

She was also curious about that.

Mok Gyeong-un pointed to the large wooden case that the guard warrior Seok Jung was carrying on his back and replied,

"As you can see, I came here on the Shadow Clan Master's orders to deliver a birthday gift and pay my respects to Elder Baek Sa-ha, the Annihilating Poison King."

"Oh, is that so? You had the same business as this young master."

"Ah, yes, it seems so."

"But you haven't made any other acquaintances in the meantime, right?"

Jang Neung-ak blatantly glared at Wi So-yeon once and asked Mok Gyeong-un.

It was as if he was asking if he had contacted other potential successors instead of him.

Mok Gyeong-un smiled and replied,

“How could that be possible?”

“...”

At those words, Wi So-yeon frowned her pretty brows.

Could it be that Mok Gyeong-un’s heart had turned towards Jang Neung-ak instead of her?

If that was the case, it would be quite troublesome.

The Shadow Clan, which controlled information, was also very important.

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak looked at Wi So-yeon with a triumphant expression as if he had won and said,

“Yes, that’s how it should be. I have high expectations for you.”

-Grip!

Wi So-yeon clenched her hand tightly.

Normally, she wouldn’t fall for such childish provocations or mind games.

However, it was hard for her to tolerate her opponent, who was also vying for the position of Society Leader, trying to snatch away what she was aiming for in this manner.

So she said,

“Mok Gyeong-un.”

“Yes, young lady.”

“You’re keeping the token I gave you safe, right?”

She revealed what she originally had no intention of disclosing.

At those words, Jang Neung-ak’s expression, which had been triumphant until just now, instantly turned fierce.

What was she talking about, a token?

‘Token?’

He wasn’t the only one reacting to those words.

Woo Ho-rang, known as Wi So-yeon’s right-hand man and the grand disciple of Bright Blade King Son Yun, also frowned and looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

He had thought that he was the only one who had received a token from her.

But this kid, who looked like a male courtesan, had received a token from the Young Lady?

“Yes, I’m keeping it safe.”

‘This bastard...’

At Mok Gyeong-un's answer, Jang Neung-ak's mood soured.

Just now, he had responded as if he hadn't gotten close to other potential successors, but he had received a token from that damn wench?

This was not something he could overlook.

"You..."

As Jang Neung-ak was about to express his displeasure towards Mok Gyeong-un,

"My lord, shouldn't we first participate in the celebration and offer congratulations to Elder Baek Sa-ha, the Annihilating Poison King?"

"..."

At the words of Ho Jong-hyeok, the Grand Clan Leader of the Destruction Clan and the third-ranked member, Jang Neung-ak closed his mouth.

Yes, this wasn't the time to do this here.

First, he had to meet with the Annihilating Poison King and settle the matter, and it wouldn't be too late to do it afterward.

If he missed today, the opportunity would slip away for a while.

"... Let's talk in a bit."

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un made a small bow.

Then, Jang Neung-ak abruptly turned his head and went ahead to the entrance of the estate.

Seeing his behavior, Mok Gyeong-un smiled nonchalantly.

Then, it was Wi So-yeon's turn to speak.

"Didn't you say you dislike conflicts?"

"Yes, that's right."

"But it seems like your stance has changed a bit from back then."

"How could that be? My thoughts remain unchanged."

"Really?"

"Yes."

Wi So-yeon stared at Mok Gyeong-un intently, then shook her head and said,

"Alright, I'll believe your words. But my second martial brother is different. I didn't just let you go back then to yield to him."

At her words, Woo Ho-rang, the grand disciple of Bright Blade King Son Yun, frowned.

Her words, openly coveting Mok Gyeong-un, were grating to him.

However, unlike his junior martial sister Yeop Wee-seon, he had some experience and composure, so he didn't reveal his emotions.

"I have other urgent matters to attend to now, so let's talk later."

With those words, she also hurriedly entered the entrance of the estate.

If she didn't hurry, her second martial brother Jang Neung-ak would take the lead.

As they went in first, the guard warrior Seok Jung, who had been extremely tense, staggered as his legs went weak.

-Tap!

Mok Gyeong-un grabbed his arm.

"Ah, be careful. It's a precious gift."

"M-My apologies."

Seok Jung clicked his tongue inwardly.

It hadn't been long since Mok Gyeong-un became a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master, but he didn't expect two potential successors of the Society Leader to covet him and engage in a battle of nerves with each other.

The person involved was unfazed, but he himself was trembling.

'Is he really not affected?'

Receiving attention from those two people was quite burdensome.

If either of them turned against him, troublesome things were bound to happen.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Shall we go in too?”

“... Understood.”

I don't know.

What could people like him, who were mere subordinates, do anyway?

It was more comfortable to just do as he was told.

As they were about to enter the entrance of the estate, at that very moment,

“Halt.”

The warriors guarding the entrance crossed their sword sheaths and blocked the way.

The atmosphere was quite different from when they had let Jang Neung-ak's group and Wi So-yeon's group pass through.

“What business brings you here?”

“Ah, I am Mok Gyeong-un, a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master. As you can see, I have come on my Master's orders to deliver a gift to celebrate the joyous occasion of the Baek family.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, one of the warriors clasped his hands and said to Mok Gyeong-un,

"So you are a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master."

"Yes."

"I apologize, but you can leave the gift here..."

The warrior pointed to a piece of paper on a table inside the entrance and continued,

"Write the names of the Shadow Clan Master and his disciple in this visitor's log and leave."

"Pardon?"

Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head.

Did this mean he should just leave the gift here and go?

Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head as if it was troublesome and said,

"It's a bit difficult to just leave the gift and go."

"Although today is a joyous occasion for the Baek family, they are still in the middle of a three-year mourning period. The Annihilating Poison King has given orders to seek understanding from most guests, except for relatives and a few others."

It seemed that those few others included the Society Leader's disciples.

They were being blocked right from the entrance.

“Ah, is that so?”

“So please just turn back...”

“I’m sorry, but it’s difficult for me to just turn back as well.”

“Oh my... Are you taking the Annihilating Poison King’s words lightly?”

The warrior raised his voice and spoke in a warning tone.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said,

“How could that be? Then let me visit with a different status.”

“What? A different status?”

-Tap!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un took something out from his bosom and placed it on the table.

‘!?’

Seeing this, the warrior’s eyes widened.

It was the three first-place tokens he had received from the Corpse Blood Valley.

It was only natural to be surprised to see him possess three first-place tokens, which were difficult to obtain even one.

Mok Gyeong-un smiled at the speechless warrior and said,

“I intend to seek guidance from Elder Baek Sa-ha, the Annihilating Poison King. Can you refuse this as well?”

Chapter 142 – Annihilating Poison King (3)

Inside the estate of Baek Sa-ha, one of the Five Kings and the Annihilating Poison King.

This place, also known as the Baek family’s estate, was bustling with relatives gathered for the first birthday celebration.

Even though no outside guests were received, there were at least several dozen people just from the relatives.

In the garden, maids were preparing food in a temporary outdoor kitchen for the celebration, and relatives were sitting at tables, raising their glasses to celebrate the first birthday.

In the midst of the ongoing celebration, Baek Sa-ha’s wife, Madam Jang, rose from her seat and headed somewhere upon receiving an urgent message.

As she walked, Madam Jang clicked her tongue and said,

“They’ve come after all.”

“Yes. Since he’s in the middle of a three-year mourning period, today was the only proper justification for them to visit.”

The man who appeared to be in his early thirties with sharp eyes, answering her words, was Baek Sogang, the second son of the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha and the one in charge of external affairs.

The reason they were hastily changing locations was due to sudden guests.

"You said it was the second young master and the third young lady?"

"Yes. They each brought their subordinates."

"Sigh. It seems they've made up their minds."

"What can we do? They came because they want Father's support."

"That's probably the case."

The current Heaven and Earth Society was facing an increasingly fierce succession dispute.

Due to rumors that the Society Leader's illness had worsened, the potential successors' movements had become more agile.

Amidst this, the family head, the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha, had not supported any of the Society Leader's disciples.

Thus, they would try to get a definite answer from him today, no matter what.

"It's truly troublesome."

"You're right. But wasn't this a problem that would eventually come?"

“Even so, don’t you know your father’s temperament?”

“Well... Sigh.”

Baek So-gang, the second son and the Outer Master, let out a sigh.

As his mother said, his father would never take back a word he had uttered.

So he was worried.

He was concerned that an unnecessary commotion might occur.

“Did you separate the rooms?”

At Madam Jang’s question, the second son Baek So-gang nodded.

There was no other choice, as it was impossible to know what would happen if the two potential successors were placed in the same reception room.

Then she said,

“Combine them into one room when they arrive.”

“Pardon? But if we do that...”

“If we keep them separate, it will be harder to refuse.”

“Ah...”

“It’s better to show them that we’re not choosing anyone when they’re together, so they’ll quietly back down.”

“Your words are wise, Mother.”

The second son Baek So-gang also nodded in agreement, as if he understood.

It was at that very moment when they were about to pass through the pavilion housing the reception room.

“Please wait a moment!”

At that moment, someone hurriedly ran towards them.

He was none other than one of the warriors guarding the entrance of the estate.

“Madam.”

Madam Jang asked with a puzzled expression,

“What’s the matter?”

“Well, another guest has just arrived.”

“A guest? Didn’t I tell you to seek understanding and send them back if they’re not relatives or pre-arranged visitors?”

“Yes, that’s true, but...”

Why had they come here when instructions had been given in advance?

She shook her head and said,

“Then send them back.”

“Please take a look at this.”

With those words, the warrior guarding the estate entrance took something out of his bosom.

It was none other than,

“No way. Is that...?”

The first-place tokens from the Corpse Blood Valley entrance.

Not just one, but three first-place tokens.

Knowing what this meant, Madam Jang’s brows furrowed.

The second disciple of the Society Leader, Jang Neung-ak, and the third disciple, Wi So-yeon, gathered in a single reception room.

And behind them, their respective subordinates were seated.

“Sigh.”

Jang Neung-ak let out a sigh as if he was annoyed.

Since he had entered the estate first, he thought he would naturally be able to meet the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha faster than Wi So-yeon.

However, they made him wait in the reception room, and now they were calling them to the same room.

As a result, his mood had become quite unpleasant.

'... I don't know if I should say it's fortunate or not.'

Wi So-yeon was also uncomfortable.

Fortunately, she was able to avoid the situation where her second martial brother met with the Annihilating Poison King first, but if they faced each other like this, persuasion might become difficult.

It was because they might have to keep each other in check, and if they blatantly disparaged each other, it could turn into a full-blown confrontation.

-Creak!

At that moment, the door opened, and a middle-aged woman in her late fifties with graying hair appeared in the reception room, where the atmosphere had become even heavier.

Seeing the dignified woman, the second disciple Jang Neung-ak and the third disciple Wi So-yeon simultaneously stood up and greeted her with clasped hands and bowed heads.

"Greetings to the Baek family's Madam."

"It's been a while, Madam."

Since they were disciples of the Society Leader, they were already acquainted with her.

Wi So-yeon also took off her bamboo hat and white veil out of respect for Madam Jang, the wife of the Annihilating Poison King and the grand matriarch of the Baek family.

She took the lead first.

“Congratulations on your grandson’s first birthday.”

‘This wench.’

Jang Neung-ak slightly frowned but soon forced a smile and said,

“It’s truly a joyous occasion.”

‘Ah...’

At the congratulations from these two, Madam Jang clicked her tongue inwardly.

She couldn’t understand how they engaged in such subtle mind games while offering congratulations.

It was too obvious that they were conscious of each other.

Of course, she understood since they were in a competitive relationship.

-Swish!

“Thank you. I’m deeply grateful that you, the two disciples of the Society Leader, have come to this humble place to celebrate my grandson’s well-being.”

“It’s something we should congratulate, of course. But the Annihilating Poison King and the Young Family Head...?”

Jang Neung-ak carefully asked, glancing at Baek So-gang, the Outer Master and second son, standing next to her.

Of course, Madam Jang, as the grand matriarch, could also be considered an elder of this household, but how could the true protagonists of the first birthday celebration, the Young Family Head, not even show up when the potential successors who might become the future Society Leaders had come?

Baek So-gang answered this question.

“I apologize. Since it’s in the middle of the first birthday celebration and my older brother has to attend to the relatives, he couldn’t spare a moment to come.”

“Ah, is that so?”

“Yes. Please understand.”

“There’s no need to seek understanding or anything. It’s only natural to be busy when we’ve come during the celebration.”

Wi So-yeon spoke softly with a smile.

Jang Neung-ak also didn’t want to lose,

“You don’t need to mind. I’m not someone who lacks that much courtesy. Hohoho.”

It was a truly amusing sight.

Jang Neung-ak's arrogant attitude was quite well-known within the Heaven and Earth Society, but seeing him try to cater like this was enough to make one feel astonished.

'That's how much he needs Father's support.'

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak pointed to the gift box he had placed beside him and said,

"Since we've come all this way, I'd like to pay my respects to Elder Baek Sa-ha, even if it's just a formality."

Seeing Jang Neung-ak take the initiative, Wi So-yeon also chimed in as if agreeing,

"It seems we had the same thought, martial brother. I also wanted to directly meet Elder Baek Sa-ha, offer congratulations, and have a conversation about this and that."

At her words, Jang Neung-ak let out a soft sigh.

He didn't like how she was trying to get involved in any way.

It seemed she was trying to interfere with his business, but did she think he would easily let it slide?

-Swish!

Jang Neung-ak fanned himself with a folding fan and said,

"There's no need for martial sister to be here. I'll meet Elder Baek Sa-ha as a representative, so you can just leave."

"How can I do that? It's an opportunity to meet someone who is like an uncle after a long time, so leaving without even seeing his face would be disrespectful."

“Why would it be considered disrespectful? I’ll convey the message well, so don’t worry.”

“No, it’s alright.”

Wi So-yeon flatly refused.

Jang Neung-ak glared at her fiercely.

Seeing the two potential successors now openly expressing hostility towards each other, Madam Jang clicked her tongue inwardly.

‘The situation we were concerned about might unfold.’

Feeling that it couldn’t be helped, Madam Jang finally tried to intervene.

“You two...”

At that moment, a voice was heard from outside the reception room.

“Madam, the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master has arrived.”

‘!?’

Hearing this, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon simultaneously frowned.

What was this about?

‘How did he...?’

‘The kid entered?’

The two of them naturally thought that Mok Gyeong-un would have just delivered the gift and left.

But they had no idea how he had entered the estate.

Then, Madam Jang clasped her hands together, slightly bowed her head towards the two of them, and opened her mouth,

“I apologize, but would it be alright to call the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master here for a moment as well?”

“Mok... No, why the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master?”

“I think I need to seek the same understanding from both of you and the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master.”

“The same understanding?”

At Madam Jang’s words, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon couldn’t hide their bewilderment.

What was she trying to say?

However, they were in a position where it was difficult to refuse her request, as they wanted to make a good impression on her.

“... Alright.”

“I don’t mind either.”

Soon, the door opened, and Mok Gyeong-un appeared.

Mok Gyeong-un clasped his hands together, bowed his head, and greeted everyone.

“I am Mok Gyeong-un, a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master.”

‘... He’s not just ordinarily good-looking.’

Madam Jang couldn’t help but admire Mok Gyeong-un’s face inwardly.

She had never seen a man’s face that gave off a beautiful impression rather than a handsome one.

But that was only for a moment, and,

“So you were the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master. I am the wife of Elder Baek Sa-ha.”

“Ah, so you are the Madam.”

Mok Gyeong-un lightly clasped his hands together and bowed again.

Then, she was about to introduce Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon, but Jang Neung-ak waved his hand and said,

“We already exchanged greetings outside, Madam.”

“Ah, is that so?”

“Yes, I have greeted the two of them.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's answer, Madam Jang pointed to an empty chair and said,

"Then have a seat."

"Yes, thank you."

Mok Gyeong-un went there, glanced at everyone once, and sat down.

Wi So-yeon was sitting next to him, and,

"How did you get in?"

She whispered to Mok Gyeong-un in a low voice.

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and replied,

"I have some business to take care of."

"That's not what I'm asking right now..."

Before Wi So-yeon could finish her sentence,

Madam Jang clasped her hands together, slightly bowed her head towards all the guests, and spoke,

"I'm afraid I have to seek your understanding, even though you have all gathered here. As you know, my husband is currently observing a three-year mourning period. That's why we are all wearing mourning clothes."

Of course, no one was unaware of this.

She continued,

“I’m grateful that you have come, but... I don’t think my husband will be able to meet anyone at the moment.”

“... What do you mean by that?”

Jang Neung-ak asked with narrowed eyes.

At his question, Madam Jang replied,

“It’s exactly as I said. My husband is currently living in isolation from the outside world. So I have no choice but to seek your understanding.”

“But aren’t you holding a first birthday celebration right now?”

“He didn’t even attend the first birthday celebration.”

At Madam Jang’s words, both Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon fell silent.

They had come to take advantage of this opportunity, but who would have expected to hear that they couldn’t even meet him after entering the household?

No matter how much authority one of the Five Kings had, it was hard to understand how he could send them away without even showing his face when potential successors competing for the position of the next Society Leader had visited.

Both of them were displeased due to the unexpected variable and couldn’t readily agree.

