

Mayhem 181

Chapter 181 – Jang Neung-ak (5)

“This isn’t a suggestion, I’m telling you to do it this way.”

‘!!!!!!’

In an instant, everyone’s expression hardened.

Just a moment ago, the situation seemed to be progressing smoothly.

However, everything changed in a split second.

‘What the hell is this guy doing?’

‘What is he saying...?’

Not only Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, but also his loyal subordinates felt the same way.

For a moment, they thought they might have ‘misheard him’.

But upon seeing the smile full of malice on Mok Gyeong-un’s face, they realized their ears weren’t mistaken.

Though it lasted only a split second, they had never felt a silence this long before.

If anyone else had said those words, someone would have drawn their sword or blade and sliced off their head right there and then.

But coincidentally, the opponent was a master who had crossed the wall into the Transformation Realm.

Realizing that,

Drip drip!

Some of them were so extremely tense that they broke out in a cold sweat.

How should they take this situation?

No, what should they say?

Amidst the confusing situation, the one to break the silence was Jeo Mo-pal, the Fifth Mountain of the Five Mountains Alliance.

“You bastard!!!!”

His voice and eyes were filled with rage.

While everyone was contemplating the situation itself, Jeo Mo-pal, who felt anger only at the fact that his lord had been insulted, was able to show a more straightforward attitude compared to the others.

‘Ah!’

At the sound of his resounding voice, everyone came to their senses in an instant.

Paying no attention to them, Jeo Mo-pal shouted,

“Unless you’re insane, how dare you threaten our lord like that?!”

His yell was so loud that it was deafening.

Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said in a low voice,

“I can see you’re angry, but please lower your voice a bit. It’s hurting my ears.”

“What? Lower my voice? You bastard...”

“I’ll warn you one last time for the young master’s sake. Lower your voice.”

“I’m going to ki...”

Gasp!

Suddenly, Jeo Mo-pal couldn’t continue speaking.

‘This... This is...’

His cheeks even trembled.

It was because of the killing intent he felt the moment his eyes met Mok Gyeong-un’s.

Though it lasted only an instant, the image of Mok Gyeong-un slicing his neck flashed through Jeo Mo-pal’s mind.

Swish!

‘.....’

Imagining this, he found it difficult to open his mouth.

Seeing Jeo Mo-pal like this, Ho Jong-hyeok, the First Mountain, clicked his tongue inwardly.

He had heard from his father that once one reaches the Transformation Realm and becomes a true grandmaster, they can control their energy more precisely and pressure a specific opponent with killing intent.

It seemed Mok Gyeong-un had pressured Jeo Mo-pal with his killing intent.

‘This has gotten tricky.’

No matter how much one has reached the Transformation Realm, he didn’t expect him to act this way.

Their own liege was the Society Leader of the Heaven and Earth Society and one of the Six Heavens, considered the pinnacle of the Central Plains martial world.

There were few within the organization who could do such a brazen thing to such a man.

Only those who had the status and qualifications were able to do so.

However, Mok Gyeong-un was not one of them.

‘Is he relying solely on his martial prowess to do this?’

If that’s the case, it’s a miscalculation.

It wasn’t because his own lord feared his martial prowess that he showed courtesy to the guy.

His lord simply...

“Mok Gyeong-un... You really take this young master lightly.”

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak spoke.

Seeing him like that, the expressions of his loyal subordinates grew serious.

His icy cold gaze.

His heavily subdued tone showed how furious their lord was at this moment.

When Jang Neung-ak is truly angry, he doesn't flare up like a fire.

Rather, he becomes even more cold-hearted.

And that cold-heartedness brings deep insight.

“Take you lightly? I'm merely presenting a condition that can benefit both the young master and the young lady.”

“Benefiting both of us? Cut the bullshit.”

“Bullshit, you say?”

“For two forces to merge into one, someone has to bow their head and enter below the other. But do you think that's possible with your pathetic threats?”

“It's possible, that's why I'm telling you to do it that way.”

“Telling me? You’re being quite presumptuous.”

“How unexpected.”

Interest flashed in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

He had considered Jang Neung-ak’s capacity to be quite shallow and small, but he was saying everything he wanted to say even in this situation.

That meant he wasn’t afraid of him.

Even though he should have already confirmed the gap in their power.

“Unexpected? That’s what this young master wants to say. Are you not afraid?”

“Not afraid, you say?”

“Who do you think you’re trying to threaten right now?”

“Threaten... You really don’t feel like a threat to me...”

“I told you to cut the nonsense. Have you completely lost your mind, trying to interfere in the successor battle and arbitrarily shake things up?”

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

“You’re being tougher than I expected.”

“Tough? That’s what this young master should be saying. Do you believe in your petty martial arts so much that you dare to interfere with the successor battle and arbitrarily stir things up?”

“Hmm. Why are you thinking so complexly about it?”

Mok Gyeong-un asked in an intrigued tone.

Then Jang Neung-ak opened his mouth while pouring wine into his cup.

“I can guess two possibilities.”

“Two possibilities?”

“The first would be based on the premise that you’ve joined hands with Wi So-yeon.”

“...Why do you think that?”

“It’s simple. Even with the power of Shadow Clan and Baek Clan added to junior sister, it’s still not enough; for both of you to face off against the eldest senior brother and this young master.”

At Jang Neung-ak’s words, Mok Gyeong-un smiled faintly.

He thought his vision would be quite clouded due to his arrogance, but that didn’t seem to be entirely the case.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said,

“There’s some truth to that. But from my perspective, for the two of you to face the Eldest Young Master, I’d prefer if you and the Young Lady joined forces regardless of who comes out on top.”

“Regardless of who comes out on top?”

“Yes. I don’t really care which of you two becomes the successor, you see. As long as you unite your forces, that’s all that matters to me.”

“.....”

At these words from Mok Gyeong-un, Jang Neung-ak’s eyes grew even more vicious.

Then he soon parted his lips.

“I thought it was the first possibility, but it seems to be the second one.”

“Hmm. And what might that second one be?”

“You don’t care who becomes the successor? Ha! The answer is clear now.”

“.....”

“Your goal is to stir up internal strife, isn’t it?”

“My lord?”

At Jang Neung-ak’s words, his subordinates’ eyes widened.

Seeing their reaction, Jang Neung-ak glared at Mok Gyeong-un and said,

“I nearly forgot because I was thinking about the Shadow Clan and the King of Poison. You were originally a hostage from the righteous faction.”

‘Ah!’

At this, everyone showed caution.

The orthodox martial world was eagerly waiting for an opportunity to dismantle the Heaven and Earth Society.

For them, there was nothing better than the successor battle to incite internal conflict.

If Mok Gyeong-un hadn’t truly surrendered and still held a mission as a member of the righteous faction, there was a good possibility for this suspicion.

Gulp!

Jang Neung-ak downed his cup of alcohol and said,

“Tell me if my guess is wrong.”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head and replied,

“Your mind is sharper than I expected.”

“You’re also...”

“But you’re mistaken.”

‘!?’

At that, Jang Neung-ak furrowed his brows.

Then he retorted,

“Mistaken, you say?”

“Yes. Things can seem that way if you overthink it. But I’m sorry to disappoint you, I truly have no connection to the righteous faction.”

“You expect me to believe that now?”

“Believe it or not, that’s up to you. I simply wish for the two of you to join forces. That way, we can avoid the annoying business with the Eldest Young Master.”

“.....”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, suspicion flashed in Jang Neung-ak’s eyes.

The guy was in an advantageous position, so he directly stated what he had guessed in order to gauge his true intentions.

But he’s really saying it’s not like that?

Well, who knows.

An agent trying to disrupt the sect on behalf of the righteous faction wouldn’t admit to being a spy, after all.

As he was thinking that, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“It seems persuasion through words is meaningless.”

Bam!

As soon as he finished speaking, Jang Neung-ak’s subordinates – Ho Jong-hyeok, Seo Hye-in, and Jeo Mo-pal of the Five Mountains Alliance – drew upon their energy and took defensive stances.

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said,

“You should know that you can’t stop me even if you do that.”

“Are you really trying to threaten this young master?”

“Yes, I suppose it is a threat if you put it that way.”

Bam!

“You fucking bastard...”

Bam!

Jeo Mo-pal tried to stand up from his seat, but ended up slamming his head on the table.

Mok Gyeong-un had appeared behind him in the blink of an eye and was pressing down on his head.

Seeing this happen in the flash of an eye, Ho Jong-hyeok judged that they absolutely could not stop Mok Gyeong-un within this distance.

“My lord...”

"I know."

Seeing them like that, Mok Gyeong-un said,

"Will you accept it?"

At those words, Jang Neung-ak snorted and replied,

"Do you have the confidence to handle the consequences of doing this?"

"That's not something you need to worry about."

"Right. I suppose so. But you'll have to deal with the consequences of that threat."

"Deal with the consequences?"

"Do you think this young master would let you get close without any preparations, even if I acknowledge your martial prowess?"

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head and asked,

"It seems you have some hidden trump card?"

To that question, Jang Neung-ak smiled meaningfully and said,

"Do you really think there's absolutely no one among the forces supporting this young master who can deal with you?"

“Someone who can deal with me? Don’t tell me?”

Mok Gyeong-un’s expression hardened.

It was because he understood what Jang Neung-ak was implying.

Looking at Mok Gyeong-un like this, the corners of Jang Neung-ak’s mouth curved up wickedly.

Just half a moment ago,

Jang Neung-ak had given an order to the martial artists on the terrace.

[You all withdraw for now.]

[But my lord?]

[I told you to withdraw.]

[Yes, sir!]

It looked like he simply made them withdraw.

However,

Right now, gather all the martial artists in the estate, and summon Axe King Ho Tae-gang, Water Clan Master Go Yeon-baek, and Valley Master of Summoning Sound Valley, Hang Yeo-ryang.

There was a secret known only to Jang Neung-ak's close confidants and subordinates.

It was the art of transmitting secret messages through sound, Secret Voice Transmission.

Jang Neung-ak, who had gained the support of the Summoning Sound Valley Master, learned Secret Voice Transmission from her as a gift.

And he found it useful from time to time.

This was one such situation.

Axe King (破斧王) Ho Tae-gang.

He was one of the Five Kings and a member of the Eight Stars, considered the top masters of the current martial world.

He was one of the few Transformation Realm experts in the Heaven and Earth Society and Jang Neung-ak's greatest force that he had recruited first.

‘Did you think this young master would fully trust you?’

The opponent was a Transformation Realm expert.

If things went wrong, who knows what the outcome would be.

Judging by this guy's actions, he didn't seem to fear the Society Leader, his master, like others did.

In the first place, if he did, he wouldn't have done something like defeating Ko Yeon-hu, one of the Five Tigers, earlier.

That's why Jang Neung-ak called upon the best card he had.

The supreme master who had reached the Transformation Realm even longer ago than Mok Gyeong-un.

‘Half a moment. That's enough.’

This much time was sufficient to summon the Axe King.

Axe King's estate was located closest among the other executives.

He would probably arrive here soon.

“Someone who can deal with me? Don't tell me?”

To Mok Gyeong-un, whose face had stiffened, Jang Neung-ak raised the corners of his mouth wickedly and said,

“Did you think this young master would let you get close without careful thought? You'll have to take responsibility for the consequences you brought upon yourself.”

“...You're not an ordinary person, indeed.”

“By the time you regret it now, it's already...”

“Would it make you feel better if I say that?”

“What?”

What?

This bastard, does he not understand the situation right now?

Puzzled by this, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“A suspicious person like you wouldn’t casually dismiss the subordinates around you for a private conversation and have me sit close to you without hesitation... Did you think I would simply believe that?”

“You bastard...”

“Of course...”

Tap tap!

Mok Gyeong-un tapped his head with his finger and continued,

“Of course, I thought you would have prepared something.”

“.....”

“Am I right?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Jang Neung-ak glared at him and replied in a low voice,

“You’re quite cunning indeed. But even if you realize it now, do you think it will change anything? Rather, even now...”

“Did you learn sound transmission from the Summoning Sound Valley Master?”

‘!?’

At that question, Jang Neung-ak, who was trying to maintain a composed appearance, raised one eyebrow.

How the hell does this guy know that?

Seeing his reaction, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said,

“Seems like I’m right. Well, since you promised to gain the support of the Summoning Sound Valley Master, I thought it was possible.”

“You bastard, how...”

Just as Jang Neung-ak was about to say something,

Step!

Jang Neung-ak, who sensed someone entering the garden, smiled with satisfaction.

No matter how Mok Gyeong-un knew about the sound transmission, once Axe King Ho Tae-gang arrived, the situation would be over.

However,

‘!?’

Jang Neung-ak’s expression stiffened as he turned his gaze towards the garden entrance.

Because the one who entered was not Axe King as he had expected.

The one who entered the garden was none other than,

‘Jong-im?’

Jong-im, the subordinate of the deceased Wi Maeng-cheon, who was one of the martial artists sitting on the terrace.

Seeing him enter suddenly, Jang Neung-ak was at a loss.

That was because he had sent an urgent sound transmission to him with orders.

Instead of the Axe King he had summoned, why was that bastard here...?

‘Blood?’

But something was strange.

Jong-im’s clothes were stained with blood.

Why was that bastard in such a state...?

“Did you take care of it well?”

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un’s voice rang in his ears.

‘Did you take care of it well?’

What the hell was this...?

Bam!

Jong-im, the subordinate of the deceased Wi Maeng-cheon, knelt on one knee and clasped his hands together in a respectful salute toward Mok Gyeong-un as he replied,

“Master. I took care of everything as you ordered.”

‘!!!!!!!’

As soon as he finished speaking, Jang Neung-ak’s face twisted terribly.

What the hell was going on?

Why was that bastard calling Mok Gyeong-un master?

As he was feeling perplexed, he suddenly sensed a strange presence behind him and someone placing a hand on his shoulder.

Gasp!

The startled Jang Neung-ak tried to shake it off, but,

Grab!

‘What?’

The pressing force was so strong that he couldn't even move his shoulder.

Then, a whisper came from behind him.

“What will you do now that news different from what you expected has arrived?”

It was Mok Gyeong-un's voice.

When did this bastard get behind him?

“You, you bastard!”

“Shh. Be quiet and relax your shoulders. If you keep moving like that, I might feel like breaking them with the strength in my hands.”

Shudder!

At those words and the accompanying laughter, goosebumps instantly covered Jang Neung-ak's entire body.

Where did things go wrong?

Chapter 182 – Submission (1)

‘My lord... I'm sorry.’

Wi Maeng-cheon, who was possessing the body of his subordinate Jong-im, apologized inwardly.

He wanted to strike the back of that guy's head for the sake of his former lord, Jang Neung-ak, but after becoming a servant spirit and realizing the principle of karma, he couldn't do it.

The fate of the servant spirit and its master were one and the same.

But even if it weren't for that, the more he learned about Mok Gyeong-un, the more fearful he became.

‘What the hell was that monstrous bird earlier?’

In fact, if it were his previous body, it would have been extremely difficult to deal with that many peak supreme masters alone.

However, thanks to that huge bird that suddenly appeared, he was able to subdue the martial artists.

This made Wi Maeng-cheon even more terrified of Mok Gyeong-un.

‘What the hell is this guy's true identity?’

He didn't know that Mok Gyeong-un could command not only humans but also monsters.

How could such a monster exist within the Heaven and Earth Society without anyone knowing?

It made him curious about Mok Gyeong-un's true identity.

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un disappeared in an instant using a tremendous light body technique and appeared behind Jang Neung-ak, grabbing his shoulder.

“You bastard!”

“Shh. Be quiet and relax your shoulders. If you keep moving like that, I might feel like breaking them with the strength in my hands.”

Shudder!

In an instant, goosebumps covered Jang Neung-ak's entire body.

The guy's snickering voice was filled with nothing but malice.

He had experienced this feeling somewhere before.

‘Eldest senior brother?’

Right.

It was quite similar to his eldest senior brother, Na Yul-ryang.

The eerie feeling of lacking humanity was alike.

Meanwhile, Ho Jong-hyeok grabbed the handle of his half-moon ax, Netherworld, with one of its blades broken, and opened his mouth.

“Mok Gyeong-un. Stop it.”

“Stop what? Did I do anything wrong?”

“I don't know how you brought them in, but do you think you can handle all of this?”

“That's not for you to worry about.”

“Worry? Even if you immediately get what you want by threatening the lord's life, do you think you can prevent all the forces supporting our lord, including my own master, from finding out about this?”

“.....”

“Stop it now. No matter how strong your martial arts have become, this is a reckless act.”

With these words, Ho Jong-hyeok’s fingers, cunningly pointing backwards, moved.

He was sending hand signals.

The recipient of those hand signals was none other than his female bodyguard behind him.

[Keep this with you.]

[What is this?]

[It’s a rescue signal flare.]

[A rescue signal flare?]

[It’s something my master gave me.]

[You mean the Axe King?]

[Yes. He gave it to me in case of an emergency. We probably won’t need to use it, but just in case, I think it’s better for you, the bodyguard, to keep it.]

[Is it okay for me to have something like this...?]

[It's more effective for you to have it. If an urgent situation arises, the other members of the Five Mountains Alliance and I will be the targets of restraint anyway.]

It was a truly coincidental thing.

He had entrusted the rescue signal flare to her in case of an emergency.

The rescue signal flare was given by his master to deal with the Eldest Young Master's side, but he thought it would never be used as long as the Society Leader was alive.

However, he didn't expect things to unfold so quickly.

Swish! Swish!

Ho Jong-hyeok sent hand signals with his fingers so that only the female bodyguard could see them.

It was a pre-arranged signal.

Gulp!

Seo Hye-in, the Fourth Mountain who was at an angle to see this signal, swallowed her saliva.

She had heard about this from Ho Jong-hyeok, so she had left the female bodyguard in this spot in case of an emergency.

‘Once the rescue signal flare goes off....’

