

Mayhem 171

Chapter 171 – Cho Tae-cheong (3)

Gasp!

The girl looked at Mok Gyeong-un with startled eyes.

‘What’s with this person? He noticed this demonic energy even before I did?’

Among the beasts, those that reach the level of monsters become cunning enough to conceal and hide their own demonic energy.

If such monsters intentionally conceal their demonic energy, it is difficult for average diviners to detect it, so she couldn’t hide her surprise at him noticing it first.

‘Could he be a diviner of the Moon-level or above?’

At first, she had thought Mok Gyeong-un was a martial artist.

That’s why she helped him, thinking she might get assistance if she saved his life.

However, upon closer inspection, he wasn’t a martial artist but someone from the same industry.

In that case, they might be able to communicate better.

The girl whispered, “You’re quite sensitive to demonic energy, aren’t you?”

“Is that so?”

"I also just noticed this demonic energy. If you're this sensitive to detecting demonic energy, you're not an average diviner. Which pavilion are you from...?"

"Shh!"

"Gulp."

At this, the girl held her breath again and shut her mouth.

Even while talking about this and that, she readily followed his instructions.

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong spoke to Mok Gyeong-un.

-Is it a Toru?

-Toru?

-The one that tried to trample and crush you with its hooves earlier.

-Ah... There seems to be one more besides that.

-One more? Ah! It's Heum-won.

-Heum-won?

-Yes. Like Toru, it's also a beast from Kunlun Mountain. In some ways, it's much more difficult and dangerous to deal with than Toru.

-Two beasts at the monstrous-level...

It was a more troublesome situation than he thought.

He had fought beasts at the monstrous beast level before, but this was his first time facing those at the higher than monstrous-level.

Thus, it was hard to gauge how powerful monsters were.

Of course, he had broken through the wall and reached the Transformation Realm, so he didn't think he would be pushed back by beasts.

He was just being cautious.

At that moment, the girl clicked her tongue and said in a small voice, "Two? So the rumors were true."

"Rumors?"

"Yes. There were stories that the Three-Eyed uses two beasts at the monstrous-level as his familiars."

These words from her piqued Mok Gyeong-un's interest.

This girl seemed to possess quite a lot of information, more than he expected.

So Mok Gyeong-un asked, "But how did you enter this place?"

"Pardon?"

"From what I heard, you're not from the Primal Killing Pavilion but from the Harmonious Immortal Pavilion, right? You said you were from there, so why are you here in such attire?"

“Um, well, about that...”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, the girl suddenly became restless.

That was understandable, as she wasn’t supposed to be here originally and was in a position where her identity couldn’t be exposed.

Unable to think of a suitable excuse, she hurriedly changed the subject.

“W-What about you? You’re just as suspicious as me.”

“Suspicious?”

“Yes. You’re not from the Primal Killing Pavilion either. Moreover, that Three-Eyed tried to kill you using his familiars. How do you explain that?”

“I don’t know.”

“What?”

“I simply tried to kill him because he threatened my life first.”

“Ah, so that was the reason... Wait, what? You tried to kill the Three-Eyed?”

The girl asked with wide eyes.

“Is there something wrong with that?”

“Rather than wrong, I’m just surprised that you tried to kill him.”

“Is that something to be surprised about?”

“It is. Do you know how dangerous that Wretched Fiend is? And you tried to kill him alone?”

“Is he that dangerous?”

“Of course. It’s said that three hundred diviners who tried to subdue him were brutally slaughtered by his hands in a single night.”

‘!?’

Three hundred diviners were killed?

Is his power strong enough to handle that many diviners alone?

No, it made sense that average diviners couldn’t handle him since he could single-handedly subdue and seal a spiritual beast.

“If I hadn’t helped you earlier, you could have died too.”

“Ah, thank you for that.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, she spoke with a puffed-up face.

“...Your gratitude sounds quite dry for a thank you.”

“How could that be?”

“Nevermind. Anyway, you’re quite daring. To think you planned to kill such a monster alone. Even I, who possesses a protective talisman given by my master, only observe him from a distance.”

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled at her words.

The girl had unintentionally revealed why she was here.

Realizing this, her face turned red, and she stamped her feet.

“Argh! How can you pry information out of others like this?”

“You directly told me with your own mouth. I didn’t pry it out.”

“No, that’s...”

“Shh. Please be quiet. If you continue being noisy like that, I think the monsters outside will notice.”

“...”

At this, the girl stopped stamping her feet and tightly shut her mouth.

Being rowdy risked being discovered by the beasts.

Mok Gyeong-un said to her, “Anyway, you received orders from your master to monitor that Three-Eyed, right?”

“...That’s right.”

Since she had already been exposed by her own words, there was no point in lying.

The girl answered honestly.

“Is it for revenge?”

“Revenge?”

“Yes. Didn’t you say he killed hundreds of diviners?”

Among that many diviners, there might have been some related to the girl or her so-called master.

At this, the girl shook her head.

Mok Gyeong-un asked in puzzlement, “If not for revenge, then why are you monitoring that Three-Eyed?”

“Because he’s dangerous.”

“Dangerous?”

“I don’t know the details either. My master only said that the Three-Eyed would soon disrupt the Heavenly Qi, so I received orders to monitor him.”

“Heavenly Qi?”

Heavenly Qi refers to the energy of the heavens.

In sorcery, Heavenly Qi signifies things like fate, the principles of the world, or its flow.

Such Heavenly Qi should flow according to a predetermined course, and if it is disrupted, the world becomes precarious.

“Yes, Heavenly Qi. Anyway, I’m here for a righteous cause, not personal reasons. So don’t even think about interfering.”

“Did I interfere?”

“Things got complicated like this because I tried to save you. Do you know how hard it was for me to infiltrate this place?”

The girl pointed to her maid attire.

He could roughly guess how she had infiltrated there.

“Ah... I see.”

“...Is that all you have to say? Sigh, I should have just left you to die or live.”

The girl clicked her tongue and spoke.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and asked, “Come to think of it, I don’t know your name.”

“My name? Ah, right. My name is... No, wait. If you’re going to ask a lady’s name, shouldn’t you reveal your name first?”

“Mok Gyeong-un.”

“Mok Gyeong-un?”

“Yes.”

“Mok is an unusual family name. I’m Yeo Su-rin.”

“Yeo Su-rin? That’s a pretty name.”

“You think it’s pretty?”

“Yes.”

“W-Well, do you think I’ll be pleased with such flattery?”

Contrary to her words, she covered her reddened cheeks with both hands, feeling shy.

-What a simple-minded wench.

-Indeed.

She seemed to be the type whose emotions were easily visible, just as they appeared.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un didn’t mind this and immediately changed the subject to the main point.

“Miss Yeo, you said this is the kitchen earlier. How far is it from the main hall of the Primal Killing Pavilion?”

“Pardon?”

“Judging from how quickly the beast chased after us, it doesn’t seem too far.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Yeo Su-rin answered with intrigued eyes, "You're quite perceptive, aren't you? That's right. This place is about a hundred jang away from the main hall."

"A hundred jang?"

It was neither a long nor a short distance.

So Mok Gyeong-un asked, "Couldn't you have gone further with that... technique you used to create the entrance earlier?"

"Sheesh, do you think it's that easy? It was barely possible thanks to this treasure my master gave me."

Yeo Su-rin showed the two connected rings worn on her fingers.

It was a silver-colored item with two luminous green jades embedded in each ring.

Judging from the extraordinary energy emanating from it, he understood why she called it a treasure.

"So you used that to create a connecting door that shortened the distance to this place?"

"That's right."

"It seems quite convenient."

"Even if it looks convenient, it has a few drawbacks."

"Drawbacks? What are they?"

"If you don't preset a medium to the desired location in advance, it can only travel about twenty jang, not a hundred."

“Twenty jang? That’s a significant decrease.”

It was reduced to not even half, but close to one-fifth.

“That’s why I said there are a few drawbacks.”

“I see. Are there any other drawbacks?”

“Other drawbacks? Apart from that, after using it twice in a row, you have to wait at least a quarter-hour before you can use the treasure again.”

“Hmm.”

It seemed to have several limitations despite its convenience.

Well, if such a treasure had no restrictions on distance or time, it would be the most dangerous item.

However, if used well depending on the situation, it seemed quite useful.

‘It’s a nice item.’

Perhaps sensing Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze, Yeo Su-rin took off the rings she was wearing and put them in her bosom, speaking as if warning him.

“Just in case, let me make this clear. Don’t covet this. It’s a treasure that no one but me can use.”

“No one else can use it?”

“Yes. If it gets more than one zhang away from me, its power will weaken, and it will break. So I’m telling you not to covet it in vain.”

‘Ah...’

At Yeo Su-rin’s words, Mok Gyeong-un inwardly clicked his tongue.

He had thought of killing her and taking it, but if that was the case, there was no point.

He had found it strange that she explained the treasure in detail to someone she was meeting for the first time, naive as it may be.

It had some safeguards in place, so she could talk about it.

If that was the case...

‘...She might be hiding some of the drawbacks.’

Although she seemed talkative and had a fluctuating personality, this woman wasn’t stupid.

Sorcery was a quite complex field of study, so one couldn’t master it without basic intelligence.

Considering that, he believed she was definitely hiding something.

The more gaps she seemed to have, the more cautious one should be. That was Mok Gyeong-un’s belief.

At that moment, Yeo Su-rin quietly said, “I think a quarter-hour has passed.”

“Ah, you can use that now.”

“Yes. The beasts still seem to be searching for us outside, so let’s move about twenty zhang at a time. Fortunately, there are nearby buildings within twenty jang, so if we take some time, we can leave the Primal Killing Pavilion.”

“I see.”

“Since the Three-Eyed is greatly angered, it would be best not to catch his attention for the time being.”

With those words, Yeo Su-rin put on the treasure on her index and middle fingers.

She was about to inject her power into the treasure and use it, but...

“Wait a minute.”

“Yes?”

“Is this possible too?”

“What do you mean by this?”

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un spoke with the corners of his mouth twitching.

-Thud!

The head of Diviner Jo Ui-gong rolled on the floor from a kick.

Cho Tae-cheong, who had kicked his head, spoke with a slightly flushed face.

“It was the same guy.”

Then, his facial muscles moved irregularly, and soon a hoarse voice came out.

“I see.”

Diviner Jo Ui-gong, bound in the pavilion master’s room.

He had tried to find out who had placed the chains of incantation through the Blood-Solving Gu.

But he was found with his head cut off, dead.

That meant one conclusion could be drawn.

‘It was one guy.’

Everything was done by the same fellow.

The one who had manipulated the greedy disciple Jo Ui-gong to control the Primal Killing Pavilion while he was away, the one related to the vengeful spirit of the Cheong-ryeong level or above, and the one who had boldly come to him and threatened his life—it was all the same guy.

-Crack, crack!

Cho Tae-cheong, whose face had returned to normal, raised the corners of his mouth bitterly and muttered.

“It’s been a while since I’ve had a worthwhile hunt.”

He had been hiding in the shadows, concealing himself.

But to dare to touch him like this, what a fearless fellow.

It seemed he would have to enjoy the hunt after a long time.

‘Run away if you can. It’ll still be within my grasp...’

-Swoosh!

At that moment.

Cho Tae-cheong’s eyes wavered.

Something sharp and black pierced through the floor, grazed past his right elbow, and shot upward.

And with a burning sensation...

-Thud!

His right arm fell to the floor.

“Kuughh!”

Cho Tae-cheong’s face contorted in immense pain as his arm was severed.

In an instant, he was dumbfounded.

He thought the guy had run away, but he came back?

‘This bastard?’

He was an unbelievably cunning fellow.

Normally, if an assassination failed, one would hide or continue to attempt escape to save their life.

But he appeared again and sniped at him from a distance below the lower floor.

What kind of guy was this?

-Grit!

‘I’ll kill him.’

Cho Tae-cheong’s facial muscles twitched as he glared at the floor, and soon his forehead began to split.

However...

-Whoosh!

‘!?’

A strange power was felt from above.

As Cho Tae-cheong unconsciously tried to raise his head...

-Swish!

Someone fell from above and stabbed a dagger into his splitting forehead with lightning speed.

-Stab!

‘!!!!!!!!!!!!’

Black blood and white fluid flowed from his splitting forehead.

The one who fell from above somersaulted and landed on the floor.

-Tap!

The person who had their face covered with a black cloth was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

“Phew.”

Mok Gyeong-un looked at Cho Tae-cheong, who was staggering with a dagger stuck in his forehead, and raised the corners of his mouth bitterly.

‘Ha...’

Yeo Su-rin, who was watching this scene through the round door of smoke opened near the ceiling of the 4th floor, was stunned.

Chapter 172 – Cho Tae-cheong (4)

From the round entrance of smoke near the ceiling, Yeo Su-rin clicked her tongue.

She didn't expect this to actually work.

When she first heard Mok Gyeong-un's plan, she thought he was crazy.

[What? You want to go back to that person?]

[Yes.]

[Are you insane? We barely escaped, and you want to go back? If you get caught this time, you might die.]

The Three-Eyed, known as the Wretched Fiend.

The number of diviners who died by his hands was too many to count.

Yet, he said he would return to such a person. He must be out of his mind.

[Even if I die, I won't regret it.]

[No, that's not the issue. I saved you, and now you're saying you'll die again. Do you think I'll just agree and let you do that?]

[But if we miss this opportunity when his familiars aren't by his side, it will be harder to kill him later.]

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Yeo Su-rin became genuinely concerned.

Does he really believe he can kill that monster?

If it were possible, the Three-Eyed would have died long ago.

[Please, I'm begging you. Let's just go.]

[If you don't help me, I have no choice. I'll have to go back alone.]

[...Are you threatening me now?]

[Threatening? I only said I'd go alone.]

[That's a threat. You're trying to stimulate my tender, pure sympathy, aren't you?]

[Not to that extent.]

[...How annoying.]

Yeo Su-rin clicked her tongue.

Two beasts at the monstrous-level were guarding outside.

If he went out like this, his body might be torn to shreds and become food for those two monsters.

Ignoring him and leaving felt truly unsettling.

[Arggh! I should have just passed by earlier. Why did I have to save a stubborn person like you?!]

[You never know.]

[What?]

[If things go well and the Three-Eyed dies, your master's concerns will be resolved, and you won't have to push yourself to hide and monitor here anymore.]

[...You're really confident.]

[You won't know until you try.]

Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly.

Seeing him like this made her burst with frustration.

Why are men so insistent on trying things before knowing if it's dung or sauce?

Yeo Su-rin shook her head and said, [I don't know. If you want to die so badly, do as you wish. I'll bet on you failing, crying, and regretting it.]

[What if I succeed?]

[What?]

[What will you do if I succeed?]

No, why is he showing such confidence?

Does he have some hidden trump card?

[Sigh...]

After staring at Mok Gyeong-un for a while, she took something out of her bosom and showed it.

It resembled the treasure she wore on her index and middle fingers.

[What's that?]

[If you succeed, I'll give you this.]

[You had two of them?]

[No, this is a spare my master gave me in case I lose the treasure.]

[A spare?]

[Yes. It can only be used once. But it can open a door anywhere within a radius of about two hundred zhang.]

[Oh.]

[You're probably filled with greed again, right?]

[How could I not be?]

[You're honest. Anyway, if you succeed, I'll give you this.]

It was a temporary treasure prepared for an emergency, which could only be used once.

If, by any chance, this man could really kill the Three-Eyed, she wouldn't need to monitor him anymore according to her master's orders, and she wouldn't be in danger.

-Pak!

Yeo Su-rin grabbed the sleeve of Mok Gyeong-un's arm and said, [If you want this, then make sure to succeed. I really don't want to see you trying to commit suicide after I saved you.]

[I'll have to succeed, even if it's just to get what you're offering.]

[I guess you're more interested in the leftovers than the main dish. You're quite unusual. Sigh, so what's the plan? I have no intention of helping if I feel like I'll be in danger.]

[Just open the entrance.]

[What?]

[As long as you open it at the exact location I specify at the moment I give the signal. And close it right away since it's dangerous.]

[...Is that really all you need?]

[Yes, that's all.]

What is he thinking?

Is that really enough?

It was truly puzzling for her.

However...

'...This person knows martial arts.'

It was a part Yeo Su-rin hadn't predicted at all.

She was convinced that Mok Gyeong-un, who was knowledgeable about sorcery and techniques, must be a diviner from the same industry.

But she couldn't help but be surprised by his martial arts skills that surpassed her expectations.

She had heard that only martial artists with quite advanced skills could send sharp energy from a sword over a long distance.

Yet Mok Gyeong-un was capable of that.

'Could it be that he's not a diviner but a martial artist?'

Just seeing him somersault and land, he was far from ordinary people.

Who exactly is this person?

Did he learn both sorcery and martial arts?

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un raised his head and looked at Yeo Su-rin.

Seeing him like this, she clicked her tongue.

'He's telling me to give it to him.'