Then, Madam Jang said to Mok Gyeong-un,

“Likewise, the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master should also just withdraw this time...”

“I’m afraid that would be difficult.”

‘!?’

Before she could finish her sentence, a rejection was expressed.

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Madam Jang frowned and looked at him.

She was earnestly seeking their understanding, so what kind of manner of speech was this?

“I clearly said I was seeking your understanding...”

“I apologize, but as far as I know, the benefit of three first-place tokens is established by the sect’s rules, so no one can refuse it.”

“...”

At those words, Madam Jang bit her lower lip.

Mok Gyeong-un’s words were accurate.

Anyone who possessed three first-place tokens from the Corpse Blood Valley entrance could seek guidance from any executive, regardless of who they were.

And that executive could not refuse it.

Since it was established by the sect's rules, everyone had to accept it.

However, the problem was that the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha was in a state where he couldn't meet anyone.

That's why she had politely sought their understanding in front of everyone, including the Society Leader's disciples.

She thought that Mok Gyeong-un would no longer demand guidance, at least out of consideration for them.

But that expectation was off.

'This child, really...'

Was he lacking in tact? Or was he just stubborn?

Whatever it was, it had become quite troublesome.

If they made an exception for Mok Gyeong-un to meet him due to the sect's rules, what would happen to the potential successors?

It could be described as a dilemma.

In fact, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon were focusing on what answer she would give.

If she tried to let only Mok Gyeong-un in, citing the sect's rules, there was an atmosphere that they would protest.

-Swish!

At that moment, the second son Baek So-gang, who was standing next to Madam Jang, grabbed her sleeve and shook his head.

Madam Jang let out a long sigh.

‘There’s no other way.’

She had tried to refuse and send them away on her own terms, but that seemed difficult.

It might be better to experience it directly.

Everyone followed Madam Jang and the second son Baek So-gang to the innermost part of the estate.

Behind the main hall, there was a shrine for the ancestors, and next to it, a small detached building was located.

When they arrived in front of this place, the second son Baek So-gang asked for their understanding.

“Please wait here for a moment.”

Baek So-gang entered the detached building.

It took about half an hour after he went inside before he came out again.

However, a faint steam-like substance was rising from his shoulders as he emerged.

As they were wondering why,

-Swish!

The second son Baek So-gang bowed his head several times towards everyone with a polite gesture and said,

“Thank you for waiting. I have informed Father about the young masters, the young lady, and the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master who has come to seek guidance.”

“Did he say he would meet us?”

Jang Neung-ak asked.

The second son Baek So-gang made a troubled expression and soon opened his mouth,

“... He said he would meet you.”

“Oh! In that case, I’ll go first...”

“But there is a condition.”

“What?”

At Baek So-gang’s words, Jang Neung-ak’s voice rose slightly.

He was already displeased, thinking that they could have met but were trying to send them away because of Mok Gyeong-un.

But now he was talking about a condition, and no matter how much he came to gain his support, it was difficult to hide his displeasure.

On the other hand,

“May I ask what the condition is?”

Wi So-yeon calmly asked about it.

She thought it was right for the one in need to comply in the current situation.

At her question, Baek So-gang went into the detached building and brought something out again.

It was a small table, and on it were a teapot and several teacups.

“This is...”

“If you can drink the tea we serve and dissolve it with your internal energy, or if we determine that you can endure it for more than an hour, you can enter.”

‘!?’

At his words, everyone couldn’t hide their bewilderment.

What was this about?

What did it mean to drink the tea and endure it to enter?

Then, Wi So-yeon frowned her pretty brows and said,

“Could it be that what’s in the teapot is poison?”

“That’s right.”

‘What?’

At the second son Baek So-gang’s answer, everyone stirred.

They had been wondering what the condition was to enter and meet him, but this was completely unexpected.

Who would have thought they would be offered a cup of poison?

Jang Neung-ak spoke as if it was absurd,

“Are you joking now? Drink the poison and endure it to enter, what kind of...”

“I apologize. But if you can’t do this, you might face a setback if you go inside.”

“A setback?”

“That’s right. Father, no, the Family Head said it was alright to tell you, so I’ll reveal it. Currently, the inside of this detached building is filled with poison qi.”

‘!?’

At his words, Jang Neung-ak frowned and looked at the detached building.

The inside was filled with poison qi?

As he was puzzled, Madam Jang, the grand matriarch, spoke instead of the second son Baek So-gang,

“The reason I sought your understanding was because of that. I did so because entering there might harm you instead.”

“Hah...”

“Even within the family, at most, only four people, including this child, can enter. The inside of the detached building is filled with such strong poison qi that even the Baek family members who have learned poison arts since childhood find it difficult to endure, so I had no choice but to seek your understanding.”

“...”

“Yet, will you still enter?”

At her words, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon hesitated for a moment.

It was difficult to know why the inside was filled with poison qi or why the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha wasn’t coming out from there.

But based on what they were saying now, it seemed there would be no chance to meet him unless they went inside.

‘... Poison.’

The problem was simply the poison.

Judging from what Madam Jang and the second son Baek So-gang were saying, it didn't seem to be ordinary poison qi.

It was truly an absurd situation.

Did they have to go this far to meet the Annihilating Poison King?

‘Damn it.’

Jang Neung-ak shook his head back and forth.

Irritation surged through him, but there was no other way in the current situation.

If he gained the support of the Annihilating Poison King, he could definitely push Wi So-yeon out of the competition and even match his eldest martial brother to some extent.

No matter how unpleasant and distasteful it was, there was no reason to hesitate.

However, what was worrying was,

‘The poison of the Baek family.’

The poison arts of the Baek family led by the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha were known to be among the top three in the Central Plains.

He had heard that it was an extremely vicious poison art that was not easy to detoxify unless one was from the Sichuan Tang Clan or the Guyang Clan of the Western Regions. He wondered if he could easily endure it.

‘Endure it for an hour...’

It might be difficult if he didn't protect his internal organs with internal energy from the beginning.

Jang Neung-ak glanced at Wi So-yeon.

She also seemed to be hesitating, concerned about the same thing as him.

'Sigh.'

Alright.

If the conditions were the same for everyone, it was best to take the lead first.

That way, he could save some face.

Jang Neung-ak, who had made up his mind, was about to step forward at that very moment.

-Sizzle!

'!?'

At that moment, he saw someone already filling a cup in front of him.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

He had not expected him to suddenly take the lead.

Meanwhile, the second son of the Baek family, Baek So-gang, spoke with a somewhat worried expression,

“Are you sure you’ll be alright?”

This poison was no ordinary poison.

It was a level that even skilled poison masters would find difficult to endure easily, as it was condensed from the poison qi inside the detached building and mixed with water.

‘His internal energy level seems shallow, if he drinks it carelessly and something happens before we can detoxify him...’

That was Baek So-gang’s concern.

Based on his spiritual perception, Mok Gyeong-un’s internal energy level seemed to be at most at the initial stage of the peak realm.

With this level of internal energy, there was a high probability that he would not be able to withstand the poison and would face a setback.

Baek So-gang admonished in a whispered voice,

“Young Master Mok. To be honest, don’t overdo it. With Young Master Mok’s current internal energy cultivation...”

-Gulp!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un downed the cup in one go.

‘Oh my?’

Baek So-gang's expression became perplexed.

He had tried to give him time to sufficiently raise his internal energy, but he just swallowed the extremely poisonous tea in one go?

But what he said next was quite a sight.

"It's sweet."

'!?'

Chapter 143 – Annihilating Poison King (4)

'What? Sweet?'

Baek So-gang, the second son of the Outer Master of the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha, clicked his tongue inwardly as if it was absurd.

Contrary to his appearance, the kid seemed to be full of bravado.

This extreme poison was something that even skilled internal energy masters would find difficult to endure if they didn't purposely engage in breathing and energy circulation techniques.

Let alone Mok Gyeong-un, who was merely at the early stage of the peak realm, he couldn't possibly withstand it.

'I need to prepare.'

The fortunate thing was that this was the Baek family's estate.

They were prepared to detoxify him if necessary.

At that moment, someone approached.

“Is it enough to drink it and endure for an hour?”

It was Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader.

Since he had a reputation to uphold, he had wanted to be the first to drink the poisoned cup.

However, Mok Gyeong-un had beaten him to it, and his mood seemed unpleasant, judging from his expression.

“My lord!”

Seo Hye-in, the leader of the Grass Smoke Group and the fourth-ranked member of the Five Mountains Alliance, called out to him with a worried look.

No matter how much he wanted to gain support, drinking the poison that only four people could endure even in the Baek family, where skilled poison masters gathered, was an extremely dangerous act.

-Swish!

At that moment, Ho Jong-hyeok, the Grand Clan Leader of the Destruction Clan and the third-ranked member, shook his head.

“Shouldn’t we stop him? This is too much, no matter what...”

“Are you going to insult our lord?”

“Pardon?”

“What do you think will happen to our lord’s reputation if he backs down in front of other potential successors?”

At Ho Jong-hyeok’s words, Seo Hye-in closed her mouth.

His words made sense.

Although the condition was somewhat absurd, retreating in this situation would be equivalent to taking a step back in the competition for the successor position.

At that moment, Wi So-yeon, the third disciple of the Society Leader, also stepped forward and said,

“I will drink it too.”

She had also made up her mind.

In fact, Wi So-yeon possessed more extensive internal energy than anyone else, so she had some confidence.

However, she had never directly swallowed poison and done such a thing before, so she had hesitated for a moment.

‘... I can’t yield.’

From Wi So-yeon’s perspective, she absolutely needed the support of the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

That’s why she couldn’t back down like this.

As she approached the table with the teapot containing the poison, she glanced at Mok Gyeong-un.

‘Reckless.’

She had felt it from the first time she saw him, but this person was treading between boldness and recklessness.

She had directly confirmed his internal energy level in the Corpse Blood Valley report.

If it were an ordinary poison, he might be able to expel it from his body even with the internal energy of the initial stage of the peak realm if he continuously engaged in breathing and energy circulation techniques.

However, the current poison was on a completely different level.

It was an extreme poison created by the Baek family, one of the top three in the Central Plains when it came to poison arts.

If one didn’t possess supreme-stage internal energy, it might be difficult to endure.

‘Why is he going this far?’

She couldn’t understand Mok Gyeong-un at all.

If he had obtained the first-place tokens from the Corpse Blood Valley entrance, he should have sought guidance from the two people who held the title of Eight Stars, the supreme masters of the Central Plains, among the Five Kings.

But why the Annihilating Poison King, of all people?

‘What exactly does he want to learn?’

The Annihilating Poison King’s main martial art was poison arts.

It was a field that was completely different from ordinary martial artists, so even if he sought guidance, there wouldn’t be much gain. She couldn’t understand why he was doing this.

‘Is he an oddball?’

Anyway, it didn’t matter.

Now that things had turned out this way, she would be able to confirm Mok Gyeong-un’s true skills.

Since her martial brother had mentioned that he was in the realm of the supreme stage, she would be able to see if he had really progressed that much in this short period.

-Gulp!

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak swallowed the poison in the cup in one go.

Since Mok Gyeong-un had done it first, he couldn’t show himself drinking it slowly.

However, because it was an extreme poison, it was difficult to completely hide his expression.

‘Ugh.’

Along with the burning pain in his lips, nausea and extreme disgust surged up.

He felt like vomiting it out, even if he had to retch.

‘Damn it.’

They wanted him to eat this and endure for an hour?

Rather than an hour, he had to first detoxify the poison that had entered his body.

Even though he was protecting his esophagus and stomach walls with internal energy as soon as it entered, it still felt burning, and he was even getting a headache.

It was indeed worthy of being called the Baek family’s extreme poison.

‘I can’t show it.’

Jang Neung-ak tried his best to manage his expression.

His subordinates were also watching, and he couldn’t make a distorted face in front of that damn wench.

‘Sigh.’

Next, Wi So-yeon also swallowed the poison in the cup.

She didn’t even want to taste it, so she wrapped her mouth and tongue with internal energy and swallowed the poison.

Therefore, she could pay more attention to her expression compared to Jang Neung-ak.

However, even though she protected her tongue, she couldn’t help but frown at the stinging smell that passed through her throat and pierced her nose.

“Cough.”

Wi So-yeon, who had unknowingly coughed softly, turned her head with a reddened face.

What kind of unsightly behavior was this?

Coughing because of the nauseating smell.

She felt somewhat embarrassed, but anyway, she had to endure for an hour or quickly dissolve this extreme poison.

-Sizzle!

Not long after, a purple vapor rose from Wi So-yeon’s shoulders.

She wasn’t the only one.

Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, also started to have purple vapor rising from his shoulders, although slightly later than Wi So-yeon.

‘As expected!’

Wi So-yeon’s subordinates showed a triumphant expression upon seeing this.

Her profound internal energy was already famous within the Heaven and Earth Society.

‘Damn that wench.’

Jang Neung-ak cursed Wi So-yeon inwardly.

If it weren't for her bizarre constitution, she would never have caught the Master's eye.

At this rate, that wench might dissolve the poison first.

Therefore, Jang Neung-ak focused even more on expelling the poison from his body.

-Whoosh!

Perhaps because of that, the purple vapor above Jang Neung-ak's shoulders became even thicker.

Madam Jang, the wife of the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha, and Baek So-gang, the second son, couldn't help but admire this scene inwardly.

That poison was an extreme poison close to the poison qi that filled the detached building.

Being able to dissolve the poison that even the martial artists who had learned the Baek family's poison arts couldn't handle rashly was truly remarkable.

'It's not ordinary internal energy.'

They had heard that the Society Leader's disciples all had deep internal energy, and it seemed to be true.

At this rate, it seemed they would be able to completely dissolve the extreme poison within half an hour, not even an hour.

However,

‘What’s this?’

The second son Baek So-gang looked at Mok Gyeong-un with a questioning gaze.

Unlike the Society Leader’s potential successors, Mok Gyeong-un was just standing still.

He thought he might be doing that because he was barely enduring it by raising his internal energy, but there was no sign of distress or anything on his face.

Rather, he even seemed relaxed.

‘... Is he really enduring the poison?’

It didn’t seem that way at all, no matter how he looked at it.

Those two potential successors had not cultivated their internal energy as deeply, so enduring it would be their best option, but why was there no change in his expression at all?

Wasn’t he having any difficulty?

It wasn’t just him who had this question.

‘What the hell is with this bastard?’

Jang Neung-ak also couldn’t hide his bewilderment when he saw Mok Gyeong-un standing still without even dissolving the poison.

Why was he just standing there?

This poison was so strong that if he didn't quickly dissolve it, it could not only strain his internal organs but also affect his brain.

'It should be dangerous, right?'

Wi So-yeon also looked at Mok Gyeong-un with concerned eyes.

He was the one who had drunk the poisoned cup first.

Yet, the fact that he still wasn't raising his internal energy to dissolve the poison seemed extremely dangerous.

Unable to stand it any longer, the second son Baek So-gang approached and spoke in a low voice,

"Young Master Mok, if you're having trouble expelling the poison qi, please say so."

Trying too hard to pretend he was fine could lead to trouble.

However,

"It's alright. But if there's no problem with drinking the poison, can't I just go in?"

'!?'

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Baek So-gang's eyes narrowed.

If there's no problem, he can just go in?

Could it be that he was really fine even though he had drunk the poison and hadn't even expelled it?

“Young Master Mok... Are you really alright?”

“Yes, I’m fine.”

‘How could that be?’

Baek So-gang looked at Mok Gyeong-un’s face.

Then, his eyes soon turned into a gaze of incomprehension.

That’s because if he had been poisoned, there should have been changes in his lips and complexion first, but there were no such signs at all on Mok Gyeong-un.

‘... Hah.’

What on earth was going on?

He shouldn’t have learned poison arts, so how could he be so unaffected after drinking the extreme poison?

As he was utterly baffled, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Can I go in?”

“Young Master Mok... By any chance...”

He wanted to ask if he could examine his body with internal energy.

However, that was an act that completely deviated from martial etiquette even among members of the same Heaven and Earth Society.

Therefore, he couldn't bring himself to say those words.

So,

“Young Master Mok, may I verify something for a moment?”

“Verify?”

“That’s right.”

There was a way to examine the body with internal energy, but there was also another method.

If Mok Gyeong-un’s saliva was dropped into a neutralizing liquid, they could determine whether he had been poisoned or not.

Those who practiced poison arts always carried this with them.

The second son Baek So-gang took out a small bottle the size of two fingers joined together from his waist and soaked a white handkerchief with the liquid.

Then he said to Mok Gyeong-un,

“Please put your saliva on this.”

“It’s not difficult, but is there a need to verify?”

“Pardon?”

"The ingredients seem to be a combination of picrotoxin, aconitine, urushiol, blue softshell turtle intestine poison, jimsonweed, mandrake, white snakeroot, *Carassius auratus*, *Aconitum carmichaelii*, red-striped scorpion venom, fire ant venom, poison dart frog venom, wasp venom, yohimbine, tetrodotoxin, and the yellow seeds of the oleander flower. Am I right?"

'!!!!!!'

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the second son Baek So-gang's eyes widened as if they would pop out.

For a moment, he doubted his own ears.

'What the hell is this...?'