Axe King Ho Tae-gang would immediately come here.

Then, even that bastard Mok Gyeong-un wouldn't be able to keep making rash threats.

To make that happen, they needed to draw his attention even more.

So Seo Hye-in intervened.

“Mok Gyeong-un! Ho Jong-hyeok is right. A threat is only valuable when you can maintain it in the first place, so how do you plan to keep it up?”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze naturally shifted to her.

Seo Hye-in cheered inwardly but didn’t show it outwardly.

She just hoped that Ho Jong-hyeok’s female bodyguard would hurry and shoot the rescue signal flare.

To do that, she tried to keep Mok Gyeong-un’s attention by continuing to talk.

However,

Crack!

At that moment, the sound of something breaking was heard.

Did she use the rescue signal flare?

‘Huh?’

Something was strange.

If she had used the rescue signal flare, sparks should have shot upward because of the ammunition.

But there was only the sound of something breaking.

Unable to hide it any longer, Seo Hye-in eventually couldn't resist and turned her head towards the female bodyguard.

At that moment,

‘No way?’

Seo Hye-in couldn't hide her perplexity.

That was because Ho Jong-hyeok's female bodyguard had broken the stick of the rescue signal flare.

Has this woman gone crazy?

If she understood Ho Jong-hyeok's hand signals, how could she do such a thing...?

That's when it happened.

“What's that?”

Mok Gyeong-un asked, looking at the female bodyguard.

Then,

“It's a rescue signal flare that can request help from Axe King.”

‘This wench, don't tell me—!’

Seeing her answer so readily, Seo Hye-in got angry and tried to rebuke her.

But before that, Ho Jong-hyeok spoke first.

“...Chae-rin. Were you also on that person’s side?”

He had no choice but to suspect her from the moment she broke the rescue signal flare.

At his question, the spirit possessing the female bodyguard Ha Chae-rin’s body, Go Chan, shuddered and said,

“Ugh. This is fucking disgusting.”

“Chae-rin?”

“Enough! I’m done catering to your preferences.”

At Go Chan’s resolute words, Ho Jong-hyeok’s expression hardened.

He had taken a liking to her due to her occasional blunt and somewhat different reactions and appearance compared to other women.

So he had kept her close and tried to make her his woman, not just a bodyguard.

But facing this result, he couldn’t help but feel empty.

Ho Jong-hyeok spoke in a voice full of lingering attachment.

“Everything we’ve been through together was a lie...”

“Yeah! That’s right. It was all a lie, so save that undeserved confidence for other wenches.”

“.....”

Shocked by Go Chan’s scolding pouring out like a flood, Ho Jong-hyeok just stood there dumbfounded.

Seeing him like that, Go Chan snorted.

If it weren’t for being a servant spirit, he would have escaped from this bastard long ago.

That guy must have a lot pent up.

Indeed.

At Go Chan’s appearance, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

He thought Go Chan had gotten quite used to it and was enjoying being a woman, but it seemed that wasn’t the case either.

Then Jang Neung-ak opened his mouth.

“...What the hell are you?”

“What am I?”

“When did you contact them?”

It was utterly incomprehensible to him.

Not only Jong-im, Wi Maeng-cheon's subordinate, but also that wench had no way to contact or connect with Mok Gyeong-un.

But how the hell did he make them his people?

No matter how much he thought about it, it was difficult to find a connection, but then Mok Gyeong-un asked, leaning close to his ear.

“Do you have any more hidden trump cards?”

“.....”

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Jang Neung-ak bit his lip hard.

Right now, there were no more moves that could turn the situation around.

So Jang Neung-ak spoke in a vicious voice,

“Even so, you won't gain anything.”

“There's no point in being stubborn.”

“Kill me.”

‘!?’

At his words, interest flashed in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

He was curious about how Jang Neung-ak would react after his hidden moves were thwarted and he reached a dead end.

Inwardly, he thought Jang Neung-ak would submit.

But unexpectedly, he was coming on strong.

“You’re not the Society Leader’s disciple for nothing, even if you’re rotten.”

“Shut up. You won’t get anything anyway. Even if you threaten me with force, it will only be temporary.”

“Hmm.”

“You’re not stupid, so you should know. Your threat is meaningless unless this young master submits.”

“Well, that’s true.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s ready acknowledgment, Jang Neung-ak frowned.

He knew the guy wouldn’t be unaware of that, so he couldn’t understand why he was doing this.

Anyway, there were no more moves left, so the only way to dissuade this bastard was to remind him of the consequences.

However,

“But you will submit to me. Like a tail-wagging dog.”

“How dare you!”

Crack!

“Aargh!”

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak screamed in pain as his bones broke.

“Ah. I clearly told you to relax your shoulders.”

Mok Gyeong-un said, raising the corners of his mouth wickedly.

“Ugh. You, you bastard!”

“My lord!”

Seeing Jang Neung-ak in agony, Ho Jong-hyeok seemed to have come to his senses and shouted, aiming his half-bladed Netherworld.

“Stop right now!”

“I think it’s better for you to stop. If you don’t want to see your lord suffering.”

“You’re really crossing the line.”

“Didn’t I cross the line long ago?”

Mok Gyeong-un said with a smile.

At his malice-filled appearance, Ho Jong-hyeok was at a loss for words.

What the hell was this bastard's real goal?

If he provoked them like this, he would have an even harder time getting what he wanted, so why was he going this far?

That's when he wondered.

"I suppose you don't have the will to submit on your own?"

"Ugh... You bastard... This young master will..."

"I guess it's better to possess you than to control you."

"What?"

"First, go to sleep."

Bam bam bam!

At that moment, Jang Neung-ak, whose acupuncture points had been sealed, lost consciousness.

Thud!

"How dare you!"

As soon as Jang Neung-ak collapsed on the table, Ho Jong-hyeok swung Netherworld towards Mok Gyeong-un's head with an angry rebuke.

Whoosh!

However,

Bam!

The blade of Netherworld was caught by Mok Gyeong-un's hand.

“You have no learning ability.”

Crackle crackle!

As black energy frosted over Mok Gyeong-un's hand, cracks formed even on the remaining blade.

Ho Jong-hyeok hurriedly tried to use his inner force to make him let go, but,

Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un's figure had already penetrated right in front of him.

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un's palm flying towards his chin, Ho Jong-hyeok gritted his teeth.

‘Damn it!’

‘...He's really become a monster.’

Go Chan, who was possessing Ha Chae-rin's body, sincerely clicked his tongue.

Ho Jong-hyeok, the First Mountain, and Seo Hye-in, the Fourth Mountain, were lying on the floor unconscious, covered in blood.

The two tried their best to resist, struggling and charging in, but the result was miserable.

They ended up like that in just a few exchanges.

Ho Jong-hyeok, who had reached the pinnacle-stage of Transcendent Realm, tried to turn the tide by unleashing his hidden ultimate technique, but it was useless.

It only bought a little more time.

‘How can a guy who hasn't cultivated martial arts for long become so strong so quickly?’

It was hard to believe.

It felt so unfair that it made the world seem unjust.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un's voice was heard.

“You two, come over here.”

‘You two? Ah!’

Go Chan looked at the man who was presumed to be possessed like himself.

Was he called Jong-im, the subordinate of the deceased Wi Maeng-cheon?

He had a faint feeling of spiritual power, so he thought he might be a possessing spirit, and his guess was correct.

But when did he get possessed by this bastard?

As he was wondering, Jong-im, no, the possessed Wi Maeng-cheon climbed up to the pavilion, and Mok Gyeong-un said,

“You’re seeing each other for the first time, right?”

“.....”

“.....”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Go Chan and Wi Maeng-cheon looked at each other with strange gazes.

It was close to asking, “You too?” with their eyes.

“Before introductions, shall we deal with this first?”

“By this, you mean?”

Then Mok Gyeong-un alternately pointed to Jang Neung-ak, the Society Leader’s second disciple who had collapsed in front of him after having his acupuncture points sealed, and Ho Jong-hyeok, the First Mountain who had fainted covered in blood, and said,

“You need to possess these two, so which one of you wants to enter the second young master?”

As soon as he finished speaking,

Bam!

Both Go Chan and Wi Maeng-cheon raised their hands at the same time like lightning, without exception.

Chapter 183 – Submission (2)

“Hmm?”

Mok Gyeong-un raised an eyebrow, seeing Go Chan, who possessed Ha Chae-rin’s body, and Wi Maeng-cheon, who possessed Jong-im’s body, raising their hands at the same time.

Realizing that they both raised their hands, the two looked at each other.

Both Go Chan and Wi Maeng-cheon had unpleasant expressions.

Mok Gyeong-un said to them,

“It seems you both want this body.”

At those words, Wi Maeng-cheon hurriedly opened his mouth.

“I definitely want it. Please give me this body.”

“Wait, that can’t be. We may have skipped introductions, but there’s a hierarchy even among water spirits. As a newcomer, how dare you covet this body?”

He had become a servant spirit before Mok Gyeong-un was brought to the Heaven and Earth Society.

How dare a newbie servant spirit try to take the body before a senior even picks up their chopsticks?

However,

“Stay out of this, wench.”

Wi Maeng-cheon snapped at Go Chan in a sharp voice.

Seeing that, Go Chan was dumbfounded.

“What? Wench? Who are you calling a wench?”

“I’m talking about you. Who else would I be talking about? Don’t be greedy and be satisfied with that body, you bi-“

“Hey!”

Go Chan shouted angrily.

Each day was already challenging and embarrassing for him as he possessed the body of a woman, Ha Chae-rin.

And now this guy was provoking him?

“Do you think I want to be in this body? How dare you thoughtlessly call me a wench when you know nothing? Do you want to die?”

“Hoo. Wench. Don’t provoke me any further.”

“Provoke? Are you blind? Fine. Let’s do this, you bastard.”

Swish!

A needle-like weapon appeared in Go Chan's fingers.

He had fully adapted to this body after possessing Ha Chae-rin's body for quite a long time.

Now he was confident he could utilize more than 100% of this body's peak martial prowess.

Shing!

Like Go Chan, Wi Maeng-cheon also half-drew his sword.

Although his martial prowess was much lower than his original body, he still had his original senses.

He was at least confident he could subdue the wench in front of him.

Then,

“Take it easy, you two.”

Mok Gyeong-un's voice reached their ears.

Unconsciously glancing at Mok Gyeong-un, their expressions soon hardened.

Although he was smiling, the immense energy flowing from Mok Gyeong-un was pressuring them as if it would engulf them at any moment.

At this, Go Chan and Wi Maeng-cheon, who seemed like they would fight at any moment, soon withdrew their weapons.

Even if they wanted to maintain their pride, as servant spirits, they couldn't refuse their master's order.

"I was going to give you a choice, but I think it's better for me to decide."

Thud!

At those words, Wi Maeng-cheon hurriedly knelt on one knee and clasped his hands together, pleading.

"Master. Please give me Young Master Jang Neung-ak's body."

He looked very desperate.

So Mok Gyeong-un asked in puzzlement,

"You seem to want it badly. Is it because Young Master Jang Neung-ak is a higher-ranking person?"

"....."

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Wi Maeng-cheon couldn't bring himself to reveal his true intentions.

At a glance, it seemed like he wanted it because Young Master Jang Neung-ak was of higher rank than Ho Jong-hyeok, a member of the Five Mountains Alliance, as Mok Gyeong-un said, but that didn't hold much meaning to him.

He just wanted to protect his former lord, even if it was in this way.

However,

‘If I reveal this, that monster-like person will probably hate it.’

That’s why he couldn’t say his true intentions.

And he didn’t want to see that wench possessing the body of his former lord.

Then,

“Master.”

Go Chan clung to Mok Gyeong-un with teary eyes.

“Didn’t you promise? You said you’d move me to a suitable body if there was one.”

“Ah. I did say that.”

“I can’t stay in this body any longer. So please give me that body.”

Seeing Go Chan holding onto his arm and pressing against his body while pleading, Wi Maeng-cheon was dumbfounded and shouted,

“Wench! How dare you act coquettishly?”

“Coquettishly? What nonsense are you spouting now? Acting coquettishly is...”

“Isn’t what you’re doing right now acting coquettishly?”

“What?”

In an instant, Go Chan realized what he was doing.

‘Oh no....’

Perhaps because he had gotten too used to living as a woman, giving up on thinking rationally.

He did something he wouldn’t have done normally.

‘Damn it. I got too immersed.’

Feeling embarrassed, his face flushed red.

Seeing him like that, Cheong-ryeong, who was watching this inside the wooden puppet, burst out laughing.

– Puhahahaha! This guy has completely become a wench.

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and shook his head.

It seemed that when a soul enters the body of the opposite sex, it gets considerably influenced even if one doesn’t realize it.

“It doesn’t seem bad for you to stay in that body.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Go Chan lay flat on the floor and pleaded.

“Oh no. That won’t do, Master... Didn’t you promise? You said you’d move me to a man’s body again.”

‘A man? Don’t tell me?’

Wi Maeng-cheon frowned and looked at Go Chan.

He wondered why this wench was trying to possess a man’s body beyond her means, but was she saying she wasn’t a woman but a man?

Realizing this, Wi Maeng-cheon looked at Go Chan as if looking at a bug.

That was because he knew that even before becoming a spirit, Ho Jong-hyeok kept that wench by his side as if she were his woman.

‘No, she said she’s not a wench.’

So Wi Maeng-cheon’s gaze was close to contempt.

Wi Maeng-cheon pleaded with Mok Gyeong-un again.

“Master. If this person’s goal is to simply enter a man’s body, Ho Jong-hyeok’s body would be fine too, right? Then please give me Young Master Jang Neung-ak’s body...”

“No! I’m going to enter that body.”

“How dare a pervert like you...”

“A pervert?! Who are you calling a pervert? Master. Please ignore this guy’s words.”

Go Chan desperately defended himself.

Go Chan wanted to possess Young Master Jang Neung-ak’s body no matter what.

If that bastard takes Jang Neung-ak's body from him and he ends up in the body of a subordinate,

Then he would have to do whatever that bastard tells him to do.

He had to prevent that at all costs.

“Master. Would you entrust Young Master Jang Neung-ak's body, which is in a crucial position, to a pervert like this? I, who have watched Young Master Jang Neung-ak closely for a long time, am more...”

Wi Maeng-cheon also tried desperately to secure Jang Neung-ak's body no matter what.

At the fervent arguments of these two, Mok Gyeong-un showed an annoyed expression.

Then Cheong-ryeong's voice rang in his head.

– You're not good at everything either.

– What?

– Well, you would have had to handle subordinates to be able to deal with this kind of situation.

– It seems you have something in mind.

– It's not just an idea, there are laws to handling subordinates.

– Laws?

– Yeah.

– What are they?

– Make the hierarchy clear.

– Hierarchy...

– Individually, they may obey your orders, but there needs to be a system in place for an organization to function. And in that system, there's something called a chain of command.

– Ah... You're indeed experienced. You must have handled many subordinates.

– ...Ahem.

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and opened his mouth.

“Wi Maeng-cheon.”

“Yes!”

Wi Maeng-cheon, who had been passionately arguing to get Jang Neung-ak's body, stopped and replied.

At his answer, Go Chan's eyes widened.

‘Wi Maeng-cheon? The Second Mountain Wi Maeng-cheon?’

He had been curious about this guy's true identity.

But he didn't expect him to be the deceased Wi Maeng-cheon.

Then,

‘...He’s really bold.’

It wasn’t another disciple of the Society Leader who killed Wi Maeng-cheon, but Mok Gyeong-un.

Go Chan, who had only been by Ho Jong-hyeok’s side, naturally assumed that Wi Maeng-cheon had been killed by either the Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang or the junior sister Wi So-yeon, as they had guessed.

But to think he died at Mok Gyeong-un’s hands and became a servant spirit, it was surprising.

‘Ah...’

This is making me uneasy.

If it’s Wi Maeng-cheon, he would know more about Jang Neung-ak and this Five Mountains Alliance than anyone else.

In that position, it seemed like Mok Gyeong-un would give Jang Neung-ak’s body to Wi Maeng-cheon, not him.

However,

“Since Go Chan here is like my right-hand man, treat him as a superior.”

‘!?’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Go Chan looked at him in surprise.

Even though Wi Maeng-cheon was dead, he could be considered a tremendous talent in the current situation.

Wasn't he a master who had reached the pinnacle-stage of Transcendent Realm when he was alive?

Telling someone like that to treat him as a superior?

And also...

‘Right-hand man?’

Gulp!

Go Chan unconsciously swallowed his saliva.

He had thought he was just a disposable card to this monster-like guy.

But hearing him say this, it felt like his past hardships were being slightly rewarded.

So Go Chan unknowingly puffed out his chest.

‘...He's become quite elated.’

Seeing Go Chan like that, Wi Maeng-cheon gritted his teeth.

He was furious at the thought of treating someone like that, whose gender was unclear, as a superior.

However,

“Why aren’t you answering? Do you perhaps want to be simply exterminated?”

“N-no way! How could that be?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Wi Maeng-cheon was startled and waved his hands.

Even if he rolled in a pile of dog shit, this world was better.

Moreover, since he was already a spirit, if he were exterminated in this state, it would be no different from returning to nothingness.

Thud!

“I will treat him as a superior.”

Although he was resentful, Wi Maeng-cheon lowered his head as Mok Gyeong-un ordered.

Seeing this, Go Chan couldn’t hide his satisfaction, his lips twitching.

To think that he, who retired as a low-ranking assassin despite being from the Flying Killing Sect, would be treated as a superior by a future top master like Wi Maeng-cheon of the Heaven and Earth Society.

‘Hehehe.’

Life was truly unpredictable.

‘Sniff.’

Jang Neung-ak, no, Go Chan who was currently possessing Jang Neung-ak’s body, couldn’t help but feel moved beyond joy.

