

Mayhem 281

Chapter 281 – Entanglements (1)

[Keep in mind, the duration you can maintain the door depends on your curse power, but as this is a one-time talisman, it won't last very long.]

These were the words of Yeo Su-rin, a diviner from Harmonious Immortal Pavilion.

Although Mok Gyeong-un's curse power had reached a level incomparable to before, there was a limit to how long he could maintain the door with a single-use talisman.

-Wooooo!

Mok Gyeong-un slightly furrowed his brows at the intense demonic cry and looked at the Plundering-killing Sword.

It was said to be the worst demonic sword, and those words didn't seem to be an exaggeration.

'It's quite rebellious.'

As he tried to suppress the demonic cry that was attempting to erode him with its evil energy, it spewed out an even stronger cry, as if provoking a battle of strength.

It made sense now how Joo Woonhyang, who possessed innate true energy, had been corrupted.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un drew out even more evil energy.

Only by completely subduing the sword's will could he make it submit to him like the Evil Commandment Sword.

-Goooooooo!

As black haze rose, Mok Gyeong-un gestured with his other hand.

“Please come this way.”

At his words, Nine Blood Sect’s Sixth Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha and Holy Fire Priestess nodded and were about to move.

However, So Yerin, who had been pushed back by Mok Gyeong-un’s counterforce, drew up her energy and shouted,

“I don’t know how you’re alive or learned such bizarre techniques, but I can’t let you take the prisoners from the underground golden prison!”

-Paat!

No sooner had she finished speaking than she flew towards Mok Gyeong-un.

‘How annoying.’

As Mok Gyeong-un had to maintain the door with his curse power, he couldn’t move properly and had to confront So Yerin’s sword head-on as she rushed at him.

-Clang clang clang!

In an instant, their swords clashed about four times.

Rather than using sword energy, So Yerin had aimed at Mok Gyeong-un with concise sword techniques, and her eyes flashed.

It wasn't a mistake after all.

'How did his martial power increase this much?'

Mok Gyeong-un's martial power was not much inferior even compared to her own.

Moreover, he originally had sword talent, so as his power increased, he easily blocked her sword.

Thanks to that, he had become much more difficult to deal with than before.

'I can't subdue him with simple techniques. Then I have no choice but to use sword energy.'

At this, So Yerin properly gripped her sword and unleashed a technique.

Her sword created a trajectory with a fierce momentum, like a tiger pouncing.

'First stance, Tiger Fang Sword Stance!'

-Clang clang clang clang!

In response to her sword energy, Mok Gyeong-un also tried to counter with a complex sword technique.

He had recently created two new sword stances for the Demonic Sword Art and wanted to test them out anyway.

But just as he was about to unfurl the second stance of the Demonic Sword Art,

-Woooooooo!

At that moment, the demonic energy of the Plundering-killing Sword that he had been suppressing with evil energy explosively soared.

It was like immense resentment or anger.

'!?'

Feeling this will of the Plundering-killing Sword, Mok Gyeong-un couldn't hide his bewilderment.

For some reason, the moment Six Offices Commander So Yerin began to unleash her sword energy in earnest, the sword's demonic will became uncontrollable.

He didn't know the reason, but the demonic energy surged so much that Mok Gyeong-un, thinking that forcibly suppressing it might damage the sword itself, decided,

'Alright. Do as you wish.'

He chose to indulge the Plundering-killing Sword's will once.

The moment Mok Gyeong-un loosened his grip on the sword,

-Swish!

The tip of the sword moved on its own, creating a sword path.

As that sword path formed, something flashed through Mok Gyeong-un's mind.

It seemed to be a vision that the Plundering-killing Sword was showing him through its will.

In the vision, the Plundering-killing Sword was being held by someone, facing off against a young man.

However, the sword techniques the young man unleashed were very similar to those used by Six Offices Commander So Yerin.

‘Did they clash before?’

It seemed so.

The man confronting the Plundering-killing Sword in the vision displayed truly remarkable swordsmanship, overwhelmingly pushing back his companion, whether it was the Plundering-killing Sword’s owner or host.

Here, the Plundering-killing Sword exuded immense demonic energy.

It was clear anger.

‘Look at this.’

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

He had thought that no matter how much demonic energy it possessed, it was just a sword, but this was the first time he felt a sword’s will expressing anger towards something it had clashed with.

-Wooooong!

At that moment, the sword path created by the Plundering-killing Sword generated wave-like ripples.

Along with it, Six Offices Commander So Yerin, who had been using the Tiger Fang Sword stance, felt the excess in her technique rebound,

-Baaaang!