He was so shocked that he was at a loss for words.

The reason was that the extreme poison was created by condensing all the ingredients Mok Gyeong-un had mentioned.

The only ones who knew the main ingredients of this poison were the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha and his sons.

It was a combination of ingredients that were extremely difficult to obtain, and if the poison was condensed to this extent, it would be difficult for even skilled poison masters to identify even after a long analysis.

'... This is unbelievable.'

It was so absurd that he wanted to deny it.

Mok Gyeong-un then said to him,

“Did I miss anything?”

At this question, the subordinates of the Society Leader’s second disciple Jang Neung-ak and third disciple Wi So-yeon looked at him with disbelief.

Was it possible to identify the ingredients after swallowing the poison, as if guessing food ingredients?

No matter what, this was too much.

As they were thinking that,

“... You got everything right.”

A shocking answer came from Baek So-gang’s mouth.

‘He got it right?’

‘Did he just say he got it right?’

‘What is this?’

The subordinates of the two potential successors were all astir.

Was it possible for someone who wasn’t a skilled poison master or a pharmacist to correctly identify the ingredients of a poison right after ingesting it?

They all had expressions of disbelief.

Meanwhile, Madam Jang, who was also surprised by her son Baek So-gang's words, asked,

"... Young Master Mok, have you learned poison arts by any chance?"

"How could that be?"

"Then how did you know the ingredients of the poison?"

"Ah, I've been interested in medicinal herbs and poisonous plants since I was young, so I studied them."

"Studied? On your own?"

At this question, Mok Gyeong-un thought of his grandfather, but he had no reason to reveal that to them.

And after coming out and experiencing the world, it seemed that some appropriate humility was necessary to a certain extent.

So,

"How could I have learned it on my own? I received help from the physicians and pharmacists around me."

"Hah..."

Madam Jang was dumbfounded by those words.

It was difficult to fully believe this answer, but if Mok Gyeong-un was really this skilled in identifying poisonous plants or medicinal herbs due to his interest, he could be called a genius.

It wasn't easy to differentiate the taste of medicinal herbs that were less harmful to the body.

Let alone poisons that were closer to pain than taste.

'Who the hell is this child?'

If his level of identifying poisons was this high, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he was close to the Young Family Head of the Baek family, no, the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

As they were amazed, Mok Gyeong-un spoke as if it was no big deal,

"If someone is interested in medicinal herbs or poisonous plants or has studied them, anyone can easily guess it. I don't understand why you're reacting like this."

'!?'

Chapter 144 – Poison Master (1)

"If anyone has even the slightest interest in medicinal herbs or poisonous plants, they can easily guess it. I don't understand why you're reacting like this."

'!?'

Anyone can do it?

"..."

Was he trying to mock them now?

Or was he just unable to show humility?

Madam Jang, who had been staring at Mok Gyeong-un with a somewhat dumbfounded expression, finally clicked her tongue and said,

“I didn’t know the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master had such profound knowledge of poisons.”

“I’m also surprised.”

Baek So-gang, the second son of the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha, also agreed with his mother’s words.

Most martial artists, unless they were exceptionally cautious, considered poison arts to be cowardly or unworthy of martial artists and didn’t even show interest in them.

However, Mok Gyeong-un’s extensive knowledge was at a level that would be difficult to know without properly studying poisons or medicinal herbs.

‘What’s even more surprising is that unbelievable level of identification.’

The Annihilating Poison King always told his sons.

He said that the most important thing for those who practice poison arts to never neglect training was the cultivation of their sense of taste and smell to identify poisons.

Smell aside, training the sense of taste was not easy.

Poisons are very dangerous to handle and can directly lead to death if mishandled, so rather than tasting a large amount, one tastes an extremely small amount.

After doing so, one gradually builds up resistance through training.

Since it takes a long time to fully grasp the taste of a single poison, it is inevitable that the training of the sense of taste would be slow.

'... Is it innate?'

From Baek So-gang's perspective, that was the only way he could view it.

The fact that Mok Gyeong-un, who was only 17 years old and didn't primarily practice poison arts, had such a sharp tongue could only be explained as a natural talent.

'Oh my.'

Baek So-gang suddenly felt regret.

Come to think of it, he would have become a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master through the Corpse Blood Valley entrance.

If his father had participated in the disciple selection ceremony this time, he could have brought this child with such remarkable talent.

Even if his father had seen him, he would have coveted him enough.

'If we had brought him, the main family's... Ah!'

Baek So-gang's eyes widened.

Upon reflection, he had been wondering why this person sought his father's guidance with three first-place tokens, but now he understood.

"I now understand why Young Master Mok wanted to seek guidance from my father."

“Ah... I see.”

Madam Jang also nodded at the words of her second son, Baek So-gang.

If someone had such profound knowledge and interest in poisons, they would naturally want to receive the Annihilating Poison King’s teachings.

Now his visit made sense.

‘I thought it was a waste of time, but I guess not. Even if he can’t become a formal disciple, if he receives my husband’s teachings, the Shadow Clan and our Baek family might form a good connection.’

However, the problem was whether her husband would be willing to teach this child.

Although it was established by the sect’s rules, her husband was someone who had his own stubbornness.

He never went back on something he had already decided.

It was at that moment.

-Whoosh!

“Hah.”

Wi So-yeon, the third disciple of the Society Leader, had completely dissolved the poison, exhaling white vapor instead of purple.

Seeing this, Baek So-gang, the second son of the Baek family, couldn’t hide his astonishment.

To dissolve the poison in less than half an hour.

‘Her internal energy is truly deep.’

It was just as the rumors said.

Soon, Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, also succeeded in completely dissolving the poison.

Although he was a hair’s breadth slower than Wi So-yeon, he was also fast.

Seeing them, Madam Jang clasped her hands together and said,

“The internal energy of you two is extraordinary. I didn’t expect you to dissolve the poison in such a short time.”

At her praise, Wi So-yeon waved her hand and expressed humility.

“The poison of the Baek family is truly remarkable. If my concentration had wavered even slightly, it would have been difficult.”

“How could that be? You must have overcome it sufficiently.”

“...”

On the other hand, Jang Neung-ak silently glared at Wi So-yeon.

His reputation had become unspeakable.

He had wanted to show himself dissolving the poison first, but he was beaten by a hair's breadth due to Wi So-yeon's monstrous internal energy.

-Creak!

He couldn't help but feel his pride hurt.

It was because he had been surpassed in front of his subordinates.

Jang Neung-ak, who had been glaring at her with a displeased gaze, finally shifted his gaze and looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

'... Did this kid have such skills?'

He had heard the vague conversation.

It seemed that he had dissolved the poison in a different way from himself and Wi So-yeon.

According to Madam Jang's words, he seemed to know a lot about poisons.

'Then he's even more desirable.'

He had already lost Wi Maeng-cheon, his left-hand man and the second-ranked member of the Five Mountains Alliance.

If this kid was versatile in many aspects, he seemed capable of filling the void left by Wi Maeng-cheon.

Wi So-yeon also felt the same way.

'Did he also have expertise in poisons?'

She had wanted to find out Mok Gyeong-un's true internal energy level this time, but it seemed he had detoxified the poison in a different way.

So she felt like she had seen an unexpected side of him.

Perhaps Mok Gyeong-un's true value lay in these diverse talents.

'... I might have to make him my person no matter what.'

She had been slightly hesitant because of his background as a hostage of the righteous faction, but if she was going to lose him to her second martial brother, it seemed worthwhile to bring him over somehow.

It was at that moment.

"Then, may we go in? Madam."

Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, took the lead and asked Madam Jang.

Although it was a hair's breadth, he was slower than Wi So-yeon in detoxification, but what mattered now was not that.

It was about who would have a private meeting with the Annihilating Poison King first.

At his question, Madam Jang looked at her second son, Baek So-gang.

Then,

"For now, the Family Head said that if you have dissolved the poison, you can come inside together."

“Together?”

“Yes. I apologize, but that was the Family Head’s intention.”

At his words, Wi So-yeon inwardly breathed a sigh of relief.

If she lost the lead in a situation where she needed to request support, it could become somewhat disadvantageous.

Of course, going in together wasn’t a particularly good thing either, but at least it was better than letting him have a private meeting first.

‘Tsk.’

Jang Neung-ak clicked his tongue.

He had tried to have a private meeting first, but if it turned out like this, it would be quite annoying.

Wi So-yeon was sure to try to interfere with him.

However, he had no choice but to respect the Annihilating Poison King’s intention if he wanted to meet him.

“... Understood.”

“Thank you for your understanding.”

With that, Baek So-gang took the lead.

Standing at the entrance of the detached building, he gave a warning in advance.

“As I mentioned earlier, the inside is filled with poison qi. Please adjust your breathing with a circulation technique to block the poison qi from entering your body.”

“Got it.”

“Yes.”

“Young Master Mok...”

“You don’t need to worry about me.”

“... Alright. But unlike drinking a single cup, the poison qi completely fills the inside of the detached building, so if you find it difficult to endure, you must come out.”

“Yes.”

Jang Neung-ak raised the corner of his mouth and spoke to the responding Mok Gyeong-un.

“If you’re struggling, let me know. I’ll move you outside.”

He was being hospitable towards Mok Gyeong-un.

At this, Wi So-yeon was about to say that she would also help him, but she closed her mouth.

She didn’t want to argue with her second senior apprentice brother over such a thing.

“Then, please follow me, you three.”

-Creak!

As the door opened, the three of them followed Baek So-gang, the second son of the Baek family, inside.

Entering the separate residence, there was another entrance inside, and faint poisonous energy lingered around it like fog.

Charcoal-filled straw bags were hanging all over the walls.

“The straw bags contain charcoal and various medicinal ingredients that have detoxifying effects. If we don’t do this, the poisonous energy will leak out.”

Baek So-gang kindly explained this.

Then, pointing to the door that looked like a wall, he said,

“If you follow the corridor, you’ll find the family head in the central inner room. The poisonous energy grows thicker as you go, so please maintain your qi circulation.”

-Creak!

Baek So-gang opened the door.

Then, the front was obscured by a hazy purple fog, blocking the view.

Seeing this, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon’s eyes flickered with interest.

‘What in the world is he doing inside to...?’

‘The poisonous energy is tremendous.’

Although they had been warned in advance and knew about it, they had never expected the poisonous energy to be this dense inside.

Could they even have a proper conversation like this?

Even if they protected their body's exterior and interior with qi circulation, if they breathed incorrectly while speaking, they would be too busy neutralizing the poisonous energy entering their lungs.

"Follow me."

Baek So-gang took the lead and went inside.

Then, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon followed with somewhat tense expressions.

On the other hand, Mok Gyeong-un seemed indifferent.

-Hey, are you really okay? The poisonous energy seems too severe.

Cheongnyeong was so worried that he had to ask.

In response, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders as if it was no big deal.

Poison had no meaning to him.

After all, the blood flowing through his veins was extremely poisonous in the first place.

-Thud, thud!

Following the long corridor, it didn't take long before the place called the central inner room came into view.

However, it was blocked not by a wooden panel but by a stone that seemed to be made of a special material.

Seeing this, Jang Neung-ak looked at Baek So-gang with curious eyes.

Then, Baek So-gang answered,

“This place is a special training room built to withstand our family’s poison techniques.”

“Training room?”

“Yes. Once you reach the sixth level or higher of our family’s true divine art, the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, you can even melt the surroundings with poisonous energy, so to endure this, you need stones of the same material as the spirit-restraining stone here.”

In other words, ordinary stones or wood-like materials would easily melt in the poison.

Indeed, the Baek family’s poison techniques went beyond the ordinary level.

‘Remarkable.’

It made sense why the Society Leader, his master, had said that in a certain sense, the Poison King Baek Sa-ha was more dangerous than the two Kings who received the title of the Eight Stars.

The poison of the Poison King Baek Sa-ha possessed the power to annihilate hundreds of martial artists in a short time.

No, it could be even more than that.

At that moment,

“Father, no, Family Head. I have brought Young Master Jang Neung-ak, Lady Wi So-yeon, and a disciple of Shadow Clan.”

Baek So-gang tapped on the wall that looked like a door and spoke.

Then, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon stared intently at the door.

They had to persuade him at this place and somehow gain his support no matter what.

This was their common thought.

While they were doing so, a voice was heard from inside.

“All three have entered?”

Although it was hoarse, the energy felt from the voice was tremendous.

Indeed, he was worthy of being one of the Five Kings, known as the top experts of the Heaven and Earth Society.

Then, Jang Neung-ak adjusted his breathing with qi circulation and opened his mouth.

“Venerable Poison King. I am Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader. To congratulate your grandson’s first birthday and pay my respects...”

“Kekeke, it’s not to pay respects but because you’re more interested in the position of the successor, right?”

“Pardon?”

“You’re here because you need this old man’s support in the successor’s rivalry, aren’t you?”

‘!?’

Jang Neung-ak was momentarily at a loss for words at the voice that abruptly hit the nail on the head.

Although he had never had a conversation with him unlike the other Demon Kings, he hadn’t expected him to have such a straightforward way of speaking.

However, Jang Neung-ak was not one to be greatly flustered by this.

“Hohoho. As expected of you, Elder. Why bother with flowery words? You’re right.”

“It’s good that you’re honest.”

At the voice coming from inside, Wi So-yeon also hurriedly opened her mouth.

“Elder Baek Sa-ha. It’s me, Wi So-yeon. Do you remember me?”

“How could I forget?”

“I really wanted to see you, Elder.”

“Kekeke, you must have come for the same reason, so of course you did.”

“I won’t deny it.”

She also answered honestly.

Looking at the way Baek Sa-ha spoke now, it seemed that if she tried to say flattering words, she would only incur dislike.

“Elder.....”

As Wi So-yeon was about to say something,

Jang Neung-ak cut her off and spoke first.

“Elder. I’ll get straight to the point. Please help me.”

‘He’s making a move like this, I see.’

Wi So-yeon bit her lower lip and was about to raise her voice to intervene.

“Elder!”

“Enough!”

A short rebuke erupted from inside the door.

At the sound that rang in their ears, the two of them immediately closed their mouths.

Soon, Baek Sa-ha’s voice was heard again.

“You want to be the successor, but your words come before your actions.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You want to receive this old man’s support?”

Wasn’t that obvious?

That’s why they had come here using the birthday celebration as an excuse.

The two of them nodded and replied,

“I need your support, Elder.”

“That’s right.”

“Kekeke, if you want this old man’s recognition that badly, show your actions before your words.”

“.....What do you mean by that?”

“It’s meaningless to tell this old man your story in detail. A martial artist proves themselves through strength. If you want to be the Society Leader, come inside and make this old man get up from his seat.”

At these words from Baek Sa-ha, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon’s expressions hardened.

Since they had already fulfilled the conditions for entering, they thought that from now on, it would be a matter of persuading him through conversation.

However, they hadn’t expected another test to be waiting for them.

They knew that Baek Sa-ha had an eccentric and stubborn personality, but this was unexpected.

‘Is he testing our martial arts?’

However, it seemed that he was looking down on them too much.

Although it was said that the Poison King Baek Sa-ha’s poison techniques were in a different league compared to others, they were disciples of the Society Leader who could be considered the supreme of the Heaven and Earth Society.

They were confident that their martial arts could not be ignored even by the executives.

‘Just making him stand up.’

It wasn’t that difficult either.

At this, Jang Neung-ak stepped forward and said,

“Then I will try first. Elder.”

“It doesn’t matter who goes first. As long as you can come inside and make this old man stand up, I’ll support that person as much as you want.”

At his words implying that he didn’t care, Jang Neung-ak raised the corner of his mouth wryly.

First of all, this place was filled with poisonous energy, so the longer one stayed, the greater the consumption of internal energy.

Therefore, if one were to step up, it was advantageous to go first.

‘.....That’s what he’ll think?’

Wi So-yeon inwardly sneered.

Her thoughts were different.

In any case, she was confident in her internal energy, so she was also confident that she could last longer than Jang Neung-ak inside, and if she stepped up as the latter, she could grasp how the Poison King responded, so she considered that to be more advantageous.

“Then I will enter. Elder.”

“Kekeke. Go ahead and try.”

Jang Neung-ak placed his palm on the door made of stone walls and pushed.

The door was thicker than he thought, requiring him to use strength.

-Rumble!

As the door opened, the inside gradually came into view.

It was at that very moment.

-Hwaaaaah!

As the door opened halfway,

-Thud!

“Ugh.”

Jang Neung-ak, who was pushing the door, knelt on one knee on the floor and clutched his chest.

‘What is this?’

His insides churned, and he tasted blood in his mouth.

Even though the poisonous energy filling the inside of the separate residence was already tremendously strong, the poisonous energy that was incomparably more severe made it difficult to breathe.

“Cough.”

Black blood flowed from Jang Neung-ak’s mouth.

However, he wasn’t the only one exposed to this poisonous energy.

-Bam!

Wi So-yeon also sat cross-legged and entered qi circulation due to the severe poisonous energy suddenly pushed out.

This was incomparable to the poisonous energy that filled the corridor of the separate residence.

The poisonous energy was so strong that her hands and feet were trembling.

‘Ah. In the end.....’

Baek So-gang, the second son of Baek Sa-ha who had been watching this, clicked his tongue inwardly.