Each day had been embarrassing and challenging for him to the point where he thought he might lose his gender identity as he possessed the body of a woman, Ha Chae-rin.

But it was worth enduring that.

Returning to a man’s body made him feel confident.

“How’s the body?”

Mok Gyeong-un asked him.

At that question, Go Chan barely suppressed his excitement and said,

“It’s really... the best.”

It was difficult to describe in words.

When he entered the body of Ha Chae-rin, a Peak Realm master, he, who was merely second-rate expert, experienced sensations he had never felt before and was only satisfied with that aspect.

But Jang Neung-ak’s body was incomparable from the beginning.

‘Amazing. How can such a body even exist?’

The body of Jang Neung-ak, who had reached the pinnacle-stage of Transcendent Realm, could truly be called a monster.

The internal energy Ha Chae-rin possessed was like a drop in the bucket.

This body was really strong, to the point where it felt like he could do anything if he wanted to.

‘But....’

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un, who had easily subdued this tremendous body, his master felt even more like a monster.

Wasn’t he someone who didn’t even know the basics of martial arts just a month ago?

He was truly a monster itself.

“Is the other body okay?”

This time, Mok Gyeong-un asked Wi Maeng-cheon, who had entered Ho Jong-hyeok’s body.

Wi Maeng-cheon nodded and replied,

“I think I can adapt quickly.”

Wi Maeng-cheon was also inwardly unable to hide his surprise.

He was aware that the hidden First Mountain Ho Jong-hyeok was strong, but after taking over his body, that strength was hard to compare to his former body.

Even though they were both at the Transcendent Realm, the difference between the early-stage and the pinnacle-stage was truly stark.

‘Ho Jong-hyeok... He’s really amazing.’

If he wanted to, he could have taken the position of one of the Five Tigers at any time.

With this body, he was curious about the outcome if he fought against that person, who was undoubtedly the best among the Five Tigers.

Fortunately, the bodies seem to suit you two to some extent.

Indeed.

The stronger the body, the more it tends to reject the spirit.

So he had been worried, but fortunately, both Go Chan and Wi Maeng-cheon seemed to have settled well into their bodies.

Since they had taken over the bodies of Young Master Jang Neung-ak, the leader of this force, and Ho Jong-hyeok, the hidden second-in-command, there would be no problem controlling this place.

– But are you really okay? Taking over that woman’s body...

– It’s fine. I don’t really like that woman.

Mok Gyeong-un had intended to give Cheong-ryeong the body of Seo Hye-in, the Fourth Mountain of the Five Mountains Alliance.

However, Cheong-ryeong refused.

The reason was that she didn't really like the body.

What could he do if she refused?

– Rather than that, how are you going to deal with that woman?

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un's gaze naturally turned to Ha Chae-rin, who was lying unconscious.

As Go Chan left her body, the successor of the Flying Killing Sect assassins, her body became vacant.

‘Hmm.’

Mok Gyeong-un stared at her intently.

Although he had conveniently used her as Go Chan's vessel, he no longer needed her.

There were many more useful cards within the Heaven and Earth Society.

So Mok Gyeong-un,

– Well, let's kill her then.

He smiled and casually approached Ha Chae-rin to kill her.

Then Go Chan, who had been satisfied with his new body, was startled and approached, saying,

“Are you going to kill her?”

“Yes. There’s no immediate use for her, so...”

“Wouldn’t it be a waste to just kill her?”

At Go Chan’s words, Mok Gyeong-un looked at him in puzzlement.

Then he asked,

“Why do you say it’s a waste?”

“Well, that’s...”

“Did you perhaps develop feelings for this body after being in it for a long time?”

“No! How could that be?”

Despite saying this, Go Chan felt strangely attached to her as if she were himself, perhaps because he had been in Ha Chae-rin’s body for a long time and read all her memories.

So although he strongly denied it, he felt uncomfortable about just killing her.

It felt like killing himself, in a way.

“Then is it okay to just kill her?”

“Well... What you say is true, but still, she’s the successor of the Flying Killing Sect, a group of the Four Great Assassins. Wouldn’t it be a waste to just kill her...?”

“Hmm.”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un stroked his chin.

Even if she was the successor of the Flying Killing Sect, she wasn't a card he could immediately use, so was there a need to keep her alive?

Then, after glancing at Go Chan, who was looking at him anxiously, he chuckled and said,

“Can you make her submit so we can use her?”

“I'll try.”

“If it doesn't work, deal with her as you see fit.”

“Alright...”

Just as Go Chan was about to reply,

Ha Chae-rin, whose soul had settled normally after Go Chan's possessing spirit left her body, seemed to regain consciousness and opened her eyes.

“Gasp!”

Ha Chae-rin looked around with a startled face.

“Wh-Where am I?”

The surroundings were unfamiliar.

She furrowed her brows.

Her last memory was of dozens of bloodstained hands suddenly popping out from the ground, grabbing and pulling at her.

She couldn't remember anything after that. What on earth happened?

“You seem to have woken up.”

At the familiar voice, Ha Chae-rin turned her head.

“You!”

The owner of the voice was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

The moment she spotted him, the final sacrifice for the Hundred Days of Killing to become the leader of the Flying Killing Sect, Ha Chae-rin instinctively shot the shadow needles hidden in her bracelet.

Swoosh swoosh swoosh!

However,

‘Huh?’

Her eyes widened.

The flying shadow needles stopped mid-air.

What the hell is going on?

As she was perplexed, Mok Gyeong-un lightly nodded his head,

Clatter clatter clatter!

All the shadow needles suspended in the air fell to the ground.

‘!!!!!!!’

Ha Chae-rin was so shocked by the sight that her pupils trembled like crazy.

Just how profound was his internal energy that he blocked the needles she shot with his energy without even touching them?

As if not caring about her bewilderment at all, Mok Gyeong-un turned his head and said to Go Chan with a smile,

“Can you make her submit?”

“I’ll try!”

“If she can’t be controlled, let me know. On second thought, it might be okay to use her as Gyu Soha’s body instead.”

Chapter 184 – Submission (3)

“Can you make her submit?”

“I’ll try!”

“If she can’t be controlled, let me know. On second thought, it might be okay to use her as Gyu Soha’s body instead.”

‘Gyu Soha?’

Who is that?

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Go Chan, who possessed Jang Neung-ak’s body, couldn’t hide his puzzlement.

Thinking carefully about what was said, it sounded like there were more spirits like them that could be used as vessels.

As if confirming his guess, Mok Gyeong-un agreed with a smile.

“That’s right. There are more.”

Gyu Soha.

She was a spirit that was raised with gu poison under the cliff of Corpse Blood Valley.

She became a servant spirit by Mok Gyeong-un and was now possessing Yang Mu-won, the caretaker of Corpse Blood Valley, guarding that place under orders.

Originally, she was only at the Green Spirit level because the gu poison wasn’t completed, but after receiving the leftover demonic energy from the Usurping Sea King that Mok Gyeong-un absorbed, her rank was finally elevated to a Blue Spirit.

– That guy, who insists he’s a man, and this bastard would make quite an interesting pair if they met.

– Indeed.

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

No matter how you looked at her, Gyu Soha, who appeared female and was being bullied by Cheong-ryeong, still insisted she was a man.

– We should bring her over soon.

Gyu Soha had become a spirit that could even face pinnacle-stage Transcendent Realm supreme masters after her rank was elevated.

Such an existence couldn't be left as a mere caretaker.

– Do you have someone to replace her?

Cheong-ryeong asked in puzzlement.

Most of the servant spirits except her had their own assigned roles.

Demonic Monk was possessing escort Byeok, a loyal subordinate of the Shadow Clan Master, to monitor him and gather information, so there was no servant spirit to replace him.

The more loyal, determined, or vengeful someone is in life, the higher the probability of them being reborn as a spirit.

– ...What are you thinking?

– Coincidentally, I sense spiritual energy over there.

The place Mok Gyeong-un was looking at.

It was the eastern direction of the garden where the martial artists from the terrace had withdrawn.

The martial artists from the terrace who had withdrawn were killed by the demon beast Heum-won and Wi Maeng-cheon.

– You’re not thinking of...?

– Yes.

To Mok Gyeong-un, whose curse power had become even more outstanding after eating the three-eyed eyeball, the newly born spiritual energy was clearly felt.

A newly born spirit would at best not even reach the level of an earth-bound spirit, so its will would gradually weaken and eventually perish.

However,

‘If we give it a little help, that will change.’

If it could at least reach the Red Spirit level to have a rank attached, it could possess someone.

Mok Gyeong-un was about to take a step.

Then Go Chan, who possessed Jang Neung-ak, asked,

“Master?”

Go Chan's eyes showed fear and a defensive stance at the same time, like a weasel with its fur standing on end, as he pointed at Ha Chae-rin.

To this, Mok Gyeong-un replied in a nonchalant tone,

“Ah. Deal with her as you see fit.”

Now Ha Chae-rin was Go Chan's responsibility.

Mok Gyeong-un, who entrusted her to Go Chan, moved and headed towards the place where spiritual power was felt, passing the garden pavilion.

There, the shrunken demon beast Heum-won was flying around, and on the floor were the cold corpses of the martial artists from the terrace.

Among them, the existence that was born as a spirit was seen.

Found it.

The corners of Mok Gyeong-un's mouth curved up.

Go Chan approached the tense Ha Chae-rin.

Then Ha Chae-rin, startled, aimed her shadow needles at Go Chan.

“Don't come any closer!”

Originally, as an assassin, she was trained to maintain composure in any situation, so she wasn't easily agitated by such things.

But the situation was different now.

She felt strangely disconnected from moving her body, as if she had been asleep for a long time and woke up, and she couldn't even understand what was happening.

She was clearly aiming for Mok Gyeong-un's life at Yeon Mok Sword Manor, so what was going on?

To her, Go Chan said,

“Hey.”

At Go Chan's call, Ha Chae-rin looked at Go Chan with tense eyes.

Seeing that reaction, Go Chan inwardly felt a strange thrill.

Until right before she died, she had considered him as a lowly inferior assassin.

But now she was properly wary of him.

‘Heh.’

It was truly ironic.

After changing bodies, she looked infinitely weak to him.

Of course, that was because the body of the Society Leader's second disciple, Jang Neung-ak, was that strong.

The elated Go Chan warned her,

“You better behave.”

“Damn it. Where the hell is this and who are you?”

At her rough way of speaking, Go Chan clicked his tongue.

He had forgotten for a while, but she was indeed a woman with an extremely crude way of speaking.

Her original personality hadn't gone anywhere.

“If you keep acting like that, your life will be in danger. That person has no mercy.”

“That person? Are you talking about Mok Gyeong-un?”

“Yes.”

At Go Chan's words, Ha Chae-rin furrowed her brows.

She was already extremely confused because of the existence called Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un was the final sacrifice for the Hundred Days of Killing to be recognized as the leader of the Flying Killing Sect.

But she didn't know where things went wrong.

The Mok Gyeong-un she knew at Yeon Mok Sword Manor was just a cowardly man without any skills.

But when she closed her eyes and opened them again, his overwhelming presence and control over his energy were truly those of a supreme master and beyond.

‘What the hell? What’s going on?’

How did such a monster become the final sacrifice for the Hundred Days of Killing?

The Hundred Days of Killing selected someone who wouldn’t be a big problem even if they died.

But wasn’t he someone they couldn’t kill?

Go Chan, who was staring intently at the perplexed her, had the corners of his mouth twitching.

[Deal with her as you see fit.]

Mok Gyeong-un had entrusted Ha Chae-rin to him.

Therefore, her life and death were now in his hands.

[Uncle, you killed the young master you served for Uncle Gam’s revenge and committed suicide. Understood?]

[Fr-From the beginning...]

[Shh. Be quiet. Be grateful that I’m letting you preserve your honor as a retired member of the Flying Killing Sect.]

He vividly remembered when Ha Chae-rin had done that to him.

She had treated him like complete trash.

He had even died because of her.

But the chance to pay her back with his own hands had unexpectedly come?

The twitching corners of his mouth curved up wickedly.

Soon, Go Chan approached her.

Then,

Swish!

As soon as he got close, Ha Chae-rin shot her shadow needles at Go Chan.

However,

Bam!

‘!?’

The shadow needles didn’t pierce Go Chan and were caught between his index and middle fingers.

‘I can see it. I can see everything!’

Go Chan inwardly cheered.

Even the notorious symbol of the Flying Killing Sect assassins, the shadow needles, were useless against him now.

He felt like he could catch them with his eyes closed just by the sound.

Surprised by Go Chan's appearance, Ha Chae-rin said,

“Wh-Who the hell are you?”

“Me? I am...”

[I didn't expect to see a retired person like this. Uncle Go Chan. Or should I call you Former Inferior Assassin No. 83?]

Suddenly, what she had said came to mind.

He wanted to rebuke her, saying, 'I'm Inferior Assassin No. 83!' but ever since possessing this body, he had to faithfully play that role.

Therefore,

“I... No, this young master is Jang Neung-ak.”

“Jang Neung-ak?”

‘Jang Neung-ak...? Jang Neung-ak, you say? I've heard that name somewhere... Jang Neung-ak... Jang...’

Suddenly, Ha Chae-rin's eyes widened.

That was because there was only one Jang Neung-ak she knew.

Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the leader of the Heaven and Earth Society, one of the three great organizations currently dividing the martial world.

Surprised, she was perplexed but soon denied reality.

“No way! You... Jang Neung-ak? How could that be? Why would the second disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society leader be at Yeon Mok Sword Manor...”

“Does this look like Yeon Mok Sword Manor to you?”

“What?”

“This is the inner city of the Heaven and Earth Society and this young master’s estate.”

‘!?’

At those words, Ha Chae-rin’s expression stiffened.

No. Does this make any sense?

Just before she opened her eyes, she was clearly at Yeon Mok Sword Manor, so why was she in the Heaven and Earth Society?

To the perplexed her, Go Chan said in a firm voice,

“Ha Chae-rin.”

She raised her head and looked at Go Chan.

How did this person know her name?

Did he hear it from that bastard Mok Gyeong-un?

As she was puzzled, Go Chan continued,

“Age nineteen. The only granddaughter of an assassin who retired at the physical age of eighty and a successor of the Four Great Assassins group, the Flying Killing Sect.”

‘!?’

“Due to your impatient and hot-tempered personality that doesn’t suit an assassin, you were forcibly confined in the Flying Killing Cave, and after coming out, in order to become the successor, you were in the midst of the Hundred Days of Killing... Ah! Since you failed to kill Mok Gyeong-un, your final target, it’s hard to even consider you a successor now.”

“Wh-Who are you?”

Ha Chae-rin’s eyes trembled.

That’s how the human mind worked.

You don’t know much about the other person, but they know so much about you.

The anxiety and fear that came from that were hard to describe.

It felt like everything about her was being exposed.

To her, Go Chan approached right in front of her and said in a low voice,

“From earlier, hearing ‘you, you’ is grating on my nerves. You’re quite impudent for a mere successor of an assassin group.”

“That... That’s...”

At Go Chan’s words, Ha Chae-rin was momentarily at a loss.

If the other person was really Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society leader, he wasn’t someone she could treat carelessly.

If the Heaven and Earth Society decided to, it would be a simple matter to wipe out the Flying Killing Sect overnight.

No matter how problematic her personality was, she knew that much.

“Young Master. There seems to be some misunderstanding. I don’t know why I’m here, but...”

“Enough. Kneel.”

“What?”

“I said kneel.”

At Go Chan’s words, Ha Chae-rin hesitated for a moment.

Even if he was the second disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society leader, wasn’t this too much for a first meeting?

What did she do to deserve this...

Slap!

At that moment, Ha Chae-rin's head turned to the side.

Her cheek burned.

Go Chan, who had slapped her, said with a sneer,

“Kneel.”

Normally, she would have submitted by now, but she had such stubbornness and temperament that even the calm assassins would be dumbfounded.

Ha Chae-rin bit her lip hard and said,

“Young Master. I don't know what you heard from that Mok Gyeong-un, but this is...”

Slap!

“Ack.”

Ha Chae-rin's cheek turned the other way.

The force put into it this time was incomparable to before.

Because internal energy was infused, blood flowed from her mouth that was torn on the inside.

Her eyes were bloodshot.

“This is going too far.”

“Impudent wench. Who are you carelessly slandering? That person is someone I serve.”

“What?”

At Go Chan’s words, Ha Chae-rin couldn’t hide her perplexity.

What kind of nonsense was coming out of the mouth of a big shot like the second disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society leader?

Saying he serves him?

She had guessed they had some kind of relationship, but this was quite shocking.

Why was a disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society leader saying he served the son of an orthodox martial family?

It was utterly incomprehensible.

Then,

Bam!

Go Chan slapped her cheek again.

The force put into it this time was stronger than before, so her head turned even more.

And a bruise even formed on her face.

“You...”

Bam!

Before she could speak, Go Chan slapped the other cheek.

Ha Chae-rin’s head turned the other way.

“Haa... Haa...”

Drip drip! Plop! Plop!

Blood flowed from her mouth as her head shook, dripping onto the floor.

It was painful and dizzying as the internal energy got stronger each time he hit her.

As Go Chan raised his hand again like that,

Thud!

Before that, Ha Chae-rin’s knees hit the floor.

Even though she was the successor of an assassin group and revered as a Peak Realm master, she couldn’t help but be powerless in this moment.

To her, who had finally knelt, Go Chan tapped her forehead with his finger and said,

“Yes. This is the eye level between you and me.”

Clench!

Her eyes, biting her lips tightly, welled up with tears.

She had never felt such humiliation before.

Moreover, the reality that she couldn't even resist made her feel even more miserable.

Seeing her suffering, Go Chan sneered and was delighted.

‘Hehehe.’

This was just the beginning.

He was so excited that he couldn't bear the thought of making her submit to the bottom.

Watching Go Chan, who was enjoying himself with a face full of madness, Wi Maeng-cheon, who possessed Ho Jong-hyeok's body, inwardly clicked his tongue.