Yeo Su-rin immediately understood why Mok Gyeong-un was looking at her.

In a situation where his life might be in danger if he failed, he hadn't forgotten about this.

He must have really coveted it.

'Impressive. Truly impressive.'

So, she put her hand in her bosom and took out the spare treasure.

Then she glanced at Cho Tae-cheong, who had collapsed on the floor, staggering.

No matter how outstanding a diviner or a Wretched Fiend he was, he wouldn't be able to avoid death with a dagger deeply embedded in his third eye before it could fully open.

With that...

"Catch."

-Swish!

-Tak!

Mok Gyeong-un caught the spare ring treasure she threw.

Although his face was covered like a mask with a black cloth, the corners of his mouth slightly rose.

Even if it could only be used once, it was sufficiently valuable.

He had to kill the enemy anyway, so getting this on top of that was quite a bonus.

Mok Gyeong-un looked through the door of smoke open in the ceiling and said, "Aren't you coming over?"

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Yeo Su-rin slightly poked her head out and said, "He's definitely dead, right?"

-...Ah.

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong let out a sigh.

Mok Gyeong-un asked in puzzlement, -Why are you sighing?

-That wretched girl said something inauspicious.

-What do you mean?

-Keep this in mind. After fighting an enemy, it's best to avoid saying things like "He's dead, right?", "Is he dead?", or "Did you get rid of him?"

-Is that a problem?

-In my long experience, when someone says such useless things, it's an ominous sign...

-Crack!

Before Cheong-ryeong could finish speaking.

At that moment, the body of Cho Tae-cheong, who had collapsed with a dagger stuck in his head, stood up straight as if someone had lifted him.

‘!!!!!!!’

“Be careful!”

Yeo Su-rin hurriedly formed a simple hand seal with her left hand.

-Pak! Pak! Pak! Pak!

Lim (臨)! Byeong (兵)! Gae (皆)! Jin (陳)!

‘Five Spirits Heavy Strike Technique!’

As she extended her hand, a huge pillar of energy shaped like a beam descended upon Cho Tae-cheong, whose body had been lifted.

It had the force to instantly flatten Cho Tae-cheong’s body.

However...

-Crack!

Before it could even touch him, it was split into a cross shape.

‘Gasp!’

What was happening?

The power emanating from Cho Tae-cheong was beyond imagination.

It possessed an ominous and evil energy that was hard to believe belonged to a human.

-Pak!

At that moment, Cho Tae-cheong reached out his left hand towards Yeo Su-rin.

Then, Yeo Su-rin's body on the ceiling was about to be pulled towards him.

“How persistent.”

-Swish!

However, in that instant, Mok Gyeong-un used his Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps to appear in front and tried to cut off Cho Tae-cheong's left arm with the Evil Commandment Sword.

But at that moment...

-Roar!

The surroundings were shrouded in dark shadows, and Mok Gyeong-un's movements froze in place.

All his senses were lost, and once again, everything except his consciousness was taken away.

‘!?’

In this situation, Mok Gyeong-un saw Cho Tae-cheong's strange state.

With his eyes rolled back and a dagger embedded in his forehead, he was no different from a dead person.

Yet, how could he move in this situation?

Moreover, he seemed to have no consciousness at all.

It was then.

-Crack! Crack!

At that moment, something appeared as Cho Tae-cheong's cheeks split open.

It was none other than an injured eyeball.

The center of the eyeball was sunken as if stabbed by something, and black blood flowed from it.

‘Could it be?’

As he thought that, Cho Tae-cheong opened his mouth, staggering with a hoarse voice.

“You damn human, how dare you stab my eye?”

That voice was filled with anger and murderous intent.

Seeing him like this, Mok Gyeong-un, with only his consciousness alive, inwardly clicked his tongue.

Considering he was alive despite his eye being stabbed and a dagger penetrating his brain, he was already a being that could hardly be considered human.

It seemed there was a reason he was called a Wretched Fiend.

“I’ll make you feel the same pain.”

With those words, Cho Tae-cheong snatched the Evil Commandment Sword from Mok Gyeong-un’s hand.

And as he gripped the hilt...

-Flinch! Tremble!

At that moment, Cho Tae-cheong’s injured eyeball trembled.

“...What’s with this sword?”

Suddenly, a spiritual energy trying to interfere with his consciousness through the sword’s hilt made Cho Tae-cheong hurriedly try to let go of the sword.

It was at that very moment.

-Swoosh!

“Kuh!”

In a brief instant, Cho Tae-cheong’s neck was severed.

Thanks to the interference with his consciousness, his power was disrupted for a moment.

Mok Gyeong-un didn’t miss that moment.

In that fleeting instant when his senses temporarily returned, he cut off the guy's neck.

“You're quite unlucky.”

He finally had a chance to kill him, but when he tried to take revenge by grasping the demonic sword, the Evil Commandment Sword, he suffered a setback.

-Thud!

“Ah!”

At that moment, Yeo Su-rin, who fell from the ceiling to the floor and landed on her bottom, was dumbfounded.

“Ouch, my butt. W-What's going on? Eek!”

She couldn't hide her bewilderment upon seeing Cho Tae-cheong's severed neck.

What on earth had happened?

It felt like only her time had stopped for a moment and then flowed again.

It was as if the flow had been cut off.

Cheong-ryeong clicked his tongue and said, -What a truly bizarre fellow. To revive even after the source of his energy was stabbed and his brain was penetrated.

He had a truly tenacious vitality that could no longer be considered human but an beast.

But now that his neck was severed, it would be difficult for him to truly revive.

Or so he believed, but a strange thing was happening inside Cho Tae-cheong's severed head.

-Thump! Thump!

The third eye with blood vessels rising.

Unlike the dead body, that eye possessed its own sense of self.

‘Damn it.’

It was a clear mistake.

When his senses were taken away, he should have killed this bastard without caring about the repercussions of losing his body.

But he messed up because of that damn demonic sword.

With just this head, it was impossible to deal with that guy.

Now that it had come to this, the only answer was to play dead, wait, and find a new body.

‘Just you wait.’

Even though he hadn't seen his face, he remembered his voice.

The moment he found a new body, he would definitely kill him...

-Squish!

Right at that moment, Cho Tae-cheong's head was crushed.

It was because Mok Gyeong-un had stepped on the head.

“Ah! What are you doing now?”

“Making sure.”

Yeo Su-rin protested, unable to bear the sight of the head being crushed, but Mok Gyeong-un ignored her and continued to step on Cho Tae-cheong's head.

-Squish! Squish!

“Hmm?”

Then, he put his hand into the crushed, miserable thing and took something out.

It was none other than the eyeball.

‘T-This bastard!’

The blood vessels in the eyeball were raised and trembling wildly.

Looking at this eyeball, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said, “I had a hunch, but it seems to be an independent existence separate from the dead body.”

At these words, the eyeball couldn't hide its inner bewilderment.

This bastard had noticed its true nature.

Until now, even diviners hadn't detected it, but its existence was exposed to a guy like this?

-Creak!

Then so be it.

It's commendable that you noticed my existence, but you made one mistake.

You should have at least avoided direct contact with me.

-Splat! Splat!

At that moment, blood vessels shot out from the eyeball and dug into the flesh of Mok Gyeong-un's fingers.

'I'll take over your body like this... Argh!'

-Sizzle! The blood vessels that had dug into the flesh were soon burned.

'P-Poison?'

The eyeball was dumbfounded.

It had tried to penetrate his skin and consume his blood and nerves.

But this bastard's blood was poison itself.

The poisonous energy coming through the blood vessels was too painful.

-Shrink!

The eyeball trembled and twisted in agony.

Seeing this, Yeo Su-rin said with wide eyes, "T-The eyeball seems to be suffering and shrinking."

Chapter 173 – Three Eyes (1)

Looking at the eyeball shrinking in agony, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

The guy who had exuded such tremendous power and triggered caution when he had a body was now powerless and couldn't do anything.

As expected, although it was somewhat of a gamble, the venture had succeeded.

If he hadn't dealt with the guy now, more troublesome things would have happened.

Anyway, he had found out the true nature of the guy's real body and neutralized his power, so should he crush it now?

-Squish!

‘Aaargh!’

The eyeball, already suffering from the poison, hastily revealed its voice when Mok Gyeong-un pressed it, feeling its life was in danger.

-S-Stop!

“Oh? It can speak?”

Yeo Su-rin looked at the eyeball with wide eyes.

On the other hand, Mok Gyeong-un, without showing any surprise, lifted the eyeball to face his own eyes.

Then, he smiled brightly and said, “So you can talk.”

-Kuugh, this bastard...

“You’re not coming to your senses.”

-Squish!

Mok Gyeong-un applied more force to his fingers.

Then, the eyeball desperately shouted at Mok Gyeong-un.

-S-Stop!

“Stop what? Just die like this.”

-Splat!

As Mok Gyeong-un applied more force, black blood spurted out from various parts of the eyeball.

Then, the eyeball’s attitude changed drastically.

-Please spare me.

“What?”

-...Spare me! I'll do anything you want, so please let me live.

“Heh.”

Seeing the eyeball turn cowardly, Yeo Su-rin raised the corners of her mouth and showed interest.

Considering that the eyeball itself possessed a will, it was undoubtedly a monster.

To think that demonic energy had infused into an eyeball, a mere part of the human body, and given it self-will.

It was a new fact that had not been known to the diviner community.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un said, “What can you do in that state?”

-Tell me what you want. I'll do anything. If you desire gold, silver, and treasures, I'll fill the storage to the brim. If you want power, I'll use my influence to make you an executive of the Heaven and Earth Society. Or if you desire strength, I'll obtain any martial art or spiritual medicine you want.

The eyeball stated everything it could do.

If it could just overcome this crisis, opportunities would arise at any time.

There was no need to consider it cowardly.

In the first place, self-esteem was just an unnecessary emotion that humans possessed.

-Please just spare my life. After granting your wish, I'll go far away and never get involved with you again.

“You're making quite tempting offers.”

-Just spare me. I'll keep my promise.

“How did you do that earlier?”

-What are you talking about?

“You stopped all senses and movements except for consciousness, as if time had stopped.”

-What?

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the eyeball couldn't hide its bewilderment.

That was because when performing the Time-Space All Deception Technique, a supreme forbidden technique, the only one who could have a flow within that space was the caster.

For all living beings except the caster, time and space itself would come to a halt.

‘Who the hell is this bastard?’

It didn't make sense.

He had consciousness within the Time-Space All Deception Technique?

This was a technique of the supreme forbidden arts that was prohibited even in ancient times when the celestial realm was said to be open.

Although there were several restrictions, no one could possess consciousness within it.

To have consciousness in that state...

-...Could it be that you're not a living being?

"Asking a rude question to someone who's breathing just fine."

-No, how can a living human...?

"Enough with the nonsense. How do you perform that technique?"

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the eyeball remained silent for a moment.

Whatever the case, the important thing right now was to somehow please this bastard and survive.

-Are you referring to the Time-Space All Deception Technique?

"Oh, so that's the name of the technique?"

-...Yes.

"I'd like to learn that technique."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Yeo Su-rin, who had been watching, interjected.

“What technique?”

“Ah, there’s something like that.”

As Mok Gyeong-un waved his hand lightly as if telling her to ignore it, Yeo Su-rin approached and linked arms with him, saying, “Hey, we’ve gone through life and death together, almost like comrades-in-arms. Teach me too.”

-Squish!

Yeo Su-rin pulled Mok Gyeong-un’s arm close to her ample bosom.

She knew.

Men were subtly weak to such temptations.

She had tried it a few times on her brothers and found it very effective.

However...

“What are you doing?”

“...”

What’s this?

This wasn’t the reaction she expected.

Usually, they would get shy or happy in this situation.

Does this person not like this kind of thing?

As she wondered, Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head and asked, “Are you trying to seduce me with your body?”

-Blush!

Instantly, her face turned red.

“No, w-what are you saying? Who’s seducing with their body?! You’re more mischievous than you look. Hmph!”

Yeo Su-rin unlinked her arm and stepped away from Mok Gyeong-un.

It was truly embarrassing.

She had seen many men, but this was the first time she had seen someone say such things so nonchalantly with a dry face and eyes.

She was feeling more embarrassed herself.

As she moved away, Mok Gyeong-un asked the eyeball again, “It would be even better if there’s a book that compiles that technique.”

-There’s no such book.

“There isn’t?”

-The Time-Space All Deception Technique is a supreme forbidden technique consisting of 63,850,987 pictograms. It can't be learned in a short period.

"Pictograms?"

-Yes. It's written in a script before Chinese characters, and it takes several years just to familiarize yourself with and memorize it.

"Several years... It's quite long."

-It takes a considerable amount of time just to transcribe it. If you really want, I can do it if you provide me with a new body. It's just that it will take that much time.

At the eyeball's words, Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue.

Memorizing wasn't a problem.

However, if it took that long to transcribe, it was essentially a technique he couldn't learn right away.

Moreover, whatever the case, he couldn't give this eyeball a body.

"You're not trying to deceive me, are you?"

-I swear on my existence. This is absolutely not a lie.

"An oath, huh? Well then, do you have any other useful techniques?"

-Apart from the pavilion master's room, I have my own private office. There are three books sealed with the Eight Trigrams Technique. I've recorded the sorcery, techniques, and so on that I've collected over the years.

“Good.”

-If there's anything else you want, tell me. As long as you spare my life, however much...

Before the eyeball could finish speaking.

At that moment, a huge shadowy flap of wings appeared in the pavilion master's office where they were.

At the same time, the monster Toru appeared, its size reduced, scraping its front hooves on the floor with an angry expression.

‘They're here quickly.’

The eyeball clicked its tongue inwardly.

If they had come a little earlier, this mess wouldn't have happened.

It was too late now.

If Mok Gyeong-un applied just a little more force with his hand, it would burst and die.

-Grooaar!

-Flap, flap!

The tremendous demonic energy of the two monsters overturning their surroundings made Yeo Su-rin take out a talisman and assume a combat stance.

“Tsk, I forgot about the beasts.”

Mok Gyeong-un replied with an indifferent gaze, looking at the monsters blocking the left and right.

“Indeed.”

“Hey, Eyeball! Quickly order them not to attack!”

‘Eyeball? This wench, really...’

At her words, the eyeball’s insides boiled, but it managed to endure and spoke.

-Toru, Heum-won, stop.

-Grrr! Grrr!

‘!?’

But something was strange.

The eyeball had given an order to the two monsters that could be considered its familiars, but the atmosphere was unusual.

Toru, who was scraping the floor with its hooves, looked like it would charge at any moment.

“Hey, Eyeball. Are you sure you gave the order?”

-This is...

“Why are they acting like that?”

-They’ve gone out of control.

“What? What do you mean?”

-Damn it. This is why I shouldn’t have split the subject.

The eyeball was just as perplexed by the situation.

That was because when it had made those two monsters its familiars, it had divided the subject of that bond between Cho Tae-cheong’s soul and itself.

It was an experiment to split the command authority when using them as familiars, but it hadn’t known there would be such side effects.

-Rooooar!

At that moment, Toru charged towards Mok Gyeong-un.

Toru was furious at Mok Gyeong-un, who had taken away one of its eyes.

As Toru fiercely rushed towards Mok Gyeong-un...

-Whoosh!

At that moment, Toru passed through the entrance of smoke that had appeared in the middle.

“Ah! It works!”

Yeo Su-rin had created the door.

-Kraaahhh! Thud!

The sound of falling and a loud noise echoed from beyond the door.

Unable to create a long-distance door of smoke without a medium, she had used her momentary wit to create an entrance in the air higher than the 4th floor.

As a result, the monster Toru had fallen straight down.

Having succeeded in this by chance, she let out a sigh of relief.

But at that very moment...

-Rooooar!

The fallen monster Toru let out a roar and then leaped towards the entrance with tremendous force.

Startled, she rotated her hand with the treasure in the opposite direction.

At that moment, Toru's horn and head popped out at an incredible speed.

“Uwah!”

However...

-Crack!

As the door of smoke closed, Toru's head got caught in the gap and was severed.

“Huh, what?”

What was going on?

She had never experienced getting caught in a door of smoke, so she was dumbfounded by this absurd result.

Having never caught a monster-level beast before, she couldn't tell if she should consider this skill or luck.

‘Whatever.’

Anyway, wasn't it as if she had caught it?

With that, Yeo Su-rin became elated and shouted, turning her head, “Hey, I caught Toru...!”

Suddenly, her eyes widened.

That was because Mok Gyeong-un was already standing on the body of the monster Heum-won, whose upper body was in the form of a giant bird and lower body was in the form of a hornet, grabbing one of its wings.

‘Wow...’

Is that man really a monster?

How did he grab a monster-level beast with strength alone, without using any techniques?

The monster Heum-won was flapping its wings but couldn't shake off Mok Gyeong-un's hand.

‘...’

She wasn't the only one surprised.

The eyeball was also dumbfounded as it looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

In some ways, Heum-won possessed a power that was even more troublesome than Toru.