She was pushed back once again.

-Ssshhhhh!

So Yerin regained her posture and spoke with sharp eyes fixed on Mok Gyeong-un's sword,

“A technique of the Scripture of Transferring True Qi.. That sword is Plundering-killing Sword.”

“You recognize the sword.”

“Of course. Among the swords crafted by the famed swordsmith Ou Yezi, that is the most evil and dangerous one. You'd best let go of it at once.”

At her warning, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged.

“Well. Is there a reason to let go of a sword that's already in my hands?”

“That sword's demonic energy is incomparable to Ou Yezi's other swords. You could lose yourself.”

“I'll find out when I experience it.”

“You really do as you please.”

Contrary to her words, So Yerin was inwardly perplexed.

With the exception of one person, she remembered that everyone who grasped that sword was unfailingly corrupted by the demonic energy and went mad.

However, Mok Gyeong-un's current state still seemed sound.

Was that somber and vicious energy preventing him from being eroded by the demonic will?

Whatever the case, if he hadn't been corrupted yet, she had to make him release the sword.

With this thought, she drew upon more of her innate true energy, intending to properly demonstrate her skill.

But then,

“You called us out, yet how long are you going to be like that?”

Nine Blood Sect's Sixth Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha, who had approached behind Mok Gyeong-un, asked in an irritated tone.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un replied without turning his head,

“You'll be able to come out soon. And I'd appreciate it if you could also take care of your fallen friend over there.”

“You mean this brat?”

That fallen friend was none other than Joo Woonhyang.

As Sixth Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha tried to approach the collapsed Joo Woonhyang, Six Offices Commander So Yerin hurriedly shouted,

“Don’t touch him!”

At her cry, Dam Baek-ha’s lips curved into a smirk.

Dam Baek-ha placed her sharp nails against Joo Woonhyang’s neck and said,

“Seems like you have some relationship with this young lad. If so, you’d best step aside at once.”

“You!”

Perhaps enraged by the threat, Six Offices Commander So Yerin threw something towards Dam Baek-ha, who was behind Mok Gyeong-un, with lightning-fast hand movements.

-Clang!

Mok Gyeong-un hurriedly blocked it with the Plundering-killing Sword.

-Clink!

The object So Yerin threw was sliced in half and fell to the ground.

-Thud! Thud!

‘This is?’

It was none other than iron beads.

But the problem was, it wasn’t just one.

-Clang! Clang! Clang!

While Mok Gyeong-un was cutting them, three iron beads flew in simultaneously.

With his excellent vision, Mok Gyeong-un twisted the sword's path to hastily cut one flying iron bead and struck another with his left fist.

-Bang!

However, he couldn't block the remaining one, as it flew in an unexpected trajectory.

-Swish!

‘Huh?’

It had bounced off the ground and flown towards Dam Baek-ha's forehead in a bizarre path.

However, Dam Baek-ha was no ordinary expert either.

She caught the flying iron bead with her red-stained hand in a swift motion.

-Pak!

Catching the iron bead, Sixth Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha muttered with narrowed eyes,

“Flicking Divine Skill?”

Flicking Divine Skill.

It was a technique of imbuing objects with martial power and flicking them with fingers.

When martial power was imbued into an object, it became like a hidden weapon. With the hardness of iron beads, it could generate enough force to penetrate a person in a single strike.

However, those who wielded Flicking Divine Skill with iron beads like this were extremely rare even in the martial world.

Dam Baek-ha instinctively thought of someone.

But then,

“Blood Jade Hands!”

The Six Offices Commander So Yerin who had launched the Flicking Divine Skill at her shouted in surprise.

Recognizing Dam Baek-ha’s Blood Jade Hands, a gleam flashed in So Yerin’s eyes, who seemed to be a high-ranking woman in the Embroidered Uniform Guard.

“You recognize the Blood Jade Hands, young lass. You have good insight.”

“Are you the Blood Demon of the Blood Sect?”

At So Yerin’s question, Dam Baek-ha gnashed her teeth and said,

“That’s right. I am the Blood Demon of the Blood Sect who was imprisoned in the Eternal Hell Prison for so many years by you lot!”

-Ssshhh!

Perhaps her fury surged, as Dam Baek-ha drew out even more martial power.

Then, her hands turned an even deeper shade of red, and a smooth luster flowed out.

“Step aside. I’ll deal with that Embroidered Uniform Guard wench myself.”

-Paat!

Dam Baek-ha flew forward and shouted at Mok Gyeong-un to move aside.