‘Is that why he let her live?’

He thought he was just a pervert, but he was extremely vicious beyond expectation.

The estate of Wi So-yeon, the junior sister of the Heaven and Earth Society leader.

The atmosphere in the main hall's meeting room was somewhat subdued.

That was because they, who had fainted and woken up after a long time, were too ashamed to face their lord, Wi So-yeon.

All of her loyal subordinates were beaten by a single person.

This was a major incident that no one had expected.

When everyone was keeping their mouths shut, a man stood up from his seat and soon knelt on the floor.

Thud!

“Grand Leader Woo?”

“Senior Brother Woo!”

At his attitude, Yang Il, the young leader of Transient Sword Group, and Gi Ok-ryeon, the eldest daughter of Sun Rock Valley Master, called out to him as if trying to dissuade him, perplexed.

Nevertheless, Woo Ho-rang lowered his head and apologized.

“...I’m sorry. Everything happened because of me.”

Woo Ho-rang, who had come to his senses, thought all of this was his fault.

It seemed to have happened because he couldn’t control his feelings of love and challenged Mok Gyeong-un to a duel.

‘Who would have thought he would do this.’

He thought it would just end as a matter between the two of them.

But he never predicted that Mok Gyeong-un would enter the estate of Wi So-yeon, the Society Leader's junior sister, and beat up all her loyal subordinates.

Grit!

‘Mok Gyeong-un...’

Thinking of that bastard made his teeth chatter.

However, he thought he had to take responsibility for what happened because of him right now.

Swish!

Woo Ho-rang took out a dagger from his bosom and placed it in front of him.

Then, holding out his left hand, he said,

“I have damaged the Young Lady's reputation, so I will first pay with my left hand.”

“Big Brother! No!”

“Grand Leader!”

The other loyal subordinates tried to stop him.

However, as if trying to carry out his will, Woo Ho-rang drew the dagger and tried to cut his left wrist.

Right at that moment,

Clang!

Before it could touch his wrist, Woo Ho-rang's dagger was deflected and stuck into the wall.

Along with that, an ornamental bead fell right in front of Woo Ho-rang.

Woo Ho-rang raised his head and looked in the direction the ornamental bead had flown from.

“Young Lady...”

The one who threw it was none other than Wi So-yeon.

Wi So-yeon looked at Woo Ho-rang with a cold gaze and said,

“I won't forgive taking responsibility in this way.”

“But...”

“Enough!”

At Wi So-yeon's small rebuke, Woo Ho-rang shut his mouth.

Perhaps feeling her anger, the other loyal subordinates also quietly closed their mouths.

This was the first time they had seen her get angry like this.

Naturally, they couldn't help but be cautious.

Then Wi So-yeon opened her mouth.

"I realized how poorly I managed the hierarchy through this incident."

"No. How could the Young Lady..."

"Shut up."

Gi Ok-ryeon shut her mouth in surprise.

Usually, she treated them well in front of everyone to boost the morale of her subordinates.

But this was the first time they saw her being so resolute.

"Now that I've realized an organization without a hierarchy has no future, I will fix the system from now on. Understand?"

"..."

"No answer."

Swoosh!

As soon as she finished speaking, a cold energy flowed out from Wi So-yeon.

The energy was so cold that in an instant, the entire room was filled with a chill, and steam flowed out of everyone's mouths.

At this, Yang Il, the young leader of Transient Sword Group, knelt on one knee, clasped his hands together, and shouted,

“We will keep that in mind!”

Then the others took the same posture and chanted,

“We will keep that in mind!”

“Hmph.”

Looking down at them like that, Wi So-yeon snorted and withdrew her energy.

As she withdrew her energy, Woo Ho-rang looked at her with somewhat surprised eyes.

‘To freely control yin energy to this extent?’

What?

He knew she had a special constitution and possessed vast true energy.

But her energy had become much more stable and stronger than before.

Could it be that she had gained some enlightenment in the meantime?

Looking closely, her face was also glowing and seemed much more beautiful than before.

As he was puzzled, Wi So-yeon said,

“And I declare two things here. No one can object to this decision.”

“We will keep that in mind!”

Everyone answered simultaneously at her words.

It was definitely effective to draw a clear line properly.

As he said, it seemed she had been too lenient and spoiled her subordinates, not properly fulfilling her role as their lord.

Through this incident, she firmly resolved to change.

Wi So-yeon, who had hardened her heart, opened her mouth.

“The first is about Mok Gyeong-un.”

‘Ah...’

At her words, everyone’s eyes lit up at the same time.

They already thought Mok Gyeong-un was the root of all this happening.

Naturally, they thought she wouldn’t just let this incident pass.

That bastard was now no different from an enemy to Wi So-yeon’s faction.

‘I’ll pay him back.’

Woo Ho-rang inwardly waited for her order.

If she just gave the order, he was prepared to challenge Mok Gyeong-un again at any time.

However,

“From now on, treat Mok Gyeong-un the same way you treat me.”

‘!?’

At the unexpected order that came out of Wi So-yeon’s mouth, everyone looked at her with surprised expressions.

Chapter 185 – Submission (4)

“From now on, treat Mok Gyeong-un the same way you treat me.”

‘!?’

At the unexpected order that came out of Wi So-yeon’s mouth, everyone looked at her with surprised expressions.

Naturally, they thought she would say she wouldn’t forgive Mok Gyeong-un for damaging the faction’s reputation through this incident, but they couldn’t understand what was going on.

Everyone was at a loss for words, and Woo Ho-rang, who could be considered the representative of the loyal subordinates and one of the Five Tigers, carefully opened his mouth.

“Young Lady. When you say to treat Mok Gyeong-un the same way as the Young Lady...”

“It’s exactly as I said. Treat Mok Gyeong-un as a superior.”

“But Young Lady, even though the subordinates’ mistake is grave, if we just overlook this incident...”

“Are you objecting?”

At her sharp voice, Woo Ho-rang couldn’t hide his perplexity.

Until before this incident, Wi So-yeon was someone who freely listened to her subordinates’ opinions.

No, even if not, as he was the chief disciple of Bright Blade King Son Yun, one of the Five Kings, she had always respected his opinion in any situation.

But her attitude had changed.

‘Is she disappointed in me?’

Is she showing this attitude because she’s really angry about this incident?

When he thought that the woman he loved had become cold towards him, Woo Ho-rang’s chest felt stuffy with bitterness.

However, if he had given up because of this, he wouldn’t have loved her in the first place.

Woo Ho-rang knelt on one knee, clasped his hands together, and said,

“How could a subordinate object to the Young Lady’s order? However, please allow me to at least ask the reason for making such a decision.”

“...”

At his words, Wi So-yeon stared intently at Woo Ho-rang and then glanced at the other loyal subordinates.

They also had expressions of wanting to know the reason.

Judging that it wasn't like she wouldn't tell the reason even for an arbitrary decision, she said,

“I joined hands with Mok Gyeong-un.”

“What? If you say you joined hands... Does that mean Mok Gyeong-un has agreed to come under the Young Lady's command?”

Woo Ho-rang asked in surprise.

It was Mok Gyeong-un who had accepted his challenge and openly insulted her, saying she wasn't qualified to be a leader.

So he thought they would never work together.

But the surprise didn't end there.

“Not under my command.”

‘!?’

At Wi So-yeon's following words, everyone's expressions stiffened.

What does she mean by not under her command?

As they were puzzled,

“Mok Gyeong-un and I joined hands as equals. So regarding the treatment of him...”

“Young Lady!”

Before she could finish speaking, Yeop Wi-seon, Son Yun’s disciple, shouted as if he couldn’t stand it anymore and got up from his seat.

Then he said,

“Even so, this is unacceptable. Young Lady, how could you treat that guy...”

Smack!

“Ugh!”

Yeop Wi-seon, hit by a flying inkstone, clutched his chest and groaned in pain.

To him, Wi So-yeon coldly said,

“I clearly said not to object, but you’re disrespecting me to the end.”

“Th-That’s not it...”

“Get out.”

“What?”

At her words, Yeop Wi-seon couldn't hide his perplexity.

“Young Lady... What do you mean...”

“A subordinate who pledged loyalty doesn't listen to the lord's orders at every turn and does as he pleases. I no longer need someone like that.”

“...”

At her words, Yeop Wi-seon's face turned pale.

He had never seen Wi So-yeon take such a hard stance before.

The shock was brief, and Yeop Wi-seon bit his lip hard.

Then he soon opened his mouth with a wronged expression.

“How... How can you do this to me? For the Young Lady's sake all this time...”

“Shut that mouth.”

“Young La-“

Thud!

“Ugh.”

Before he could say something, someone slammed Yeop Wi-seon's head to the floor.

That person was none other than Woo Ho-rang, Yeop Wi-seon's eldest senior brother.

"E-Eldest Senior Brother?"

"Be quiet."

Woo Ho-rang, who had scolded him softly, soon lowered his head and said,

"Young Lady, please forgive him. I will strictly discipline my foolish junior."

"..."

"Thinking of all this time, please give him one more chance."

"..."

When Wi So-yeon didn't say anything, Woo Ho-rang gripped Yeop Wi-seon's head tightly and urged,

"Can't you hurry up and apologize to the Young Lady?!"

"Please forgive me."

Looking at them like that, Wi So-yeon let out a faint sigh and said,

"This is the last time. If something like this happens again, Yeop Wi-seon, you will no longer be my person."

"...I will keep that in mind."

Yeop Wi-seon's expression wasn't good as he answered while prostrating.

He knelt because of her sternness, but for him, this incident was like a humiliation.

Yeop Wi-seon also loved her no less than Woo Ho-rang and wanted to make her his woman.

When he thought that the woman he wanted so much had humiliated him in front of everyone, he was furious.

Grit!

‘Me and Eldest Senior Brother... If Master doesn't help her, that wench will have no opportunity at all, so how can she act like this.’

He thought he would be able to control her as he wished with time.

But now it was hard to even expect that.

His feelings of love had already turned into resentment.

Then, Gi Ok-ryeon, the eldest daughter of Sun Rock Valley Master Gi Hae, carefully said to her,

“But Young Lady. Following orders is not that difficult, but if you want to clearly establish the hierarchy as you said, shouldn't Mok Gyeong-un also pledge loyalty to you as the next successor?”

‘Right. No matter what, how can that guy be on equal footing with the Young Lady?’

‘Gi Ok-ryeon is right.’

At this sharp point, everyone looked at Wi So-yeon with agreeing expressions.

Then she slightly turned her head to the side and answered in a small voice,

“...I will handle that myself.”

‘!?’

At her answer, everyone couldn’t understand at all.

Why was Wi So-yeon trying to treat that arrogant bastard so well without even pledging loyalty?

However, unlike them, Gi Ok-ryeon’s expression looking at Wi So-yeon became strange.

She had been close with Wi So-yeon since childhood.

Perhaps because of that, she could read Wi So-yeon’s emotions better than anyone else.

‘...Are you feeling shy right now?’

It might not be noticeable to the men’s eyes, but Gi Ok-ryeon noticed.

Just now, Wi So-yeon had acted shy.

On the surface, it wasn’t apparent, but that expression only appeared at times like this.

For a moment, Gi Ok-ryeon’s eyes slightly widened.

‘Could it be?’

Gi Ok-ryeon looked at Wi So-yeon.

Her face, which seemed to be sternly treating everyone as if trying to properly establish discipline, had the corners of her mouth slightly raised and looked unusually radiant and beautiful compared to usual.

Gi Ok-ryeon's mouth fell slightly open.

‘Oh my...’

She was convinced.

Wi So-yeon's reaction.

It was definitely an appearance that could only come out when she liked someone.

And it didn't seem to end with just simple love.

They say a docile cat climbs the fireplace first.

‘She acted as if she had no interest in men at all, but look at this...’

It was truly surprising.

She felt like asking about this and that, not as a relationship between a lord and subordinate, but as a friend.

What on earth happened while they were unconscious?

Then her expression soon changed.

‘Ah!’

Thinking about it for a moment, wasn’t this a good thing in a way?

Gi Ok-ryeon’s gaze turned to Woo Ho-rang.

She loved Woo Ho-rang.

The only one who knew this fact was Wi So-yeon.

The reason she had told her was because she had developed a suspicion that Woo Ho-rang had feelings for Wi So-yeon that he shouldn’t have as her lord.

So she deliberately revealed her feelings to Wi So-yeon.

She thought that even if Wi So-yeon, as a lord, knew about the affection of the man she loved, she wouldn’t covet him.

‘...Did it turn out well.’

Gi Ok-ryeon’s eyes looking at Woo Ho-rang sparkled.

In the rear courtyard of the estate’s guest hall.

There, Yeop Wi-seon said to his eldest senior brother Woo Ho-rang, as if he couldn’t contain his anger, with a flushed face,

“Eldest Senior Brother. Does this make sense? Not only that Mok Gyeong-un bastard, but now she’s even joining hands with Young Master Jang Neung-ak, what the...”

“Be quiet.”

Woo Ho-rang scolded him softly as his voice got louder.

Woo Ho-rang’s expression wasn’t very bright either.

He was already troubled by the Young Lady’s first declaration, but to make matters worse, his head became complicated because she said she would join hands with the Jang Neung-ak faction, the force they were competing with most fiercely.

‘Why is she doing this?’

It was utterly incomprehensible.

Although her force was the most behind, it was still unknown.

He couldn’t understand the reason, and it was unpleasant, but if she had joined hands with Mok Gyeong-un, it was practically the same as gaining the support of the Baek Clan led by Shadow Clan and the King of Poison.

In that case, she was rather in a superior position compared to the Jang Neung-ak faction.

‘With just this, her approval rating reaches nearly 30 percent.’

If she could gain the support of either Corpse Blood Valley, which was still maintaining a neutral position, or the power of the last of the Five Kings, she might even be able to compete sufficiently with the Eldest Young Master’s side, which had the support of the elder council.

But why?

Was there a reason to join hands with Young Master Jang Neung-ak?

Young Master Jang Neung-ak was never someone who would compromise.

Rather, he would hope for them to come under his command, but he would never join hands.

Wi So-yeon clearly knew that too, so he couldn't understand.

As his mind was complicated like that, an unexpected remark came out of Yeop Wi-seon's mouth.

"Eldest Senior Brother... I think our choice was wrong."

"...What?"

"This isn't right, is it?"

"What's not right? And what do you mean our choice was wrong?"

"I thought there was a possibility if we assisted her, given the Young Lady's lack of skills and her nature of valuing talented people. But the current Young Lady's vision has darkened as if someone is blocking her view."

At Yeop Wi-seon's words, Woo Ho-rang sighed.

This guy seemed to have taken what happened earlier quite personally.

Of course, from his perspective, it could be disappointing, but it wasn't right to criticize the lord he had pledged loyalty to because of today's incident alone.

So Woo Ho-rang scolded him softly,

"Don't speak recklessly. It's not right to blame the lord just because you don't agree with her order. And doing that is like belittling our own choice."

"Aren't you angry, Eldest Senior Brother?"

"Angry?"

"We are the Young Lady's loyal subordinates. But no matter how angry she is about this incident, using the hierarchy as an excuse to decide everything according to her will, and even treating Eldest Senior Brother and me, who have supported her for a long time, like this."

"Stop it. Don't..."

"If the Young Lady says she will come under Young Master Jang Neung-ak's command, will you follow that without question?"

"That's..."

"If she tells you to leave for opposing that, will you accept it?"

"..."

"If she draws a line every time like this, not allowing us to even offer advice as subordinates, isn't that just the conduct of a tyrant? I can't tolerate this situation."

“You!”

“I think I should report this matter to Master and consider whether to continue supporting her or not.”

“You’re going too far!”

This time, Woo Ho-rang’s voice rose.

Then Yeop Wi-seon quickly took the lead, clasping his hands together in a salute.

“Let’s leave the conversation here. Rather, Master told me to bring Eldest Senior Brother, but I forgot because of that Mok Gyeong-un bastard.”

“What? Why are you telling me this only now?”

“Like Eldest Senior Brother, I was knocked out by that bastard, so when did I have a chance to tell you?”

At Yeop Wi-seon’s words, Woo Ho-rang clicked his tongue.

And he was inwardly worried.

Although he felt that his relationship with Wi So-yeon had become somewhat awkward due to today’s incident, he couldn’t help but be concerned that he might cause trouble and drift further apart from her.

So Woo Ho-rang warned Yeop Wi-seon,

“I’m saying this just in case, but don’t act rashly when you go to Master.”

“...”

“You really...”

As he was about to scold Yeop Wi-seon, someone called out to them.

“You two haven’t left yet?”

That someone was none other than Gi Ok-ryeon, the daughter of Sun Rock Valley Master Gi Hae.

When Gi Ok-ryeon came, Yeop Wi-seon shut his mouth.

There was no one among the loyal subordinates who didn’t know that she was practically Wi So-yeon’s right-hand woman.

So Yeop Wi-seon, worried that she might have overheard their conversation or seen through his true intentions, tried to move.

“I was about to go. Let’s go, Eldest Senior Brother.”

“Alright.”

“Wait a moment, Brother Woo.”

Woo Ho-rang, who was about to leave with Yeop Wi-seon, stopped.

When Yeop Wi-seon signaled for him to go, Gi Ok-ryeon smiled and said,

“It will only take a moment, so you can go slowly first.”

“Sigh.”

At this, Yeop Wi-seon shook his head and left the courtyard first.

Then Woo Ho-rang asked,

“Why are you doing this?”

“I just wanted to tell you not to be too heartbroken because of what happened today.”

“Heartbroken?”

At Gi Ok-ryeon’s words, Woo Ho-rang asked back in puzzlement.

Then Gi Ok-ryeon widened her eyes, tilted her head, and said,

“Aren’t you okay with it?”

“...What do you mean by that?”