Yet, before Heum-won could do anything, Mok Gyeong-un, who had moved at a tremendous speed, instantly stepped on its back and grabbed its wing.

‘With this level of skill, he's much stronger than the average martial artists of the Heaven and Earth Society. Who the hell is this guy? I've never heard of this name before.’

Even ordinary martial artists couldn't handle a monster-level beast.

But this guy overpowered Heum-won instead.

This level of martial prowess was only possible for high-ranking executives within the Heaven and Earth Society, so its identity was unknown.

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un, while holding the monster Heum-won, said to the eyeball, “I have a question.”

-What is it?

“Why did you put that seal in the secret chamber of the Corpse Blood Valley?”

-Seal? What are you talking about?

“The scroll inside that wooden box.”

-A scroll? I have no idea what you’re talking about.

“...”

At the eyeball’s answer, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

It doesn’t know?

‘Well, this is...’

Since it was called the Three Eyes, he had thought this eyeball had sealed that monstrous raccoon dog.

But the eyeball itself seemed to have no clue.

If that was the case...

‘...It means it wasn’t this guy.’

This was a completely unexpected result.

Chapter 174 – Three Eyes (2)

-A scroll? I have no idea what you’re talking about.

“...”

At the eyeball's answer, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed.

He had naturally assumed the eyeball was the Three Eyes and had sealed the monstrous raccoon dog in the Corpse Blood Valley's secret chamber.

But the eyeball itself seemed to have no clue.

If that was the case...

‘...It means it wasn't this guy.’

This was a completely unexpected result.

Then who on earth had sealed that monstrous raccoon dog there?

They had definitely said it was a diviner with three eyes.

At that moment, the eyeball spoke.

-I don't know what you're talking about, but I've never been to the secret chamber of the Corpse Blood Valley.

“You've never been there?”

-That's right.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been frowning, stared intently at the eyeball and asked, “Do you really not know about a beast that looks like a raccoon dog?”

-A raccoon dog-like...beast?

“Yes.”

Then the eyeball trembled severely and convulsed.

Its appearance seemed as if it was feeling fear.

Why was this eyeball reacting like this all of a sudden?

As he wondered...

-C-Could you be referring to the Usurping Sea King, the Guhwancheonggu[1]?

“Guhwancheonggu?”

Mok Gyeong-un asked back at the unfamiliar name.

Could that be the name of the monstrous raccoon dog?

Meanwhile, Yeo Su-rin, who had been keeping her distance due to the earlier embarrassment, suddenly showed interest with a surprised face.

“What did you say just now?”

“Pardon?”

“Did you mention Guhwancheonggu?”

Mok Gyeong-un turned his head towards Yeo Su-rin and asked back.

“Do you know about it?”

“Of course I do. My master told me about it.”

“Your master, you mean...?”

“Yes, that person.”

Scarlet-Tailed Old Immortal.

Yeo Su-rin’s master and the pavilion master of Harmonious Immortal Pavilion, known to be one of the two most mysterious among the sixty-four pavilions of diviners.

Yeo Su-rin answered with sparkling eyes, as if intrigued.

“My master had told me about it.”

“What is it?”

“Huh? Don’t tell me you don’t know about the six spiritual beasts that have existed since ancient times?”

“The six spiritual beasts?”

Of course, there was no way he could have known.

At Mok Gyeong-un's reaction, Yeo Su-rin made a perplexed expression.

Is this man really a diviner who learned sorcery?

Meanwhile, the eyeball spoke in a trembling voice.

“...They are the ones at the pinnacle of beasts. They are not beings that a human wench like you can carelessly judge.”

At this, Mok Gyeong-un asked, “The pinnacle of beasts? Are they divine beasts by any chance?”

According to the The Classic of Mountains and Seas that he had memorized, it was known that beasts were divided into six grades based on their level of danger and power.

The lowest grade was fierce beasts.

The beast Guyeo that Mok Gyeong-un had first encountered in Mt. Yeo-a was precisely the fierce beast with the lowest level.

Of course, even if the level was low, they were still stronger than ordinary vengeful spirits.

The next grade, called the fourth grade, was precisely the monstrous beasts.

The wolf-shaped monster that had made the sound of a pig's cry, encountered during the path of the Corpse Blood Valley's gate, was the monstrous beast called Galjeo.

The next grade, the third grade, was the demonic beasts, and Heum-won, the beast from Kunlun Mountain whose wing was being held by Mok Gyeong-un's hand and was struggling, belonged to this category.

Next was the second grade, the diabolic beasts, which were so rare that even renowned diviners could hardly see them, and they were called moving disasters.

And there were beasts that were called natural disasters if even one of them appeared, and they were referred to as spiritual beasts.

These spiritual beasts were beings that might appear once every few hundred years, and even if only one of them emerged, they were beasts in the realm of calamity that could devastate an entire city.

‘Divine beasts.’

The final grade, divine beasts.

According to the Classic of Mountains and Seas, divine beasts were beings that might appear once every few thousand years, and they were in the realm of heavenly energy or divine punishment that humans could not handle, so they could lead to the destruction of a nation and the extinction of the human race, known as a great calamity.

Therefore, Mok Gyeong-un wondered if they were divine beasts since they were referred to as the pinnacle of beasts.

However...

-Divine beasts? They can't exist in this world in the first place. If the demonic energy reaches that level, it surpasses the natural order.

“Natural order?”

-You don't know what the natural order is?

“What is it?”

-The natural order is what sustains this world. Well, it's difficult for humans to understand.

“You’re speaking ambiguously.”

-The natural order is the natural order. If you go beyond that realm, you have no choice but to cross over to the other side of the boundary due to the natural order.

“The other side of the boundary?”

As he wondered, Yeo Su-rin interjected.

“It refers to ascending to immortality.”

“Ascending to immortality?”

Curiosity flashed in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

Come to think of it, he had heard about this when learning the sword and martial arts from Cheong-ryeong.

[The origin of internal energy, the foundation of martial arts, stems from the Taoist breathing techniques. Taoism cultivates internal energy through breathing methods and thereby evolves the physical body.]

[The evolution of the physical body? Do you mean becoming stronger?]

[That's part of it, but the evolution Taoism refers to means breaking through the limitations of the physical body, realizing the flow of heavenly energy, and reaching spiritual awakening.]

[Spiritual awakening?]

[Yes. That's what they call ascending to immortality or undergoing metamorphosis and ascending to immortality.]

[Undergoing metamorphosis and ascending to immortality? Does it mean becoming an immortal and ascending to the heavens?]

[Yes. Those who practice martial arts naturally aim for ascension by attaining enlightenment through martial arts. Of course, nowadays, it has faded, and martial arts have become a mere symbol of power and a tool to protect oneself and kill others.]

[Oh. But isn't that the truth?]

[Yes. The essence of martial arts was originally not to cultivate the Dao but to easily kill others. However, if you want to reach a higher realm, you need to think more transcendently.]

This was Cheong-ryeong's teaching.

She said that if one wanted to learn martial arts and reach a higher realm, one should aim for ascension.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un had no interest in that at all.

His goal was to gain the power for revenge rather than becoming an immortal.

But out of curiosity, he had asked.

[By the way, Cheong-ryeong. Have there been any actual cases of ascension?]

[There have been.]

[Bodhidharma, known as the founder of the Chinese martial arts, Zhang Sanfeng, who founded the Wudang Sect, and the Sword Immortal who was said to have beheaded a dragon with a single strike. Apart from them, there must be unknown extraordinary individuals as well. The world is full of unknowns.]

[So there have been actual cases of ascension?]

[Of course, that's why it's the goal.]

If the metamorphosis and ascension to immortality that Cheong-ryeong mentioned referred to crossing over to the other side of the boundary as the eyeball said, did it mean that humans could also reach the realm of divine beasts, as described in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, by honing their martial arts?

Somehow, both the world of sorcery and the martial world seemed to converge towards the end.

As his thoughts deepened, the eyeball spoke again.

-Yes, I think that was the case. Humans referred to crossing the boundary due to the natural order as ascending to immortality.

“Hmm. So those six beasts you mentioned...”

-The Six Demons.

“Pardon?”

-beasts who have awakened intelligence call them the Six Demons or the Six Demon Kings.

At the eyeball's words, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes slightly narrowed.

He had considered it a deformed creature, but this confirmed the eyeball's true identity.

The guy itself also recognized itself as a beast, in other words, a monster.

Well, it was strange to dismiss a being with this level of demonic energy and self-will as a mere byproduct of deformity.

“The Six Demon Kings? That’s quite a grandiose title.”

“Wow...This is the first time I’ve heard of this too.”

Yeo Su-rin spoke with sparkling eyes.

She was also very interested in beasts, but encountering a beast with intelligence was like finding a needle in a haystack.

Therefore, when she talked about the leader of the six spiritual beasts that she had heard from her master from the perspective of a beast, she naturally found it intriguing.

“Eyeball, tell me more. I want to know if the Six Demons you’re talking about are the same as the leaders of the six spiritual beasts I know.”

-...

At her pestering, the eyeball tightly shut its mouth.

It was already trying to please this guy, so it wondered if it really had to reveal this to this wench as well.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un spoke up.

“Regardless of what they’re called, anyway, that monstrous raccoon dog is called Guhwancheonggu, right?”

-It’s the Usurping Sea King.

A voice filled with fear.

Just from this reaction, the eyeball seemed to have considerable reverence for the monstrous raccoon dog.

Come to think of it, the monstrous raccoon dog possessed tremendous demonic energy even when it was sealed and its strength was significantly weakened.

It was understandable for the eyeball to be afraid.

“Well, whatever it is, the Usurping Sea King or Guhwancheonggu, there are six beasts of that level, right?”

-That’s right.

“Do you know all of those beings?”

-How could I not know?

At the eyeball’s words, Mok Gyeong-un pondered for a moment.

He wondered if he really needed to know about those beings, but it was just in case.

Who knew if that monstrous raccoon dog, no, Guhwancheonggu, was also sealed in the secret chamber of the Corpse Blood Valley?

It wouldn't be bad to know about these beings to some extent for the future.

“Can you tell me what kinds of beings they are?”

“What do you call the white ox spiritual beast?”

At that moment, Yeo Su-rin interrupted.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at her with an annoyed expression.

Then she pouted her lips and said, “I helped you too, so I can at least ask this much.”

“...”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders as if telling her to do as she pleased.

With that, Yeo Su-rin asked with a delighted face and a grin, “What do you call that huge white ox spiritual beast whose length reaches hundreds of jang from head to tail?”

-...The Great Strength King.

“The Great Strength King? Ooh, so beasts call that giant ox spiritual beast that. Then what about the dragon that couldn't ascend to the heavens and fell into depravity?”

-The Dragon Demon King.

“What about the spiritual beast of the North Sea, the phoenix whose wings have turned white?”

-The White Phoenix Demon King.

“Literally. Then what about the spiritual beast in the form of a lion with black wings and sharp spiky mane?”

-The Lion Demon King.

‘Hmm.’

Thanks to Yeo Su-rin’s questions and the eyeball’s answers, Mok Gyeong-un naturally learned about the appearance of the spiritual beasts and their titles.

He thought he did well to let her ask the questions on purpose.

Meanwhile, Yeo Su-rin continued to ask, “That stone ape trapped in the Five Finger Mountain...”

-No.

“Huh? How do you know what I’m going to ask before I even ask it?”

-The being you mentioned has already disappeared long ago due to the natural order. It no longer belongs to the Six Demons.

“Ah...It’s a bit different from what my master told me.”

At Yeo Su-rin’s words, the eyeball asked in disbelief, -You wench...Who the hell is that master of yours? How does he know about the Six Demons from long ago?

“Heh, come to think of it, you pretended to be a diviner, so you must know who our master is, right?”

-What?

“Have you heard of the Scarlet-Tailed Old Immortal?”

-...Could it be the pavilion master of Harmonious Immortal Pavilion, one of the Six diviner Gods?

The eyeball immediately recognized which pavilion and who it was upon hearing the name.

Since it shared a body with master diviner Cho Tae-cheong, it naturally knew about the existence of renowned diviners.

They were natural enemies to the beast eyeball.

Yeo Su-rin looked at Mok Gyeong-un with a triumphant expression and said, “See? Even this deformed creature knows about my master.”

“Yes, yes.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s dry response, Yeo Su-rin’s lips pouted like a duck.

Is this person really a diviner?

How could he show no interest at all when her master was so renowned and famous?

Ordinary diviners would usually try to establish connections by any means.

Clicking her tongue inwardly, Yeo Su-rin asked the eyeball again, “No, if it’s not the spiritual beast trapped in the Five Finger Mountain, then what is the remaining one of the Six Demons?”

-The Hundred-Face King.

“The Hundred-Face King?”

-That’s right.

“A hundred faces? I’ve never heard of it...What kind of spiritual beast is it?”

At Yeo Su-rin’s question, the eyeball held by Mok Gyeong-un’s hand trembled.

Even more than when it talked about the Usurping Sea King Guhwancheonggu.

The eyeball shrank and began to speak.

-It is said to be even worse than the Great Strength King, who is known to be the oldest among the Six Demons. That being is the embodiment of evil intent itself and leads everything to destruction.

“...Leads to destruction?”

-Because of that being, several nations, such as the Yin and Zhou dynasties, have been destroyed since ancient times.

“Yin and Zhou? Don’t tell me, the spiritual beast you’re talking about...”

Before Yeo Su-rin could finish her sentence, the eyeball spoke in a meaningful voice.

-A fox with golden fur and nine tails. The Golden Nine-Tailed Fox.

Chapter 175 – Three Eyes (3)

“Yin and Zhou? Could it be that the spiritual beast you’re talking about...”

-That’s right. The nine-tailed fox beast with golden fur. The Golden Nine-Tailed Fox.

‘!!!!!!!’

At the eyeball’s meaningful words, Yeo Su-rin couldn’t hide her shock.

“The Golden Nine-Tailed Fox? It seems to be a beast in the form of a fox, right?”

On the other hand, Mok Gyeong-un, who had no knowledge of this being, showed a reaction no different from when discussing the other leaders of the Six Demons.

“Ha...The Hundred-Face Golden Nine-Tailed Fox...”

“The Hundred-Face Golden Nine-Tailed Fox?”

“Haven’t you heard of it?”

“No.”

How could he have known when he didn’t even know about the other leaders of the spiritual beasts? Looking at Mok Gyeong-un, Yeo Su-rin spoke in a slightly trembling voice, unlike a moment ago.

“It’s a being different from other beasts.”

“Different, you say?”

“Beasts are usually not well known to humans because most of them have little interest in the human world.”

“Hmm, is that so?”

“But this one is different.”

“Different in what way? Isn’t it just an ancient and powerful beast?”

“In the books that diviners read, such as the Encyclopedia of Strange Creatures from Mountains and Seas, supernatural records about monsters are naturally described. But the Golden Nine-Tailed Fox has its records left even in ancient books and even in historical records.”

“Even in historical records?”

Historical records were no different from official histories compiled by the state.

Even the martial world avoided leaving records, so it was quite interesting that historians had left them.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un said, “I’ve read quite a few books related to historical records, but I’ve never heard of a story about a fox beast.”

“The earliest record is from the time of King Zhou of the Shang Dynasty.”

“The Shang Dynasty... That’s quite a long time ago.”

“Yes, it’s written in the historical records of that time. A fox monster that ate King Zhou’s concubine Su Yang and transformed into her, causing the king to become depraved and create a garden called Juchi Roulin to indulge in pleasure and commit numerous tyrannies. As a result, the Shang Dynasty was destroyed by King Wu of the Zhou Dynasty.”

“Ah... I think I’ve heard of it vaguely. The story of a king who fell for a concubine named Daji and brought ruin to his country. But it’s a bit different from what I knew.”

“This is the true original version of the historical record.”

The original version.

It is also called the original text of the historical record.

In the original text of the historical record, the truths that the author truly wanted to convey were recorded.

“The concubine Daji of the Shang Dynasty, Bao Si of the Zhou Dynasty, Lady Huayang of India, Wakasa and Tamamo-no-Mae of Japan... It appeared in numerous forms and names, influencing the fate and history of nations.”

At Yeo Su-rin’s words, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

Listening to it, this beast called the Golden Nine-Tailed Fox was different from other monsters.

As she said, it was heavily involved in the human world.

Ordinary beasts usually didn’t think of humans as anything more than food.

This was no different from humans not being interested in the world of insects or animals.

“...This monster has a lot more interest in humans than I thought.”

“That’s right. It’s strange to that extent. So it must have infiltrated human society and caused all sorts of trouble.”

“I can see why it’s called the Hundred-Face.”

The Hundred-Face King, the Golden Nine-Tailed Fox.

This ancient great fox beast always appeared in different forms and led a village at the least, or a nation at the worst, to the path of destruction.

It was not for nothing that it was said to have a hundred faces.