Mok Gyeong-un, thinking this was perfect, stepped to the side.

While she dealt with the troublesome Six Offices Commander So Yerin, he could get Holy Fire Priestess out.

-Paat! Ssshhh ssshhh!

Sixth Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha, passing through the smoke door, unleashed hand techniques towards Six Offices Commander So Yerin.

‘Blood Jade Hands 6th Stance, Blood Jade Shatter!’

Her two hands, dyed crimson, unfurled villainous hand techniques and rushed at So Yerin with the momentum to tear her body apart in an instant.

It was precisely that moment.

So Yerin’s sword grip changed, and her momentum shifted.

It was different from the sword techniques she had displayed so far. For a fleeting instant, her sword emitted a vermillion aura and unleashed tremendous killing energy, as if specialized solely in taking lives.

-Clang clang clang clang!

The stance of the Blood Jade Hands and her vermillion sword energy collided, producing a tremendous shattering sound.

It was a tremendous momentum, as if they would finish each other off.

However, that didn't happen.

Halfway through their stances, as if they had conferred with each other, the two women simultaneously withdrew their energy and retreated at the same time.

-Bam!

Putting distance between them, the two spoke simultaneously.

“As expected, you are the Blood Demon.”

“Aaaah! Is it really you, of Jin Clan?”

The eyes of the two women, who had spoken to each other like that, reddened at the same time.

Their reactions were as if they had been searching for each other for a long time.

Watching this with bewilderment, Mok Gyeong-un still had to get Holy Fire Priestess to escape, so he gestured to her, who had been unable to do anything due to the fierce battle.

“Come.”

“Will it be alright?”

“Yes.”

With that, Holy Fire Priestess laboriously led her aged body and arduously tried to walk towards the door.

Mok Gyeong-un also shouldered Joo Woonhyang, who had been lying in front of the smoke door.

-Ssshh ssshh!

The smoke was gradually dissipating.

There was truly no time now.

Right then,

“Officer So!”

Someone’s shout was heard from afar.

A person appeared, unleashing lightness skill while gasping for breath as if being chased by something, through one of the underground golden prison’s passages.

It was none other than the head of the Fourth Office, Six Offices Commander Im Gyu-weol.

Spotting Six Offices Commander So Yerin through the smoke entrance, Im Gyu-weol's face brightened.

‘Hea, heavens have helped.’

As expected, Six Offices Commander So Yerin undoubtedly had a deep connection with him.

He didn't know what that smoke door was, but just seeing her there made it certain that it led outside.

At this, Im Gyu-weol rushed towards them using lightness skill and shouted,

-Paat!

“Six Offices Commander So, help me!”

However, behind him, men with expressionless faces, their entire bodies glinting with a copper hue, were also using lightness skill to chase after him.

-Clang! Clang! Clang!

Each time they leaped, a metallic sound rang out, indicating they weren't ordinary humans.

Seeing this, Six Offices Commander So Yerin frowned and said,

“Bronze Men?”

Those were undoubtedly Bronze Men.

They were beings born through unorthodox arts, possessing human forms but lacking consciousness or will, moving only according to set commands.

Looking at those Bronze Men and Six Offices Commander Im Gyu-weol leading them, Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue.

“Dragging along useless things.”

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un passed through the smoke entrance and made a pulling gesture with his hand.

Then, Holy Fire Priestess's body, who had been painstakingly walking with her aged frame, floated up and flew towards Mok Gyeong-un.

“Oh my!”

As Holy Fire Priestess also passed through the entrance,

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un stopped infusing curse power into the talisman held between his index and middle fingers.

With the curse power cut off, he expected the smoke door to close immediately, but,

-Ssshh ssshh!

Contrary to this expectation, the smoke door slowly dissipated and had yet to disappear.

It maintained a state of being on the verge of closing.

-Clang! Clang! Clang!

In the meantime, Six Offices Commander Im Gyu-weol, along with the Bronze Men of the Eternal Hell Prison chasing him, reached the immediate vicinity of the entrance.

At this rate, even they would come out through the door.

Mok Gyeong-un grasped his sword, intending to prevent them from crossing over, but right then,

“I’ll do it.”

‘!?’

With those words, someone powerfully stepped on an acupoint towards the smoke entrance.

-Thud!

That someone was none other than Six Offices Commander So Yerin.

Seeing this, Six Offices Commander Im Gyu-weol, who had been rushing towards the smoke entrance, was startled and shouted in shock,

“Officer So! Y-you, what are you doing...”

Before he could even finish his words,

So Yerin forcefully pulled back her sword and thrust it towards the entrance.