“It seems the Young Lady has marked Mok Gyeong-un as her partner, didn’t you notice that too, Brother Woo?”

“What?”

At her words, Woo Ho-rang’s eyes changed.

They became much fiercer than before, should I say?

Seeing his reaction, the corners of Gi Ok-ryeon's mouth twitched slightly, but she soon hid it.

Gi Ok-ryeon played dumb and covered her mouth with both hands, saying,

“Oh my... I didn't know. You didn't know.”

“What the... That's...”

Woo Ho-rang's voice trembled.

In that voice, there was disappointment and a strange anger.

Seeing him like this, Gi Ok-ryeon said as if perplexed,

“I thought you and the others all knew. I guess I was wrong. It seems I made a thoughtless remark.”

Even while saying that, her eyes didn't leave Woo Ho-rang.

She couldn't miss this opportunity.

To make him realize that his feelings for Wi So-yeon were futile and to have a single chance to get into his heart.

If she missed this, she wouldn't be able to make this man hers.

Clink clink!

A cold-looking girl wearing thin chains all over her body like clothes appeared. With her short hair and half of it dyed white, her strange appearance made both Go Chan, who possessed Jang Neung-ak, and Wi Maeng-cheon, who possessed Ho Jong-hyeok, unable to hide their inner tension.

That was because,

‘Blue Spirit?’

They could instinctively tell that this girl spirit’s rank had reached the Blue Spirit level. As spirits with lower ranks, they naturally couldn’t help but feel a strange fear beyond wariness.

Go Chan carefully asked Mok Gyeong-un,

“Master. Who is this girl...?”

– Girl? Who are you calling a girl?

The girl suddenly glared at Go Chan and raised her voice.

Despite the simple action, the chilling and tremendous spiritual power made Go Chan unconsciously flinch and take a step back.

– This young master is a man.

“A man?”

Where does she look like a man?

Anyone would see her as a girl.

However,

“Take it easy.”

As Mok Gyeong-un warned,

– Master!

The girl immediately clung to Mok Gyeong-un and rubbed her face against him like a cat.

Mok Gyeong-un pushed her away with an expressionless face.

Then the girl said with a disappointed expression,

– I’ve waited for a long time.

At this half-white-haired girl’s remark, Mok Gyeong-un, as if not caring at all, pointed to the people lying on the floor and said,

“Gyu Soha.”

– Yes.

The girl was none other than Gyu Soha, the spirit that was born from gu poison at the cliff of Corpse Blood Valley.

Mok Gyeong-un continued,

“Possess a useful body among them. That person over there seems good.”

The person Mok Gyeong-un pointed to with his finger was a muscular man with his face buried in the ground. He was Ko Yeon-hu, one of the Five Tigers, the best rear disciples of the Heaven and Earth Society.

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Gyu Soha, who had been carefully examining Ko Yeon-hu, soon made a disapproving expression and said,

– Master. Can't I have one of those two instead?

The two Gyu Soha pointed to were none other than Ha Chae-rin, who was kneeling and blinking with a puzzled expression, and Seo Hye-in, the leader of the Grass Smoke Group and the Fourth Mountain of the Five Mountains Alliance.

At Gyu Soha's words, Cheong-ryeong, who was watching inside the wooden puppet, clicked her tongue and said to Mok Gyeong-un,

– See that, you fool. I told you this wench is a girl.

Chapter 186 – Pinnacle (1)

“Heheh.”

Gyu Soha, who ended up possessing the body of the female Fourth Mountain Grass Smoke Group's leader Seo Hye-in according to her wishes, snickered as if satisfied.

Seeing Gyu Soha like that, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

– Tsk tsk. I don't understand how she can insist that she's a man while being so happy.

– Indeed.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders.

In fact, it didn't matter to him whether Gyu Soha was a woman or a man.

He just needed a card that could move as he wished.

– By the way, what are you going to do? Regardless of the process, it seems you've gotten the factions of the second disciple Jang Neung-ak and his junior sister Wi So-yeon under your control, just as you intended.

– Not completely yet.

– Why do you think so?

– We can only say we've succeeded in merging the two groups when we can move the real powerhouses.

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Cheong-ryeong said as if impressed,

– Oh? Is that so?

– Isn't this the natural course of action?

– Yes. You're right. The greenhorn subordinates may follow their masters' orders, but the real ones are different.

The real ones Cheong-ryeong was talking about.

It didn't refer to the loyal subordinates of the two successors.

The majority of the subordinates were disciples of the next generation who would take responsibility, but currently, the executives behind them were the real power holders.

– If we try to hastily merge the two forces, we may face opposition from the elders behind them.

– Indeed.

The subordinates following Jang Neung-ak or Wi So-yeon are disciples of the next generation of similar age.

Unless it's an extraordinary case, they have no choice but to move according to their lord's will.

However, as Cheong-ryeong said, the executives were different.

– If it goes against their interests, they are likely to react differently.

– Do you have a plan for that?

– Well... What do you think is the best way?

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Cheong-ryeong asked in puzzlement,

– Are you asking seriously?

– Yes.

– ...Are you seeking advice from me?

– Yes, that’s right.

– Ha? The sun must be rising from the west. You’re the one who doesn’t even listen to the advice I give and does whatever you want.

– You seem more familiar with handling an organization than I am.

– ...

– Am I wrong?

– ...Hmph. You’re talking nonsense.

Cheong-ryeong, who was looking at Mok Gyeong-un while within a wooden puppet, seemed surprised.

Judging by his actions, she thought he might act on his own until the end.

But at some point, he had started adopting her advice little by little.

Especially in matters of handling an organization like this.

‘This guy... He may have the qualities of a leader too.’

It was an unexpected aspect.

The Mok Gyeong-un she had been watching so far was close to a lone wolf who never trusted others.

But as he began to face enemies with an organized force, his judgment and insight were gradually rising to match it.

This was truly the quality of a leader.

A leader doesn't just lead an organization with pressure or stubbornness, but must be able to contemplate and discern the situation with a broad perspective and utilize talented individuals in the right place at the right time.

Without realizing it, Mok Gyeong-un was gradually doing that instinctively.

‘Is it not just his martial arts that are growing?’

He's a truly peculiar fellow.

Usually, when one thing is outstanding, another tends to be lacking, but it was strange to the point of being remarkable that he was growing in various aspects.

To her, who inwardly found him admirable, Mok Gyeong-un said,

– If there's no particular plan...

– Move people.

– Move people?

– Yes.

– How?

– No matter how much you run around alone, it's difficult to make the elders behind them move as you wish. But if you move people, it will become a bit easier.

– ...

– It doesn't seem to click with you. There's a good example related to this.

– What is it?

– When that old King of Poison said he would clean up his surroundings and talk to the Shadow Clan Master about the current situation and pursue an alliance, what did you do?

– ...I asked him to do it.

– Yes. Didn't you entrust that to the old man and do what you had to do?

– That's right.

– That old man is not your servant spirit, nor do you have any leverage over him, so why did you casually entrust that to him?

– That's...

Mok Gyeong-un didn't continue.

It was because he realized what intention Cheong-ryeong had in saying these words.

When Cheong-ryeong said to move people, it wasn't with a simple intention.

The true meaning of her words was,

‘...Is she telling me to trust?’

Mok Gyeong-un never trusted others.

That’s why, until he became a death row inmate, he didn’t trust anyone and moved alone.

But at some point, the situation changed.

It was because he encountered the limit of his own strength.

If the one he considered an enemy had not been a martial artist or someone associated with a huge organization like the Heaven and Earth Society, he would have still tried to solve everything alone.

However, now it was different.

He realized that he needed various cards to face a huge organization.

‘Trust...’

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

He was aware that he needed various cards, so he was gradually increasing the number of servant spirits.

However, there was something he realized while newly turning spirits into servant spirits this time.

It was that he couldn’t infinitely increase the number of servant spirits.

[Oh? There was one more.]

He thought only one spirit was born among the martial artists on the terrace, but two entities were trying to be created at that time.

So Mok Gyeong-un tried to make that one spirit a servant spirit as well.

However, he couldn't.

It was because the karma wasn't formed.

[As I thought.]

[What do you mean by that?]

[Karma is literally like forcibly connecting fate. Fate is inevitable and like the yoke of law, so it would be stranger to infinitely increase it in the first place.]

[Is there a limit?]

[If karma could be endlessly connected, that would rather go against inevitability.]

Mok Gyeong-un couldn't understand the enlightenment of the dead because he wasn't dead.

However, what was certain was that the act of increasing servant spirits itself was close to going against inevitability and law, so there had to be restrictions.

In conclusion, there was a limit to the number of servant spirits that could be maintained.

Therefore, there was a limit to increasing the number of cards that could be utilized by increasing servant spirits.

‘No other way?’

As Cheong-ryeong said, in order to increase the cards, that “trust” might be somewhat necessary.

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled as he thought about this.

The fact that he, who could never absolutely trust anyone, was contemplating trust in others to increase the cards he could utilize.

Cheong-ryeong said to him,

– You’re quite peculiar too. How can someone who needs to move people not be able to trust people?

– Is it a contradiction?

– Contradiction... Yes, that’s a word that suits you well. But suddenly I’m curious.

– About what?

– Why is it that you can’t trust people?

– Who knows? Do I have to trust them?

At Mok Gyeong-un’s dry response, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue inwardly.

‘A peculiar brat.’

If he had been betrayed by someone he trusted like her, it would be understandable.

What was the reason why a guy who had barely lived a youthful age couldn't trust others to this extent?

Simply because he had a way of thinking that deviated from ordinary people?

Of course, that could be the case.

Considering his appearance that she had been observing so far, he was full of irregularities and surprises.

But somehow it didn't seem like that was all.

‘...I'll know if I keep watching.’

What he ultimately wanted to do was revenge.

If she watched the process of that revenge, she would be able to understand why Mok Gyeong-un couldn't trust people to this extent.

Until then,

– Well, whether you trust someone or not is up to you. But in order to organically move an organization, you need to have some level of trust.

– Since you say that, I'll keep it in mind. Then what's the best way to do it?

– What do you think is the most important card on Jang Neung-ak's side?

- It would be Ho Jong-hyeok's master.

Ho Jong-hyeok's father, or the Axe King Ho Tae-gang, was one of the Five Kings and the Eight Stars considered the top masters of the current Central Plains martial world.

- Yes. He would be the main pillar of the forces supporting Jang Neung-ak.

- If he moves, the others will naturally have no choice but to follow the trend.

- That's right. So move the Axe King through Ho Jong-hyeok.

- That makes sense.

Wi Maeng-cheon was possessing Ho Jong-hyeok.

As a servant spirit, Wi Maeng-cheon had no choice but to move according to Mok Gyeong-un's orders, so he would be helpful in persuading Axe King Ho Tae-gang, the father of that body.

- The problem is not Jang Neung-ak's faction, but Wi So-yeon's faction.

- ...That seems to be the case.

- The biggest supporter and main pillar of Wi So-yeon's faction... You wouldn't be able to like him even if you wanted to.

- The biggest supporter of Wi So-yeon's faction.

- He was Bright Blade King Son Yun, one of the Five Kings.

As Cheong-ryeong said, the most tangled relationship since entering the Heaven and Earth Society was with Bright Blade King.

He had also refused when Bright Blade King said he would accept him as a disciple, and his relationship with his disciples Woo Ho-rang and Yeop Wi-seon was close to bad karma.

Even Bright Blade King Son Yun's newly accepted disciple Mok Yu-cheon was like that.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders and said,

- Not everything can go smoothly.
- You don't think it's the grave you dug even if you die soon?
- Is there any meaning in arguing about what has already happened?
- Tsk tsk. Anyway.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

Then she soon said,

- Anyway, it's obvious that even if you move, the relationship will only worsen, so move someone else.
- It seems his disciples are already like that.

There was no way Woo Ho-rang or Yeop Wi-seon would move for Mok Gyeong-un's sake.

Moreover, since he had made Wi So-yeon his woman, if they found out about that, they would have even more antipathy.

– It would be better to persuade through the Shadow Clan Master or the King of Poison.

– Through the Shadow Clan Master or the King of Poison?

– Yes. It would be easier to persuade if a fellow executive moves. But the King of Poison would be better than the Shadow Clan Master. You should know well why, right?

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

It was because he understood her words.

The Shadow Clan Master had also confronted Bright Blade King Son Yun at the Corpse Blood Valley's Succession Ceremony to obtain Mok Gyeong-un.

If he stepped up and asked Bright Blade King to help the two factions join forces, would it even work?

– Then I'll have to move quickly.

The night wasn't very long.

He had to quickly establish an alliance system before the Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang regained consciousness.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had left Jang Neung-ak's residence, hurried to head to the King of Poison Baek Sa-ha's estate.

However, on the way there, he encountered a martial artist from Shadow Clan running towards him out of breath.

“Young Master! You were here.”

Mok Gyeong-un asked in puzzlement,

“What’s the matter?”

“The Shadow Clan Master is urgently looking for you.”

“My master?”

“Yes, it’s a very urgent matter, so he told me to bring you right away.”

‘An urgent matter?’

What on earth was it that he was like this?

Could it be because the King of Poison Baek Sa-ha had talked about the incident with the Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang and suggested forming an alliance?

But now he had to go find Baek Sa-ha first and talk about Bright Blade King Son Yun.

So Mok Gyeong-un said,

“I understand. For now, a moment...”

“You have to go right now.”

“It won’t take long. First...”

Before Mok Gyeong-un could even finish his words, the martial artist from Shadow Clan said impatiently,

“No. You have to go right now.”

“Ah, this is quite troublesome. I’ll return to Shadow Clan soon...”

“It’s not Shadow Clan.”

“What?”

“Right now, the Shadow Clan Master is paying respects to the Society Leader at the main hall of the inner city.”

‘!?’

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un’s expression changed.

The Shadow Clan Master was paying respects to the Society Leader of the Heaven and Earth Society and urgently called for him?

In the end, this meant...

‘Can I meet that person?’

Mok Gyeong-un had tried to enter the factions of the successors in order to create an opportunity to contact the Society Leader.

But unexpectedly, the opportunity for a meeting had come.

Chapter 187 – Pinnacle (2)

Mok Gyeong-un followed the martial artist from Shadow Clan towards the main hall of the inner city.

Not long after, Cheong-ryeong, smoking a long pipe, flew to his side.

She said to Mok Gyeong-un,

– Hey, you fool. I’ve told Go Chan.

– Thank you.

Mok Gyeong-un sent a sound transmission to her.

Since he couldn’t go right away, he sent Cheong-ryeong to give orders to Go Chan, who possessed the body of the Society Leader’s second disciple Jang Neung-ak, to send someone to the King of Poison Baek Sa-ha instead.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue and said,

– Anyway, when it comes to revenge, you don’t consider the consequences.

In fact, when the opportunity to meet the Society Leader arose, Mok Gyeong-un had tried to find Baek Sa-ha to ask him to persuade Bright Blade King Son Yun without hesitation.

So Cheong-ryeong had stepped up and said she would relay the message through Go Chan.

Mok Gyeong-un casually replied to her rebuke,

- The chance to see the Society Leader won't come easily.
- Hmph. Your judgment is clouded because your mind is elsewhere.
- It's fine since you helped.
- What's fine? Tsk tsk. Anyway, even if you meet the Society Leader right now, what do you think you can do?
- Who knows?
- Oh please. You fool. Even if he's ill, he's practically the pinnacle of the current martial world. Do you think you can get the answer you want from him right away?

Mok Gyeong-un had one goal.

To hear about the Ghost Sword's connection to the Society Leader or his identity.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un didn't think this was possible right away either.

However, through this opportunity, he couldn't miss the chance to gauge what kind of person the Society Leader was or how strong he was.

‘Pinnacle...’

The Six Heavens, called the pinnacle of the current martial world.

The Society Leader was one of those Six Heavens.

He was definitely curious, not just for clues to his revenge.

Among the countless martial artists, he wondered how much of a gap there would be between himself and the one called the pinnacle, grand master, the supreme master.

Cheong-ryeong said to Mok Gyeong-un, who was thinking that,

– Mortal..

– Yes.

– This time, I'll clearly warn you. If the Six Heavens, the pinnacle of the current martial world, have crossed the wall of walls as I expect, you must never provoke them.

– You seemed very concerned?

– Do you know what it's called to cross the wall of walls?

– Who knows?

– It's called the Profound Realm[1]. Profound means the heavens or the supreme. It means reaching the highest realm that cannot be touched.

– The realm that cannot be touched...

– Yes. Of course, your current level is also a realm that ordinary martial artists wouldn't even dare to dream of. But the Profound Realm is on a completely different level.

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

Judging by her warning to this extent, the realm of the Profound seemed to possess unimaginable power in martial arts.

Perhaps he shouldn't let his guard down.

Not long after moving like that, Mok Gyeong-un finally arrived in front of the main hall building of the inner city, following the martial artist from Shadow Clan.

He thought he would go inside, but,

Clang!

The two martial artists guarding the entrance of the main hall crossed their spears and blocked him.

Mok Gyeong-un asked the martial artist from Shadow Clan in puzzlement,

“Didn't you say I need to come to the main hall?”

The Shadow Clan Master definitely said that.

The martial artist from Shadow Clan also looked puzzled as if he didn't know what was going on.

So Mok Gyeong-un clasped his hands together in a salute and said,

“Excuse me. I am Mok Gyeong-un, the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master. Right now, we...”

“The disciple of the Shadow Clan Master?”

Before Mok Gyeong-un could finish speaking, one of the martial artists guarding the entrance of the main hall asked.

“Yes. That’s right.”

“We were waiting for you. Follow me.”

Fortunately, there was no mistake.

The martial artist from Shadow Clan who had finished guiding him bid farewell and left.

Mok Gyeong-un followed the martial artist who had been guarding the entrance into the main hall.

However,

‘Huh?’

Why are we not going upstairs but entering through the corridor instead?