“A beast with a keen interest in humans... In some ways, it’s quite a troublesome being.”

“It goes beyond troublesome. It’s the worst beast. My master also said that the Golden Nine-Tailed Fox is the most dangerous because it can exploit human’s dark emotions and lead them to depravity.”

“Depravity...”

Exploiting emotions and leading to depravity.

What a truly strange beast.

I wonder why it keeps doing such things.

If it had toyed with humans to that extent, there would be no one who knew humans better than that being.

Yet it had repeatedly done so...

It’s one of two things.

‘Amusement or...’

“Wait a minute, thinking about it, you’re no different from the Golden Nine-Tailed Fox, Eyeball!”

At that moment, Yeo Su-rin, who had been talking about the Golden Nine-Tailed Fox, glanced at the eyeball held by Mok Gyeong-un’s fingers and spoke.

At this, the eyeball trembled and pleaded.

-I-I won’t interfere with human affairs anymore. So please spare my life.

“How many humans have you killed, and now you’re asking to be spared? Master Mok, just kill it.”

Yeo Su-rin pointed at the eyeball with her finger, then ran her thumb across her neck and stuck out her tongue, mimicking death.

“Squawk.”

‘This bitch!’

The eyeball cursed at Yeo Su-rin inwardly.

Then it pleaded to Mok Gyeong-un.

After all, he was the one with the choice.

-Didn’t I tell you everything you asked for? Please spare me.

“Ah, there’s one more thing I want to ask before that.”

-Ask me anything. I'll tell you everything I know.

“There are others besides you, right?”

-...What?

At the eyeball's question, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

Then he lifted the eyeball to face his own eyes and said, “Your answer was a bit slow.”

-No, I don't properly understand what you're...

“I'm asking if there are other Three Eyes besides you.”

-...

The one who reacted to Mok Gyeong-un's question was Yeo Su-rin instead.

“What are you saying now? What do you mean by asking if there are more Three Eyes?”

“There's a sealed wooden box in the Corpse Blood Valley. The beast sealed inside that box said that the one who imprisoned it was a Three Eyes in diviner attire.”

“A Three Eyes in diviner attire? Then it's this eyeball, isn't it?”

“I thought so too. But it has no idea at all. Right?”

-What are you talking about? It might be an old incident that I don't remember. All the affairs within the Heaven and Earth Society, I...

“Do you know what's sealed in the wooden box?”

-...

The eyeball shut its mouth.

“If you know, then tell me.”

-...

Seeing the eyeball suddenly become silent, Yeo Su-rin frowned.

What on earth was this situation?

The Three Eyes mentioned by her master was undoubtedly this eyeball.

A being in the form of a diviner who commanded two monster beasts as familiars.

If not this one, then who else could it be?

“That can't be. Master Mok, could you be mistaken about something? My master said that the Three Eyes in the Heaven and Earth Society would disrupt the Heavenly Qi... Ah!”

Come to think of it, her master had never specified anyone.

To be precise, he had said this.

[Go and observe. A being with a third eye will appear in the Heaven and Earth Society and disrupt the Heavenly Qi.]

“...Then what the hell is this eyeball?”

“It’s the Three Eyes.”

“But...”

“There could be another Three Eyes, so there’s no need to think too much about it. Don’t you agree, Mr. Eyeball?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the eyeball hesitated and said, -I... really... don’t know.

“Simple, isn’t it?”

-What?

“When talking about the Six Demons and such, you were afraid but still spoke well, but when I mention another Three Eyes, you’re trying your best not to show any reaction.”

-What are you talking about? Human, I really don’t know. Yes, the world is vast, so how could there not be another being like me? But I have no idea what you’re...

-Squish!

-Aaaargh!

“It would be better to talk than to die here, wouldn’t it?”

-Aaaargh, I really, really don't know.

“If you think I'm lying, then keep resisting like that.”

As Mok Gyeong-un applied more force to his fingers, the eyeball reached the point of almost being crushed.

It seemed like it would burst at any moment and release white fluid.

Then the eyeball hurriedly tried to say something.

-I-If I tell you, I'll die.

“What?”

-A forbidden technique is placed on me.

“A forbidden technique?”

-That's right.

“What kind of forbidden technique?”

-I don't know. A part of my memory is completely gone, and whenever I try to forcefully recall it, the technique activates and makes me lose consciousness.

“Hmm.”

Mok Gyeong-un tried to form a hand seal.

-D-Don't do it. I also tried to forcefully undo the forbidden technique and almost burst.

“Is that so?”

-The eighty-six widely known undoing techniques and thirteen secret undoing techniques were useless. I want to tell you, but since my life is at stake, I have no choice in this matter. Please spare...

“Ah, then there's no more need for you.”

-What?

“I'll send you off.”

-Ah!

Was he going to spare its life?

The eyeball, which had been tense for a while, let out a sigh of relief.

However...

-Swoosh!

‘!?’

At that moment, the surroundings were engulfed in darkness.

And with that, the eyeball was crushed by something.

-Crunch, crunch!

-Kuh!

“Eek!”

Yeo Su-rin looked at Mok Gyeong-un with a perplexed expression.

“A-Are you crazy?”

-Munch, munch!

Mok Gyeong-un chewed the eyeball thoroughly, then swallowed it and said nonchalantly, “So this is the taste of a beast’s eyeball.”

“What?”

“It’s salty and sticky.”

“No, what you’re saying now...”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Yeo Su-rin showed a genuinely disgusted expression.

Even if he had just eaten an eyeball, it would have been nauseating, but he had swallowed the Three Eyes, known as a Wretched Fiend. He was out of his mind.

‘Wow! This guy is a real psycho.’

She had never seen someone like this before.

Even she had been told by her master and brothers that she had a unique worldview, but this man was truly beyond the realm of understanding.

There was even a strange madness felt from him.

However...

“Huh?”

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes, which had been fine, suddenly turned white and trembled.

Why was he suddenly acting like this?

Could it be that he had suffered some side effects from eating the Three Eyes’ eyeball?

“Hey, are you okay?”

As Yeo Su-rin tried to approach Mok Gyeong-un, she had to step back because the monster beast Heum-won, not missing this opportunity, was trying to shake off its held wing.

-Kraaahhh!

“Of all times!”

Yeo Su-rin hurriedly took out a talisman from her waist and formed a hand seal with her left hand.

Although she had easily killed the monster beast Toru earlier due to luck, a monster beast at the level of a monster was not easy to deal with, even for someone close to a master diviner like herself.

-Pak!

At that moment, one of Heum-won's wings was released.

It seemed that Mok Gyeong-un's grip had weakened due to his worsening condition.

‘No, why did he have to eat that thing?’

Why did he create such a troublesome situation?

This man was really exhausting.

-Pak! Pak! Pak! Pak!

‘Yeol (裂)! Jae (在)! Jin (陣)! Gae (皆)!’

From the Earth-Pressing Seal to the Single Wheel Seal, followed by the Inner-Restraining Seal and the Outer-Restraining Seal.

It was the hand seals of the Six-Person Suppression Technique.

At the same time, the talisman contained the incantation of a guardian deity that momentarily weakened demonic energy.

-Flap, flap!

The monster beast Heum-won fully spread its huge wings.

When it spread its wings, strange patterns could be seen inside, resembling two huge eyes, which was eerie.

Moreover, the force of the demonic energy spreading in all directions was no ordinary matter.

It was enough to make the legs of average diviners tremble.

Yeo Su-rin gritted her teeth.

“Come at me. Even though I may look like this, I’m the top disciple of the diviner god Scarlet-Tailed Old Immortal.”

With that, Yeo Su-rin pointed the hand seal Gae (皆) at the monster beast Heum-won and tried to use the Six-Person Suppression Technique.

But at that very moment...

“Stop.”

As soon as that shout was heard.

The monster beast Heum-won, which had spread its wings to attack, folded its wings.

Then, as if surrendering, it lowered its head and upper body.

Surprisingly, the target was...

“Huh?”

Mok Gyeong-un.

Yeo Su-rin's eyes widened.

Why was the monster beast Heum-won obeying Mok Gyeong-un's command?

Come to think of it, that wasn't the only strange thing.

Since Mok Gyeong-un had chewed and swallowed the Three Eyes' eyeball, the familiars who had lost their master should have naturally had their bond severed and either disappeared or died.

But the monster beast Heum-won was still alive and well.

"What's going on?"

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and replied, "Who knows?"

'!?'

What on earth was happening?

She couldn't help but be genuinely curious about what had occurred.

Of course, the only one who somewhat understood this was Cheong-ryeong inside the wooden figurine in Mok Gyeong-un's bosom.

-Ha! So this works.

-Yes, it works.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been contemplating what to do with the Three Eyes, who had formed a bond as a familiar, just ate it on a whim.

He had tried it before, making a vessel or medium of a vengeful spirit into a familiar by eating it, so he thought it might work, and it truly succeeded.

The bond of the familiar had been transferred.

And one more strange thing had happened...

‘My eye...’

After eating the Three Eyes, he had absorbed its demonic energy, and it had concentrated particularly in his right eye.

When he unleashed the Three Eyes’ demonic energy like when he opened the Spirit Eye, surprisingly, the flow of energy became more distinct.

-Roar!

‘Look at this.’

Even the trajectory of the sword he had swung earlier had turned into a residual notion and left a trace.

It wasn’t just a trace of true energy.

Even the form of demonic energy transforming into a technique was faintly visible as a residual notion.

At this, the corners of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth twitched.

‘...This could be useful.’

Chapter 176 – Three Eyes (4)

‘What was that just now?’

Yeo Su-rin looked at Mok Gyeong-un’s face in puzzlement.

If her eyes weren’t deceiving her, although it was brief, Mok Gyeong-un’s right eye had turned a silver color, and an energy that couldn’t be specified as curse power or demonic energy was felt.

But it was only for a moment and quickly disappeared.

‘I’m sure there was a change in his eye.’

When it returned to its original state, that strange energy also vanished.

What was going on?

-Flap, flap!

A small bird flying around Mok Gyeong-un.

It was the shrunken form of the monster beast Heum-won.

When Mok Gyeong-un told it to hide its appearance as if he found it bothersome, it had shrunk to the size of a sparrow and was circling around.

As expected of a monster beast, it concealed its demonic energy so well that it seemed difficult to notice it was a beast unless one had outstanding demonic energy or was extremely sensitive.

‘Oh, I really don’t know.’

The monster beast Heum-won definitely seemed to have become Mok Gyeong-un’s familiar.

But all of this stemmed from one thing.

That was...

‘Did he really become like this after eating that eyeball?’

It was something she found hard to understand.

The eyeball was a Wretched Fiend and a parasitic beast that took root in a human body.

Would eating such a beast make this possible?

[The demonic energy, blood, or flesh of beasts is nothing but poison to humans. So make sure it never enters your mouth, even by mistake.]

That’s what her master had said.

Yet Mok Gyeong-un had done the crazy act of eating it.

And the bond of the Three Eyes’ familiar had been transferred to Mok Gyeong-un.

Something completely contrary to the common sense she knew had occurred.

‘How on earth did he do it?’

She was burning with the desire to ask.

However, even if she asked, it seemed unlikely that Mok Gyeong-un would tell her.

Just like the martial arts sects and factions, if the pavilion or sect of sorcery was different, they had their own techniques and did not share them with other sects.

In the first place, asking about it was considered taboo.

‘Ah, I’m really curious.’

But once her curiosity was piqued, she had to resolve it to feel at ease.

For Yeo Su-rin, Mok Gyeong-un was a collection of curiosities.

If he had really eaten a monster and made its bond his own, she wanted to dissect and study him.

As Yeo Su-rin stared at Mok Gyeong-un like that, she came up with a good idea.

‘Right. Then I can keep observing him closely.’

There was a very simple solution.

Not only that, she had learned that there was another Three Eyes besides the one that had been one with Diviner Cho Tae-cheong.

Then she hadn't completed her master's order yet.

There was still a reason for her to stay here longer.

"Hey."

"Yes?"

"I think I'll... Huh?"

Yeo Su-rin's eyes widened as she tried to speak to Mok Gyeong-un.

The reason was none other than the fact that Mok Gyeong-un had opened the lid of what seemed to be a coffin placed next to the desk in the pavilion master's office, and there was a person inside.

"What is that? Wait, that person? It's not a living person."

"That's right."

Mok Gyeong-un shook his head.

Inside was something that anyone would consider a corpse.

That corpse was none other than the former Primal Killing Pavilion Master, In Seo-ok.

"Ugh... ugh..."

Seeing In Seo-ok groaning, Yeo Su-rin said, "Is this a jiangshi? No, a corpse ghost?"

“You have good eyes.”

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes flashed with interest as Yeo Su-rin immediately recognized In Seo-ok’s condition.

This woman may be chatty, but she was definitely a capable diviner.

Both in terms of knowledge of sorcery and demonic energy.

“No way. That corpse ghost, could it be... the Primal Killing Pavilion Master?”

“That’s right. You recognize him?”

“Of course. It took a while to enter the main hall building, but I’ve been inside the Primal Killing Pavilion since three months ago.”

During that time, she had familiarized herself with the face of the Primal Killing Pavilion Master, In Seo-ok.

But she hadn’t expected him to be in this state after not seeing him for half a month.

Yeo Su-rin let out a sigh and said, “Why did the Primal Killing Pavilion Master end up like this? Could it be that he was attacked by the Three Eyes?”

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

“No, that’s not it.”

“It’s not? Then who on earth did this? The Primal Killing Pavilion Master may have left the Sixty-Four Pavilions, but he’s still a diviner.”

Excluding the top six diviner gods, the highest level in sorcery was called master diviner.

For a skilled master diviner to become a corpse ghost like this...

Only a diviner of the same level or higher could have done this.

However...

“I did it.”

“Ah, so Master Mok did it... What?”

Yeo Su-rin looked at Mok Gyeong-un’s face in surprise.

In Seo-ok was the Primal Killing Pavilion Master, who had a high reputation even among the master diviner of the Sixty-Four Pavilions.

And Mok Gyeong-un had made him like this?

“Really?”

“Yes, really. Did you think it might be fake?”

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue and formed a hand seal.

-Tak! Tak!

‘Jae (在)! Jin (陣)!’

Then he struck In Seo-ok's chest with his palm.

A strange thing happened.

The curse binding In Seo-ok was released, and his neck bulged, and then...

"Kuh-blegh."

Something like intertwined tree branches violently popped out.

Every time they came out, In Seo-ok's entire body shook violently.

It seemed that the tree branches had spread throughout his body, fixing him in place so he couldn't move.

"Wow... That's really vicious. Vicious."

Yeo Su-rin clicked her tongue at this sight.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said, "This wasn't done by me. It was probably done by the Three Eyes, Cho Tae-cheong."

"The Three Eyes?"

"Yes. In Seo-ok wasn't supposed to be here originally."

He had told the dead Diviner Jo Ui-gong to take care of it if he managed to take the position of the Primal Killing Pavilion Master.

But his presence here meant that the Three Eyes, Cho Tae-cheong, had noticed his existence because of this.

It was fortunate that it was resolved before things got more complicated.

Otherwise, things would have gotten tangled.

‘And is it fortunate?’

Mok Gyeong-un was already pondering one thing.

With the death of the diviner Jo Ui-gong, he had lost the person who would control the Primal Killing Pavilion.

But with the living corpse ghost, the former Primal Killing Pavilion Master In Seo-ok, that problem was solved.

With him around, he could fill the void left by the dead Jo Ui-gong and Cho Tae-cheong.

“Kuh-ugh.”

-Swish!

As the long, extending tree branches were all pulled out, In Seo-ok’s body twitched, and then he sat up as if he had regained consciousness.

Then he slightly bowed to Mok Gyeong-un.

“Hiya. You really made him like this. No, how did you subdue the Primal Killing Pavilion Master?”

“I’m good at it.”

“Ahaha. Good... Will you keep answering like that?”

“Yes.”

-Crunch, crunch!

Yeo Su-rin chewed her fingernails and glared at Mok Gyeong-un.

He was the most troublesome man she had ever met.

Seriously.

As she chewed her fingernails, she let out a sigh and said, “Then you won’t tell me why you made him like that, right?”

“Yes. Although we had a deal, our relationship ends here, doesn’t it?”

“What?”

“You’ll be leaving now, won’t you?”

“Ah...”

Yeo Su-rin looked at Mok Gyeong-un with a strange expression.

Although they hadn’t known each other for long and their relationship was short, they had faced a common enemy while risking their lives, so she thought they had become somewhat close.

But with these words, she realized that Mok Gyeong-un didn't trust her at all.

‘This person... Is he very shy?’

Yeo Su-rin clicked her tongue with a twisted expression.

Even though it was a bet, she had given him a disposable treasure, so she felt disappointed.

Fine.

Now that it had come to this, she would make him treat her warmly with his own mouth out of spite.

Yeo Su-rin, who had inwardly set her ambition, said, “I’m not going back.”

“You’re not going back?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Didn’t you say there’s one more Three Eyes?”