His father had no intention of supporting any of them from the beginning.

That's why he had presented a task that they could never overcome.

'Wave Demon Poison Scripture, Seventh Level.'

The poisonous energy currently spewing out from the inside was the wave poison fog that could only be emitted by reaching the seventh level of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.

This wasn't the kind of poisonous energy that even a top expert at the peak could withstand.

The only thing that could guard against this was learning the same Wave Demon Poison Scripture like himself and adapting to the poisonous energy.

However,

"It's interesting. Releasing poison in the form of fog from the body. Is this what poison arts are?"

'!?'

At the voice he heard, Baek So-gang's eyes widened.

There was one person he had forgotten about while observing these two.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un, the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master.

'How can this be?'

For a moment, Baek So-gang doubted his own eyes.

No matter how proficient he was in poisons, he thought Mok Gyeong-un wouldn't be able to endure it this time.

But Mok Gyeong-un was standing there, looking perfectly fine.

"Young Master Mok? How..."

At that moment, Baek Sa-ha's voice came from inside the room filled with thick purple fog.

"... What the hell are you?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"How can you endure this poison qi?"

-Sizzle!

Soon, the fog obscuring the front dispersed, revealing the purple face of an old man sitting cross-legged on the floor, extending sharp fingernails.

He was none other than the Annihilating Poison King, Baek Sa-ha.

Baek Sa-ha had a gaze of utter incomprehension.

He had never expected to see someone standing so unaffected in the poison qi that even the Society Leader's two disciples couldn't endure.

Moreover,

‘That child... Isn’t he not even circulating his energy right now?’

If he had been circulating his energy, he would have sensed it from the beginning.

Yet, to endure like that in this place filled with poison qi without protecting his body with energy circulation?

If that was the case, it meant he had resistance to poison, but...

“... Don’t tell me you’ve cultivated poison arts?”

At his question, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head and replied,

“Ah, no, it’s not like that.”

“You say it’s not? Then how can you endure this deadly poison qi?”

At Baek Sa-ha’s question, Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head with an incomprehensible expression.

Then,

“Deadly? This?”

‘!?’

Chapter 145 – Poison Master (2)

“Deadly? This?”

‘!?’

A tone as if he couldn’t understand.

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha frowned.

It could sound very arrogant, but looking at Mok Gyeong-un’s current state, it really seemed like he was not affected by the poison qi at all.

‘My goodness.’

It was a truly astonishing sight.

The fog of wave poison that could only be unleashed upon reaching the seventh layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture was so deadly that even masters who had reached the supreme stage could be instantly poisoned if they didn’t maintain an appropriate distance.

Wasn’t there a prime example right here?

“Huff... Huff...”

“Hah.”

Even the Society Leader’s two disciples, Jang Neung-ak and Wi So-yeon, were preoccupied with dissolving the wave poison fog after being exposed to it due to a moment of carelessness.

They probably couldn’t hear anything right now.

The poison qi was so strong that Mok Gyeong-un's unaffected reaction seemed truly bizarre.

"You said you were the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master?"

At the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha's question, his second son Baek So-gang, who had been staring with an unbelievable expression, hastily replied,

"Y-Yes! That's right."

"He's a very interesting fellow. He's not wearing a poison-repelling robe, and his internal energy isn't thick, but I'm curious how he's unharmed by my wave poison."

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un politely bowed his head and said,

"It's a matter of constitution, so please don't pay much attention to it."

"Constitution?"

"Yes."

"Ha!"

The Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha clicked his tongue as if he was dumbfounded.

Occasionally, there are individuals who have a strong natural resistance to poison.

However, that occasional resistance is also about enduring or self-detoxifying ordinary levels of poison, not the poison of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.

This extreme poison, which can only be acquired through training with hundreds of different poisons, is completely different from ordinary poisons.

Enduring such a tremendous poison solely with one's constitution was impossible.

"Are you trying to mock me?"

"How could I possibly do that? I merely spoke the truth."

"The truth... Tsk, fine. Then I'll personally uncover your secret."

"My secret?"

"Yes. Come closer."

-Grab!

The Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha extended his hand forward and made a grabbing motion.

Then, the surrounding true energy fluctuated, and Mok Gyeong-un's body was about to be pulled by it.

'Huh?'

Is this really the technique of capturing objects from a distance?

Mok Gyeong-un instinctively realized that Baek Sa-ha was using his true energy to pull him.

Indeed, Baek Sa-ha's true energy was on a different level.

The Shadow Clan Master was also strong, but Baek Sa-ha's was far more extensive.

-Screech!

Mok Gyeong-un's feet were dragged across the wooden floor.

However, he had only moved about two steps.

Seeing that he wasn't being pulled as easily as expected, a glint of surprise flashed in the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha's eyes.

'Look at this kid.'

Based on his spiritual perception, Mok Gyeong-un's martial prowess seemed to be at most at the early stage of the peak realm.

Yet, he was resisting his true energy.

This level of resistance was only possible upon reaching the pinnacle stage of the transcendent realm.

'He seems to have mastered the skill of concealing his internal energy even from those with higher cultivation than himself. But my internal energy is...'

-Grab!

Baek Sa-ha stretched out his hand once more and pulled.

Then, a true energy nearly twice as strong as before enveloped Mok Gyeong-un's body.

'This is...'

Mok Gyeong-un let out a soft sigh and then entrusted his body to that true energy.

To resist this, he would have to unleash the death energy in his middle danjeon as well, but there was no need to reveal that power.

-Thud!

Soon, Mok Gyeong-un's body floated and flew to Baek Sa-ha's front.

In that state, Baek Sa-ha gently drew a trajectory with his palm, and Mok Gyeong-un's body spun around and was forcibly seated on the floor.

'He manipulates true energy as if breathing.'

Indeed, the title of Five Kings was not undeserved.

If a master of approaching the Unrestrained Realm was like this, he couldn't even imagine how strong those who had truly surpassed the wall would be.

At that moment, Baek Sa-ha spoke,

"Come to think of it, you said you wanted to receive my guidance, right?"

"Yes."

"Then tell me how you endured my poison. Depending on your answer, I will decide whether to give you guidance or not."

"That's strange."

“What’s strange?”

“Based on the sect’s rules, you shouldn’t be able to refuse, but you’re talking as if you can reject me depending on your decision.”

“Hahaha, of course, the sect’s rules must be followed.”

“But...”

“But I could just teach you how to peel the bark of a sorghum tree and send you away. That’s also a form of guidance.”

“Peeling the bark of a sorghum tree is not martial arts.”

“It’s an example that I can teach you something useless.”

At Baek Sa-ha’s words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled inwardly.

As the Shadow Clan Master had said, he indeed seemed to be eccentric and had his own stubbornness.

So Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Since you put it that way, I should definitely tell you.”

“Hahaha. You’ve made up your mind well. So, how did you endure my wave poison?”

“It’s my constitution.”

“...”

One of the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha's eyebrows arched up.

His face was already purple, making him look fierce and grotesque, but his expression seemed to transform into that of a demon.

“I was going to talk nicely for the sake of your master's face, but it seems you don't want that.”

“I have spoken honestly to you.”

“Honest? Fine. Then if it's your constitution, let's see if you can endure this as well.”

“Hmm?”

-Whoosh!

The moment he questioned, the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha's hand turned purple.

It was more condensed than the fog form and far surpassed the poison qi from earlier.

The Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha smiled menacingly and said,

“Try enduring my Wave Demon Palm Technique as well.”

-Blast!

Baek Sa-ha's palm soon struck Mok Gyeong-un's chest.

At that moment, the back of his clothes tore, and poison qi spurted out through his back.

It was a phenomenon caused by the principle of acupoint striking.

The Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha curled the corner of his mouth.

‘As the poison qi penetrates, his internal organs will be struck by the poison qi. He talked about constitution or whatever, but now that I’ve directly injected it inside, let’s see if you can dissolve it.’

He was curious to see how Mok Gyeong-un would dissolve the poison.

Since it was certain that he hadn’t cultivated poison arts, he would have no choice but to reveal his secret.

Or so he thought, but,

“How long do I need to endure it?”

“... Don’t tell me you’re alright?”

“Yes. If it was a test to see whether the poison would work or not, it’s a pointless act due to my constitution.”

“What the hell are you?”

The Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha was dumbfounded.

The poison qi contained in the palm technique just now possessed the power to prevent even skilled masters from breathing properly and kill them in no time if they were hit properly.

Yet, this kid was blabbering away.

-Grab!

Baek Sa-ha grabbed Mok Gyeong-un's collar and pulled him.

"How did you do it? Without even circulating your energy, how did you endure my poison?"

"It's the same question. And I have the same answer."

"Nonsense!"

"It's true."

"Are you mocking me? The poison just now could melt even stone. Do you think you can endure it simply with your constitution?"

"Hmm. It seems you don't believe me."

"Would you believe it if you were me?"

"Are you really curious?"

"... Do you truly wish to die?"

-Whoosh!

Suddenly, strong poison qi and killing intent burst out from Baek Sa-ha's entire body as his anger surged.

The force was so strong that even his second son, Baek So-gang, took a step back in tension.

‘What is he trying to do by provoking Father?’

He couldn’t understand Mok Gyeong-un’s intentions at all.

Rather than asking for a detailed explanation of the secret, it would have been sufficient to just tell him how he endured the poison qi, but he kept provoking the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un spoke,

“Actually, there’s a simple reason why I could endure your poison.”

“Speak. If you’ve mocked me again this time, regardless of being the Shadow Clan Master’s disciple, you’ll have to be prepared for the consequences.”

“I understand. Since you’re so displeased, there’s no reason for me not to tell you.”

“Hmph. No need to beat around the bush and say you don’t want to die.”

“Let’s say that’s the case.”

“Hah...”

Baek Sa-ha clicked his tongue.

Even though he was showing such an angry appearance, this kid was speaking his mind without even blinking an eye.

He couldn’t tell if he had lost his fear or if he was just bold.

However, one thing was certain: judging from his unwavering eyes, it didn't seem to be the former.

"Speak."

"Since I must speak only to you, I will take the liberty of being rude for a moment."

"What?"

Questioning him, Mok Gyeong-un lowered his head close to his ear and whispered,

"You asked how I endured it, right?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever been poisoned by eating false hellebore?"

"False hellebore poison? Why would I, at most, get poisoned by a weak poison that only causes a rash on the body?"

"That's it."

"What?"

"The reason why your poison has no effect on me."

'!?'

Instantly, Baek Sa-ha's expression twisted fiercely.

Although he spoke in a roundabout way, Mok Gyeong-un's words had scratched his pride.

To be blunt, Mok Gyeong-un had said this:

[Your poison didn't work because it was weak.]

-Grind!

Baek Sa-ha gnashed his molars strongly.

His poison, known as one of the top three in the entire Central Plains, was weak?

Did this kid really have a death wish?

He was digging his own grave.

"Hahaha. It seems my poison felt that way to you. Then I should show you what a truly proper poison is."

'Uh-oh?'

At the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha's words, his second son Baek So-gang's eyes widened.

That's because he realized what kind of poison his father was trying to show now.

Naturally, there were secret techniques in places where poison was cultivated.

For example, there was the Invisible Poison of the Four Seasons Tang Clan, the Clam and Snake Poison of the Guyang Clan, and the Wave Demon Poison created by the patriarch and grandfather of the Baek family, the Myriad Poisons Master Baek Yu.

“Father!”

The startled Baek So-gang called out to him.

Even at his call, Baek Sa-ha didn’t even spare him a glance.

He seemed to be really angry.

‘No.’

Baek So-gang thought this shouldn’t be allowed.

The Wave Demon Poison was literally the secret of the Baek family, and this poison was called “Ten Steps to Death” because one would die before even taking ten steps, making it the worst extreme poison.

“Fath...”

The moment Baek So-gang tried to approach his father to dissuade him,

The Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha lightly stretched out his hand.

Then,

-Rumble!

The stone door that was half-open at the entrance closed.

Baek So-gang's face turned serious at the blocked entrance.

It seemed he had done that to avoid interference.

'This is a big problem.'

At this rate, his father might really use the Wave Demon Poison and kill Mok Gyeong-un.

The problem was that this stone door was designed to be locked and unlocked from inside the training room, so if it was firmly locked from the inside, it would be difficult to break through and enter.

-Bang bang!

"Father! Father!"

Ignoring the faintly audible knocking and calling from outside, Baek Sa-ha said,

"Since you said it's so weak, I will show you a proper..."

"It doesn't seem to be completely soundproof."

"What?"

"But I think this much is enough for the two of us to have a quiet conversation."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Baek Sa-ha frowned.

Did this kid deliberately provoke him to make him close the door?

Baek Sa-ha spoke in a dumbfounded voice,

“What the hell are you up to?”

“It’s not a scheme, but it seemed like it wouldn’t be good for my constitution to be widely known.”

“Constitution?”

Is he still going on about that?

As he was thinking that, suddenly, sharp aura flowed out from Mok Gyeong-un’s index and middle fingers forming a sword finger.

“You, what are you...”

-Slice!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un lightly cut his palm.

Then, blood began to drip from the wound on his palm onto the floor.

-Drip drip!

As the blood droplets fell on the floor, Baek Sa-ha frowned and asked,

“What are you doing now?”

“I thought I should also show you the poison I possess.”

“Poison? Don’t tell me you...”

Baek Sa-ha looked at the blood flowing from Mok Gyeong-un’s palm with surprised eyes.

What this kid was saying now was,

“... Are you saying there’s poison in your blood?”

“Yes. Would you like to taste it?”

Mok Gyeong-un, smiling while extending his blood-stained hand.

‘!!!!’

At this action, Baek Sa-ha’s expression became one of disbelief.

There is an ultimate realm that those who deeply study poison and cultivate poison arts aim for.

It is to become a Poison Master, where one’s flesh, blood, and everything else is composed of poison.

This realm of becoming poison itself was the highest realm they pursued.

‘... Are you trying to say that you, a young kid, have reached the realm of a Poison Master?’

Chapter 146 – Poison Master (3)

Drip! Drip!

The thick blood droplets falling from Mok Gyeong-un's palm.

The Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha, who had been staring at it with unbelieving eyes, finally opened his mouth,

"Young lad, do you know what you just said?"

"Well."

"You saying that your blood is poison means that you have reached a realm that even I haven't ascended to. Does that make sense to you?"

He was only 17 years old.

An age too young to even be called a youth.

Was he saying that he had reached a realm that even he, who had cultivated poison arts all his life, had not attained?

It was something he absolutely could not accept.

To that, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

"For someone who claims to be the top expert in poison arts, is it that difficult for you to simply taste my blood? Seeing how you're denying it so elaborately."

"What? You, right now, to whom..."

"Then taste it. It's not that difficult."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha's eyes narrowed.

If the kid's blood was truly poison itself, it would be a genuine shock to him.

After hesitating for a moment, Baek Sa-ha finally extended his hand.

And he grabbed Mok Gyeong-un's wrist, pulled it, and let the blood flowing from his palm drip into his mouth.

-Drip drip drip!

Mok Gyeong-un's blood wetting his tongue.

The moment it touched his tongue, the Annihilating Poison King Baek Sa-ha's eyes widened.

'!?'

He had lived his entire life with poison.

The moment he tasted the blood, he could instinctively realize it.

'This is...'

It was undoubtedly poison.

The burning sensation as it touched his tongue and the complex taste spreading out.

This flavor, which was one yet could be felt as numerous changes, was a kind of poison he had never experienced before.

‘What on earth...’

Baek Sa-ha’s ability to identify poisons was at the highest level, to say the least.

Yet, he couldn’t identify what kind of poison it was.

That meant it was proof that the blood itself had become poison, not formed through poisoning.

“Hah...”

A gasp escaped from Baek Sa-ha’s mouth.

Even he, who had preserved poison within his body through the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, couldn’t have his blood itself become poison.

However, Mok Gyeong-un’s blood was truly poison itself.

If that was the case,

“... Poison Master.”

Mok Gyeong-un had truly reached the realm of a Poison Master.

Baek Sa-ha stared at Mok Gyeong-un’s face with shocked eyes.

What the hell was this kid?

How did such a young lad reach the realm of a Poison Master that even he, who had cultivated poison arts for decades, had not achieved?

It went beyond the realm of understanding, so he was filled with questions.

After being at a loss for words for a while, Baek Sa-ha finally managed to part his lips.

“How... How did you ascend to the realm of a Poison Master?”

“What even is a Poison Master?”

“... You’re asking what a Poison Master is?”

“Yes.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Baek Sa-ha’s head ached.

This kid didn’t even know what realm he had reached.

It was utterly absurd.

“Are you trying to mock me?”

“It’s not mockery. I’m asking because I truly don’t know.”

“Hah...”

“Is it because my blood is poison?”

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Baek Sa-ha clicked his tongue and answered,

"Yes. The person themselves becoming poison. That is the realm of a Poison Master."

"Ah. Is that so?"

Baek Sa-ha felt inwardly dumbfounded yet envious at Mok Gyeong-un's attitude of answering as if it was nothing.

He had struggled to the point of death but failed to achieve what this young lad had accomplished so easily.

'It's utterly disheartening.'

A young lad who hadn't even cultivated poison arts, no, who couldn't even properly utilize poison, had ascended to the realm of a Poison Master.