He knew that the size of the inner city’s main hall building was the largest within the Heaven and Earth Society, but seeing the considerably long corridor continuing, it seemed to be larger than expected.

The martial artist who had been walking down the corridor turned to the right and led him to a passage that seemed to lead outside.

Entering there, a very wide space was revealed.

‘Where is this?’

There were numerous weapons and training tools everywhere.

It seemed to be a training ground.

What was peculiar was that it seemed to be made so that no one could recklessly intrude or leave, with thick walls blocking all four sides.

However, one of Mok Gyeong-un's eyebrows slightly rose.

He had naturally assumed that he would be led to where the Shadow Clan Master and the Society Leader were.

But waiting here were not them, but young men who seemed to be in their mid to late twenties.

A young man with a handsome appearance in his mid-twenties wearing a red leather belt was sitting cross-legged, and another man in his late twenties with thick muscles was leaning against the wall, chewing on something that looked like a rice cake.

So Mok Gyeong-un asked,

"I don't see Master... No, the Shadow Clan Master?"

"I was told to wait here."

"By the Shadow Clan Master?"

"No."

"Then by whom?"

"It was the Society Leader's order."

‘The Society Leader?’

The Society Leader told him to wait here with them?

It was difficult to guess what was going on.

While he was puzzled, the martial artist guarding the entrance left as if his business was finished.

It was a truly strange situation.

If he had told him to stay alone, that would be one thing, but telling him to wait with unfamiliar people without any introduction.

‘Hmm.’

Since he couldn’t understand the reason, he had no choice but to wait.

Then the young man in his late twenties who had been leaning against the wall eating the rice cake approached and said,

“Wow. So you’re the famous disciple of the Shadow Clan Master.”

“...”

Mok Gyeong-un silently stared at him.

Then the young man in his late twenties held out the skewer with the rice cake and said,

“Want some?”

“I’ll pass.”

Mok Gyeong-un lightly shook his head.

Then the young man chuckled and pointed to the young man sitting with his eyes closed, saying disapprovingly,

“At least you seem more communicative than that guy.”

“And who are you?”

“Me? Or that guy?”

“Either one.”

“It would be great if you could tell me about both.”

Then the young man shrugged his shoulders and pointed to himself with his thumb, saying,

“I’m Seop Chun, the captain of the third guard unit of the main hall.”

“Captain of the main hall guard unit?”

At his introduction, interest flashed in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

This was information he had heard not from the Shadow Clan Master, but from the leader of Corpse Blood Valley, Lee Ji-yeom.

[The place with the thickest military power in the inner city is none other than the main hall.]

[Is it because the Society Leader is there?]

[Yes, the Society Leader is the center of the Heaven and Earth Society, after all.]

[I see. Do you know roughly how strong they are?]

[It's difficult to grasp the hidden power, but counting only the revealed forces, there are three guard units in the main hall, each consisting of thirty men.]

[Thirty men? Even if you add them all up, it's only ninety... That's smaller than I thought.]

The number was smaller than he expected.

As if he knew Mok Gyeong-un would react that way, Lee Ji-yeom said,

[At a glance, you may feel that way, but each one of them is an elite.]

[Elite?]

[Yes. Although they are called units, each individual is a Peak Realm master equivalent to the captain-level of an ordinary unit, and those captains possess the martial prowess of a great elder.]

[The guard captains are at the great elder level... The gap is clear.]

[Yes, the guard captains are originally people who have no problem becoming great elders. Ah, come to think of it, the most recently appointed captain of the third guard unit is from Corpse Blood Valley here.]

[From here?]

[That's right. Thanks to you, my liege, that friend came to mind.]

[Thanks to me?]

[Yes. Like you, my liege, that friend also obtained three top disciple tokens from the gates eight years ago and exited as the top disciple.]

[Three? He must have done well.]

It was very difficult to obtain even one top disciple plate from the Corpse Blood Valley gates.

Obtaining more than two could be considered truly exceptional.

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Lee Ji-yeom said quite seriously,

[It's not just doing well. He's quite an oddball, so he gave up at the last few gates, but if he had put his mind to it, it wouldn't have been strange for him to receive all the top disciple tokens.]

[Wouldn't have been strange to receive them all?]

[Yes, he stopped at that level because he gave up voluntarily, but that friend's talent can definitely be called a genius.]

[Hmm. Interesting. What's that friend's name?]

[Seop Chun. I heard he's also part of the Five Tigers, who are called the most outstanding rear disciples in the sect.]

Mok Gyeong-un, who recalled the conversation with the leader of Corpse Blood Valley Lee Ji-yeom, looked at the face of Seop Chun, the captain of the third guard unit of the main hall, with interested eyes.

There were only two people the leader of Corpse Blood Valley Lee Ji-yeom had praised for their talent.

One was the Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang, and the other was none other than this Seop Chun.

“Oh no. The top disciple junior of this Corpse Blood Valley class is staring at me so intently, I don’t know what to do with my body.”

Seop Chun covered his muscular chest with both arms and said.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

He had only heard praise about his talent, so he didn’t know what kind of person he was, but he seemed to have a very outgoing and humorous personality.

Mok Gyeong-un, who quickly looked him over, was puzzled to see the sword case at his waist.

‘It looks light.’

Although it was in a sword case, it seemed to be about four feet long.

But even the sword case looked very thin, so the sword itself seemed to be quite light.

As if sensing Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze, Seop Chun said,

“Ah. As expected of the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master, you have a lot of interest in swords.”

“A muscular person is carrying a very light sword.”

“You have good eyes?”

“You don’t need good eyes to see that.”

Swish!

As soon as Mok Gyeong-un finished speaking, the sword had already come out of the scabbard.

As expected, the sword looked very thin and light.

It even felt like it was fluttering.

However, despite such lightness, the faint luster flowing from the blade showed that it was no ordinary sword.

Mok Gyeong-un stared at the blade and muttered,

“Mad Dance?”

On the inside of the sharp blade, the characters for Mad Dance[2] were engraved.

At Mok Gyeong-un’s mutter, Seop Chun showed his teeth and said,

“That’s this friend’s name.”

“This friend?”

“Yeah. For a swordsman, the sword is a lifelong companion. Of course it’s a friend.”

“Is that so?”

“The reaction is less interesting than I thought. I even showed you my friend, but... Hey, you’re the disciple of the Shadow Clan Master... That’s not a sword.”

Seop Chun said in a puzzled tone, looking at the sword case at Mok Gyeong-un’s waist.

Mok Gyeong-un casually replied,

“It’s a gift from my master.”

“Your master, you mean the Shadow Clan Master?”

“Yes.”

“That’s quite unusual. The Shadow Clan Master should be a swordsman, but he gifted a sword to his disciple? Then it must not be an ordinary sword.”

“It’s a pretty useful sword, he said.”

“Oh! Is that so? What’s that friend’s name?”

As Seop Chun kept referring to the weapon as a friend, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and replied,

“The Evil Commandment.”

“The Evil Commandment...? What?”

Suddenly, Seop Chun couldn't hide his surprise.

It wasn't just him who was surprised by this.

The handsome young man who had been sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed opened his eyes and frowned, looking at Mok Gyeong-un.

Their reactions were natural.

Whether they were swordsmen or swordmasters, who in the martial world wouldn't know about the Evil Commandment Sword?

It was a demonic sword made by the legendary craftsman Ou Yezi.

Seop Chun said as if dumbfounded,

“No way. Is that really the Evil Commandment Sword?”

“Yes.”

“Ha!”

Seop Chun clicked his tongue inwardly.

As far as he knew, although the Evil Commandment Sword was a masterpiece made by the craftsman Ou Yezi, it was a cursed weapon known as a demonic sword.

He gave such a dangerous thing to his disciple?

No matter how great the sword was, he couldn't understand giving him that, which had a high risk.

So Seop Chun asked,

“Is that... sword okay?”

“Yes, is there a problem?”

“Like gradually losing energy or seeing things that aren't there?”

“You're worrying a lot.”

“No. What is there to worry about when we just met for the first time? It's just that even though it's our first meeting, that sword seems to be very good but also very, very dangerous...”

“Have you mastered the sword?”

At that moment, someone interrupted.

It was the young man with the red belt who had been sitting cross-legged.

As the young man intervened, Seop Chun, the captain of the third guard unit of the main hall, raised one eyebrow and said,

“Is the guy who didn't even answer once when I talked to him so much opening his mouth because of a sword?”

Naturally, he thought it was understandable.

No matter how demonic the sword was, as a swordsman, he couldn't help but be interested.

However, ignoring his words, the young man said to Mok Gyeong-un,

“I asked if you mastered the sword.”

To that question, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders and replied,

“To some extent.”

“To some extent?”

At that answer, the young man snorted.

Then he uncrossed his legs, stood up, and opened his mouth.

“Then it’s a pearl necklace on a pig’s neck.”

‘!?’

At those words that came out of the young man’s mouth, it wasn’t Mok Gyeong-un but Seop Chun who shook his head and said,

“A pearl necklace on a pig’s neck? Oh, that’s harsh. No matter what, saying that at the first meeting is...”

“...”

The young man paid no attention to Seop Chun’s words.

So, feeling uncomfortable, Seop Chun made a disgusted expression and said to Mok Gyeong-un,

“Just ignore what that guy says. He’s just jealous...”

“A sword in the hands of someone who hasn’t properly mastered the sword is nothing more than a decoration, so what else can I say but a pearl necklace on a pig’s neck?”

At the young man’s continuing words, Seop Chun said as if dumbfounded,

“Hey. Even if you’re the vice-leader’s son, you’re going a bit too far. Take it easy, will you?”

‘The vice-leader’s son?’

Mok Gyeong-un looked at the young man.

If he was the vice-leader’s son, was he that person?

He had heard of him before.

Vice-leader Mong Seo-cheon had twin children.

Mong Seo-hye and Mong Mu-yak.

The young man in front of him couldn’t possibly be the daughter Mong Seo-hye, so he must be Mong Mu-yak.

‘What a coincidence.’

And Mong Mu-yak was also one of the Five Tigers, called the best rear disciples of the Heaven and Earth Society.

In other words, two of the Five Tigers were gathered here.

Why did they call him together with these people?

As he was thinking about that, Mong Mu-yak approached Mok Gyeong-un and said,

“Leaving aside the demonic sword, do you think you deserve to carry such an excellent sword?”

‘This guy doesn’t know moderation.’

Seop Chun clicked his tongue.

He knew well that Mong Mu-yak was crazy about swords, but he didn’t expect him to pick a fight with Mok Gyeong-un, whom he was meeting for the first time, in this way.

Based on his long observation, that guy wasn’t doing this because he coveted the sword.

He literally disapproved of Mok Gyeong-un having that sword.

‘This will lead to trouble at this rate.’

Seop Chun thought he should stop Mong Mu-yak.

Even if he was the top disciple at the Corpse Blood Valley gate, his opponent was one of the best rear disciples who had received the vice-leader’s teachings.

If he got involved in this fight because he was in a bad mood, he might suffer a big...

“Hey. Take it easy...”

“I think I deserve it more than you, don’t you think?”

‘Huh?’

Seop Chun turned his head in surprise.

It seemed Mok Gyeong-un had fallen for Mong Mu-yak’s provocation.

But for someone who had fallen for the provocation, Mok Gyeong-un had a smiling face.

So,

“More than me?”

Rather, Mong Mu-yak showed his discomfort.

Judging that this would lead to trouble, Seop Chun stepped between the two to dissuade the situation and said,

“Stop it, you two...”

At that moment, Mong Mu-yak’s hand suddenly reached for the hilt of the sword at his waist.

Then he tried to swiftly draw his sword, but,

Bam!

Before he could even draw half of the sword, something blocked it.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un's palm.

‘!?’

Mong Mu-yak looked at Mok Gyeong-un with surprised eyes.

To him, Mok Gyeong-un said with a sneer in a whispering voice,

“If you're slower than a pig, are you a maggot?”

Chapter 188 – Pinnacle (3)

Half a quarter-hour ago.

Hwan Ya-seon, the Shadow Clan Master, stood in front of the entrance to the Society Leader's bedchamber with a somewhat tense gaze.

‘When was the last time?’

It had been quite a long time since he had seen the face of the Society Leader, whose illness had deepened.

He hadn't seen the Society Leader for so long that he gave orders through the vice-leader, even to him, the head of Shadow Clan in charge of secrets.

But unexpectedly, he had been summoned abruptly.

So he couldn't help but be inwardly puzzled.

However, there was one thing he could guess.

‘...Could it be that the vice-leader’s side found out?’

If that’s the case, it becomes quite troublesome.

How much effort had he put in to prevent that information from reaching the Society Leader?

He hoped that what he was worrying about wouldn’t happen.

Creak!

At that moment, the door to the residence opened.

The one who opened the door was none other than Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon.

Thud!

The Shadow Clan Master managed his expression and clasped his hands together in a salute with a smile.

“Ohoho. Greetings to the Vice-Leader.”

At his greeting, Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon showed no particular reaction.

Rather, he looked at the Shadow Clan Master with a strange expression.

Then,

“Why didn’t you bring your disciple?”

“My disciple is out on an errand for me, so I sent a subordinate to bring him...”

“Then come in.”

Before he could even finish speaking, Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon turned his body and gestured.

At his appearance that seemed much colder than usual, the eyes of Hwan Ya-seon, the Shadow Clan Master, narrowed.

He thought that his concern might become reality.

‘It’s troublesome.’

He couldn’t make a move yet because he hadn’t secured the exact location and a perfect escape route.

In the meantime, if the Society Leader finds out about it, the situation will end up thoroughly twisted.

If that happens...

‘...’

Hwan Ya-seon clenched his teeth slightly.

Then he soon entered the residence with a smiling face, covering his mouth.

The Society Leader's residence, where a few lamps were lit, was a place he had been to many times, but today the entire interior felt heavy and chilling.

There was no way the air in the residence of a sick person could be cold, and it was probably because the tension had grown.

Step step!

The footsteps were heavy.

Although he maintained a smiling face, his stomach was about to churn.

The other party was the leader of the Heaven and Earth Society, one of the Six Heavens (六天) called the pinnacle of the current martial world.

Facing him had to be uncomfortable, no matter who it was.

On the large bed attached to the wall of the spacious residence, there was a thin cloth hanging down, so the inside could be seen dimly.

Swish!

The vice-leader stood in front, clasping his hands together, and said,

“The Shadow Clan Master has arrived.”

“Cough cough.”

A coughing sound came from inside.

At this, Hwan Ya-seon, the Shadow Clan Master, who was standing behind the vice-leader, hurriedly clasped his hands together and lowered his head.

“I pay my respects to the Society Leader.”

The eyes of Hwan Ya-seon, who was bowing his head, narrowed even more.

He was already curious about the extent of the Society Leader’s condition.

But hearing the scratching sound mixed with the coughing, it seemed like the illness was still the same.

‘Strange.’

Why is the illness of such a master like the Society Leader himself is lasting so long?

‘Is it certain that he suffered incurable internal injuries from that person?’

Only a very few people in the organization knew about this.

The reason why only a very few people knew was obviously because the Society Leader’s internal injuries were more severe than expected, and because they ultimately failed to gain the upper hand in the confrontation with that person.

But even so, it was too long.

If a person was an inner master with profound internal energy like the Society Leader, he should have been able to heal his own internal injuries by this point and still have plenty left over.

It was at that moment when he was finding it strange.

“Shadow Clan Master.”

It was the Society Leader’s voice that he heard after a long time.

“Yes, please speak.”

“Do you perhaps have something to say to me?”

“...”

For a moment, the expression of Hwan Ya-seon, the Shadow Clan Master, hardened.

He thought there would be some prior discussion about the reason for calling him, but he didn’t expect for the man to suddenly come at him like this.

However, Hwan Ya-seon did not easily expose his emotions in such situations.

“Ah ah. Is your illness a bit bett-“

“The Imperial Palace.”

It was before he could even finish speaking.

With just one word, Hwan Ya-seon’s throat felt blocked.

What he had been worrying about had happened.

He had tried so hard to confuse the information so that the vice-leader’s side wouldn’t notice, but it seemed he couldn’t stop it after all.

‘It was reckless.’

If it weren’t for the Imperial Palace, he could have bought more time.

But it seemed he had missed that opportunity.

As he was quickly thinking about what to do,

The voice of Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon, who was in front of him, was heard.

“Don’t tell me you’re saying that the information department of our esteemed organization, the Shadow Clan, have no knowledge of what you’ve found out?”

“...”

Damn it.

There was no room for evasion.

They already found out.

Testing him like this was a kind of trial in itself.

The Society Leader was that kind of person.

If it came to this, there was only one way.

Hwan Ya-seon, the Shadow Clan Master, raised his head, smiled brightly, and said,

“Ohoho. How could that be? This subordinate has also obtained information of that person being detained in the Imperial Palace.”

As soon as he finished speaking, the vice-leader slightly turned his head, glared fiercely, and said,

“But why didn’t you report it?”

“This is quite troublesome.”

“Troublesome?”

“The vice-leader is speaking as if I deliberately hid it.”

Hwan Ya-seon spoke in a tone as if he was offended by being suspected.

Then the vice-leader snorted and said,

“Then what’s the reason you haven’t reported the fact that you knew that person is being imprisoned in the Imperial Palace’s Golden Jade all this time?”

‘Ah ah.’

So this is how it’s going to be.

Seeing how he was interrogating and pressuring him, it seemed he was indeed called because of suspicion.

There was no other way now.

Hwan Ya-seon said calmly, without losing his composure,

“Do you really believe that’s true?”

“What?”

The vice-leader frowned.

“What if it’s information deliberately spread by the Imperial Palace to lure in the remnants of the Fire Faith Order?”

“...”

At these words from Hwan Ya-seon, the Shadow Clan Master, the vice-leader was momentarily at a loss for words.

This was also a gamble for Hwan Ya-seon.