“That’s...”

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue inwardly as if he had made a mistake.

He had asked about this, thinking it was important information, but because of this, Yeo Su-rin also had a reason to stay here longer.

No, was it a situation where she couldn't leave yet?

"Ah... Is that so? But there won't be any more inside the main hall, so you'll have to search hard."

"What? You're not going to search?"

"Me?"

"Yes. Judging from what you said to the Three Eyes earlier, weren't you trying to find the other Three Eyes?"

"No. I was just checking if there was another one."

"No, then you're not going to search?"

"Yes."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Yeo Su-rin showed a troubled expression.

She had intended to observe Mok Gyeong-un under the pretext of searching for the Three Eyes together.

What should she do about this?

Yeo Su-rin, whose mind had become complicated, pouted her lips like a duck and said, "No, isn't that really mean of you?"

"What's mean about it?"

“Even though this is also a relationship, can’t you help me a little? Thanks to me, you were able to kill the Three Eyes here without difficulty.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un replied nonchalantly.

“Wasn’t it because our goals aligned? And the one who risked his life was me. As I recall, Miss Yeo, you were always ready to run away.”

“T-That was just what I said. If things had turned out differently, I would have helped.”

“Ah, is that so?”

Yeo Su-rin stamped her feet with an indignant expression and said, “It’s true.”

“Yes, I’m sure it is.”

Mok Gyeong-un placed his hand on the head of the former Primal Killing Pavilion Master, In Seo-ok, as if he had no interest.

Then he infused the energy of death, the death qi, into In Seo-ok’s head.

-Whoosh!

A corpse ghost is literally close to a corpse state.

However...

“Huh?”

Yeo Su-rin's eyes widened.

She had thought that the Primal Killing Pavilion Master, In Seo-ok, was simply a corpse ghost.

But before she knew it, the state of the Primal Killing Pavilion Master, In Seo-ok, was changing to resemble his living appearance rather than a corpse.

Even the color of his skin was turning from purple to a flesh tone.

“A-A living corpse ghost?”

A living corpse ghost.

It was a forbidden secret technique of the Six-Person Spirit Summoning Technique.

When the heart's blood of the caster is fed to a person who has just died, and the yin energy of those who have recently died is gathered in one place, and a technique is performed, this is born.

Literally, it is a living corpse ghost.

‘A living corpse ghost?’

The reason she was surprised was simple.

Creating a living corpse ghost was even more difficult than an ordinary corpse ghost or jiangshi.

To create a single living corpse ghost, nearly thirty people had to be killed, and their energy had to be gathered together. Moreover, living corpse ghosts had too many weaknesses.

If they couldn't periodically kill people and fill themselves with the yin energy of the dead, their bodies would rot, so their utility was extremely low.

“Master Mok... That's a forbidden technique.”

“Ah, it was.”

Mok Gyeong-un looked at Yeo Su-rin with a cold gaze.

Come to think of it, she was from the Harmonious Immortal Pavilion, which belonged to the proper diviner group, the Sixty-Four Pavilions.

On the other hand, the Primal Killing Pavilion was a group that had left the Sixty-Four Pavilions, joined hands with martial arts groups, and performed all sorts of forbidden techniques.

Therefore, Mok Gyeong-un didn't place much significance on forbidden techniques.

However, in reality, among diviners, forbidden techniques were literally sorcery that should not be performed.

‘Should I kill her?’

Mok Gyeong-un had intended to let her go since she had been helpful.

But now that she seemed like she might become an obstacle, he was contemplating whether to kill her.

Meanwhile, Yeo Su-rin spoke with sparkling eyes.

“No, how did you do it?”

“What?”

“To give vitality to a living corpse ghost, you need the yin energy of those who have just died.”

“...”

“That’s why it was a forbidden technique, but could it be that you found a way to infuse vitality even without that?”

At Yeo Su-rin’s words, Mok Gyeong-un let out a soft sigh.

It was because she was creating her own excuses.

So Mok Gyeong-un lightly nodded his head.

At this, Yeo Su-rin approached Mok Gyeong-un with sparkling eyes and said, “Where are you really from? Are you perhaps a disciple of the pavilion master of the Sonmunjiyonggak?”

“Gentle Gate Dragon Pavilion?”

“Huh? You’re not?”

“No.”

“Then the Submerged Moon Water Pavilion...”

“I won’t tell you, so stop asking.”

“Hmm... Can’t you at least tell me that much?”

“Yes. And I have a lot of work to do here. So let’s part ways here. Otherwise, you...”

He omitted the latter part about having to kill her.

He hoped she would understand.

But Yeo Su-rin clasped her hands together with a pleading expression and said, “Master Mok, I’m really, really saying this because it’s hard for me to find the Three Eyes alone. Can’t you help me?”

She seemed to have misunderstood.

Should he just kill her?

There was no need for her anymore.

Mok Gyeong-un said with a faint smile, “I’m busy with my own work.”

“Then I’ll help Master Mok too.”

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un raised an eyebrow and asked back, “You’ll help me?”

“Yes, from what I see, Master Mok wasn’t here for three months, so it seems you’re not here as a diviner, right?”

“...”

“Since you’ve also learned martial arts, you’re here as a martial artist, aren’t you?”

Indeed, even though this woman was chatty, she wasn't stupid.

"Right? Then don't you need someone to manage this living corpse ghost?"

"..."

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed.

Someone to manage the living corpse ghost...

Even though it had self-will and was close to the state of a living person, a corpse ghost was still a corpse ghost.

It needed to be managed from time to time to ensure there were no problems.

Yeo Su-rin, convinced that Mok Gyeong-un was contemplating, smiled brightly and said, "I'll actively help you with anything else you need, not just this. Master Mok, please help me find the Three Eyes too. Isn't that a fair deal?"

"Hmm."

"Hey, don't pretend to think about it."

"It seems like a not-so-bad condition."

"Right?"

"But I don't trust people well."

“No, I keep my promises well!”

“Because there’s always the possibility of ‘what if’.”

“Ugh, you’re really too much. I gave you the spare treasure without a word. Even if it can only be used once, it’s worth a thousand gold.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

He knew from observing her that this woman had no ill intentions.

However, Mok Gyeong-un didn’t completely trust people.

That’s why he thought an appropriate measure was necessary.

“Do you really wish to make a deal?”

“I told you. If you help me find the Three Eyes, I’ll help you with your work too. Isn’t it fair in a way?”

“Well, I suppose so.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s somewhat positive answer, Yeo Su-rin’s expression brightened.

“Then you’re accepting it?”

“I’m considering it, but if you agree to one condition.”

“A condition?”

“Yes. As I mentioned before, I don’t trust people well. So...”

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un extended his hand.

Then, something was sucked from the wrist of the beheaded corpse fixed in front of the pavilion master’s desk into Mok Gyeong-un’s hand.

-Swish! Tak!

“Huh? How did you do that just now?”

“I’m good at it.”

“Ugh.”

He never properly taught her even once.

Biting her lips tightly and glaring at Mok Gyeong-un, Yeo Su-rin soon recognized what was in his hand.

“Wait a minute... Don’t tell me that’s the Chain of Incantation?”

“You recognize it.”

At this, Yeo Su-rin spoke with a somewhat stiffened expression, unlike before.

“You’re not going to tell me to wear that, are you?”

In response to that question, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and replied, "I was going to tell you to wear it."

"No. That's used to subjugate the other party!"

"It's not to unconditionally subjugate you, but think of it as a kind of safety device. When we're both done with our business, I'll release you."

"I can't! Absolutely not!"

Yeo Su-rin shouted angrily with a furious face.

No matter what, this was not acceptable.

The Chain of Incantation was a dangerous treasure that allowed the one who imposed the restraint to drive her to death as much as they wished.

And he was telling her to put that on?

-Whirl, whirl!

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un twirled the Chain of Incantation and said, "Then there are only two options."

"Two? One would be to not make a deal at all and part ways."

"Yes, you're quite perceptive."

"Then what's the other one?"

“It’s a method that I’ve found to be somewhat effective, so it might not be bad for you either.”

“So what is it?”

“Becoming my woman.”

‘!?’

Instantly, Yeo Su-rin’s expression stiffened.

For a moment, she doubted her own ears.

Chapter 177 – Jang Neung-ak (1)

Yeo Su-rin’s expression stiffened.

For a moment, she doubted her own ears.

‘Becoming your woman?’

What on earth was he saying?

Yeo Su-rin asked, thinking it couldn’t be.

“Hey... you know what? I’m asking because I think I might have misunderstood... What you just said, could it be?”

“Yes, if you become my woman, I might be able to trust you a little more, don’t you think?”

‘!?’

Yeo Su-rin looked at Mok Gyeong-un with dumbfounded eyes.

She thought there might be another way to prove trust, but this was a completely unexpected suggestion.

It wasn't just her who was dumbfounded by Mok Gyeong-un's words.

-Ha! Human, are you out of your mind?

-Pardon?

-If she's that troublesome, you should just kill her. What's all this about?

-Is there a problem?

-A problem? Of course there is. Are you attracted to that wench?

-No.

How could that be?

Mok Gyeong-un didn't feel any emotions towards Yeo Su-rin.

Cheong-ryeong also knew that Mok Gyeong-un had no particular feelings towards women, so the fact that he made such a suggestion was absurd.

-Ha! Then are you in heat?

-In heat?

-Yes, in heat. If not, why would you make such a suggestion? Do you think that's a way to build trust? You're just trying to satisfy your own sexual desires...

-I don't know what kind of emotion it is to want to satisfy it, but wouldn't it be good to develop a relationship, both feel good, and have her affection focused on me?

-...

Cheong-ryeong was not only dumbfounded but also at a loss for words at Mok Gyeong-un's confident words.

She wanted to refute him, but he stated his reasons so confidently that she didn't know what to say.

-So you're saying you'll sleep with that human wench?

-If she wants to.

-If she wants to?

-Yes, is there a better way to confirm trust than that?

-...Sigh.

Did he become overconfident after being intimate with Wi So-yeon?

Or does he believe that he can manipulate a woman's, no, a person's emotions just through a relationship?

Whatever it is, it's truly remarkable.

So she had to clearly tell him.

-You seem to have a serious misunderstanding, human.

-Misunderstanding?

-Yes. Although I've become a vengeful spirit, as a woman, let me make it clear. You're taking women too lightly.

-Taking them lightly?

-Yes!

-Hmm. You sound a bit agitated. Are you perhaps angry?

-No!

-Even though you said no, you seem to have put some force into it.

-I said no!

-...Well, I don't mind if that's the case, but I don't take women lightly. I just think there's nothing wrong with having a relationship when it comes to making emotions more solid...

-Slap!

At that moment, a slap flew at Mok Gyeong-un's cheek.

Of course, with this level of force, his head wouldn't turn at all.

-See that?

Cheong-ryeong chuckled mockingly.

She knew this would be the obvious result.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at Yeo Su-rin, who had slapped him, with a puzzled expression.

Unlike before, she seemed to exude a cold aura.

“What are you doing?”

“Listen, Master Mok. You talked about trust and all that, but do you think I'm some prostitute from the red-light district?”

“...That's not it?”

“Then how can you say such things?”

“What's wrong with it?”

“Ha! Why should I become your woman to build trust? Did you not know that you're quite lustful despite your looks? No, did you decide to have some fun because you have a decent face?”

“Fun?”

“Yes, otherwise how can you say such things so easily?”

“Hmm.”

“Except for your face, you’re not my type at all. And I have no desire to be intimate with someone whose neck will be broken and die at a young age.”

“Is that so?”

“...”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s dry response, Yeo Su-rin clicked her tongue inwardly.

This man seems really unusual.

Judging by the way he looks at her, it doesn’t seem like he fell for her or feels sexual desire to make such a suggestion.

But then why did he make such an absurd suggestion?

Did he see her as someone easy?

“I’m really disappointed.”

“Disappointed? In what?”

“You talked about trust and all that, but you’re saying things that only horny pigs would say.”

“Horny... What is a male-female relationship in the first place?”

“What?”

“I’m asking what a male-female relationship is.”

“What do you mean what? When they feel attraction and have feelings of love for each other...”

“Isn’t it the case that humans are divided into male and female not only for physical structural differences but also for the purpose of reproduction of the species?”

“...”

For a moment, Yeo Su-rin was at a loss for words.

He asked what a male-female relationship was, but wasn’t he being too fundamental?

Yeo Su-rin spoke with a flushed face, feeling annoyed.

“No, then what’s the difference between humans and beasts?”

“In the first place, when it comes to male-female relationships or reproduction of the species, there’s no difference between humans and beasts.”

“Ugh, what kind of nonsense...”

“It’s not nonsense.”

“What?”

“Even beasts don’t just reproduce for the sake of it. Females try to find a male with stronger seed, and males also try to find a more suitable female for reproduction.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Yeo Su-rin clicked her tongue.

This man’s way of thinking seemed extremely one-dimensional.

Considering how he simplistically dismissed male-female relationships.

“Hey, do you even know what the feeling of love is?”

“Isn’t it when two people find each other attractive, whether it’s appearance or anything else?”

“That’s...”

When she tried to answer, it wasn’t wrong.

So Yeo Su-rin pondered what to say and spoke.

“Fine. Then let’s go by what you said. Do you find me attractive?”

“As the opposite sex?”

“Yes!”

In response to her question, Mok Gyeong-un answered without any hesitation.

“Excluding everything else and considering you solely as the opposite sex, there’s no reason not to find you attractive.”

Yeo Su-rin had a cute and beautiful appearance with short hair.

With her ample breasts, slim waist, and protruding hips, her figure was also excellent.

Although Cheong-ryeong and Wi So-yeon were exceptionally beautiful, Yeo Su-rin was also undoubtedly a beauty.

“...”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s answer, her expression became strange.

At first, she thought this man was playing with her.

But if she carefully considered what Mok Gyeong-un was saying, it was no different from saying that he found her attractive as the opposite sex, in other words, as a woman.

‘No, is he really attracted to me?’

Yeo Su-rin looked into Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

But she couldn’t feel any particular emotion in Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze.

How could he say such things so nonchalantly with that expression and eyes?

It was incomprehensible.

Meanwhile...

“Then it seems we’ve reached a conclusion. Let’s part ways here.”

“What?”

“If you don’t like both options, there’s no reason for us to do anything together. Then will you please leave this place?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s firm words, Yeo Su-rin’s expression became sulky.

What kind of options were so extreme?

She had intended to properly rebuke him and end things, feeling that she was being taken lightly as a woman.

But when Mok Gyeong-un gave up so easily, she felt a strange sense of competitiveness instead.

What does it mean to say he finds her attractive as the opposite sex and then give up so easily?

“Isn’t it too quick to reach a conclusion?”

“I’m busy with other things besides this.”

“You said you find me attractive as the opposite sex. Shouldn’t you be more proactive if that’s the case?”

“Is there a need for that?”

“What?”

“And the one who should feel regretful is you, not me.”

“Eek!”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Yeo Su-rin’s cheeks trembled.

He was really toying with her.

If she followed what Mok Gyeong-un wanted right here, she would be no different from selling her body just to receive help.

So...

“Then let’s do this.”

“I won’t accept any other proposals.”

“Can’t you listen first and then decide?”

“No such thing.”

Mok Gyeong-un flatly refused.

So she stamped her feet and then calmed herself down and said, “No, you’re really too much. Let’s at least make a vow to each other using the Non-Movement Curse Power Weakening Technique.”

“Non-Movement Curse Power Weakening Technique?”

“You know it, right?”

“I don’t, but...”

“Ah... You don’t know this?”

“What is it?”

“The Non-Movement Curse Power Weakening Technique is a technique where you pledge an oath by using each other’s curse power as collateral.”

“Using curse power as collateral?”

“Yes, you said you can’t trust me. But I’m the same. How can I trust a man who tells me to offer my body for trust when we haven’t even known each other for a day?”

“So?”

“It’s literally what it means. The Non-Movement Curse Power Weakening Technique is a technique where you make an oath based on incantations and curse power. If you break each other’s oath, you lose all your curse power.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

There was no reason for him to take on such a risky constraint together with her.

However...

“The technique isn’t that difficult. You just need to use your own name and curse power as the incantation.”

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un, who was about to refuse, stopped.

Hearing about it, the principle seemed similar to the Chain of Incantation.

If that was the case...

“...Hmm. Not bad.”

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

If the principle was similar to the Chain of Incantation, he had nothing to lose.

After all, it wasn’t his true name.

Yeo Su-rin, unaware of Mok Gyeong-un’s inner thoughts, spoke with a slightly flushed face, as if embarrassed, without making eye contact.

“For now, let’s prevent backstabbing each other for a certain period with the oath of the Non-Movement Curse Power Weakening Technique. And if we develop some trust in each other during that time, I’ll consider that proposal. Ahem. Is this good enough?”

The residence of Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader.

On the bed in the reception room of the residence, a woman with thick lips was sitting up, saying something.