‘True Chasing and Turning Sword’

-Ssshhh ssshhh ssshhh ssshhh!

At that instant, sword energy swirled from the tip of her blade and surged towards the entrance with a momentum akin to a storm.

The sword technique with a tempestuous force blocked the entrance, and Six Offices Commander Im Gyu-weol, along with the Bronze Men of the Eternal Hell Prison who had been rushing over, were swept up by it and bounced away.

Chapter 282 – Entanglements (2)

Ssshhh ssshhh ssshhh ssshhh!

The True Chasing and Turning Sword of Six Offices Commander So Yerin surged with a momentum akin to a storm as it swirled.

Its power was so strong that Six Offices Commander Im Gyu-weol and the Bronze Men were all swept up by the sword energy and bounced away.

The face of Im Gyu-weol, who had been rejoicing just a moment ago that he was alive, was truly ‘miserable’.

As they were swept away by the sword energy, a coincidental event occurred.

The smoke door that had remained open now closed completely.

-Ssshh sssshh!

As the door fully vanished, the talisman held between the index and middle fingers,

-Crack!

Shattered and dispersed.

It clearly proved to be a single-use item.

Staring intently at the shattered talisman, Mok Gyeong-un slowly turned his head and spoke to Six Offices Commander So Yerin,

“…Wasn’t he your colleague?”

If she was the head of the Sixth Office, Im Gyu-weol was the head of the Fourth Office.

Although they were from different offices, they could be considered colleagues of the same rank in the Embroidered Uniform Guard, so he hadn’t expected her to suddenly unleash a sword stance at him.

To Mok Gyeong-un’s question, she replied,

“Better than things getting complicated.”

Six Offices Commander So Yerin also had an eye for the situation.

With two escaped prisoners clearly present, if he, the head in charge of the underground golden prison, were to escape, it was evident that things would get complicated.

Therefore, she unleashed the sword stance without a moment’s hesitation.

“Is it alright to say our interests aligned?”

“...”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, So Yerin silently turned her head and looked at Nine Blood Sect's Sixth Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha.

At this, Dam Baek-ha bowed to her with her hands clasped and said,

“You are indeed the one who carries his bloodline, correct?”

To this question, So Yerin briefly glanced around and finally nodded.

“That's right.”

At her answer, the masked Thousand-men Commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard, Ma Ra-hyeon, who had been watching, exclaimed in astonishment.

From the beginning, Ma Ra-hyeon knew that his master, So Yerin, had joined the Embroidered Uniform Guard here to find someone.

However, he didn't know that person was a prisoner locked in the underground golden prison.

Suddenly, Ma Ra-hyeon looked at Mok Gyeong-un with surprised eyes.

‘Then, were they indeed connected?’

If one of the two people Mok Gyeong-un had broken out was the person Six Offices Commander So Yerin had been searching for, it would be strange to say they had no connection.

Meanwhile, Dam Baek-ha knelt on one knee with reddened eyes and said,

-Thud!

“Aaah. I’ve been searching for so long.”

“Blood Demon. Please don’t do this.”

So Yerin tried to make her stand up.

However, Dam Baek-ha shook her head and refused.

“No. Young Miss, you are the only remaining true heir who can carry on the lineage of our sect. How can this subordinate not pay her respects?”

‘The true heir to carry on the sect?’

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un looked at them with bewilderment.

What was the relationship between these two?

Nine Blood Sect’s Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha had been searching for someone related to ‘that person’ who carried the blood of Jin Clan and So Clan.

In the midst of this, Mok Gyeong-un had intended to have the masked Thousand-men Commander Ma Ra-hyeon Ra-hyeon meet Dam Baek-ha, thinking he might know something, but he suddenly realized that Six Offices Commander So Yerin was the So Clan Dam Baek-ha had been searching for.

However, for Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha, who was called a remnant of the Nine Blood Sect, to suddenly call So Yerin the ‘true heir to carry on the sect’...

‘Are Jin Clan and So Clan the family of the leaders from the destroyed Nine Blood Sect?’

It had to be that way for things to make some sense.

While sorting this out in his mind, So Yerin also knelt on one knee, met Dam Baek-ha's gaze, and said,

"I don't have the qualifications for that."

"What do you mean you don't have the qualifications? He was also the sect leader of our Nine Blood Sect. If you, who inherited his bloodline, don't have the qualifications, then who does?"

"..."

At Dam Baek-ha's words, Six Offices Commander So Yerin tightly shut her mouth.

She had an expression as if she was in a difficult position.