From his position as a real remnant of the Fire Faith Order, it was better not to talk about the Fire Faith Order as much as possible, but now he had no choice.

Otherwise, it was obvious that the vice-leader would press him even more.

Fortunately,

‘He’s not convinced of the information yet.’

It seemed the vice-leader had not obtained definite information.

Like himself, it seemed he had only obtained information that that person was being detained in the Imperial Palace's Golden Jade.

If so, he could push a little more.

“As the head of the information department, if I report unconfirmed information, I have to take responsibility for it. Naturally, I have to carefully verify the authenticity...”

“Verification is unnecessary.”

The one who cut him off was none other than the Society Leader.

At this, Hwan Ya-seon hurriedly bowed his head as if apologetic and said,

“But Society Leader...”

“Cough cough. There's not much time left.”

“What?”

What on earth does that mean?

There's not much time left?

It was right then.

“Look at me.”

Swish!

The thin cloth was lifted, and the Society Leader revealed himself from the bed.

The two eyes of Hwan Ya-seon, who unconsciously raised his head to look at the Society Leader, widened.

‘...What the hell is this?’

Half a quarter-hour later.

In the training ground of the secret wall inside the main hall.

“If you’re slower than a pig, are you a maggot?”

‘This bastard!’

The surprise was brief, and at Mok Gyeong-un’s sneer mocking him, Mong Mu-yak’s eyes turned fierce.

However, unlike how he started the fight first, Mong Mu-yak was a very cool-headed person.

So, in a short moment, he analyzed Mok Gyeong-un.

‘The energy I felt from him is only at the Peak Realm level at most. But this series of movements and the strength pressing the tip of the sword are beyond that.’

That meant he had concealed his energy.

Realizing this, Mong Mu-yak inwardly clicked his tongue.

He had heard that the person in front of him had graduated as the top disciple from the Corpse Blood Valley gate, but the boy was only 17 years old, and considering the level of the previous rear disciples of Corpse Blood Valley, Mong Mu-yak had expected Mok Gyeong-un to be at the proficient-stage or at the pinnacle-stage of Peak Realm at most.

But if this bastard could deceive his own energy sensing to this extent,

‘I’ll have to consider the possibility of his real level to be more than I expected.’

Bam!

Mong Mu-yak, who judged that Mok Gyeong-un might have higher martial arts than expected, soon shifted his weight back with his footwork, making his center of gravity unbalanced.

Then naturally, Mok Gyeong-un’s body, which was pressing the tip of the sword, also leaned forward.

At that moment,

Bam!

Mong Mu-yak swiftly kicked towards Mok Gyeong-un’s neck as he leaned forward.

If the guy has a narrow field of vision, he would get hit by this, and if his martial prowess is indeed higher, he would have to avoid the kick and let go of the sword hilt to prevent himself from leaning forward.

However,

Grab!

Mong Mu-yak's prediction was off.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been pressing the tip of the sword with his palm, grabbed it, and,

Swoosh!

He seized it and swung it.

As a result,

‘Urk.’

Mong Mu-yak's body, which had been holding the sword hilt while kicking, staggered to the side and was forcibly twisted.

But it didn't end there.

Mong Mu-yak drew upon his inner force to resist this, but,

Whoosh!

‘Damn it!’

Nevertheless, Mong Mu-yak's body was swung even more strongly, and soon,

Whoosh!

Along with letting go of the sword hilt he was holding, he was sent flying nearly eight steps away.

Although startled, Mong Mu-yak calmly twisted his body in the air to regain his posture, but,

Skid skid skid skid!

He was pushed back nearly seven steps on the ground, unable to dissipate Mok Gyeong-un's inner force.

Watching this with wide eyes, Seop Chun, the captain of the third guard unit of the main hall, clapped his hands and cheered.

Clap clap clap!

“Gwahahaha! Good! Very good!”

Inwardly, he had thought that if trouble occurred, Mok Gyeong-un would naturally be the one to suffer.

It had to be that way because Mong Mu-yak was the son of Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon and the grandson of Bright Blade King Mong Woo-jong, who had retired before joining as an elder in the elder council.

Seeing Mong Mu-yak being pushed back by a newcomer who wasn't even the same age as him, let alone the same Five Tigers, after receiving teachings from a supreme master who was considered one of the top five even including the previous and current generations, Seop Chun couldn't help but feel excited.

Grit!

Of course, Seop Chun's cheers were enough to stimulate Mong Mu-yak's pride.

Although he was the one who picked the fight first, he had his own reasons.

It was because he thought Mok Gyeong-un had insulted the sword.

He really didn't like the fact that a disciple of the Shadow Clan Master, who must be a swordmaster, not a swordsman, was carrying that great sword made by the legendary craftsman Ou Yezi like a decorative piece.

So he went calling it a pearl necklace on a pig's neck.

But the situation had become ridiculous.

He had tried to teach him a lesson as a swordsman, but he ended up being humiliated instead.

Mong Mu-yak glared at Mok Gyeong-un.

If he backed down like this, this humiliation would really become set in stone.

So,

Swish!

Mong Mu-yak, gripping his sword hilt, raised his energy.

“Good. Let's have a proper duel-“

“Before that, take this back.”

‘!?’

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un threw something as if throwing a spear.

It was none other than the sword he had taken from Mong Mu-yak.

Whoosh! Swish swish swish!

The sword flew to right in front of him in an instant.

Just how strong was this bastard's inner force that the sword flew right in front of him in the blink of an eye?

Just by looking at the speed, one could guess its power.

However,

Bam!

The flying sword suddenly stopped in midair.

Boing boing!

Seeing the sword stop precariously right in front of him, Seop Chun couldn't hide his surprise.

‘No way. He blocked that with his energy?’

The power imbued in the sword seemed to be no joke, so he thought he should avoid it, but he didn't expect him to be able to block it with just his energy.

Mong Mu-yak's inner energy level seemed to have become much thicker than before.

At this, Seop Chun shouted to Mong Mu-yak with amazement,

“Hah! Mong Mu-yak! Did you eat centuries-old wild ginseng or something?”

However,

“...It wasn't me.”

Mong Mu-yak said with a perplexed expression.

Seop Chun tilted his head.

What is he saying now?

It wasn't him?

“What are you talking about?”

“I'm saying it wasn't me who stopped the sword just now!”

“What?”

At this, Seop Chun looked at Mok Gyeong-un, thinking it couldn't be.

‘Huh?’

But Mok Gyeong-un was looking at Mong Mu-yak's sword floating in the air with a serious face, the smile gone from his face.

It wasn't him either?

What on earth is going on?

He was puzzled, wondering what was going on, when,

Swish!

‘Huh? The sword?’

At that moment, the sword that had come out of Mong Mu-yak's scabbard on its own, which was floating in the air, charged towards Mok Gyeong-un at a tremendous speed, cutting through the air.

Swish swish swish!

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes looking at this turned sharp.

The energy imbued in the flying sword was something he had never experienced before.

The energy was moving the sword as if it were a living, breathing supreme swordsman.

What kind of sorcery is this?

As he was shocked, Cheong-ryeong's exclamation pierced his ears.

– It's the Art of Sword Control[1]!

Chapter 189 – Pinnacle (3)

A hundred years ago.

The past, when even the exact time is no longer clearly remembered.

She asked, gazing at the back of a man holding a sword technique manual in the training grounds.

“What are you doing?”

A sword was floating in front of the man.

He tried to move the floating sword more naturally.

However, the sword that had been hovering in the air soon escaped his qi control and flew away with a whoosh, falling to one side of the training grounds.

-Clang!

“As expected, it’s difficult.”

“Of course it’s hard. The moment the connection of qi released outside the body is severed even slightly, the void attraction will be released.”

“Yes, that’s why it’s hard. But what if one could handle that qi more smoothly and manipulate the sword like a living horse?”

“Manipulating the sword like a horse? Is that really possible?”

The qi circulated within the body is the inner force in the danjeon.

Inner force strengthens the body with qi, but the moment it leaves the body, the qi naturally disperses.

Therefore, to maintain the qi sent outside the body, one needs vast and deep inner force and the enlightenment to concentrate it without dispersing.

The man, with his hands clasped behind his back, responded to Cheong-ryeong's words.

“Yes. It might be impossible. However, I heard that the great sword masters who were renowned in the Old Martial World were capable of it.”

“The Old Martial World...”

The Old Martial World.

Unlike now, when the overall level of martial artists has declined, there was a time in the past when martial arts flourished.

Looking at the oral traditions and records from that time, there was an overflow of techniques that seemed almost absurd.

One of them seemed to be what the man was talking about.

She shook her head and said,

“Even at your age, there's no one as obsessed with the Old Martial World as you.”

“It's not an obsession. I just want to recreate the glory of the Old Martial World.”

“Yes, yes, of course. So, what do they call manipulating the sword with qi like controlling a horse in the Old Martial World?”

“That’s...”

The sword that flew out of the scabbard on its own and stopped in front of Mong Mu-yak, the son of the Vice-Leader.

Although it was inside a wooden puppet, Cheong-ryeong could instinctively tell upon seeing it.

‘Art of Sword Control!’

It was none other than Art of Sword Control.

Was this actually possible?

Shocked by this, she shouted to Mok Gyeong-un as a warning,

“It’s Art of Sword Control!”

‘Art of Sword Control?’

At her cry, Mok Gyeong-un, who was on guard, quickly twisted his body to the side and avoided the sword rushing at him.

However,

-Swish!

He thought he had dodged the sword, but it changed direction as if someone was wielding it, trying to slash Mok Gyeong-un’s neck.

Mok Gyeong-un drew his Evil Commandment Sword without a moment to think.

-Clang!

-Screech!

The moment the swords clashed, his body was pushed back nearly five steps.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes flashed with surprise at the unexpectedly fierce sword strike.

Who would have thought that this much qi would be infused into the sword that changed direction midway, even though no one was directly holding it?

But it didn't end there.

-Swish!

The sword instantly pierced toward Mok Gyeong-un's glabella as he was pushed back.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un hurriedly raised his sword.

-Clang!

However, Mok Gyeong-un's sword, which had blocked upward, was instead bounced downward.

‘!?’

The force infused into the sword had not diminished at all.

Rather, it had grown stronger than before.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes sharpened.

Since this was the main building where the Society Leader resided, he had adjusted his martial power to match the level of a pinnacle-stage of Transcendent Realm as a precaution, but it seemed difficult to block with this.

“Don't confront it and dodge!”

Cheong-ryeong shouted urgently.

At her cry, Mok Gyeong-un hurriedly executed the Light Body Technique.

The Light Body Technique he used was the Ghost Shadow Steps he had learned from Shadow Clan Master.

-Tap tap tap tap!

The Ghost Shadow Steps, which valued change, had unparalleled flexibility in foot movements, like reeds.

While avoiding the sword, Mok Gyeong-un asked through voice transmission,

“What on earth is this? The qi is manipulating the sword as if it were a living swordsman.”

“It's Art of Sword Control.”

“Art of Sword Control?”

“A technique that manipulates the sword with qi.”

“Manipulating the sword? Is it possible to control it so precisely?”

“This is the first time even I have seen it in person... Be careful!”

-Swish!

As soon as Cheong-ryeong’s warning ended, the sword brushed past the chest of Mok Gyeong-un, who was employing the steps.

Narrowly avoiding it, Mok Gyeong-un focused his qi on the Yongcheon acupoint and kicked the ground.

-Bam!

Mok Gyeong-un, who instantly gained a distance of more than six steps backward, shot Profound Energy toward the sword that was trying to change direction.

-Swish swish swish!

Profound Energy flew in succession.

The sword seemed to be briefly blocked by the sharp qi.

-Swish swish swish!

However, the qi infused in Art of Sword Control was so strong that the Profound Energy was split instead.

It seemed useless to try to block it with just Profound Energy.

At least,

-Clang!

At that moment, something flew in like lightning and struck the sword away.

It was none other than Seop Chun, the Third Captain of the main building.

The sword, which had been rampaging on its own, was thrown to the ground by the Blue Martial Saber imbued with blue-colored powerful energy.

-Clang!

‘The qi is weaker than powerful energy.’

The qi infused in the sword was above Profound Energy but below powerful energy.

“Phew, hey, are you alright?”

Seop Chun asked Mok Gyeong-un while waving his left hand.

He had intervened midway, thinking he shouldn’t just stand by and watch.

Mok Gyeong-un was about to express his gratitude for his help when he suddenly shouted,

“Help... Look behind you!”

-Gasp!

As soon as Mok Gyeong-un's words fell, Seop Chun instinctively sensed a sharp qi and executed his saber technique.

‘Butterfly Saber Technique, Second Stance: Butterfly's Warning!’

Seop Chun spun his body like a top while wielding his saber.

Then, a whirlwind of powerful energy surged due to the blue-colored saber energy infused in the Blue Martial Saber.

“That guy isn't ordinary either.”

An exclamation escaped Cheong-ryeong's mouth.

The saber technique Seop Chun executed was so outstanding that it could be called a transcendent saber technique without hesitation.

Even with Art of Sword Control, it seemed difficult to penetrate that saber technique.

However,

-Swish!

The sword soared upward.

Then, it pierced from above Seop Chun, who was spinning while executing the stance.

‘No way?’

Seop Chun's eyes widened.

Just like the eye of a typhoon is calm, the only gap in the Butterfly's Warning stance was right above where the stance was being executed, and it had penetrated that in an instant.

Realizing it wouldn't work, Seop Chun twisted the trajectory of the stance and executed a variation.

‘Butterfly Saber Technique, Eighth Stance: Butterfly Dance in Full Bloom!’

-Swish swish swish swish swish!

The saber trajectories of the Butterfly Saber, fluttering like a butterfly, created numerous afterimages and instantly trapped the sword that had been piercing toward Seop Chun's crown.

-Clang clang clang clang clang!

The sword, trapped in the net created by the dazzling saber technique, bounced around wildly, losing its strength.

Seeing this, admiration flashed in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

Seeing the net created by the dazzling saber technique, it seemed evident how exceptional Seop Chun's combat sense was.

He was completely blocking the connection of qi to the sword.

‘Has it been severed?’

The sword could no longer do anything.

Not only Mok Gyeong-un but also Seop Chun, who had trapped the sword with his saber technique, was confident of this.

However,

‘!?’

Mok Gyeong-un frowned.

Although the qi connection was severed, to find out who had utilized Art of Sword Control and in what way, he opened the power of his Third Eye.

‘What the hell is this...?’

It was completely different from what he expected.

He thought there would be traces of qi connecting to the sword.

But there were no traces of qi.

“Why are you doing that?”

“There are no traces of qi connected to the sword.”

“What?”

If qi had been connected to the sword, traces of it should have remained visible to this eye.

However, nothing could be seen.

That meant the sword had truly moved on its own?

While he was puzzled, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue in admiration.

“Sword and self as one. The sword itself has been used as a medium for qi.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Instead of sending qi to the sword to connect it, the sword itself is made to gather and manipulate qi. That’s why the sword can be freely controlled like this. Ha!”

She was genuinely impressed by this.

She had even doubted whether Art of Sword Control was actually possible.

But now she had seen the answer to that.

And thanks to that, she realized.

“Mortal. This isn’t a technique that can be achieved by simply surpassing the wall.”

“Then?”

“One must reach a realm where they can harmonize with the surrounding qi and themselves. At least the pinnacle-stage of the Transformation Realm... Or surpassing the wall of walls.”

“That means...”

“Yes. There is only one person here who can display such profound arts to this extent.”

“...The Society Leader.”

Mok Gyeong-un sent a voice transmission with a confident tone.

The only one who had reached a realm beyond walls, to the point where even Mok Gyeong-un, who had surpassed walls himself, could not discern the authenticity of qi with his Third Eye.

That person was none other than the Society Leader of the Heaven and Earth Society, the sole person among the Six Heavens.

Cheong-ryeong spoke in a rather serious voice,

“There are mountains beyond mountains, indeed.”

She had guessed that he might have reached the realm of Profound Realm after reaching beyond the walls.

But now that she knew for certain, the path of revenge still seemed far away.

Perhaps Mok Gyeong-un was feeling similar to her.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un's shoulders trembled faintly.

‘This guy?’

Could it be that he had encountered a wall?

This was the first time she had seen him react like this.

Seeing his appearance, Cheong-ryeong inwardly understood.

‘When faced with a being whose limits are unknown, it’s natural to feel awe or fear. As expected, even you, Mortal, are human after all...’

Twitch twitch!

‘!?’

Cheong-ryeong couldn’t hide her puzzlement.

That was because she saw the corners of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth, whose shoulders were trembling even more, twitching.

‘Is this guy actually smiling?’

Shouldn’t one feel fear after encountering a wall?

He’s smiling in this situation?

She thought she might have seen it wrong, but the corners of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth were faintly raised.

“Mortal, are you really smiling?”

“Huh? Was I smiling?”

“What? You didn’t even know what expression you were making?”

“Ah ah ah. I almost made a mistake.”

“A mistake? Why were you smiling in the first place?”

“Just because.”

“Just because?”

“Yes, it seems that martial arts have more room for further exploration than I thought.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s answer, Cheong-ryeong was inwardly surprised.

To this guy, martial arts were nothing more than a tool for revenge.

But after encountering a higher level of martial arts, instead of being blocked by a wall, he was showing interest in it.

‘Ha!’

Does this guy even realize?

How much his mindset has changed.

But there was no need to mention it.

This was moving in a very good direction.

It was right at that moment.

-Clang!

“No way?”

Seop Chun, who was confident that he had completely severed the sword's qi by continuously executing the stances of the Butterfly Dance in Full Bloom, tried to stop it, but at that moment, the sword revived and pierced his shoulder.

There was no time to dodge.

However,

-Clang!

The sword that was about to pierce his shoulder suddenly lost its strength and fell to the ground.

‘Huh?’

What's going on?

Could it be that the person who has been moving the sword with qi had released the connected qi?