She was Seo Hye-in, the leader of the Grass Smoke Group, one of the Five Mountains Alliance, the loyal subordinates of Jang Neung-ak.

Sitting next to her and listening to the report was Jang Neung-ak, her lord.

Jang Neung-ak's expression wasn't good as he listened to her report.

Moreover, it wasn't just him. Ko Yeon-hu, the grand leader of the Hegemon Fist Group, the First Mountain, who was standing behind him, also had a frown on his face.

The reason was simple.

"Are you sure you saw it correctly?"

"Yes, young master. Do you think I would dare to report falsely to you?"

"Ha!"

At her words, Jang Neung-ak was dumbfounded.

Then he asked Ko Yeon-hu behind him, "What do you think?"

"...I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"The first time I saw him was inside the Baek Clan's estate. At that time, he seemed to be at the level of early-stage of Transcendent Realm at best."

"Early-stage Transcendent Realm... No. Absolutely not."

Jang Neung-ak shook his head.

He had already witnessed Mok Gyeong-un's true abilities there.

Although he hadn't reached the realm of the Poison Master, he had endured even the poison of the Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

Perhaps because of that, Baek Sa-ha had taken a liking to him and accepted him as a disciple.

But this was indeed surprising.

“That guy defeated Woo Ho-rang? Hah.”

Who was Woo Ho-rang?

Wasn't he one of the Five Tigers, the best late-stage disciples that the Heaven and Earth Society was proud of?

Even Ko Yeon-hu, his right-hand man, couldn't gauge the outcome of a battle against him, but he had defeated him with his skills?

If this was true, it was truly astounding.

“Hehehe.”

But more than surprise, he felt joy.

Even without this, when Seo Hye-in had been brought unconscious by the Baek Clan's warriors, he had thought something was wrong.

But now they said Mok Gyeong-un had defeated Woo Ho-rang.

That meant he had fallen out with his junior sister, Wi So-yeon.

“What a likable fellow. To prove his loyalty to this young master in this way. Hahahahaha!”

He couldn’t help but laugh.

Meanwhile, Seo Hye-in spoke in a cautious voice, “But young master, there’s a slight problem.”

“A problem?”

“Yes.”

“Ah, right. Who knocked you unconscious?”

He had already asked the Baek Clan’s warrior who had brought her here, but they said they couldn’t tell him under the order of the Poison King Baek Sa-ha, the head of the family.

He had considered beating them up to find out, but he needed Baek Sa-ha’s support at this point, and he could just ask Seo Hye-in when she woke up, so he had let them go.

“That’s...”

“Don’t tell me you don’t know who knocked you out?”

“No, I have a guess.”

“A guess? You’re not saying you don’t even know who knocked you unconscious, are you?”

“...I think it was probably the Eldest Young Master.”

“What?”

At her report, Jang Neung-ak’s expression, which had been as if he had the whole world in his hands until just now, instantly hardened.

“Senior Brother?”

“...Yes.”

“How could that be? Senior Brother made a move?”

Jang Neung-ak denied it with trembling eyes.

He clearly remembered the last words his eldest brother had said to him.

[Try your best to struggle. If you can, that is.]

He didn’t even consider him a competitor.

He had thought it was just words, but during that time, his eldest brother had almost neglected and didn’t even interfere with him gathering his forces.

But now he suddenly made a move?

This was unbelievable.

However...

“It was too bland, so I was thinking of giving one or two to the disciples, but it seems too much of a waste.”

“What?”

“Those were the last words I heard before being struck on acupoints.”

At Seo Hye-in’s words, Jang Neung-ak gritted his teeth with a flushed face.

If these words were true, it meant that bastard had caught the Senior Brother’s attention, didn’t it?

-Bang!

Jang Neung-ak hit the armrest of the chair and stood up.

“No way.”

Anyone else was fine, but not Mok Gyeong-un.

Right now, that guy was in the most important position.

Not only was he the joint disciple of the Poison King Baek Sa-ha, who had recently reached the Transformation Realm, but also of the leader of the Secret Information Group, the Shadow Clan.

If he took in Mok Gyeong-un, he would secure a force comparable to his eldest brother’s at once.

But all of a sudden, at this crucial moment, he interfered?

-Grit!

It seemed his eldest brother didn't treat him as a competitor after all.

He had been watching all along.

To crush him like this at a critical moment.

"Let's go."

"Excuse me?"

"Young Lady Seo, rest. The rest of you, follow this young master."

At his order, Ko Yeon-hu, the grand leader of the First Mountain Hegemon Fist Group, hurriedly said, "My lord, you're not planning to meet the Eldest Young Master, are you?"

"...I am."

At those words, Ko Yeon-hu couldn't hide his concern.

No matter how angry he was about this incident, the Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang was a truly dangerous person.

Although his lord Jang Neung-ak also had a tendency to be somewhat swayed by emotions, Na Yul-ryang transcended that realm and didn't even feel like a person.

If he met him with his emotions ahead...

‘It’s too dangerous. I need to dissuade my lord.’

-Tap tap tap tap!

At that moment, the sound of someone running was heard from outside.

Then they knocked on the door. “My lord. It’s me, Jeo Mo-pal.” The one knocking on the door was none other than Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountain, and leader of Geo-am Fist.

Jang Neung-ak, who was about to go out anyway, roughly opened the door.

-Bam!

“What is it?”

“Well...”

“Well what?”

“Mok Gyeong-un has come to see you.”

‘!?’

Chapter 178 – Jang Neung-ak (2)

“What? Mok Gyeong-un?”

Jang Neung-ak’s expression turned strange.

He was just about to go and protest to his eldest brother Na Yul-ryang for interfering and trying to take Mok Gyeong-un away from him.

But now Mok Gyeong-un has come on his own?

What was going on?

‘...Should I consider this fortunate?’

On the other hand, Ko Yeon-hu, the grand leader of the First Mountain Hegemon Fist Group, who had tried to dissuade his lord, Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, inwardly let out a sigh of relief.

It wasn't the time to clash with the Eldest Young Master in terms of power or in any aspect.

But while feeling relieved, Ko Yeon-hu also became puzzled.

So...

“My lord, something seems strange.”

“Strange, you say?”

“Yes. Didn't Young Lady Seo say that the Eldest Young Master mentioned it would be a waste to give him away before striking her acupoints?”

At his words, Jang Neung-ak also nodded inwardly in agreement.

If he hadn't heard those words, he would have gladly gone to welcome Mok Gyeong-un right away.

So Jang Neung-ak pondered for a moment and asked, "What do you think happened?"

At that question, Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountains Geo-am Fist, who had reported Mok Gyeong-un's arrival, answered.

"Since he came here on his own, isn't it to pledge loyalty to you, my lord? Why are you reacting like this?"

At his words, Ko Yeon-hu said, "It seems the Eldest Young Master has made contact with Mok Gyeong-un."

"What? The Eldest Young Master?"

"Yes. That's why I'm concerned."

"Concerned about what?"

"Perhaps Mok Gyeong-un has had a change of heart."

At those words, Jeo Mo-pal raised his voice with a fierce look in his eyes.

"No. After my lord has treated him so favorably, how could he have a change of heart? If he does such a thing, I, Jeo Mo-pal, will break his legs."

At those words, Jang Neung-ak shook his head and waved his hand.

"Stand down. It's too much for you."

"Pardon?"

“Leader Ko or Leader Ho would have to step up to handle him.”

At Jang Neung-ak’s words, Jeo Mo-pal spoke with a frown and a disappointed tone.

“If it’s because of my confrontation with him last time, I didn’t use my full strength then. I also underestimated him, thinking he was a novice. This time, I’ll properly...”

Ko Yeon-hu, the First Mountain, cut off Jeo Mo-pal’s words.

“He defeated Woo Ho-rang.”

“What?”

Jeo Mo-pal’s eyes widened.

What was this about?

Was the Woo Ho-rang he was referring to the same one he knew?

“Surely you don’t mean Woo Ho-rang, the grand leader of the Giant Watchtower Group?”

“Who else would I be talking about?”

‘!?’

Jeo Mo-pal was momentarily dumbfounded.

There were rumors that Mok Gyeong-un's martial prowess was higher than expected, but weren't the Five Tigers considered the best among the late-stage disciples in terms of strength, excluding the executives of the Heaven and Earth Society?

And one of the Five Tigers, Woo Ho-rang, was defeated by Mok Gyeong-un?

"That means..."

"We can consider Mok Gyeong-un as a new member of the Five Tigers."

"Gasp!"

Jeo Mo-pal clicked his tongue.

As he closed his mouth, Seo Hye-in, the leader of Grass Smoke Group, who had been sitting up on the bed, cautiously spoke.

"Young Master, why don't you meet him first?"

"Meet him, you say?"

"Yes. If Mok Gyeong-un had truly changed his mind and joined the Eldest Young Master, would there be any reason for him to come all the way here again?"

"Hmm."

At her words, Jang Neung-ak nodded his head.

What she said made sense.

So Jang Neung-ak asked Jeo Mo-pal, "Did he come alone?"

"Yes. He came alone. There doesn't seem to be anyone accompanying him."

"Alone..."

In that case, he should meet him first and judge.

If he had betrayed him and changed his allegiance to his eldest brother, it would be best for him to be prepared.

Of course, if he came to pledge loyalty to him, he would receive appropriate treatment.

"Prepare the banquet table."

"Pardon?"

"Depending on his answer, it will be determined whether it will be a punitive drink or a rewarding drink."

Mok Gyeong-un, following Jeo Mo-pal, was walking through the estate.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes flashed with interest.

Compared to the side of Wi So-yeon, the third disciple of the Society Leader, this side seemed more systematic.

Wi So-yeon's estate wasn't that large in scale and felt more like a place for acquaintances, while this place had a well-established hierarchy.

The energies felt from various places and the number of masters were also considerable.

Seeing this, one could guess how much effort the second disciple Jang Neung-ak had put in to become the Society Leader.

As they walked for a while, Mok Gyeong-un spoke up.

"I'm starting to become familiar with the layout of the estate, but how long are we going to keep walking in circles?"

"...What? You noticed?"

"The estate may be large, but not to the extent of walking for nearly a quarter-hour, right?"

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Jeo Mo-pal chuckled.

Then he stopped walking and said, "Well, I didn't have any ill intentions, so there's no need for suspicion."

"Is that so?"

"My lord just said he's preparing a banquet for you, so I was just giving you a brief tour of the estate."

"A banquet?"

"That's right."

“You’re making me feel burdened.”

“It’s just a casual gathering for drinks.”

“Ah, is that so?”

“The preparations should be almost done, so I’ll guide you to the reception room.”

“I would appreciate that.”

With that, they resumed walking.

As they headed towards the reception room, Jeo Mo-pal spoke without looking at Mok Gyeong-un.

“Did you really defeat the Giant Watchtower Group Leader?”

“Giant Watchtower Group Leader?”

“I’m talking about Woo Ho-rang, Young Lady Wi So-yeon’s loyal subordinate.”

“Ah, you mean him.”

“Yes. Did you really defeat him?”

“You seem curious about that.”

“Of course I’m curious since I only heard about it. Moreover, aren’t I the only one among us who has properly fought against you?”

At that time, Jeo Mo-pal didn't consider Mok Gyeong-un to be above him.

He thought he had simply let his guard down for a moment.

But if he had truly defeated Woo Ho-rang, one of the Five Tigers, the situation would be completely different.

“So you wanted to confirm it?”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Jeo Mo-pal stopped walking.

Then he turned around and said, “Confirm? Of course, I have a burning desire to confirm it. But if you really defeated Woo Ho-rang, I'm definitely not a match for you.”

“Then what's the reason behind this question?”

Mok Gyeong-un asked with a bright smile.

Contrary to his smile, the atmosphere was close to not refusing a fight if it came to it.

At that, Jeo Mo-pal's eyes flashed with interest.

‘...So it's true.’

Unlike the last confrontation, this was Lord Jang Neung-ak's base.

In a place like this, one would usually feel intimidated to some extent, but the fact that he showed such confidence meant his skills backed it up.

Realizing this, Jeo Mo-pal said with a grin, revealing his yellowish teeth.

“I became curious.”

“Curious, you say?”

“Yes. Whether you will take the vacant position of the Second Mountain or the position of the First Mountain from Ko Danju.”

“Ko Danju? That person is...”

“Ko Yeon-hu, the grand leader of the Hegemon Fist Group. You must have heard of him.”

Of course, he had heard of him.

Mok Gyeong-un had familiarized himself with the loyal subordinates of the second disciple Jang Neung-ak through the Shadow Clan.

If Woo Ho-rang was Wi So-yeon’s right-hand man, Ko Yeon-hu was Jang Neung-ak’s right-hand man.

And like Woo Ho-rang, Ko Yeon-hu was also one of the Five Tigers.

“He’s known to be unmatched in close combat among the Five Tigers.”

“Bol-mo... No. Since you’re from the Amjong, it would be strange if you didn’t know even this. Anyway, I look forward to it.”

With those words, Jeo Mo-pal turned around and walked away.

Looking at his back, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

Eventually, they arrived at the garden of the reception room.

‘Oh?’

The garden, illuminated by hexagonal lanterns on all sides, was bright, and a considerable feast was prepared, considering it was prepared within a quarter-hour.

Even the lovely maids, who had been summoned at some point, were ready to serve the drinks.

The rumors about the second disciple Jang Neung-ak enjoying elegance seemed to be true.

‘He must be in high spirits.’

Did he prepare this gathering with the conviction that he would pledge loyalty to him?

But it wasn’t just Jang Neung-ak and his loyal subordinates at this gathering.

As if all the subordinates of Jang Neung-ak who had reached the Transcendent Realm or above had gathered, they filled the lower seats.

There were about twenty of them.

They were all sitting upright in front of the banquet table, waiting silently.

Compared to Wi So-yeon, he definitely had a more organized force and system.

At that moment, the sound of Cheong-ryeong’s laughter reached Mok Gyeong-un’s ears.

-Puhahaha! Human, look over there.

At the head of the banquet table was Go Chan, who was possessing Ha Chae-rin.

Dressed lavishly, Go Chan was seated next to Ho Jong-hyeok, the grand leader of the Third Mountain Destruction Clan, as if he were his wife.

As soon as his eyes met Mok Gyeong-un's, he lowered his head, feeling embarrassed.

-It seems he has fully adapted.

-It appears so.

Well, it seemed he was carrying out the orders given to him well.

He had wondered if he would do well due to the awkwardness, but unexpectedly, perhaps a woman's body suited his constitution.

Judging by the smile that never left the face of the Third Mountain Ho Jong-hyeok as he placed his hand around Go Chan's waist, he must have taken a great liking to him.

Meanwhile, Jang Neung-ak, who was sitting at the head of the table, laughed loudly and said, "Hahaha! You're here."

In response, Mok Gyeong-un lightly bowed to him with his hands clasped together.

"Mok Gyeong-un greets the Young Master."

It was a respectful greeting.

However, at this greeting from Mok Gyeong-un, the eyes of Ko Yeon-hu, the grand leader of the First Mountain Hegemon Fist Group, who was sitting at the head of the table, narrowed.

‘...This fellow?’

He didn’t mention his affiliation.

When greeting a superior, it was customary to mention one’s affiliation even if they knew each other.

But Mok Gyeong-un didn’t do that.

For some reason, it bothered Ko Yeon-hu.

Meanwhile...

“Come closer to the head of the table.”

Jang Neung-ak ordered Mok Gyeong-un to come closer.

So Mok Gyeong-un passed the lower seats and approached closer.

As they approached where they were sitting, Jang Neung-ak extended his hand, signaling him to stop.

Mok Gyeong-un stopped in his tracks.

Then Jang Neung-ak spoke with a smile on his lips.

“This banquet was prepared for you. Do you like it?”

“It’s lavish.”

“Yes. If there was more time, I would have prepared an even more extravagant feast.”

“Thank you.”

“No. There’s no need to thank me yet.”

“Pardon?”

“The start of the banquet will be determined by your answer.”

The smile on Jang Neung-ak’s face, which had been present until just now, changed to a blank expression.

In an instant, the cheerful atmosphere sank.

It showed that everything could change depending on Jang Neung-ak’s mood.

So Mok Gyeong-un parted his lips.

“My answer?”

“That’s right.”

“...”

“You came here without even meeting Young Lady Seo, whom this young master sent, which means you must have made a decision in your heart, right?”

At Jang Neung-ak's words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders and replied, "Well... you could say that."

-Thud!

At that moment, Jeo Mo-pal, who had just sat down at the head of the table, slammed his wine cup on the table and said, "Mok Gyeong-un. Does this gathering seem like a joke to you? Show respect to my lord and answer properly."

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head and said, "I did answer properly."

"What?"

"Jeo Mo-pal. Be quiet."

As Jeo Mo-pal's voice rose, Ko Yeon-hu, the First Mountain, stopped him.

Jeo Mo-pal closed his mouth with a slightly flushed face.