It was enough to make his efforts feel meaningless.

It was like discovering a pig with a pearl necklace around its neck.

"... Fine. Let me change the question. How did you get poison to permeate your blood? You should know the answer to this yourself."

"Well, I suppose."

"Then tell me."

"Are you referring to the method?"

“Yes.”

At his answer, Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head and let out a groan of contemplation.

“Hmm.”

“Do you not want to tell me?”

“It seems like you really want it.”

“Want it? It’s more than that. This is a long-cherished wish for me.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes. So tell me what you know. If you do that, I will properly teach you poison arts so that you can utilize that poison qi of yours.”

“Not a bad condition.”

“Ha! Not a bad condition? You fool. If you learn poison arts from me, you will undoubtedly be called the best among the younger generation.”

“Is it to that extent?”

“Indeed.”

Mok Gyeong-un had already reached the realm of a Poison Master.

If taught, he had sufficient talent to even ascend to the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.

However, completely unexpected words flowed out of Mok Gyeong-un's mouth.

"Can I change the condition a bit?"

"What?"

"It's not that difficult."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Baek Sa-ha clicked his tongue again.

Sensing that he was in a disadvantageous position, the kid was now trying to make a deal with him. He was truly a brazen fellow.

"... What do you want?"

"It's not very difficult. I just want you to tell me what I want to know..."

It was at that very moment.

"Ugh."

Baek Sa-ha suddenly clutched his chest.

Then, his eyes became bloodshot, and he looked at Mok Gyeong-un with a perplexed expression.

'This... What the...'

The reason for Baek Sa-ha's bewilderment was simple.

It was because he felt a burning pain starting from his chest.

Baek Sa-ha could instantly identify the cause of this pain.

'Impossible.'

This was a phenomenon that occurred when being poisoned.

Baek Sa-ha was dumbfounded.

As someone who had reached a high realm through poison arts, he possessed the ability to neutralize other poisons invading his body with the hundreds of poisons he carried within him.

However,

"Cough... Cough..."

Dark red blood flowed from his mouth.

Baek Sa-ha's eyes trembled violently.

"How can this be..."

It was absurd enough to be preposterous.

Did it make sense for a poison to exist that he, known as the Annihilating Poison King, couldn't neutralize?

[Deadly? This?]

Suddenly, Mok Gyeong-un's words from earlier came to mind.

He had spoken as if Baek Sa-ha's wave poison was nothing, causing him displeasure.

However, with the rapidly spreading poison qi, Baek Sa-ha realized.

'This kid... Was he serious?'

It wasn't bravado to provoke him.

Baek Sa-ha hurriedly circulated the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, trying to neutralize Mok Gyeong-un's poison that was penetrating and spreading further into his internal organs.

-Sizzle!

Dark red vapor flowed from his shoulders.

It was a phenomenon that occurred while dissolving the poison.

With his profound internal energy, he was somehow expelling the poison, albeit belatedly.

However, the problem lay elsewhere.

-Crack!

“Ugh!”

Baek Sa-ha, who had been circulating his energy, grabbed the back of his neck.

“Elder?”

“Argh.”

Mok Gyeong-un looked at him with a puzzled expression.

He had been watching, thinking that as a master of poison arts, Baek Sa-ha would be able to dissolve the poison on his own, but something seemed strange.

The eyes of Baek Sa-ha, who was holding the back of his neck, were becoming clouded.

Something seemed to have gone wrong.

‘Hmm.’

So, Mok Gyeong-un tried to lay Baek Sa-ha down to check his condition.

However,

-Thud!

‘Huh?’

The legs that were crossed in a sitting position wouldn’t straighten.

No, it wasn't just that they wouldn't straighten, but it seemed that this posture had been fixed for a long time, and the bones and muscles of his lower body had significantly weakened.

Mok Gyeong-un placed his hand on the acupuncture points there.

'... Is this why he kept sitting?'

As he touched the acupuncture points, Mok Gyeong-un discovered Baek Sa-ha's secret.

It seemed that the flow of the acupuncture points in his lower body had become blocked due to the clashing of the reversing poison qi and his internal true energy, causing paralysis.

'Was he continuously using his true energy to block the reversing poison qi?'

That seemed to be the reason why he had been sitting all the time.

Mok Gyeong-un slowly traced Baek Sa-ha's acupuncture points upward.

The poison seemed to have finally reached his brain as it reversed along the path where the true energy moved through the main acupuncture points.

The cause was probably,

'My blood?'

In order to dissolve Mok Gyeong-un's blood, or rather, the new poison, Baek Sa-ha had further dispersed his internal true energy and failed to block the reversing poison qi.

'What should I do about this?'

If left alone, Baek Sa-ha would either become a vegetable or die, one of the two.

If true energy was injected at this point to help block the reversing poison qi, there might be some hope, but the problem was,

‘Will death energy work?’

His death energy would rather scatter the true energy.

It could even have the opposite effect.

As he was pondering what to do, Cheong-ryeong’s voice reached his ears.

-Do you have the Moonlight Pill?

-Pardon?

-The one you called the Heavenly Earth Pill.

-Ah, that? I’m carrying it with me.

Since he hadn’t cultivated the energy of nourishing life, Mok Gyeong-un couldn’t see any effect even if he took it, so he was just carrying it in his pocket.

-Yes. Put the Moonlight Pill in that old man’s mouth and try to block the poison qi that has risen to his brain.

-The poison qi that has risen to his brain?

Mok Gyeong-un looked at the back of Baek Sa-ha's neck.

Then, he removed the hand that was holding the back of his neck and placed his fingers on the acupuncture point connected to the brain.

-Swish!

And then he unleashed the Ritual of Binding.

Through the Ritual of Binding focused on a single finger, the rising poison qi concentrated into one point and then entered Mok Gyeong-un's finger.

“Cough.”

At that moment, Baek Sa-ha, who had lost consciousness, regained his senses.

“Have you regained consciousness?”

“You... How did you...?”

To him, who was clueless about what was going on, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Rather than directly helping you, it seems difficult, so try doing something with this.”

“What?”

-Plop!

Mok Gyeong-un then put the Heavenly Earth Pill into Baek Sa-ha's mouth.

‘This is?’

Baek Sa-ha, who had the pill in his mouth, instinctively realized that it was a spiritual medicine.

In the current situation where the flow of his true energy was disrupted while dissolving Mok Gyeong-un’s poison, he couldn’t block the reversing poison qi.

So, Baek Sa-ha, who was in no position to be picky,

-Gulp!

He swallowed the Heavenly Earth Pill as it was.

Indeed, as befitting the spiritual medicine boasted by the Heaven and Earth Society, the moment he swallowed it, he felt a hot energy gradually spreading as it went down his esophagus.

Normally, he should have used it to make it his own, but,

‘Push it out.’

Baek Sa-ha had to utilize the energy of the spiritual medicine to push out the reversing poison qi again.

If he didn’t, not only would his lower body become paralyzed, but his entire body would become paralyzed, and he might become a vegetable.

-Sizzle!

As Baek Sa-ha was exerting all his strength with the energy of the spiritual medicine,

Mok Gyeong-un muttered while watching him,

“It’s strange. I don’t understand why you’re fighting the poison. You could just accept it.”

‘!?’

At that moment, Baek Sa-ha’s eyes trembled strongly.

50 years ago.

A young Baek Sa-ha, kneeling, asked a middle-aged man who was lighting incense,

[How can I ascend to the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture?]

[...]

[Are you not going to answer me? Father.]

The middle-aged man was none other than Baek Sa-ha’s father, Baek Yu, who could be called the patriarch of the Baek family and the Myriad Poisons Master.

He was the man who overturned the martial world’s conventional wisdom that the Four Seasons Tang Clan and the Guyang Clan couldn’t be defeated with poison.

With the death of the Tang Clan’s patriarch, Tang Yeon-jong, known as the Thousand Flower Poison Hand, at his hands, the martial world of the Central Plains acknowledged Baek Yu as the new supreme master of poison arts.

The Wave Demon Poison Scripture was a poison art created by Baek Yu, the patriarch of the Baek family, and it became a supreme technique that rivaled the fame of the Tang Clan's Myriad Heavenly Flower Poison Art and the Guyang Clan's Clam and Horse Technique.

However, the process of mastering this Wave Demon Poison Scripture was not easy, and as one ascended each layer, it became more difficult to gain enlightenment. Apart from Baek Yu, the creator, none of his sons had reached the eighth layer, known as the ultimate realm.

The same was true for Baek Sa-ha, who was originally the second son but became the eldest.

[Is the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture impossible for anyone other than you, Father?]

[...]

Baek Yu remained silent.

The reason he was acting this way was that this place was the ancestral shrine where the spirit tablet of the eldest son was placed.

Baek Seong-ha, the eldest son who was cultivating the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, had died due to the phenomenon of poison reversing, causing his brain's blood flow to be blocked, resulting in paralysis of his entire body.

[Please tell me, Father.]

[...]

[Will I also lose my life like my elder brother if I try to master the eighth layer like this?]

After losing his elder brother, the young Baek Sa-ha began to have doubts about cultivating the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.

The eldest son had lost his life, and the third younger brother had become paralyzed from the waist down.

The only one who was still intact was himself, but no matter how much he thought about it, this Wave Demon Poison Scripture seemed to be a martial art that no one could master except for his father, the creator.

[The Wave Demon Poison Scripture is the path to becoming a Poison Master.]

[That again?]

[The ultimate realm of poison arts is to become poison oneself.]

[How? From the moment one cultivates poison arts, one has to live in constant tension, unable to sleep properly. How can a person become poison?]

[Just adapt to it.]

[... What exactly is this adaptation?]

[You can't understand it now, and I know you have many grievances against this father. But it's something you have to realize on your own.]

[...]

'Adaptation... Adaptation... That damn adaptation...'

Such vague advice even to his son.

Because of that, one son died, and another son became crippled. Is this how it is?

From that day on, Baek Sa-ha made a resolution.

Rather than recklessly following his father's shadow, he decided to forge his own path.

33 years later.

[Hah... Hah...]

Baek Sa-ha, wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth, was exhaling rough breaths.

It was the first time in nearly a decade that he had been injured in a one-on-one match against someone, and he couldn't hide his shock.

He had never faced the Society Leader, known as the supreme master of the Heaven and Earth Society, in the first place.

However, he had once directly sparred in a friendly match with Ho Tae-gang, one of the Five Kings who held the title of Eight Stars and had surpassed the wall.

Even then, although he felt a certain gap, he had never experienced such a sense of powerlessness.

'How can this be possible?'

Even Ho Tae-gang, who had surpassed the wall, couldn't directly withstand his poison qi.

That's how much he knew the danger of the power called poison.

However, that person had directly clashed with him and deflected all the indiscriminately unleashed fog of poison.

The poison that didn't touch him had no effect on him.

'The high-level technique of transferring flowers and grafting trees, capable of lightly deflecting even poison qi.'

It was something that could only be possible by handling true energy as if breathing.

'Ghost Blade...'

That bastard was truly a monster.

He felt a sense of self-loathing.

However, through this confrontation, Baek Sa-ha realized his shortcomings.

If he couldn't handle true energy as delicately as that person, he could no longer advance upward.

So he honed himself once again.

If he could handle true energy delicately and move it freely as if breathing, he might be able to succeed in the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture that he had given up on.

However, his judgment was half right and half wrong.

Baek Sa-ha, who was confident that he could handle true energy as delicately as breathing, challenged the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.

The eighth layer realm that only his patriarch and father, Baek Yu, had succeeded in.

This time, he was confident that he would succeed.

However,

[Argh...]

Baek Sa-ha failed to ascend to the eighth layer.

Since he could handle true energy delicately, he tried to achieve harmony with the poison qi.

However, due to the phenomenon of the poison qi reversing, his lower body became paralyzed instead.

He had become the same as his third younger brother.

'... Is the ultimate realm of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture truly impossible?'

Perhaps the realm of a Poison Master was an impossible domain for anyone other than his father, the supreme master.

With his lower body paralyzed, Baek Sa-ha went into seclusion under the pretext of a three-year mourning period.

His goal was not to achieve the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.

He simply hoped to suppress the reversing poison qi and restore his paralyzed lower body to its original state.

However, even now, he was still at square one.

'Do I have to live like this, half-crippled?'

He was gradually becoming exhausted.

However,

[It's strange. I don't understand why you're fighting the poison. You could just accept it.]

The moment he heard those words from Mok Gyeong-un, he suddenly recalled what his father, Baek Yu, had said.

[Just adapt to it.]

'Adapt?'

It was at that very instant when he recalled those words.

Baek Sa-ha released the poison qi that had been reversing and the true energy that had been blocking it.

And he discarded all the thoughts of separating them.

Then,

-Rumble!

Baek Sa-ha's true energy and poison qi, which had been unable to mix like water and oil, began to harmonize with each other.

And then,

-Crack! Crackle!

Cracks appeared on Baek Sa-ha's skin.

That phenomenon was none other than,

-That old man is lucky. To undergo a transformation.

It was just as Cheong-ryeong had said.

Transformation.

His body was mutating anew to match his enlightenment.

Into a body befitting the eighth layer of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture that he had longed for.

It didn't take very long.

Baek Sa-ha's body was already sufficiently prepared.

He had just been forcibly suppressing it.

Chapter 147 – Repayment (1)

Fssst! Crack! Crunch!

As cracks formed, his skin peeled off like a shell, and his muscles twisted and contorted.

Upon witnessing his transformation, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue and remarked:

-Why did you give him a clue to enlightenment?

Her desire was for the current Heaven and Earth Society to crumble.

However, thanks to the words Mok Gyeong-un had spoken, the Poison King Baek Sa-ha had gained some sort of enlightenment.

As a result, he was now able to break through his bottleneck.

This also meant that he would become significantly stronger than he was now.

-You did something unnecessary. Tsk, tsk.

Cheong-ryeong was not pleased with this.

Yet, there was no response from Mok Gyeong-un.

He was someone who had mastered telepathy and would always provide answers unless it was a special case. Why wasn't he responding now?

Puzzled, she looked at Mok Gyeong-un's face.

“.....”

‘This guy?’

Mok Gyeong-un was intently staring at Baek Sa-ha, who was undergoing a complete metamorphosis.

It wasn't an expression of amazement or awe.

He was observing as if studying him.

Cheong-ryeong grew curious about what thoughts were going through his mind as he watched this.

'What are you so deeply pondering?'

And those thoughts held quite an unexpected aspect.

Rather than focusing on the external process of Baek Sa-ha's body being reconstructed, Mok Gyeong-un was keenly observing how the internal energy was transforming.

'Was it like this?'

After staring for a while, the corners of Mok Gyeong-un's lips twitched.

For martial artists, a complete metamorphosis[1] was a realm that existed only in dreams.

It was a phenomenon where, upon breaking through a bottleneck, one's body would be reconstructed according to their increased cultivation level, resulting in a physique that could be considered the most ideal form for oneself.

"Ha....."

A gasp escaped from Baek Sa-ha's mouth.

Unlike a typical transformation, his clothes had almost entirely melted away, leaving him nearly naked, as he had become a complete Poison Master.

The corners of Baek Sa-ha's lips curled upward.

The reason was simple.

'I thought I might never be able to stand again.'

He stood up on his own two feet.

How long had it been since he last experienced this sensation?

He was so excited and moved that his heart pounded.

Amidst his emotions, Mok Gyeong-un's voice reached his ears.

"Congratulations."

At this, Baek Sa-ha turned his head to look at Mok Gyeong-un.

"You..."

"I was worried you might go back to drinking my blood, but instead, you even underwent a complete metamorphosis."

Upon hearing Mok Gyeong-un's words, Baek Sa-ha once again realized the significance of what had happened to him.

He himself was aware that he had undergone a metamorphosis.

However, hearing it from someone else felt quite different.

“Kekeke.”

“That laughter doesn’t suit you right now.”

“It doesn’t suit me?”

“Yes. At a glance, you appear to be in your late forties? No, mid-forties. You’ve rejuvenated.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s remark, a glint appeared in Baek Sa-ha’s eyes.

Rejuvenated?

Baek Sa-ha unconsciously touched his face.

The wrinkles that had felt dense on his face had nearly disappeared, and his skin was elastic.

“Oh my.....”

There was no mirror in the meditation room to confirm in detail, but judging from the significantly reduced wrinkles on his hands, he truly felt as if he had become much younger.

Come to think of it, the two individuals among the Five Kings who had received the title of “Eight Stars” also appeared much younger than their actual age.

‘I merely wished to walk again.’

Not only had he become a Poison Master, but he had also broken through his bottleneck.

Now, he could genuinely say that he had reached the realm of the Eight Stars.

Unable to contain his emotions, Mok Gyeong-un spoke to him.

“It seems you have achieved the results you desired. With this, the proposal I made earlier is practically nullified.”

“Proposal?”

“Yes. You have already become a Poison Master, haven’t you?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the corners of Baek Sa-ha’s mouth rose.

“Kekeke. Are you disappointed?”

“I thought I might be able to hear that story from you more easily, but it appears you have obtained what you wanted through your own efforts.”

“Through my own efforts..... Do you think I am someone with such little shame?”

“What do you mean by that?”