While he was puzzled, Seop Chun stepped back to gain distance.

Then he looked towards the entrance of the training grounds.

The person who had controlled the sword with qi might be there.

However, there was no one at the entrance.

‘Who is it?’

He couldn’t sense any qi in the surroundings based on his perception.

But it was right at that moment.

-Rustle!

Suddenly, there was someone standing in the middle of the training grounds with their hands clasped behind their back, their face wrapped and covered with cloth like a bandage.

The moment he saw that person, Seop Chun’s eyes widened, and then,

-Bam! Thud!

He knelt on one knee, clasped his hands together, lowered his head, and shouted,

“Seop Chun, the Third Captain of the main building, pays homage to the Society Leader of the Great Heaven and Earth Society!”

‘!!!!!!!’

As soon as those words ended, Mong Mu-yak was also startled and knelt on one knee, paying his respects like Seop Chun.

“Paying homage to the Society Leader!”

‘Society Leader? This person?’

Mok Gyeong-un's right eyelid trembled faintly.

Would everyone present here see this?

The qi stored within that person's body was so intense and thrilling that no qi he had ever seen could compare to it.

He even wondered what would happen if that qi were to be unleashed.

Is this the pinnacle of the Heaven and Earth Society?

He was in awe.

"Gyeong-un!"

Seop Chun, the Third Captain of the main building, urgently called out to Mok Gyeong-un.

It was disrespectful to stand there blankly when the Society Leader himself was present, not just anyone else.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un knelt on one knee and paid his respects, following their lead.

Seeing that, Seop Chun sighed in relief.

At that moment,

-Thump thump!

Footsteps were heard, and the Society Leader's legs appeared right in front of him.

Seop Chun lowered his head even more with a tense expression.

Then a voice was heard.

“Cough cough. What are you doing?”

‘Ah!’

At that voice, Seop Chun's eyes trembled.

He had a hunch, but was this profound art of the sword moving on its own a test from the Society Leader for them?

He had wondered why they were summoned here, but he didn't know it would be for something like this.

-Tremble tremble!

‘It was indeed a test.’

Seop Chun spoke with an utterly excited voice as if it were an honor.

“My skills are insignificant. I merely did my best...”

“No. Not you.”

“Pardon?”

At this, the startled Seop Chun slightly raised his head.

However, the gaze of the Society Leader, whose face was wrapped and covered with a bandage, was directed at Mok Gyeong-un.

Moreover, it was with a rather intrigued look.

‘Why on earth?’

Why was the Society Leader reacting like this?

While he was puzzled, the Society Leader spoke again.

“How did you scatter the qi infused in the sword?”

‘What?’

Chapter 190 – The Test (1)

Half a moment ago.

In the Society Leader’s quarters located at the topmost floor of the main building.

The Society Leader, whose face was obscured by shadows as he had his back to the lantern, had his face wrapped in bandages.

The expression of the Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon, who was looking at him, was stiff, unlike his usual self.

‘...So this is why he kept hiding his appearance.’

As the Shadow Clan Master who had thought it was because he had suffered an incurable injury, he couldn't help but be quite shocked.

To him, the Society Leader said while wrapping the bandages,

“Cough cough. Why do you think I showed this to you?”

“...”

At the Society Leader's question, Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon couldn't easily answer.

The intention behind hiding this until now and only revealing it to him, who was in charge of confidential matters and information.

Of course, there were a few guesses that came to mind.

The first was the impact it would have if this fact were to be known.

It would likely cause a big commotion even within the Heaven and Earth Society.

‘This is an obvious problem, and the next is indeed...’

The Society Leader's trust.

It seemed that even before, but especially after his illness had worsened, he didn't trust anyone except for the Vice-Leader and his closest aides.

If that's the case,

“Perhaps, you have determined that there are spies even within the inner fortress?”

“...”

At his words, Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon snorted with a displeased expression.

This meant affirmation.

‘Spies...’

Spies were bound to appear from time to time.

Even the Righteous Sect Alliance, a martial arts alliance opposing the Heaven and Earth Society, frequently sent spy organizations called the Silent Strides to investigate and disrupt the Heaven and Earth Society.

The role of catching such spies belonged to the Shadow Clan.

However, the fact that he had hidden it even from him, the head of the Shadow Clan,

‘I am also a subject of suspicion.’

It was troublesome.

Although he tried his best to manage his expression and not show it, Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon was not pleased with this situation.

Because he was a person of the Fire Faith Order.

The fact that he, as such a person, had become a subject of suspicion was not good for the future reconstruction of the Fire Faith Order.

For a brief moment, Hwan Ya-seon fell into contemplation.

‘I must somehow regain trust.’

Otherwise, even the reconstruction of the Fire Faith Order might become impossible.

Fortunately, the fact that he had revealed the hidden truth, even if it was for a test, meant that there was still some trust left.

At that moment, the Society Leader, who had finished wrapping the bandages, got up from the bed.

The Society Leader spoke,

“The imperial palace has requested the later generation disciples again this time. You are aware of that, right?”

For over a decade, the Imperial Guards, a special agency of the imperial palace, had been requesting young later generation disciples from the Righteous Sect Alliance and the Heaven and Earth Society, claiming to be reorganizing and reforming.

Although it seemed like a simple request, it was a policy of the imperial palace to maintain its relationship with the martial arts world.

The Righteous Sect Alliance had already been accepting their request and sending later generation disciples since the beginning, but the Heaven and Earth Society did not do so.

To the Society Leader’s words, Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon replied,

“Yes. However, since it was a matter not approved by the Society Leader...”

“Cough cough. It’s not a matter worth approving. How can the martial arts world and the government coexist?”

“...”

Of course, this was not the only reason.

The imperial palace and the government had taken the side of the Righteous Sect in the war between the Heaven and Earth Society and the Righteous Sect Alliance.

As a result, the Heaven and Earth Society faced a disadvantageous situation in the war.

This was the reason why the Heaven and Earth Society did not officially move in the direction the imperial palace wanted, even though they did not have a grudge against them.

“But we can no longer just stand by and watch.”

“If we can no longer just stand by...”

“Vice-Leader.”

The Society Leader called for the Vice-Leader.

The Shadow Clan Master looked at him with a puzzled expression.

Then the Vice-Leader continued,

“Officially, our association has rejected the imperial palace’s request, but the Society Leader’s direct subordinates have been making their own investments in addition to the spies being sent to the imperial palace.”

“Their own investments?”

What does this mean?

Could it be that they have built friendly forces on the imperial palace’s side?

When did they go to such lengths?

While he was thinking, Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon answered,

“Imperial Consort Seo.”

“Imperial Consort Seo?”

She was one of the two consorts currently most favored by the emperor.

That favor was so great that her seven-year-old child, overriding the grown children of the empress, became the crown prince.

As a result, she became one of the four people wielding absolute power in the imperial palace.

‘Ha!’

The Shadow Clan Master clicked his tongue.

Of course, there were also Shadow Clan spies in the imperial palace.

However, most of the spies were active for information purposes, and there was no special intervention in the imperial palace.

But while the Society Leader outwardly took a hardline stance, saying that he could not coexist with the imperial palace, he had intervened in the inner palace behind the scenes.

In a sense, it was truly astonishing finesse.

“...It’s truly remarkable, without even a word to the Shadow Clan.”

“It was just a precautionary measure. Anyway, through the information from Imperial Consort Seo’s side, we learned that this information is certain enough to take action.”

“...Then you plan to attempt a rescue?”

“Yes.”

The answer came from the Society Leader.

At his resolute voice, the Shadow Clan Master felt his determination.

The Society Leader had been continuously seeking ‘that person’ instead of physicians since his illness had worsened.

He would never let go of this opportunity.

However, the situation of ‘that person’ falling into the Society Leader’s hands was just as bad as being detained in the imperial palace.

What should be done about this?

At that moment, the Vice-Leader continued,

“So this time, we will accept the imperial palace’s request.”

“Ah... Then you’re going to dispatch later generation disciples?”

“That’s right.”

At the Vice-Leader’s words, the Shadow Clan Master silently looked at him.

It was utterly ironic.

He had predicted such a situation when he heard the news of that person’s detention.

Due to the emperor’s illness, there were signs of internal strife in the imperial palace.

Therefore, the various factions in power were fiercely competing to seize power in many departments.

This was indeed an opportunity.

“Then, to recruit the later generation disciples to dispatch...”

“No, there’s no need for that.”

The Vice-Leader shook his head.

The Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon was puzzled by this.

To rescue that person imprisoned in the underground Golden Prison of the imperial palace, they needed to recruit suitable talents, so why was there no need for that?

Could it be,

“...You plan to proceed in secret?”

At the Shadow Clan Master’s words, the Society Leader coughed and smiled faintly.

As expected, his prediction was correct.

The Society Leader was someone who was cautious to the extent of being convinced that there were spies within, to the point of hiding it even from him.

If that’s the case, if they were to officially recruit and dispatch later generation disciples to the imperial palace for the mission, this information would flow to the mastermind through the spies, and there would be significant obstacles.

“Then what do you plan to do?”

If recruitment was impossible, they had no choice but to secretly designate and issue secret orders.

However,

“Shadow Clan Master. Did you separately inform your disciple?”

“Inform? No. I just told him to bring him straight here... !?”

Suddenly, the Shadow Clan Master stopped mid-answer and frowned.

Then, as if glaring at the Vice-Leader, he asked,

“You’re not planning to send my disciple, are you?”

“That’s right.”

At his answer, the Shadow Clan Master was at a loss for words.

He had a hunch, but it turned out to be true.

In the case of secret orders being issued, it was often carried out abruptly like this.

That was to prevent information from spreading outside.

However, there was an issue to raise here.

“Vice-Leader... That child has just completed the Corpse Blood Valley and become my disciple. He’s not yet at the level to take on a dispatch mission...”

“If he passed the gate of the Corpse Blood Valley as the top disciple, his abilities are sufficient.”

“But you know that child’s background, don’t you? I trust that child belonging to us, but...”

“Is there a problem with trust?”

“Pardon?”

“I heard that he showed his will to be loyal to our sect in front of everyone at the Corpse Blood Valley’s closing ceremony.”

‘...It reached the ears of the Society Leader and Vice-Leader.’

As expected, they were aware of most things, operating their own direct intelligence unit.

However, it was utterly unacceptable.

Even if that child, Mok Gyeong-un, had made a pledge, there was no way the Society Leader or Vice-Leader would believe it right away.

Rather, they were figures who would continue to test that child for a while to verify it.

But they’re saying they’ll entrust such an important mission to that child, believing in him?

What are they thinking?

The Shadow Clan Master spoke in a troubled voice,

“I’m grateful for your words as his teacher, but if that child, who hasn’t even received training as a spy yet, is entrusted with such a mission and fails...”

“He’s not being sent alone.”

“Pardon?”

“There are already three people who have been dispatched unofficially in advance, and with the official dispatch as per the request, your disciple and two others will be additionally dispatched.”

“Ah...”

“Imperial Consort Seo’s side wanted trustworthy personnel, so we had to select quickly, and your disciple was inevitably chosen.”

“...”

‘Inevitably?’

The Shadow Clan Master’s eyes narrowed.

Could this really be explained away as inevitable?

If Mok Gyeong-un were not a hostage of the righteous faction and had been his disciple for ten years, it might be an understandable selection.

This was probably,

‘A test?’

It wasn’t a test just for himself.

It seemed to include a test for that child, Mok Gyeong-un, as well.

It was truly troublesome.

To him, the Vice-Leader spoke with a soft sigh,

“Don’t be too dissatisfied. I’m not only sending your beloved disciple but also my own son.”

“Your son, you mean Mong Mu-yak?”

“That’s right.”

At this, Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon couldn’t hide his inner surprise.

He had thought it was a test to make things difficult for him and Mok Gyeong-un, but if it included Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon’s son Mong Mu-yak, the matter was different.

Wasn’t Mong Mu-yak the successor of Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon and one of the Five Tigers, known as the Heaven and Earth Society’s greatest later generation disciples?

Even he is being dispatched on such a dangerous mission?

‘What is the intention?’

Anyway, he had no choice but to follow the Society Leader’s orders.

It was definitely not a desperate measure to reassure him.

However, the fact that they were even sending the Vice-Leader’s son...

‘Could it be?’

Hwan Ya-seon glanced at the Vice-Leader.

Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon’s eyes were strangely bitter.

Seeing this reaction, it seemed that the Vice-Leader was also not very pleased with sending his child on this rescue mission.

It seemed to be to prove his loyalty to the Society Leader.

‘That position is not very good either.’

Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon clicked his tongue inwardly.

It was so pitiful that even the Vice-Leader, one of the closest aides, had to continue proving his loyalty in this way.

“Since my son, the Vice Commander of the Society Leader’s direct subordinates, is also being dispatched, do not raise any more objections.”

“...I understand.”

Anyway, it was impossible to object further.

If he continued to object, it would only incur the Society Leader’s anger and suspicion.

‘There’s no other way.’

Now that it had come to this, it seemed he had no choice but to trust Mok Gyeong-un.

Fortunately, Mok Gyeong-un was a person of the Fire Faith Order, just like himself.

No.

Come to think of it, it might actually be for the best.

It could be an opportunity to prevent 'that person' from falling into the Society Leader's hands.

At that moment,

-Click!

The Society Leader opened the window.

Then, looking down, he spoke,

"Cough cough. They're here."

"What do you mean?"

"The three people to be dispatched."

With those words, the Society Leader's eyes narrowed as he looked down at the training grounds below.

'That guy?'

The hostage of the righteous faction who had mastered the Moon Sword Technique.

The Society Leader's gaze became strange.

He had thought that with the existence of Wi So-yeon, the Earth Preserving Sword and the Moon Sword Technique were meaningless.

That's why he had sent him to the Corpse Blood Valley without any lingering attachment, but not only did he survive, he even became the Shadow Clan Master's disciple.

Truly a peculiar child.

[In the end, he will find his place. That is fate and the natural order.]

The words that person had said came to mind.

Then, is all of this because of that so-called natural order?

Even the fact that that kid survived there.

After looking down for a while, the Society Leader grabbed a sword technique manual and lightly waved his fingers.

At that moment,

-Whoosh!

Sharp Profound Energy rose from him.

Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon, who was watching from behind, was gripped by a sense of unease.

What is he trying to do?

While he was puzzled, the Society Leader continued to wave the sword technique manual.

He wanted to watch closely what he was doing, but he couldn't.

At that moment,

The Society Leader, who had been waving the sword technique manual as if commanding a battle formation, suddenly stopped his hand and trembled.

Then,

“Ha? Look at this guy.”

He showed a reaction as if it were absurd.

He even had his eyes wide open, what could have happened to make him react like that?

While thinking that,

-Bam!

“So- Society Leader!”

The Society Leader jumped out the window.

The startled Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon and Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon ran and looked down below the window.

The Society Leader, who had landed on the ground with a light body, glanced at the sword that had fallen on the ground, then turned his gaze back to Mok Gyeong-un and asked,

“How did you scatter the qi infused in the sword?”

‘What?’

At those words, the eyes of Seop Chun, the Third Captain of the main building, widened.

What does this mean?

Mok Gyeong-un scattered the qi infused in the sword?

No.

Wasn’t it him who blocked the sword flying at Mok Gyeong-un and severed the qi to stop it?

It was utterly incomprehensible.

At that moment,

‘Could it be?’

Seop Chun recalled the moment when the sword had revived for a moment and then lost strength and fell.

Could it be that it wasn’t the Society Leader who had withdrawn the qi?

No. Something is strange.

If it was a method of creating a net with a saber technique like he did, the connected qi could be severed, but otherwise, how was that possible?

-Tap tap tap tap!

At that moment, two more people landed in the training grounds.

They were none other than Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon and Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon.

Not knowing exactly what had happened below, they were puzzled and asked,

“Society Leader, why are you...”

-Swish!

The Society Leader raised his hand, signaling them not to intervene.

At this, Vice-Leader Mong Seo-cheon stopped speaking and looked around.

The hilt of a sword lying on the training ground floor.

And seeing the numerous saber marks filling the surroundings, he could roughly guess what had happened.

‘Did the Society Leader test them?’

Judging from him waving the sword technique manual, it seemed he had used Art of Sword Control.

However, midway, the Society Leader had looked absurd.

[Ha? Look at this guy.]

Did someone among them surprise the Society Leader?

But was that even possible?

No matter how severe his illness was, the only ones who could block the Society Leader's Art of Sword Control were the two people with the title of Eight Stars or the head of the Elder Council, not anyone else.

At that moment, the Society Leader spoke again.

"Why is there no answer?"

Following the Society Leader's gaze, the two executives also turned towards Mok Gyeong-un.

Then Mok Gyeong-un spoke,

"This lowly one does not know what you mean."

Everyone was puzzled by his response, as if he truly had no idea.

At this, the Society Leader soon chuckled.

"Cough cough. Do you think you can deceive my eyes?"

"..."

"It was clearly you who did it."

The Society Leader spoke with a confident voice.

Then Mok Gyeong-un, with his head lowered, repeated the same words again.

“This lowly one truly does not know what you mean.”

At his words, the Society Leader scoffed.

Then,

“Is that so? Then this will be an unfortunate accident.”

-Swish!

As soon as those words ended, the Society Leader lightly nodded his head,

-Clang! Swish!

A sword from the weapon rack on one side of the training ground drew itself and flew towards the head of Mok Gyeong-un, who was kneeling with his hands clasped.

‘How!’

Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon flinched for a moment at the Society Leader’s sudden outburst.

It was because he had agonized in an instant whether to block it or not.

But at that moment, something astonishing happened.

-Bam! Clang!

The sword flying towards Mok Gyeong-un's head suddenly stopped as if it had lost strength and fell to the ground.

‘!!!!!!!!!!’

Everyone who witnessed this scene couldn't hide their shock.

That youngster blocked the Society Leader's Art of Sword Control without moving a single finger?