He could overlook Mok Gyeong-un acting rudely towards him, but he couldn't forgive disrespect towards his lord.

Meanwhile, Jang Neung-ak spoke again.

"There's no point in prolonging this conversation. It will only tire our mouths. I'll just ask you directly. The rest can be heard later."

"..."

“Did you come here to pledge loyalty to this young master?”

At Jang Neung-ak’s straightforward question, everyone’s gaze turned towards Mok Gyeong-un at once.

His answer would determine whether this would be a banquet or not.

Jang Neung-ak still viewed it positively.

After all, since Mok Gyeong-un had fought against Woo Ho-rang, Wi So-yeon’s right-hand man, he had already fallen out with them.

The only variable was his eldest brother.

Depending on this guy’s answer, he could tell whether he had sided with his eldest brother or not.

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un parted his lips.

“Before that, there’s something I’d like to say first.”

“What?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Jang Neung-ak’s eyes turned sharp.

This guy didn’t answer his question.

Not only that, but he wanted to say what he had to say first?

Feeling offended, Jang Neung-ak scoffed.

“You’ve become arrogant.”

“Arrogant, you say?”

“After defeating Woo Ho-rang, one of the Five Tigers, and making contact with my eldest brother, has your nose grown high?”

“That’s completely separate.”

“Separate?”

“Yes.”

“Separate... Fine. I’ll give you another chance. Answer this young master’s question first.”

At Jang Neung-ak’s question, Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head as if in a difficult position.

Then he said, “I apologize, but I think I need to speak first.”

-Thud!

As soon as those words left his mouth, murderous intent and energy surged from various directions.

The loyal subordinates were enraged by Mok Gyeong-un’s rudeness.

Of course, Jang Neung-ak, the person in question, also had an unpleasant expression.

His eyes had turned cold.

Everyone was gauging Jang Neung-ak's reaction.

If he gave the order, they were in an atmosphere ready to subdue Mok Gyeong-un at any moment.

-Swish!

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak poured alcohol into a cup and shook his head.

Then he downed the cup in one gulp and turned his head towards Ko Yeon-hu, the grand leader of the First Mountain Hegemon Fist Group, and said, "This is perfect timing. Why don't we establish the hierarchy for the newcomer and determine who is suitable for the First Mountain position?"

-Tak!

"I accept your order, my lord."

At Jang Neung-ak's words, Ko Yeon-hu, the First Mountain, stood up from his seat.

He understood what Jang Neung-ak's intention was.

As Ko Yeon-hu, the First Mountain, got up from his seat and descended from the head of the hall, everyone's gaze turned towards him.

'He's sending Ko Danju.'

'Does he really consider that guy to be at the level of the Five Tigers?'

'Are we going to witness a confrontation at the level of the Five Tigers?'

Curiosity gleamed in everyone's eyes.

Apart from being annoyed by Mok Gyeong-un's rudeness towards their lord, it was an opportunity to see the martial prowess of Ko Yeon-hu, Jang Neung-ak's oldest loyal subordinate and right-hand man, after a long time.

As Ko Yeon-hu approached Mok Gyeong-un, he said, "You made a mistake. Why don't you apologize to my lord now and answer his question?"

At his suggestion, Mok Gyeong-un spoke with a troubled tone, "Ah, that seems difficult."

-Roar!

As soon as that answer ended, tremendous energy burst forth from Ko Yeon-hu, the First Mountain.

Ko Yeon-hu, seemingly in a bad mood, glared at Mok Gyeong-un and said, "Since you've avoided answering the question about loyalty three times, can I assume you have other intentions?"

In response to that question, Mok Gyeong-un replied with a bright smile, "You keep asking, so I have no choice but to answer. Yes, that's right."

"What?"

-Grit!

Was this guy now ridiculing their lord and them?

For a moment, they were dumbfounded.

Then why had he come here in the first place?

Could it be that after meeting with the Eldest Young Master, he received some secret orders and was trying to play tricks?

If that was the case, it was unforgivable.

Ko Yeon-hu spoke in a murderous voice, "Draw your sword immediately."

"My sword?"

"It's the last mercy I'm giving you. If you don't draw your sword right now, you won't be able to do anything in this place..."

-Kwang!

Before he could even finish his words.

Mok Gyeong-un had already grabbed Ko Yeon-hu's head with one hand and smashed it straight into the floor.

Ko Yeon-hu's head and body, with his face buried in the floor, twitched and trembled.

Mok Gyeong-un spoke to him with a sneer, "Show mercy to those inferior to you."

‘!!!!!!!!!!!!’

At the unexpected result, the surroundings were instantly filled with silence.

Chapter 179 – Jang Neung-ak (3)

In an instant, the banquet area in the garden of the reception hall was filled with silence.

It was because a scene unfolded before their eyes that was completely different from what they had expected, no, something they couldn't even have imagined.

‘How could this be?’

One of the men on the lower seats was dumbfounded.

He was Wi Maeng-cheon, the Second Mountain, who was possessing a man named Jong-im, who had become Mok Gyeong-un's subordinate.

Wi Maeng-cheon knew Ko Yeon-hu's martial prowess better than anyone else.

After all, he had directly sparred with him.

But this was more than just a shock.

He had fought against Mok Gyeong-un just a day ago, so he was convinced that with his skills, he couldn't defeat Ko Yeon-hu, one of the Five Tigers.

‘What on earth is going on?’

It had only been a day, so how had his martial prowess risen so much?

No, this was a development that couldn't be understood rationally.

Ko Yeon-hu wasn't someone who would be defeated like this in a single move.

‘...What the hell is this?’

He wasn't the only one surprised.

The guard Go Chan, who was possessing Ha Chae-rin's body, also tried his best not to show it, but he couldn't hide his inner shock at this outcome.

It was incomparable to what he had seen on the street not long ago.

‘Is that guy really a monster?’

How could he have become this strong in such a short time?

It was completely incomprehensible.

Then, he heard a clicking sound next to him.

‘!?’

It was Ho Jong-hyeok, the grand leader of the Third Mountain Destruction Clan, who had his hand around his waist and was tilting a wine cup.

Ho Jong-hyeok clicked his tongue while looking at this scene and muttered, “Oh my. An unexpected hidden card.”

He seemed surprised too, but strangely, there was a subtle sense of rivalry in his expression.

What was this reaction?

Meanwhile...

“Kuugh!”

At that moment, Ko Yeon-hu, whose face had been buried in the floor, slammed his hands on the ground, trying to use the rebound to lift his body.

However...

-Bam!

Mok Gyeong-un pressed his head down again, burying his face in the floor.

The trembling of Ko Yeon-hu's body, which had been shaking its head, soon ceased.

It seemed he had lost consciousness.

At the sight of him, the banquet area, which had been engulfed in silence, soon became abuzz.

Mok Gyeong-un removed his hand from Ko Yeon-hu's head, straightened his waist, and looked at Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader.

The way Jang Neung-ak looked at Mok Gyeong-un changed.

Until now, it had been merely like looking at a tempting fruit, but now, wariness appeared in his eyes.

‘...This guy. His martial prowess has further developed?’

Ko Yeon-hu's martial prowess was not inferior to Woo Ho-rang, who was also called one of the Five Tigers.

No, in some ways, Jang Neung-ak considered him to be a step above.

But he had knocked him down in a single move?

Jang Neung-ak opened his mouth.

“You... You’re close to the pinnacle.”

-Murmur murmur!

‘Pinnacle?’

‘Did he just say pinnacle?’

At his words, the martial artists on the lower seats were abuzz.

The pinnacle of the Transcendent Realm.

It was the martial prowess of the executive level, surpassing the Five Tigers, who were called the best late-stage disciples.

Among the executives who held the positions of the Four Valley Masters, Three Clan Masters, and Five Kings, there was no one who wasn’t close to or had reached the pinnacle of the Transcendent Realm.

Each of them was equivalent to the leader of a small to medium-sized sect or the top master of a major sect in the righteous martial world.

So Jeo Mo-pal spoke in disbelief.

“Pinnacle, you say? My lord, no matter what...”

“Jeo Mo-pal.”

“Brother Ho?”

“Haven’t you noticed yet?”

“Noticed what?”

“That guy has no injuries at all.”

“Injuries?”

At those words, Jeo Mo-pal’s eyes trembled.

He hadn’t been aware of it, but there were no visible injuries on Mok Gyeong-un.

He had heard that it was a quite fierce confrontation with Seo Hye-in, the Grass Smoke Group Leader, but there wasn’t the slightest injury on Mok Gyeong-un’s exposed areas.

“...He was more of a monster than he looked. Not a single injury against that Woo Ho-rang?”

At Jeo Mo-pal’s words, Seo Hye-in spoke in a grave voice.

“What are you saying when Ko Danju was knocked down in a single move right before your eyes?”

“...”

-Swish!

Before they knew it, the martial artists on the lower seats, as well as Seo Hye-in of the Five Mountains Alliance and Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountains and Geo-am Fist, had drawn their true energy and assumed a battle stance.

From the moment he knocked down Ko Yeon-hu in a single move, that guy had surpassed the level of a late-stage disciple.

He already possessed martial prowess close to that of an executive.

The only ones who could face him one-on-one here were their lord Jang Neung-ak, who had been taught by the Society Leader, and...

The gazes of Seo Hye-in and Jeo Mo-pal on the upper seats turned towards an unexpected person.

It was none other than Ho Jong-hyeok, the grand leader of the Third Mountain Destruction Clan.

Why were they looking at him like this?

Ko Yeon-hu, known as one of the Five Tigers and the strongest among the loyal subordinates as the First Mountain, was defeated in a single move, so why were they sending such gazes?

At that moment...

“What’s with those looks?”

Ho Jong-hyeok spoke in an annoyed tone and downed his wine cup.

Meanwhile, Jang Neung-ak opened his mouth.

“Ho Jong-hyeok.”

“Yes, my lord.”

“I didn’t expect to reveal the hidden card in a place like this.”

At Jang Neung-ak’s words, the gaze of Ho Jong-hyeok, who had been acting indifferent, changed.

It became heavier and sharper, so to speak.

Jang Neung-ak said to him, “Can you handle him?”

“I can manage somehow, but I can’t guarantee victory. Considering his movements just now.”

“Then I’ll have Jeo Mo-pal assist you. Subdue him and make him kneel.”

“You’re really putting me in a difficult position. Are you sure about this?”

“It’s this young master’s estate anyway. It doesn’t matter if they see.”

“...Understood. I accept your order.”

With those words, Ho Jong-hyeok smiled at Go Chan, who was possessing Ha Chae-rin next to him, and said, “Wait here for a moment. I’ll be back soon.”

‘Kuaaaah!’

At his words, Go Chan inwardly screamed.

Even though he urged himself in his mind to fulfill his role, the words this guy carelessly threw out went beyond being a burden.

As Ho Jong-hyeok was about to grasp the handle of the huge ax placed behind him...

“Why don’t we stop this unnecessary fight?”

Mok Gyeong-un spoke to Jang Neung-ak.

Then Jang Neung-ak scoffed.

“You refused the offer of loyalty, said you came to play tricks with your own mouth, and now you’re telling us not to engage in an unnecessary fight... Do you take this young master as a joke?”

“How could that be? I simply came to make a necessary proposal to you, Young Master.”

“Shut up!”

Before he could even finish, Jang Neung-ak’s rebuke spread in all directions.

Perhaps because it was infused with internal energy, the martial artists on the lower seats covered their ears in unison at the echoing shout.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un’s expression didn’t change at all.

Jang Neung-ak pressed Mok Gyeong-un.

“I don’t know what tricks you’re trying to pull after joining hands with my eldest brother, but from the moment you let go of this young master’s hand, you’re an enemy.”

“Aren’t you defining it too easily?”

“Defining? Don’t make me laugh. Did you think this young master wouldn’t know that you made contact with my eldest brother?”

“Yes, I did make contact.”

“Right. Then you can’t deny it any...”

“Thanks to that, I’ve become troubled because I’ve made Young Master Na Yul-ryang my enemy.”

“What?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Jang Neung-ak’s expression momentarily stiffened.

He had naturally assumed that Mok Gyeong-un had joined hands with his eldest brother Na Yul-ryang since he had defeated Woo Ho-rang, a subordinate of his junior sister Wi So-yeon, and even knocked down his right-hand man, the First Mountain Ko Yeon-hu, in a single move.

But what was this about?

“You’ve made my eldest brother your enemy?”

“Yes.”

Jang Neung-ak, with narrowed eyes, frowned and said, “Are you trying to deceive this young master by telling lies now?”

“How could that be? Young Master Na Yul-ryang is probably anxious because he couldn’t kill me.”

“He’s anxious because he couldn’t kill you?”

“Yes.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Jang Neung-ak snorted.

This guy was playing tricks on him.

What kind of person was his eldest brother?

He was a cold-blooded person who didn’t even consider most of the people around him as human beings.

Even his own disciples, including himself, were not acknowledged by him.

Such an inhuman eldest brother considered a mere guy like him as an enemy?

“Foolish fellow.”

“...”

“You don’t know Na Yul-ryang. Are you telling this young master to believe such nonsense that he would consider you as an enemy? It would be more realistic if you said he considers you a worm.”

-Swish!

With those words, Jang Neung-ak nodded his head towards the Third Mountain Ho Jong-hyeok.

“Phew.”

Then Ho Jong-hyeok let out a soft breath, grasped the huge axe, and descended from the hall.

Seeing the axe, Mok Gyeong-un recalled who he was from the conversation with the Shadow Clan.

[Ohoho. There's one particularly troublesome person among Jang Neung-ak's loyal subordinates.]

[Who is it?]

[The grand leader of the Destruction Clan, Ho Jong-hyeok.]

[Ho Jong-hyeok?]

[Yes. I heard he holds the position of the Third Mountain in the Five Mountains Alliance.]

[The Third Mountain means he's the third in rank.]

[That's the displayed rank.]

[Displayed rank?]

[Of course, his actual martial prowess may not match that of Ko Yeon-hu, the First Mountain, or Wi Maeng-cheon, the Second Mountain. But considering his father's prestige, his position is incomprehensible.]

[Who is his father to make you say that?]

[The Axe King, Ho Tae-gang.]

[The Axe King? Is he one of the Five Kings?]

The Five Kings.

They were the top executives supporting the Heaven and Earth Society.

But that wasn't the end of it.

[He's not just one of the Five Kings. He is one of the eight masters known to have reached the highest realm in the current martial world.]

[Could it be...]

[Yes, he's one of the Eight Stars.]

The huge ax that looked like it could split a person in half was probably the Annihilation Ax, known to have been crafted for the Axe King Ho Tae-gang to unleash his unique martial art, the Heavenly Axe Technique.

‘The son who received the teachings of one of the Eight Stars...’

A small interest arose in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

The Eight Stars were called the highest masters in the current martial world, excluding the Six Heavens.

It would be stranger if he had no interest at all.

-Rumble rumble!

The muscles on the right arm of the Third Mountain Ho Jong-hyeok, who was dragging the ax on the floor as he walked, were extremely bulky.

They must have developed to handle that huge Annihilation Ax with ease.

Anticipation gleamed in the eyes of Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountains and Geo-am Fist, who was following behind to assist him.

‘Will I get to see Brother Ho’s true skills?’

There was a secret in the Oakhoe.

It was a secret known only to the members of the Five Mountains Alliance and their lord Jang Neung-ak.

Even the martial artists on the lower seats didn’t know about it.

It was the existence of the true First Mountain.

‘The True First Mountain. The hidden blade of our lord.’

Anyone would think that Ko Yeon-hu, one of the Five Tigers who were called the best late-stage disciples, was the strongest in the Oakhoe, but the reality was different.

The true strongest expert of the alliance was none other than Ho Jong-hyeok.

His true martial prowess had reached the pinnacle of the Transcendent Realm.

-Whoosh!

Ho Jong-hyeok lifted the huge ax, the Annihilation Ax, which he had been dragging on the floor, and lightly swung it in the air.

It was just a light swing, but a strong wind pressure arose, and a sharp aura spread in all directions.

‘As expected, he’s incredible.’

If this much could be done with just the wind pressure, it seemed like something truly amazing would happen if he fully unleashed his martial prowess.

Ho Jong-hyeok approached Mok Gyeong-un and said, “Hey. Don’t resent us too much for ganging up on you. It’s not a duel but an order to subdue you.”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders as if he didn’t care.

Then he took something out from his waist.

It was a small pouch attached to his belt.

“What are you trying to do?”

Ho Jong-hyeok asked.

In response, Mok Gyeong-un didn’t answer and said while looking at Jang Neung-ak in the hall.

“If you see this, your thoughts might change a bit.”

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un threw the pouch to Jang Neung-ak in the hall.

“Where are you...!”

-Pak!

Seo Hye-in of the Five Mountains Alliance caught it instead, thinking he might try to pull some tricks.

But the pouch was lighter than expected.

She thought it might contain a hidden weapon or something, but it didn't seem to be the case.