Baek Sa-ha placed his hands behind his back, an old habit, and said:

“If it weren’t for you, young man, I would have either lost my life today or spent the rest of my days as a paraplegic, unable to even open my eyes.”

“Thank you for saying it directly.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's response, one of Baek Sa-ha's eyebrows arched upward.

As expected, this fellow was saying things he didn't truly mean.

He believed that thanks to him, Baek Sa-ha had gained enlightenment and undergone a complete metamorphosis.

Of course, those words weren't entirely wrong.

"You're quite an impudent fellow."

"If that's how you feel, I apologize."

"Don't say things you don't mean. I am well aware that I owe you a debt I could never repay in my lifetime."

"Then you should be able to grant my request."

"Of course."

Baek Sa-ha readily agreed.

This young man had allowed him to walk on his own two feet again and had helped him reach the 8th level of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, becoming a Poison Master, something he had longed for.

He was no different from a benefactor to Baek Sa-ha, so what couldn't he do for him?

"What are you curious about?"

“First, promise me that you will answer unconditionally.”

“A promise? I have already said with my own mouth that I will agree, do you think I would go back on my word?”

“I’m just saying this as a precaution.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Baek Sa-ha shook his head and said:

“I promise. I will answer any question you have.”

“Thank you.”

“What are you curious about?”

“The Ghost Blade.”

‘!?’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s unexpected words, Baek Sa-ha momentarily furrowed his brows.

He wondered what the young man wanted to ask that required a promise, but an unexpected question had emerged.

“...Why are you asking about that?”

“I can’t tell you the reason, but let’s just say I’m curious about who the Ghost Blade is.”

“You’re curious?”

“Yes.”

“Oh my.....”

“To cut to the chase, I heard you had crossed blades with the Ghost Blade. Is that true?”

“...It is.”

It was a well-known anecdote that everyone was aware of.

However, while many had asked about this matter, Baek Sa-ha had never given a proper answer.

There were two reasons for this.

The first was,

‘It couldn’t even be called a duel.’

Using his vast experience and the unique methods of his poison-based martial arts, he had merely endured for a short while. If the duel had been prolonged, he would have eventually been the one to lose.

Baek Sa-ha opened his mouth.

“Why are you curious about the Ghost Blade?”

“I already told you.”

“Are you saying you can’t reveal the reason?”

“Yes.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s answer, Baek Sa-ha’s eyes narrowed.

He was conflicted.

He was concerned about what intentions this child had for being curious about the Ghost Blade.

If that intention stemmed from pure curiosity, it would be fine, but he worried if it might be driven by negative emotions.

However, a promise was a promise.

“...Since I said I would tell you, I will do so regardless of the reason. However, I also have a request for you.”

“A request?”

“Yes. It’s not a difficult one.”

“May I ask what it is?”

“Do not reveal what you hear from me in this place.”

“Do not reveal it?”

“Yes. As a member of the Heaven and Earth Society, you will soon understand why I am saying this.”

“...I understand.”

After Mok Gyeong-un agreed, Baek Sa-ha answered the question.

“First, regarding the question of whether I know who the Ghost Blade is, I cannot answer because I don’t know either.”

“What?”

What did he mean by that?

Since they had fought directly, wouldn’t he know the Ghost Blade’s face?

Puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un listened as Baek Sa-ha continued.

“It is true that I crossed blades with the Ghost Blade, but his face was covered with a black mask, so there was no way to confirm his identity.”

“His face was covered? Then what about the story of the Ghost Blade stopping the fight midway?”

“That is true.”

“So, are you saying that during the fight, the Ghost Blade suggested stopping, and you agreed?”

If that was all there was to it, it would be quite a waste of effort.

Just as he was about to feel let down, Baek Sa-ha shook his head and said:

“Does that make sense? Even if I was clearly losing against him, I am still a martial artist. I wouldn’t accept such a proposal to save my life in the middle of a fight.”

‘Losing..... Was he being overpowered?’

Baek Sa-ha casually revealed the fact that he had been at a disadvantage.

Considering he had never disclosed this until now, it seemed he had a strong sense of pride. Had he become more composed after gaining enlightenment?

Although curious, that wasn’t the main question.

“...Then is that rumor also true?”

“Rumor?”

“The rumor that the Ghost Blade might be one of the Society Leader’s personal guards.”

“Haa.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Baek Sa-ha clicked his tongue.

A considerable amount of time had passed since this incident, and it was slowly fading from many people’s memories. Younger disciples might not even be aware of it, so where had he heard this story from?

No. Since he was a disciple of the Shadow Clan, had he heard it from the Shadow Clan Master?

“You know quite a bit.”

“Is it true?”

“I don’t know.”

“What?”

“I also don’t know whether he is one of the personal guards or not.”

“What do you mean by that?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Baek Sa-ha recalled the events from 17 years ago.

The Ghost Blade, who had displayed an astonishing divine technique that drained away all of his poison techniques, suddenly distanced himself and requested to stop the duel.

[What are you doing? Don’t tell me you’re going to show mercy in a life-or-death duel?]

On the contrary, it was a humiliation for a martial artist.

They were engaged in a duel where their lives were at stake, yet even though he had the upper hand, what kind of nonsense was this?

However,

[Poison King. Do you want to fight against an injured person?]

[Injured?]

As Baek Sa-ha asked in return, the Ghost Blade opened his upper garment and revealed his chest.

Surprisingly, there was a palm-sized mark on his chest that appeared to be a scar. The affected area had turned black and sunken in.

Moreover, judging from the black veins protruding from the wound, it looked as if,

‘Poison scar?’

It seemed as if he had been struck by a poisonous hand technique.

Could it be that he had fought against a master from the Four Heavens Tang Clan or the Guyang Clan?

However, what was even more absurd was,

‘...He fought against me in this condition?’

Baek Sa-ha found it utterly ridiculous.

The Ghost Blade’s condition was truly severe, to the point where it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to call it a serious injury.

Yet, he had displayed martial prowess that almost overwhelmed him, draining away all of his poison techniques, while in such a state?

It was even more humiliating.

His desire to settle things with the Ghost Blade had vanished.

At this, Baek Sa-ha asked:

[...Who did you fight against to end up like this? The Guyang Clan? The Sichuan Tang Clan?]

He didn't expect an answer when he asked.

However, unexpected words escaped from the Ghost Blade's mouth.

[Hae Yeong, the Medicine Immortal.]

'!?'

What did he just say?

Hae Yeong, the Medicine Immortal, was known as one of the greatest pharmacists of the era, alongside Wailing Doctor Hoe Ta.

He was a pharmacist, not a martial artist.

[What are you saying...]

As he asked in confusion, the Ghost Blade threw something to him.

It was none other than,

[This is?]

[Now you should understand that we have no reason to fight anymore.]

[...How did you get this?]

[Deliver that to him. Inform him of my injury and tell him I was interrupted.]

[What do you mean by that?]

[Just tell him that much.]

With those words, the Ghost Blade swiftly moved and disappeared from sight.

Baek Sa-ha tried to chase after him, but he vanished with such incredible lightness skill that it was hard to believe he was seriously injured, making it impossible to catch up to him.

“...So you really don’t know who he is.”

“Yes. What I learned from fighting against him is...”

“That he was seriously injured by the individual known as the greatest pharmacist of the era, Medicine Immortal Hae Yeong. That’s all you know?”

“...At first, I couldn’t believe it. No one had ever heard of Medicine Immortal Hae Yeong cultivating martial arts until then. He was a pharmacist, after all.”

“Well, he could have kept it hidden.”

“Yes. That could be possible. However, one thing is certain: if Medicine Immortal Hae Yeong truly inflicted serious injuries on the Ghost Blade, then his poison techniques far surpass mine.”

That made the duel even more humiliating for Baek Sa-ha.

It meant that an old pharmacist, who was renowned for his medical skills, had overwhelmed the Ghost Blade, one of the Eight Stars, with superior poison techniques compared to him, who had devoted his entire life to refining poison arts.

‘I see.’

Now Mok Gyeong-un understood why Baek Sa-ha had glossed over the matter and kept it hidden from everyone back then.

Perhaps it was also a matter of pride as a master of poison techniques.

Mok Gyeong-un asked him:

“But what exactly was the item the Ghost Blade gave you?”

He had mentioned that by giving that item, there was no longer a reason for them to fight.

What did he give him?

Chapter 148 – Repayment (2)

“But what exactly was the item the Ghost Blade gave you?”

The Ghost Blade had given it to Baek Sa-ha, saying there was no longer a reason for them to fight.

What did he give him?

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Baek Sa-ha let out a soft sigh and answered:

“Whew. It was the Society Leader’s token.”

‘!?’

The Society Leader’s token?

Upon hearing this, Mok Gyeong-un furrowed his brows.

Based on Baek Sa-ha’s words, he had thought that the Ghost Blade might not be related to the Heaven and Earth Society, but if that was the case, the story changed.

“...If he gave you the Society Leader’s token, does that mean the Ghost Blade is connected to the Society Leader?”

“I don’t know for certain either.”

“What do you mean by not knowing for certain?”

“It means there’s no way to tell what kind of connection he has with the Society Leader or what instructions he received from the Society Leader.”

It was a somewhat ambiguous answer.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un asked:

“Then did you deliver the token to the Society Leader as the Ghost Blade requested?”

“Yes, I did.”

“May I ask what the Society Leader said?”

“He said nothing.”

“What?”

Did he mean there was no reaction after delivering it?

As he was puzzled, Baek Sa-ha lightly placed his hand on Mok Gyeong-un’s shoulder and said:

“The only thing the Society Leader said was this.”

“What is it?”

“He ordered me not to reveal anything I learned while fighting the Ghost Blade to anyone. Of course, that includes the token as well.”

“...”

“Do you now understand why I told you not to let what you hear from me in this place leak out?”

It was all by the Society Leader’s order.

In the first place, the duel with the Ghost Blade was a humiliating incident for Baek Sa-ha as well, so their interests aligned, and it had been well-kept as a secret until now.

‘Society Leader...’

Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze grew somewhat heavy.

He had tried to learn the Ghost Blade's identity through Baek Sa-ha, but instead, he only found out that there was a close connection between him and the Heaven and Earth Society's Society Leader.

Cheong-ryeong, who had been listening to this conversation, inwardly felt relieved.

'It's unfortunate, but I should say it's fortunate for me.'

She had been worried that Mok Gyeong-un might leave this place if the connection between the Ghost Blade and the Heaven and Earth Society disappeared.

However, coincidentally, as it turned out to be related to the Society Leader, the reason for him to stay here became even more clear.

It could be said to be a fortunate turn of events for Cheong-ryeong.

-In the end, it seems that your purpose and mine align to some extent, you despicable being.

-...It seems so.

Mok Gyeong-un's gaze turned cold.

The situation had become a bit more complicated.

He had hoped for a more straightforward clue about the culprit, but he only found out that the Society Leader might also be involved in this matter.

'The Society Leader is a clue.'

He was related to the Ghost Blade, who might have killed his grandfather.

Since it was an incident from 17 years ago, he couldn't determine a direct connection, but one thing was certain: the Society Leader knew about the Ghost Blade.

That meant he needed a way to contact the Society Leader.

However, the problem was that meeting the Society Leader was incomparably more difficult than meeting Baek Sa-ha.

He was the leader of the Heaven and Earth Society and one of the Six Heavens, known as the pinnacle of the current martial arts world.

'...I need a way to make contact.'

No method came to mind at the moment.

Baek Sa-ha had the justification of the three Society Leader disciple tokens, but the Society Leader was different.

There was no natural way to get close to him.

'Hmm.'

While his mind was filled with those thoughts, Baek Sa-ha spoke.

"Why aren't you answering?"

"Pardon?"

"Didn't I tell you that as a member of the association, you shouldn't reveal it either?"

“Ah, ah, yes. Of course.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s answer, Baek Sa-ha looked at him with suspicious eyes.

He had told him despite it being the Society Leader’s order because of the promise, but judging from Mok Gyeong-un’s reaction, it seemed he had some connection to the Ghost Blade in one way or another.

At this, Baek Sa-ha spoke as if advising him.

“Although I told you because it was a promise, it would be better for your well-being not to dig too deeply into matters regarding the Ghost Blade.”

“...”

“Besides, he disappeared 17 years ago. Whether it’s a good connection or a bad one, it’s best to forget about it now.”

Disappeared?

That was yet to be known.

The mark left on his late grandfather’s wound was related to the Ghost Blade.

Anyway, in response to Baek Sa-ha’s advice, Mok Gyeong-un politely brought his hands together and replied:

“I will keep that in mind.”

“I hope you do, even if it’s just lip service.”

“How could I give lip service to the advice you give me?”

“Kekeke. You’re good with words.”

“Thanks to you, my curiosity has been satisfied, and you have obtained what you wanted. I shall return to the Shadow Clan now.”

Mok Gyeong-un had no more business with Baek Sa-ha.

‘What?’

At his words, a glint appeared in Baek Sa-ha’s eyes.

Although he had told him, going against the Society Leader’s order to keep it a secret, it wasn’t something that could be considered a proper repayment.

Yet, he was just going to leave?

“You’re quite a peculiar fellow.”

“Pardon?”

“Did you come all the way here just to satisfy that curiosity of yours?”

“Ah, that’s...”

“You didn’t come to seek my teachings.”

“...”

“Kahahahaha! What kind of fellow is this? Using the benefit of the Society Leader disciple tokens just as a pretext to meet me.”

Baek Sa-ha burst into laughter, holding his stomach.

As the holder of the Society Leader disciple tokens of the Corpse Blood Valley, Mok Gyeong-un had the privilege of receiving teachings from him.

But he was saying he would leave without even receiving that benefit, so how impudent was that?

It meant he had no intention of learning from the beginning.

‘I’ve been caught.’

Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head, wondering what to do about this.

While he was doing so, Baek Sa-ha, who had been laughing for a while, stopped and said:

“You made me laugh for the first time in a long while.”

“I apologize.”

“What do you have to apologize for? But listen. Since you brought the three Society Leader disciple tokens of the Corpse Blood Valley, I can’t just let you go.”

“What do you mean by not being able to let me go?”

“Of course, I will pass on martial arts to you.”

“Martial arts?”

“Kekeke. Yes.”

“...Then may I ask what you will teach me?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Baek Sa-ha stroked his beard and replied:

“I will teach you poison techniques.”

“Poison techniques?”

“It seems that even though you have become a Poison Master, you don’t know how to use poison techniques at all. Who taught you about poisons?”

“...I just learned bits and pieces from physicians or pharmacists.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Baek Sa-ha snorted.

What did this fellow take him for to say such a thing?

Even if one devoted their entire life to refining poison techniques, it would be uncertain whether they could reach the level of a Poison Master. Yet, he claimed to have reached that level with shallow knowledge learned from physicians and pharmacists?

“Hmph! Learned bits and pieces? Don’t talk nonsense.”

“Even if you don’t believe it, it’s the truth.”

“Do you think I’m going to capture and eat the one who taught you poison if I find out?”

“Well, that’s not it.”

“Then why aren’t you revealing it? Do you have a reason to hide it?”

‘Phew.’

At his question, Mok Gyeong-un felt annoyed inwardly.

If he didn’t give an appropriate answer, it seemed Baek Sa-ha would keep probing.

So,

“I understand. There’s no reason to hide this, so I’ll tell you. The mentor who taught me about medicinal herbs and poisonous plants has already passed away.”

“What?”

“He passed away.”

“...He’s deceased?”

“Yes.”

“Oh my.”

Baek Sa-ha let out a small sigh.

He was genuinely curious about who had turned Mok Gyeong-un into a Poison Master.

But judging from Mok Gyeong-un's tone and the faint sense of loss in his eyes, it seemed it wasn't a lie.

'...I suppose it's true.'

"Ahem. I don't know who he was, but if he was skilled enough in poisons to turn you into a Poison Master without even passing on poison techniques, he must have been no ordinary person. Even the Four Heavens Tang Clan or the Guyang Clan..."

At that moment, a certain nickname flashed through Baek Sa-ha's mind.

'Medicine Immortal Hae Yeong, the Medicine Immortal?'

Until now, he had believed that only his Baek Clan, the Four Heavens Tang Clan, and the Guyang Clan were the supreme masters of poison techniques in the Central Plains.

But 17 years ago, the one who had inflicted a serious injury on the Ghost Blade with a poison scar.

He had said it was Medicine Immortal Hae Yeong.

When one became proficient and reached the pinnacle in a particular field, they naturally became knowledgeable in the opposite nature as well.

Wasn't Baek Sa-ha himself also a master in pharmacology?

Poison techniques might be like that for Medicine Immortal Hae Yeong.

'Hmm.'

Baek Sa-ha stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un's face.

But soon, he shook his head.

'Yes. That can't be.'

No matter how he thought about it, the connection between this fellow and Medicine Immortal Hae Yeong was too far-fetched.

Then what exactly was the identity of that person?

But it seemed unlikely that this stubborn fellow would reveal it at the moment.

'Let's find out gradually.'

Hiding his inner thoughts, Baek Sa-ha said:

"Kekeke, anyway, if you learn poison techniques from me, you'll be able to fully utilize the poison within you."

"Fully utilize the poison..."

"Yes. Do you want to learn properly?"

At his question, Mok Gyeong-un brought his hands together in a salute and said:

"How could I refuse your consideration? If you bestow your teachings upon me, I will do my best to learn."

There was no reason to refuse.

There was no harm in learning poison techniques.

At that moment, Baek Sa-ha suddenly asked Mok Gyeong-un a question.

“By the way, what was that thing you fed me earlier? Could it be a divine medicine?”

“Are you referring to the Heavenly Earth Pill?”

“Ah, yes. I thought so.”

Baek Sa-ha clicked his tongue, looking at Mok Gyeong-un.

Divine medicines were no different from treasures to martial artists, even if it was to save his life.

Yet, he had used it on him without any hesitation, even though he might have died.

If he had really died, it would have been a wasted effort.

It was truly difficult to discern what type of person this fellow was.

“I owe you a great debt.”

“You don’t need to think of it as a debt.”

“No, it is a debt.”

“...Well, if you think that way, I can’t help it. Then will you repay it?”

“Of course. I have a temperament that can’t stand being in debt.”

“Is that so? Then how do you intend to repay it?”

“As it was an equivalent exchange, I will give you a special divine medicine made by our clan.”

“A divine medicine?”

Repaying a divine medicine with a divine medicine.

It made sense.

“If you give it to me, I will gratefully accept it.”

“However, there is a condition.”

“...You sure have a lot of conditions.”

“It’s not a bad condition at all. If you promise not to reveal anything about this divine medicine to others, I will give you two of them.”

“Two?”

“Yes. Isn’t that good?”

At these words, Mok Gyeong-un didn’t hide his puzzlement.

He had only used one divine medicine, yet he was offering to give him two in exchange for not revealing it. Why would he refuse?

“It’s not bad for me, but are you sure?”

“Kekeke. If it wasn’t okay, would you not accept it?”

“Of course not.”

“Naturally. The divine medicine I will give you is called the Ascending Dragon Pill[1], created by my father, who was also the founder of our clan, Lord Baek Yu. In some ways, it’s far superior to the Heavenly Earth Pill.”

“Far superior?”

“Yes. If the Heavenly Earth Pill grants ten to a maximum of fifteen years’ worth of internal energy, our clan’s Ascending Dragon Pill, if absorbed efficiently, can grant up to twenty years’ worth of internal energy.”

‘!?’

At his words, a glint appeared in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

If what Baek Sa-ha said was true, it was a divine medicine far better than the Heavenly Earth Pill.

“...I can definitely understand the reason for not revealing it.”

“Yes. However, it’s not unconditionally good.”

“Why?”

“In the case of the Ascending Dragon Pill, its side effects are much stronger than the Heavenly Earth Pill. After consuming one pill, the effects drastically decrease from the second pill onward.”

“Ah...”

“Kekeke, don’t be disappointed. Still, if I assist you with the Pushing Palace and Passing Acupoints[2] technique, you can gain close to ten years’ worth of internal energy even with the second pill.”

‘Ten years.’

If what he said was true, even with the assistance of an internal energy master in absorbing the pill, the efficiency would drop by almost half.

Then, if one were to absorb the pill alone, the efficiency would be even lower, so he understood why Baek Sa-ha said it wasn’t unconditionally good.

However,

‘It won’t be of any use to me anyway.’

For Mok Gyeong-un, who used the Death Qi, divine medicines held no meaning or effect.

But if a situation like this arose, it would be useful, just like this time.

‘Damn it.’

Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader who had barely dispelled the poison qi, couldn't hide his anger.

What kind of disgrace was this?

He hadn't expected to kneel down, unable to endure the Poison King's poison qi even for a moment.

Fortunately, it seemed that Wi So-yeon, the third disciple, was also circulating her energy due to the poison qi.

But what was annoying was that she seemed to have dispelled the poison qi even before him.

In terms of internal energy, she was far ahead of him.

'F*cking wench.'

How was it that the gap between them kept widening?

He was worried that she might reach a level that would be truly difficult to deal with.

Perhaps he needed to take action before that happened.

But there was something else that took priority.

"Is the Poison King elder still inside?"

Jang Neung-ak asked Baek So-gang, the second son of Baek Sa-ha.

In response, Baek So-gang nodded and replied:

“Yes, he is.”

“...I need to have another conversation with him.”

“You’ll have to wait for now.”

“Wait? What do you mean?”

“My father is currently engaged in a conversation with the Shadow Clan Master’s disciple.”

“What?”

Jang Neung-ak furrowed his brows and looked at the entrance made of stone walls.

That meant Mok Gyeong-un had endured that incredible poison qi and went inside.

What was going on?

No matter how proficient he was with poisons, how was he enduring the poison emitted by a master of poison techniques like the Poison King?

He wasn’t the only one puzzled by this.

‘Mok Gyeong-un.’

Wi So-yeon, who had dispelled the poison before him, was also unable to hide her surprise upon hearing that Mok Gyeong-un was inside the meditation room.

His internal energy and martial arts level should be several ranks below theirs, so how was this possible?

At that moment,

-Rumble!

The tightly closed stone door opened, revealing someone's figure.

Wi So-yeon, who noticed the person emerging from the entrance, momentarily turned her head to the side in embarrassment.

'Wh-why?'

It was because Poison King Baek Sa-ha's clothes had almost entirely melted away, leaving him nearly naked.

"Father!"

Seeing Baek Sa-ha like this, his second son, Baek So-gang, approached him with wide eyes and asked in a trembling voice:

"A-are your legs all right?"

"Kekeke, can't you tell by looking?"

Baek So-gang couldn't contain his emotions upon seeing his father, Baek Sa-ha, standing firmly on his two legs.

Hadn't he been paralyzed from the waist down, unable to walk, as a side effect of not reaching the 8th level of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture?

Suddenly, he noticed a change in his father's appearance.

"Huh? F-father... Could it be... Did you undergo a complete metamorphosis?"

"Complete metamorphosis!?"

At those words, Jang Neung-ak also stared at Baek Sa-ha with widened eyes.

His face, which looked as if he had rejuvenated by nearly thirty years, was completely different from before.

Not only were his clothes melted, but it seemed he had truly undergone a complete metamorphosis.

That meant,

'He broke through his bottleneck?'

It signified the birth of a new master of the Transformation Realm within the Heaven and Earth Society.

At that moment, Wi So-yeon, who had been sneaking glances at the nearly naked Baek Sa-ha, hurriedly brought her hands together and said:

"Congratulations on achieving a great accomplishment!"

"C-congratulations on achieving a great accomplishment, Elder."

Jang Neung-ak, who had been too shocked to speak, also congratulated Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

His mind became extremely complicated.

With this, he couldn't afford to lose Poison King Baek Sa-ha's support even more.

Not only was he already a master of poison techniques, but he had even reached the Transformation Realm on top of that. He needed to bring him to his side by any means necessary.

However,

"Kekekeke, I merely obtained a small achievement, but I'm grateful for your congratulations."

"How can that be considered a small achievement? Father, I sincerely congratulate you on achieving a great accomplishment!"

"Thank you. But with my clothes like this, it's truly embarrassing."

"Ah!"

At Baek Sa-ha's words, his second son, Baek So-gang, hurriedly took off his outer robe and handed it to his father.

Baek Sa-ha took the outer robe and quickly tied the sleeves around his waist to cover his important parts.

Seeing him like this, Jang Neung-ak thought it was a good opportunity and spoke up.

"Elder. How can we just let this day pass? Instead of this, we should go outside and celebrate your great accomplishment..."

"It's fine."

“Pardon? But...”

“I appreciate your congratulations on my achievement, but didn’t we already conclude our business earlier?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Didn’t we make a promise earlier? You said you would support me if I could stand up.”

“...”

At Baek Sa-ha’s words, Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, was at a loss for words.

He had tried not to miss this opportunity, thinking Baek Sa-ha would be in a good mood after achieving a great accomplishment.

But he hadn’t expected him to draw the line with what happened earlier.

“But Elder...”

“A man’s word is as good as gold. I don’t go back on my word.”

‘Damn it. This stubborn old man...’

Jang Neung-ak was angry, but he couldn’t express it.

That was because Baek Sa-ha’s energy, which was already strong, had intensified to an incomparable level compared to before.

Now, it was difficult to even gauge the difference between them.

'...What should I do about this?'

Jang Neung-ak wasn't the only one troubled by Baek Sa-ha's resolute attitude of drawing the line.

The third disciple, Wi So-yeon, was also in a dilemma.

If they missed today, the opportunity to persuade him would become distant.

-Tap tap!

At that moment, Poison King Baek Sa-ha tapped the shoulder of his second son, Baek So-gang, and pointed to Mok Gyeong-un standing behind him with a nod, saying:

"From today onward, this child is my formal disciple and a new member of our clan. Treat him like your own younger brother."

'!?'

Chapter 149 – Repayment (3)

"From today onward, this child is my formal disciple and a new member of our clan. Treat him like your own younger brother."

'!?'

Everyone was unable to hide their bewilderment at Poison King Baek Sa-ha's words.

'Formal disciple?'

In the case of his second son, Baek So-gang, he had never imagined his father, Baek Sa-ha, would make such a statement.

That was because the Baek Clan had always valued the bloodline of the family for generations and never accepted outsiders as disciples.

His father, Baek Sa-ha, had also maintained that tradition, so he hadn't expected him to suddenly accept an outsider as a disciple.

‘What exactly happened inside?’

He had been continuously wondering what had occurred inside that led his father, Baek Sa-ha, to undergo a complete metamorphosis.

It was unlikely for his father to show such favor to this child without something happening.

Could it be that he had given him a clue to enlightenment?

At that moment, Baek Sa-ha spoke.

“Why aren’t you answering?”

“Ah, I understand. I will do as you say.”

In the Baek Clan, the orders of the clan head were absolute.

If Clan Head Baek Sa-ha had decided so, then that was how it would be.

At that point, Mok Gyeong-un intervened.

“Disciple, you say?”

“Kekeke, why are you so surprised? Since you’ll be receiving my teachings, you’re now my disciple.”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un replied with a troubled expression.

“Receiving teachings is just in exchange for the three Society Leader disciple tokens...”

“Oh, what should I do about this?”

“Pardon?”

“For a youngster like you who has a deep understanding of poisons, I need to pass on my poison scripture, the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, but that can’t be done for outsiders.”

“Wa... Wave Demon Poison Scripture? Father?”

At those words, his second son, Baek So-gang, asked in surprise.

That was because the Wave Demon Poison Scripture wasn’t an ordinary martial art or poison technique of the Baek Clan, but a secret scripture.

The Wave Demon Poison Scripture was a transcendent poison technique that could only be learned by those of the main family’s bloodline who were qualified to become the clan head, so it was bewildering to hear that he would pass it on.

“Even if it’s a privilege of the Society Leader disciple tokens, that’s...”

“Didn’t I say I would accept him as a formal disciple? Are you questioning the order of this clan head?”

“N-no, that’s not it.”

Baek So-gang waved his hands in surprise.

The clan head and his father, Poison King Baek Sa-ha, never went back on his decisions once he made them.

Especially if he had decided something as an order from the clan head, anyone who tried to object would face severe consequences.

‘Oh my.’

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue inwardly at Baek Sa-ha’s decision.

He had thought the level of repayment was greater than expected when Baek Sa-ha mentioned repaying the debt, but he hadn’t expected this ulterior motive.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un brought his hands together in a salute and said:

“Elder. I am grateful for your consideration, but I am a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master. How can I, when I already have a master...”

“Is there a rule stating one can’t have two masters?”

“...”

There was no such rule.

However, this wasn’t a matter of rules.

“Even if there’s no such rule, this is about the Shadow Clan Master...”

“I will personally go to the Shadow Clan Master and seek his understanding, so don’t worry about that.”

“...”

It seemed he was determined to accept him as a disciple no matter what he said.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un was inwardly annoyed, but since he had no proper reason to refuse, he refrained from further objections.

However, at some point, he noticed that the gazes of the Society Leader’s second disciple, Jang Neung-ak, and the third disciple, Wi So-yeon, were directed at him rather than Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

Seeing their peculiar looks, Mok Gyeong-un licked his lips.

‘...So that’s what it was.’

He seemed to understand the reason why Baek Sa-ha publicly declared him as his disciple in front of them.

It was to divert the attention of those who had been pestering him for support away from himself.

It was a kind of ploy.

Due to Baek Sa-ha’s declaration, regardless of his own will, Mok Gyeong-un had become a joint disciple of the Poison King, one of the Five Kings, and the Shadow Clan Master.

As a result, he had become an even more enticing prey for those seeking a successor.

It took nearly an hour of torment before Mok Gyeong-un could leave the Baek Clan's estate with his guard, Seok Jung.

Poison King Baek Sa-ha was not only stubborn but also had a very troublesome personality.

He made Mok Gyeong-un participate in his grandson's first birthday celebration and personally introduced him to the Baek Clan's blood relatives, making him acquainted with them one by one.

Mok Gyeong-un found this very annoying but played along without showing it.

The reason was that Baek Sa-ha was one of the Five Kings, a high-ranking executive.

'For now, the Poison King is the way to go.'

Considering Baek Sa-ha's position, there was a high possibility of contact with the Society Leader.

That was why, even when he said he would accept him as a disciple, despite finding it troublesome, Mok Gyeong-un had reluctantly agreed.

It remained to be seen how this would play out, but making contact with the Society Leader was currently Mok Gyeong-un's top priority.

As they moved away from the Baek Clan's estate, Cheong-ryeong's voice echoed in his ears.

-In the end, it seems your judgment was correct.

-Judgment?

-Yes. Someone like the Poison King is the best ally.

-Well, I don't know. He seems like an annoying old man to me.

-Didn't you gain the opportunity to learn the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, known as the supreme poison technique, thanks to helping that annoying old man?

-Well, that's true.

In front of the Baek Clan's blood relatives, Poison King Baek Sa-ha had publicly declared Mok Gyeong-un as his formal disciple and immediately took him to the clan head's hall to show him the verses of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.

Despite accepting him as a disciple, Mok Gyeong-un had shown no particular reaction, so Baek Sa-ha wanted to demonstrate how extraordinary the Baek Clan's poison scripture, the Wave Demon Poison Scripture, was.

Thanks to that, Mok Gyeong-un had memorized all the verses of the Wave Demon Poison Scripture just by glancing at them once.

Of course, Poison King Baek Sa-ha was unaware of this fact.

-There's no martial art as unconventional as poison techniques. Moreover, it can be considered the best when dealing with multiple opponents.

-Multiple opponents... I suppose so.

-Anyway, it's not bad... Why are you doing that?

Cheong-ryeong asked Mok Gyeong-un, stopping mid-sentence.

The reason was that Mok Gyeong-un, who had been walking, stopped and stared at something.

His guard, Seok Jung, also asked in puzzlement.

“Young Master. Why are you doing that?”

“There’s a guest waiting for you.”

“Pardon?”

As he asked in return, someone walked out from the right corner.

The moment he saw that person, Seok Jung’s eyes widened.

‘W-Woo Ho-rang, Grand Clan Leader?’

He was none other than Woo Ho-rang, the Society Leader disciple of Bright Blade King Son Yun and the grandmaster of the Geo-gweol Clan.

He was also known as the right-hand man and the most trusted subordinate of Wi So-yeon, the Society Leader’s third disciple, and was one of the Five Tigers, considered the top disciples within the Heaven and Earth Society.

Woo Ho-rang stared at Mok Gyeong-un with an expressionless gaze and opened his mouth.

“Despite your appearance, your perception is excellent.”

“That’s because you didn’t particularly hide your energy.”

“Hmph.”

Woo Ho-rang snorted.

As Mok Gyeong-un said, he hadn't hidden his energy from the beginning.

Unless it was a special case, he considered the act of hiding oneself to be something only cowards and rats would do.

Woo Ho-rang lightly scanned Mok Gyeong-un from top to bottom.

‘What a strange person. How did he do it?’

The energy emanating from Mok Gyeong-un was merely at the level of the early peak stage.

With such martial prowess, he absolutely couldn't have defeated his junior brother, Yeop Wi-seon, yet it was said that he had won against him.

And according to his lord, Wi So-yeon, this fellow's true martial prowess might have reached the transcendent realm.

If what she said was true, it meant this fellow had mastered a mysterious technique that could almost perfectly conceal his martial prowess.

‘He's mastered a troublesome technique.’

But it was of no concern to him.

Regardless of what technique he had mastered, he just needed to cut him down.

Woo Ho-rang said to Mok Gyeong-un:

“Do you know why I was waiting for you?”

“Who knows.”

“They say you’re a clever fellow, but you can’t even guess?”

“I have no way of knowing whether it’s a personal matter or because of an order from your lord.”

“What?”

“You seem to be looking at me with displeasure, so it doesn’t seem like you’re waiting for me just because of an order from your lord.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Woo Ho-rang chuckled.

Indeed, he wasn’t entirely devoid of a cunning side, as his lord had said.

That made him even more displeased.

“You’re right. I don’t particularly like you. Starting from the fact that you’re a hostage from the righteous faction, there are many reasons.”

“Many reasons?”

“Yes. Many reasons.”

“Hmm. Then it’s just that you don’t like me.”

“I won’t deny it.”

“I see. I don’t think I can do anything about those feelings, so may I ask what business you have with me?”