“Young Master, this is...”

“Don't mind useless things. Hurry up and subdue him.”

Jang Neung-ak gave the order to Ho Jong-hyeok and Jeo Mo-pal as if he had no interest in it at all.

As soon as he did, Ho Jong-hyeok moved his body towards Mok Gyeong-un and swung the huge ax, the Annihilation Ax, towards his neck.

-Whoosh! Swish! Crack!

As the Annihilation Ax sliced through the air, the banquet tables were split by the wind pressure and aura.

Thanks to that, the martial artists on the lower seats who were watching had to step back as the tables were split.

Jang Neung-ak looked at this and raised the corners of his mouth bitterly.

With Ho Jong-hyeok, who had reached the pinnacle of the Transcendent Realm, and Jeo Mo-pal assisting him, there wouldn't be much difficulty in subduing that guy.

‘How dare you ridicule this young master?’

Let’s see if he can still say such things even after peeling off his skin.

At that moment...

“Yo... Young Master?”

Seo Hye-in of the Five Mountains Alliance called out to Jang Neung-ak.

Jang Neung-ak, who was focused on their confrontation, replied in an annoyed tone, “Tell me later.”

“I, I apologize, but I think you need to see this before that.”

“Didn’t I tell you to talk later?”

“Young Master!”

“Right now, this young master’s words are being igno... !?”

The expression of Jang Neung-ak, who was about to press Seo Hye-in, suddenly stiffened.

It was because of something held in her hand.

It was none other than an eyeball.

The moment he saw the eyeball with a silver color instead of a black pupil, someone’s image quickly flashed through Jang Neung-ak’s mind.

It was the image of his eldest brother, Na Yul-ryang.

[As expected of the Thunderbolt Fist King. To think you would make this young master use even this.]

Na Yul-ryang's voice and appearance were still vivid.

During the sparring with the Thunderbolt Fist King Won Byeong-hak, suddenly the pupil of his right eye had turned silver.

After that, the dynamics of the match had clearly changed.

In an instant, Jang Neung-ak's eyes trembled as he recalled this.

This eyeball was too familiar.

‘Could it be?’

This was...

At that very moment...

-Kwang! Clang!

At the sound of continuous crashing noises, Jang Neung-ak's gaze shifted to the side.

‘!?’

There, he saw Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountains lying face down on the floor with Mok Gyeong-un's foot stepping on his head, and Ho Jong-hyeok, with one side of his ax blade broken, staggering and being pushed back.

All of this had happened in the brief moment he had taken his eyes off them.

Chapter 180 – Jang Neung-ak (4)

It all happened in an instant.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been right in front of him, disappeared from his sight.

The True First Mountain, Ho Jong-hyeok, the grand leader of the Destruction Clan, moved his head and searched for Mok Gyeong-un's whereabouts.

However...

-Bam!

“Kuk!”

Before he knew it, Mok Gyeong-un was stepping on Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountains Geo-am Fist.

He couldn't even use his hands properly before being defeated.

Just by seeing this, one could tell that there was an overwhelming gap between Mok Gyeong-un and his martial prowess.

But he couldn't just stand by and watch.

-Whoosh!

Ho Jong-hyeok raised his unique weapon, the Annihilation Ax, with true energy and swung it towards Mok Gyeong-un.

It would be nice if he could cut him, but that wasn't likely.

He just wanted to make him back away from Jeo Mo-pal.

However...

-Clang!

‘!?’

Ho Jong-hyeok's eyes wavered.

‘He caught the blade infused with true energy?’

A perplexing situation unfolded.

Mok Gyeong-un had caught the blade of the Annihilation Ax flying towards him with one hand.

True energy could be said to be true energy and aura converging into one and gathering densely.

Catching this with bare hands was nearly impossible for any martial artist.

If one wanted to counter this, they would have to raise their own true energy...

‘Hand?’

Ho Jong-hyeok’s eyes widened.

That was because he discovered the black energy enveloping Mok Gyeong-un’s hand.

The energy wrapped around his hand was protecting him from being cut by the true energy infused in the Annihilation Ax.

‘What the hell is that energy?’

It was more dense and stronger than aura.

And it even felt strangely sinister.

But that wasn’t the problem.

If it was an energy that could block true energy with bare hands, it had to be true energy.

However, even if one reached the pinnacle of the Transcendent Realm, it was nearly impossible to raise true energy with bare hands.

-Sizzle!

At that moment, a strange sensation flowed from Mok Gyeong-un’s hand.

It was poison energy.

“This is...?”

As the poison energy and black energy entangled with his true energy...

-Crack!

‘No way?’

His fingers dug into the ax blade of the Annihilation Ax, and it cracked.

Surprised by this, Ho Jong-hyeok hurriedly used his footwork and tried to kick Mok Gyeong-un’s head.

However...

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un lightly avoided it by tilting his head back, and then...

-Bam!

Instead, he landed a punch on Ho Jong-hyeok’s chest.

Ho Jong-hyeok’s body was sent flying back from the impact of the punch.

-Swoosh! Clang!

But in the process, one side of the Annihilation Ax’s blade broke.

Ho Jong-hyeok’s expression contorted.

The Annihilation Ax, a unique weapon he had received from his father, was an ax forged from a single piece of iron by a renowned craftsman of the time.

Seeing one side of the blade of the Annihilation Ax, which he cherished like a treasure, shatter before his eyes, he couldn't help but feel a surge of anger.

-Grit!

‘This guy!’

But contrary to this anger, his reason became even more cold.

This man in front of him.

He was definitely not at the pinnacle of the Transcendent Realm.

To possess martial prowess that overwhelmed him to this extent, one had to surpass the wall.

But this didn't make sense rationally.

Not long ago, he was barely at the level to receive a strike from Jeo Mo-pal of the Geo-am Fist and Blind Swordsman Wi Maeng-cheon.

‘This isn't just fast development.’

The speed at which he was getting stronger was beyond imagination, almost to the point where it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call him a monster.

It wasn't a matter of whether he had surpassed the wall or not.

This guy didn't seem to be someone who could be controlled by anyone.

[What? You're saying we should exclude him?]

[Yes.]

[Our lord has already taken a liking to him, so why are you trying to exclude him?]

[Because he's dangerous.]

[Dangerous? What's dangerous? If it's because of his background...]

[That's not the problem. Even if it's not visible, I can tell. Mok Gyeong-un is never someone who can be loyal to anyone.]

The words of that dead guy suddenly came to mind.

‘That blind fellow's judgment was right.’

As Wi Maeng-cheon said, this guy could never be controlled by their lord.

Not only was his speed of growth alarming, but his intentions were also unknown, so keeping him close could lead to unpredictable incidents.

-Grip!

‘This is troublesome.’

But right now, this was an even bigger problem.

He wanted to subdue the guy according to his lord's order, but it was impossible alone.

If his guess was correct, no one present at this gathering could defeat this guy alone with martial arts.

The only possibility was for their lord Jang Neung-ak to join forces and launch a combined attack...

‘There's too much to lose.’

But then the loss would be too great.

If they ended up losing even after launching a combined attack against someone they had intended to take in as a subordinate, the aftermath would be...

“Stop!”

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak's shout was heard.

At his shout, the Third Mountain Ho Jong-hyeok turned his head with a puzzled expression.

There, Jang Neung-ak was holding an eyeball with a stiff expression.

‘Eyeball?’

What the hell was that?

As the True First Mountain Ho Jong-hyeok was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un spoke to Jang Neung-ak with a bright smile.

“It seems you’re now willing to have a conversation.”

“You, this...”

Jang Neung-ak was about to say something, but then he roughly shouted at the martial artists on the lower seats.

“You guys, stand back for now.”

“But my lord?”

“I told you to stand back.”

“Yes, sir!”

At his order, the martial artists on the lower seats moved out of the garden in unison.

Go Chan, who was possessing Ha Chae-rin, also hesitated and tried to leave, but Seo Hye-in of the Five Mountains Alliance allowed him to stay with a nod.

After they had all left and only the Oakhoe remained, Jang Neung-ak spoke again.

“This... What is it?”

At that question, Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head and said, “You’re not asking because you really don’t know, right?”

“...Are you trying to humiliate this young master now?”

“How could that be? I thought you would recognize it if you saw it since you’re the Young Master, but you’re asking what it is, so...”

“You!”

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

“...”

At Jang Neung-ak’s even more stiffened expression, Ho Jong-hyeok looked at the eyeball in his hand with uncomprehending eyes.

What the hell was that thing that made his lord react like this?

But then, unbelievable words came out of Jang Neung-ak’s mouth.

“Did you fight my eldest brother?”

‘Eldest brother?’

What was this about?

Was he asking if Mok Gyeong-un had fought against the Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang?

As he was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un nodded his head and replied, “I thought that would be a sufficient answer.”

Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze was directed at the eyeball held in Jang Neung-ak’s hand.

At his attitude, Jang Neung-ak stared intently at the eyeball in his hand with a stiff expression, and then he let out a hollow laugh as if he couldn't believe it.

“Hah!”

At his reaction, all of his loyal subordinates couldn't hide their surprise.

They had also realized whose eyeball it was thanks to Jang Neung-ak's reaction.

If that was the case...

‘What the hell is this?’

‘That guy defeated the Eldest Young Master?’

‘...That monster?’

The Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang.

Not many within the Heaven and Earth Society could handle him.

He was a monster, a disciple of the Society Leader who was one of the Six Heavens and had surpassed the wall to reach the Transformation Realm.

It was said that even the Five Kings, the highest executives of the Heaven and Earth Society, had a hard time dealing with him unless they were the two kings who had received the title of Eight Stars.

And that guy had fought him?

No, if he had even plucked out his eyeball, wasn't it the same as winning?

What on earth was going on?

At that very moment...

“Hahah... Hahahahahaha!”

The Society Leader’s second disciple, Jang Neung-ak, who had been letting out a hollow laugh, burst into a mad laughter.

Everyone looked at him in puzzlement at his sudden behavior.

Was it because the shock was too great?

As they wondered why he was acting like that, Jang Neung-ak, who had been laughing for a while, plopped down on his seat and gestured with his hand, saying, “To think you plucked out the eyeball of that inhuman bastard. I’ve lived to see such a day. Hahahahahaha! Come here and let’s talk.”

“My lord!”

Seo Hye-in, the leader of the Five Mountains Alliance, tried to dissuade him.

Then Jang Neung-ak waved his hand and said, “Enough. He’s the one who plucked out the eyeball of that monstrous bastard. Who could stop him?”

“But my lord, it’s too dangerous...”

“Enough. If he had any intention of harming me, he would have done it already. Isn’t that right?”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un replied with a bright smile, “That’s correct.”

“...”

At his answer, Seo Hye-in and Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountains, whose face was swollen, couldn't hide their concern.

No matter how strong that guy was, they were loyal subordinates.

They had a duty to ensure his safety.

But Ho Jong-hyeok shook his head as if telling them not to.

‘It's no use. Leave it.’

If he was truly a master of the Transformation Realm, this distance was already within his range.

He could easily make a move if he wanted to.

‘It's better to narrow the gap.’

That would be a better way to protect their lord Jang Neung-ak from him.

Sometimes the best defense was offense.

-Tap tap tap! Tak!

In the end, Mok Gyeong-un came up to the hall and sat across from Jang Neung-ak.

The treatment had clearly changed.

Sitting next to him signified trust, but having him sit directly in front meant acknowledging him as an equal.

As Mok Gyeong-un sat down, Jang Neung-ak picked up a wine bottle and said, "Will you have a drink?"

"There's no reason to refuse a drink you offer."

"Good. Have a drink."

Jang Neung-ak poured wine into Mok Gyeong-un's cup.

Since they were sitting across from each other, there was a distance, but...

-Swish!

As Jang Neung-ak applied his internal energy, the wine inside the bottle stretched out and entered the distant cup.

When the cup was full, the stream of wine connecting them was cut off.

'As expected, the Young Master's true energy is no ordinary matter.'

Even if he had the lowest true energy among the Society Leader's three disciples, it was still vast enough to be incomparable to ordinary internal energy masters.

It was only natural since he had received the Hundred Bees and Mice Technique and regularly consumed spiritual medicines since childhood.

Jang Neung-ak put down the wine bottle.

Then he looked at Mok Gyeong-un and said, “Will you pour for me?”

The wine bottle was at a distance.

He had to stand up and get the wine bottle to pour him a drink.

At a glance, it might seem like he was trying to make Mok Gyeong-un stand up.

‘Could it be that he’s trying to tame the guy?’

Seo Hye-in of the Five Mountains Alliance watched this anxiously.

However...

“It’s not difficult.”

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and then lightly gestured towards the wine bottle.

Then, a stream of wine naturally extended from the spout of the wine bottle and entered Jang Neung-ak’s cup.

-Swish!

‘!!!!!!’

Seeing this, Jang Neung-ak’s loyal subordinates unknowingly let out exclamations of surprise.

This was the technique of Void Seizing.

If one reached the pinnacle of the Transcendent Realm, they could use true energy to pull or push objects to some extent.

But to manipulate something like water droplets so delicately with true energy, one had to reach an even higher realm.

“Is it confirmed now?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Jang Neung-ak looked at the cup filled with wine and then raised his head.

“Indeed, you have surpassed the wall.”

‘Ah...’

Seo Hye-in of the Five Mountains Alliance finally understood Jang Neung-ak’s intention.

Their lord had wanted to confirm one last time if Mok Gyeong-un had truly surpassed the wall and reached the Transformation Realm.

It was now certain.

That guy was undoubtedly a master of the Transformation Realm.

He was no longer at the level of a pinnacle-stage supreme master but already a true grandmaster who could be counted on one hand even within the Heaven and Earth Society.

Apart from being a disciple of the Shadow Clan and the Poison King, he had reached a position where he alone could be considered a force to be reckoned with.

Their lord's reason for having Mok Gyeong-un sit right in front of him was understandable.

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak spoke.

“The strong deserve to be treated accordingly.”

-Swish!

Jang Neung-ak clasped his hands together and bowed to Mok Gyeong-un, saying, “Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, will respectfully treat Master Mok with courtesy.”

‘Ah!’

At his behavior, the loyal subordinates of the Five Mountains Alliance inwardly clicked their tongues.

It was also the first time they had seen their lord Jang Neung-ak treat a late-stage disciple of a younger age so politely, apart from the executives.

But he certainly had the qualifications for it.

After all, he was a master who had reached the Transformation Realm.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un also bowed to him with clasped hands and replied, “There's no need to go out of your way, but I'm grateful for your courteous treatment.”

The atmosphere wasn't bad as they exchanged courtesies.

Jang Neung-ak seemed to think the same, as he spoke in a brighter voice, “Master Mok, may I ask the reason for coming to me with this?”

-Swish!

What Jang Neung-ak pointed to was none other than the eyeball of the Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang.

Jang Neung-ak’s mood was elevated as he looked at the eyeball.

At first, he had thought that Mok Gyeong-un had joined hands with his eldest brother Na Yul-ryang to deceive him.

But that was his misjudgment.

Mok Gyeong-un had defeated Woo Ho-rang, the right-hand man of his junior sister Wi So-yeon, and not only that, he had even fought against his eldest brother Na Yul-ryang and plucked out his eyeball.

What did that imply?

‘He wishes to be with this young master.’

He was convinced.

Mok Gyeong-un had chosen him.

However, contrary to his expectations, unexpected words came out of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth.

“Join forces with Young Lady Wi So-yeon’s side.”

‘!?’

Jang Neung-ak’s expression instantly stiffened.

This guy had made him anticipate so much, and now what was he talking about?

So Jang Neung-ak spoke, managing his expression as much as possible.

“Master Mok, what are you saying? Joining forces with my junior sister, that’s...”

“I mean it literally. If you two don’t combine your forces, it will be difficult to compete against Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang’s side.”

“...”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Jang Neung-ak was momentarily dumbfounded, and then a hollow laugh escaped his lips.

It was disappointing since it wasn’t what he had expected, but was he saying this thinking it was possible?

So Jang Neung-ak spoke his true thoughts.

“Look here, Master Mok. Do you think that’s possible?”

“Possible?”

“That’s right. Both my junior sister and I are running for the same position. And now you’re telling us to combine our forces. Do you think that’s possible?”

Jang Neung-ak shook his head.

Then he chuckled and said, “Well, if my junior sister were to pledge loyalty to me and join my subordination, it might be possible. If not, your proposal is essentially impossible, Master Mok.”

“I see.”

It was a foolish proposal.

This was a proposal that neither he nor his junior sister could accept.

If that was the case, they would have already joined forces long ago or pushed one of them in that direction.

It was because that didn’t work that they were each putting in so much effort to secure support.

“Anyhow, thank you for the proposal, but...”

“Ah, did it sound like a proposal to you?”

“What?”

Jang Neung-ak frowned for a moment.

Did he mishear?

But then...

-Flinch!

The guy smiled, filled with malice unlike before, and said, "This isn't a proposal but an order to do so."