“The young lady told me to bring you to her.”

“Me?”

“Yes. It’s an order from the young lady, so you don’t have the right to refuse, do you?”

At Woo Ho-rang’s words, Mok Gyeong-un laughed inwardly.

It was indeed as he had expected.

Even though she hadn’t achieved her goal at the Baek Clan’s estate, the way she had retreated while giving him a meaningful look was in anticipation of this moment.

“...Of course. Then should I just follow you?”

“Yes. But listen.”

“Yes.”

“Before that, shouldn’t we settle our score?”

“Settle our score?”

-Roar!

As soon as he finished speaking, Woo Ho-rang released a powerful aura.

The aura was so fierce that Seok Jung unknowingly took a step back.

Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth with narrowed eyes.

“That seems to go against your lord’s wishes. Are you okay with that?”

“This is purely a matter between you and me.”

“A matter between you and me?”

“You showed off your martial prowess against my junior brother, Yeop Wi-seon, didn’t you?”

“Ah, I see. So that’s what this is about.”

“Thanks to you, my junior brother is now imprisoned in a detention cell. Of course, it’s partly his own mistake, but how can I just let it slide when he’s facing execution?”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled inwardly.

Was it really just about his junior brother?

No matter how he looked at it, it didn’t seem to be solely about that.

It seemed to stem from a more personal sentiment.

The matter regarding his junior brother was merely a pretext.

So, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and spoke with a troubled expression.

“Ah. I see. But you see, do you know why the young lady is summoning me?”

“I know.”

Of course he knew.

As Wi So-yeon’s trusted subordinate, he knew her intentions better than anyone else.

If it were any other time, he would have suppressed his own feelings and done his best as a subordinate to fulfill her wishes.

But strangely, the thought that he shouldn’t let this fellow get close to the young lady took precedence.

Even if he had to go against his emotions and make a mistake.

-Shing!

Woo Ho-rang drew his unique weapon, the Nine Harmony Blade[1], and said:

“You received a token from the young lady, didn’t you?”

“Yes. But...”

“I also have a token.”

“Ah, is that so?”

“Let’s wager our tokens and duel. If you win, I will give you the token I received from my lord. But if you lose, I will take that token from you.”

This was Woo Ho-rang’s true objective.

To retrieve Wi So-yeon’s token from Mok Gyeong-un.

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un suddenly burst into laughter.

“Haha.”

“You... Did you just laugh?”

“Yes. I laughed.”

-Roar!

At that moment, a strong murderous intent surged from Woo Ho-rang.

How dare a mere youngster ridicule him?

As he was doing so, Mok Gyeong-un lightly waved his hand and said:

“Ah. If I offended you, I apologize. I couldn’t help but laugh because I could see through your true intentions.”

“True intentions?”

“Yes.”

“What nonsense are you spouting? How can you...”

“It seems you’re not doing what your lord wants, but rather, you’re desperate to make your lord yours. Am I wrong?”

‘!?’

For a moment, Woo Ho-rang flinched.

Seeing his reaction, the corners of Mok Gyeong-un’s lips curled up.

It seemed his prediction was correct.

-Swish!

Then, Woo Ho-rang’s blade swiftly flew towards Mok Gyeong-un’s neck, stopping at his skin.

However, whether it was due to the sharp blade or not, the skin was cut, and blood flowed down.

“Are you trying to mock me?”

At Woo Ho-rang’s words, which revealed murderous intent in a low tone, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders.

“How could I?”

“But...”

“I merely stated the truth, but if you’re getting so agitated, I can’t help but be more certain.”

“You!”

-Pak!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un grabbed the blade of Woo Ho-rang’s Nine Harmony Blade.

At this, Woo Ho-rang tried to shake it off.

However, surprisingly, even though he drew out his internal energy to nearly 6-star level, the blade didn’t budge at all.

‘This bastard’s internal energy?’

It had far surpassed his expectations.

It seemed that his lord Wi So-yeon’s words about him possibly reaching the transcendent realm were indeed true.

As he was astonished, Mok Gyeong-un said with a smile:

“Well, I can understand. Even if you want the person you admire to do well, if she truly becomes the successor, your relationship will become more fixed and distant. So, you wouldn’t be fixated on her becoming the successor. That’s why you tried to take the young lady’s token from me, using your junior brother as a pretext.”

‘!!!!!!’

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Woo Ho-rang's expression completely stiffened.

Even though they hadn't engaged in a long conversation, he had thoroughly seen through his true intentions.

What kind of fellow was this?

As he was thinking that,

"But you see. Do you think you can take it from me?"

-Creak creak creak!

The blade of the Nine Harmony Blade, gripped in Mok Gyeong-un's hand, gradually bent.

Chapter 150 – Talent (1)

The estate located southwest of the inner city headquarters of the Heaven and Earth Society was the base of the Primal Killing Pavilion, which was in charge of providing consultation related to sorcery.

Diviner Jo Ui-gong was hastily heading towards the main hall of the estate, using his cane.

Although he tried his best not to show it, he couldn't help but feel nervous.

'...Senior Apprentice Brother.'

It was said that Senior Apprentice Brother Cho Tae-cheong was currently in the main hall.

He had heard that diviner had gone somewhere after receiving a secret order from the Society Leader, but he had come to visit without any prior notice as soon as he returned.

He couldn't help but feel uneasy.

'The preparations are solid.'

While his senior apprentice brother was away, he had quickly obtained the approval of the Society Leader through the vice-Society Leader.

In Seo-ok, the Primal Killing Pavilion leader who had become a living corpse ghost, due to Mok Gyeong-un's Six People Spirit Summoning Technique, had handed over his position to him.

Yun, the disciple in the Corpse Blood Valley, had also attended and agreed.

During the process, some senior diviners who supported his senior apprentice brother had objected, but what could they do?

It was an order from the leader.

Therefore, Jo Ui-gong was the leader of the Primal Killing Pavilion in both name and reality.

'He must have come as soon as he heard the news.'

He assumed that was probably the case.

His senior apprentice brother rarely left the headquarters where the Society Leader resided unless it was a special case.

So, the fact that he had come like this meant he must have heard the news that he had become the leader.

Fortunately, he had already arranged for the previous Primal Killing Pavilion leader, In Seo-ok, to be moved away.

He had sent him more than 50 ri away and erased his traces using sorcery, making it useless to track him down.

‘As long as I prevent him from seeing it directly, there won’t be a problem.’

It was no exaggeration to say that his senior apprentice brother’s sorcery skills were on par with their master’s.

Deceiving such a senior apprentice brother was by no means easy.

So, despite having made all the preparations, he couldn’t help but feel nervous.

“Greetings!”

When the guards guarding the front of the main hall saw Jo Ui-gong, they bowed their heads in greeting.

At this, Jo Ui-gong asked:

“Where is Senior Apprentice Brother?”

“He said he would be waiting inside.”

“I see. Understood.”

As Jo Ui-gong was about to enter, one of the guards said:

“By the way, diviner Cho Tae-cheong entered carrying a large wooden box that looked like a coffin.”

“A wooden box?”

What was that?

Could it be related to the Society Leader’s secret order?

Puzzled, Jo Ui-gong eventually entered the main hall and headed towards the leader’s office.

Following the corridor and opening the door,

-Creak!

‘!?’

He saw someone sleeping with their head tilted back and their two legs propped up on the leader’s desk.

Just by looking at the gray martial arts uniform with the yin-yang symbol, he could tell who it was.

It was his senior apprentice brother, diviner Cho Tae-cheong.

‘...’

Jo Ui-gong’s eyes narrowed.

There was a separate place for guests to sit, but he deliberately sat on the leader’s chair and slept like that.

It was clearly meant to provoke him.

Thanks to that, he could guess his senior apprentice brother's current mood.

'...I mustn't get agitated.'

Regardless of the reason, he had taken away his senior apprentice brother's position.

His anger was justified, and it was bound to erupt in some way.

"Ahem."

Jo Ui-gong deliberately made a coughing sound as he entered.

Then,

"You're here?"

Cho Tae-cheong, who had been sleeping with his head tilted back, opened his eyes and spoke.

At this, Jo Ui-gong brought his hands together with his cane and carefully greeted Cho Tae-cheong.

"Senior Apprentice Brother, you've arrived?"

"Yes, I have."

"I heard you were away after receiving an order from the Society Leader."

“Seeing as you’ve heard that much, it seems you’ve definitely completed the handover.”

‘...’

At the strangely sharp voice, tension subtly crept into Diviner Jo Ui-gong’s eyes.

His senior apprentice brother had been the front-runner, so he had already anticipated that he would object to this matter.

Jo Ui-gong calmly replied:

“Yes. Although I still have many shortcomings, I will gradually adapt.”

“Gradually adapt...”

‘...’

“Was that position so desirable to you?”

-Gulp!

At Cho Tae-cheong’s direct question, Jo Ui-gong unknowingly swallowed his saliva.

No matter how well-prepared he was, he couldn’t help but feel nervous knowing his senior apprentice brother’s sorcery skills better than anyone else.

It was something he had to face eventually.

Jo Ui-gong spoke with a forceful voice:

“How can you say such hurtful words? I merely followed our master’s orders.”

“Master’s orders?”

“Yes. I also declined, saying how could I inherit the position of leader when there is a senior apprentice brother like you.”

“Decline...”

“Yes. However, our master said that you must guard the Society Leader’s side, so he couldn’t entrust you with the position of leader.”

“...Did he really say that?”

“How could I lie to you, Senior Apprentice Brother? If you truly find it hard to believe, we can call Yun...”

“Are you telling me to play along with your false tune?”

“...It’s not a lie. Are you denying our master’s decision, Senior Apprentice Brother?”

“Deny? Ha!”

-Creak!

Cho Tae-cheong stood up from the leader’s office chair.

Seeing his attitude, Jo Ui-gong gripped his cane and prepared to respond.

He had set up various defensive sorceries throughout the office in anticipation of this moment, so he could immediately activate the Four Pressure barrier.

At that moment, Cho Tae-cheong formed a hand seal by connecting his index and middle fingers.

Then,

-Clank!

The lid of the coffin-like wooden box on one side of the office opened by itself.

Then, something inside the wooden box straightened up and rose from its seat.

Seeing this, Jo Ui-gong's eyes widened as if they would tear.

It was none other than,

'M-Master?'

It was In Seo-ok, the former Primal Killing Pavilion leader who had become a living corpse ghost.

On the forehead of the pale-faced In Seo-ok, there was a talisman with the word "seal" (封, bong) written on it.

Seeing him like this, Jo Ui-gong couldn't hide his bewilderment.

He had taken measures to ensure that In Seo-ok couldn't come out by attaching heavy weights to him in the depths of a lake more than twenty li away from here.

But how did he find him?

‘Damn it.’

He didn’t know why, but his senior apprentice brother had found their master who had become a living corpse ghost.

That meant he had come here to remove him from this position.

At this, Jo Ui-gong hurriedly formed a simple hand seal with his left hand.

-Clap! Clap!

Gye (皆)! Jeon (前)! Yeol (裂)! Ja (者)!

This was the hand seal of the Nine Character Activation Technique to activate the Four Pressure barrier.

It was a technique he had already prepared, so he naturally thought it would be activated immediately, but,

‘What?’

The barrier didn’t activate.

Unable to understand why, Cho Tae-cheong clicked his tongue and said:

“You’ve prepared quite a lot. But did you think I would just leave it alone?”

-Clench!

At those words, Jo Ui-gong bit his lower lip tightly.

Did he mean that he had dismantled all those techniques while he was briefly away?

He had tried his best to make it unnoticeable, but as expected of his senior apprentice brother.

So, Jo Ui-gong hurriedly tried to unfold the spell engraved on his cane.

But before he could even chant the spell,

-Thud!

“Ugh!”

Something kicked Jo Ui-gong’s back, causing him to fall forward.

-Thud!

Something stepped on Jo Ui-gong’s back as he fell.

The weight was so heavy that the pressed area sank inward, making it extremely painful.

“Argh...”

Feeling the intense pain, Jo Ui-gong unconsciously turned his head,

-Shudder!

There, he saw a strange creature with a tall red horn and four huge legs pressing down on him with its front leg.

The moment he saw it, Jo Ui-gong instinctively realized what it was.

‘Toru!’

The name of this monstrosity was Toru (Tulou).

It was a monster that lived in the Kunlun Mountains, known as the Separate Island of the Heavenly Emperor.

Unlike its goat-like appearance, it was a very ferocious and monstrous beast that preyed on humans who entered the misty valley of the Kunlun Mountains.

Also known as the Red Falling Star, it was his senior apprentice brother’s proud spirit beast.

-Thud thud!

Diviner Cho Tae-cheong slowly walked over and said:

“Who is it?”

“W-What do you mean?”

“With your skills, it’s impossible to make our master, who received the title of diviner, like that even if you die and wake up. Who helped you?”

‘Damn it.’

Driven into a corner, Jo Ui-gong's expression darkened rapidly.

He thought he had made all the preparations, but it was far from enough.

No, how did his senior apprentice brother find their master in the first place?

Unable to understand, diviner Cho Tae-cheong approached and pressed down on Jo Ui-gong's right wrist, opening his mouth.

“The chains of the spell... As expected.”

“T-This is...”

-Swish!

Cho Tae-cheong made a light gesture, and the monstrous beast Toru pressed down on his back even harder.

-Crunch!

“Aargh!”

Looking down at the suffering Jo Ui-gong with cold eyes, Cho Tae-cheong clicked his tongue and said:

“Tsk tsk. To be caught and dragged by such a thing. What a pathetic fellow.”

“Ugh... Stop...”

“If you want me to stop, it's best to tell me right away. Who put the chains of the spell on you?”

Under the pressure of his senior apprentice brother Cho Tae-cheong, Jo Ui-gong's eyes gradually weakened.

-Creak creak creak!

The blade of the Nine Harmony Blade, gripped in Mok Gyeong-un's hand, gradually bent.

At this, the eyes of Woo Ho-rang, the trusted subordinate of Wi So-yeon, the Society Leader's third disciple, widened.

The Nine Harmony Blade was a precious sword made by a famous craftsman who was acquainted with his master, Bright Blade King Son Yun, and its hardness was different from ordinary swords.

Moreover, when his internal energy was added, the sword became even harder.

So, if the sword could bend to this extent, it meant that Mok Gyeong-un's martial power had reached not just the early stage, but a proper pinnacle level.

‘He’s not someone to go easy on.’

Only then did Woo Ho-rang become alert.

This fellow was an opponent he absolutely couldn’t subdue without properly dealing with him.

At this, Woo Ho-rang drew out his martial power.

-Roar!

As he drew out his martial power from 6-star to 8-star in an instant, a repulsive force arose from the bending blade.

-Clang!

Along with it, Mok Gyeong-un's hand gripping the blade was bounced off.

Matching this, Woo Ho-rang tried to widen his stance and create distance, but,

-Bam!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un's palm heavily struck Woo Ho-rang's chest.

Having already drawn out his martial power up to 8-star level, Woo Ho-rang, who had endured it with his protective energy, also kicked Mok Gyeong-un's abdomen.

-Thud!

The two people who had simultaneously struck each other were pushed back.

Woo Ho-rang, who had been pushed back, instinctively checked the distance he had been pushed back and the distance Mok Gyeong-un had been pushed back.

‘Four steps.’

He had been pushed back four steps, while Mok Gyeong-un had been pushed back five steps.

Then, in terms of martial power, he could say he had a slight advantage.

If it was to this extent, if he drew out his martial power to the extreme level, it seemed he could subdue the fellow without much trouble.

Confident of victory, Woo Ho-rang said to Mok Gyeong-un:

“You will regret misusing that mouth of yours... Cough!”

At that moment, Woo Ho-rang coughed as he felt a burning pain from inside.

Woo Ho-rang hurriedly wiped his lips with his sleeve, and,

‘!?’

Black blood was smeared on his sleeve.

Seeing this, Woo Ho-rang frowned and looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

What the hell was going on?

He had indeed been hit by a palm strike, but he had endured it with his protective energy.

But what was this unpleasant pain?

-Rip!

Woo Ho-rang roughly tore open the upper part of his clothes.

Then, on his chest, there was a palm-shaped mark left, with blood vessels bulging out in a dark red color.

‘Could it be...’

Woo Ho-rang muttered with widened eyes.

“Poison?”

Did this fellow possibly use a poison palm technique?

Woo Ho-rang’s eyes trembled.

According to what he had heard from his lord Wi So-yeon, Mok Gyeong-un had been accepted as a disciple by the Poison King just about an hour ago.

‘It can’t be...’

It was impossible for him to learn poison techniques and freely use them in just an hour.

No matter how innately talented he was, that was impossible.

Moreover, poison techniques were fundamentally different from ordinary martial arts in the first place.

As he was bewildered, Mok Gyeong-un said with a smile:

“That’s great. I wanted to test out what I had just learned anyway.”

-Roar!

On Mok Gyeong-un’s hands, a dark red poison energy was seeping out and rising like a haze.

‘!!!!’

Seeing this, Woo Ho-rang couldn't hide his shock.

It was none other than the Toad Poison Demon Palm[1] from the Poison King Baek Sa-ha's poison scripture, the Wave Demon Poison Scripture.