To her, Dam Baek-ha even prostrated herself and said,

-Bam!

"This is all the guidance of the heavens. Please take in this subordinate and the surviving sect members and revive our Nine Blood Sect."

"Blood Demon!"

At her attitude, So Yerin couldn't help but feel even more embarrassed.

Seeing the executive of the Nine Blood Sect go this far, it seemed certain that So Yerin was indeed connected to the Nine Blood Sect, which was known to have been destroyed.

However, now was not the time to continue this conversation.

With the underground golden prison collapsing, earthquakes must have occurred, and the situation must have escalated, causing chaos throughout the imperial palace.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, they had to quickly escape the imperial palace.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un interjected and politely said,

“I don’t know what kind of relationship you two have, but it seems you’ve had a moving reunion, so congratulations. However, if we spend more time here, it will become difficult to leave the imperial palace.”

“Leave the imperial palace?”

At these words, So Yerin turned her head and alternately looked at Mok Gyeong-un and the old woman Holy Fire Priestess.

Then she asked the prostrating Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha,

“Is this person also from the Blood Sect?”

“Ah! No. That young old woman is the one I truly came to save.”

“You came to save that elder?”

Due to Dam Baek-ha’s words, So Yerin had been doubtful until just now, but she realized that Mok Gyeong-un had nothing to do with them.

It seemed he had met Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha by pure coincidence in the underground golden prison and came out together.

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un spoke to the masked Thousand-men Commander Ma Ra-hyeon,

“Commander Ma Ra-hyeon. Did you prepare that?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Ma Ra-hyeon instinctively replied,

“Yes. It’s prepared outside the warehouse.”

Seeing him respectfully answer as if he were a subordinate, So Yerin intervened in a tone of incomprehension,

“Commander Ma Ra-hyeon. Since when have you been helping him?”

He was a disciple to whom she had imparted martial arts and was like her right-hand man.

Seeing him behave as if he were loyal to Mok Gyeong-un was utterly unacceptable.

The Ma Ra-hyeon she knew would never submit to anyone.

“Did Mok Gyeong-un know your weakness?”

“Officer So... That’s...”

Ma Ra-hyeon was flustered and at a loss for words.

Due to the evil energy, he had naturally developed loyalty to Mok Gyeong-un, but Six Offices Commander So Yerin was his master, mentor, and superior.

She was such a special existence to him that it was difficult to endure her interrogation.

Then Mok Gyeong-un intervened,

“Don’t press him too hard. I merely helped Commander Ma Ra-hyeon, who was addicted to Poison Gu and caught by a weakness, that’s all.”

“What? Poison Gu? What do you mean by that?”

She asked in surprise, looking at Mok Gyeong-un.

To this, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and replied,

“Exactly what I said. The Associate Military Commissioner Sang Ik-seo had addicted Commander Ma Ra-hyeon here to Poison Gu and had been continuously blackmailing him. Isn’t that right?”

“…That’s correct.”

Ma Ra-hyeon answered with difficulty.

There was no falsehood in what was said regarding this matter.

At this, So Yerin spoke in dismay,

“Commander Ma Ra-hyeon. Why didn’t you tell me...”

“It’s not that I couldn’t tell you. They said that if you get addicted to Poison Gu, you’ll be bound by a prohibition, and just mentioning it would cost you your life. I can’t believe you didn’t know until now. You weren’t attentive enough to your subordinate.”

“...”

At Mok Gyeong-un's sarcastic words, So Yerin bit her lip hard.

She was inwardly angry but couldn't say anything.

She had a firm belief that she must protect her people no matter what.

However, she couldn't help but feel a sense of self-reproach upon realizing that she had been unaware until now that her right-hand man had been addicted to Poison Gu.

So Yerin looked at Ma Ra-hyeon and spoke with difficulty,

“Commander Ma Ra-hyeon... I...”

“Officer So... It's alright. It was truly an unavoidable situation. I wanted to tell you, but I didn't want to trouble you.”

“How could that be troublesome? I didn't even know you were in such a painful situation...”

Seeing her eyes redden, Ma Ra-hyeon hurriedly waved his hands.

His heart ached at the sight of her blaming herself.

“Absolutely... Absolutely none of this is your fault, Officer So. All of this happened due to my carelessness.”

At his words, So Yerin stared intently, swallowed dryly, and said,

“...Are you alright now?”

At this question, Ma Ra-hyeon hesitated for a moment but then answered without delay,

“I’m fine. If it weren’t for Young Master Mok’s help, I would have died.”

In fact, the parasitic male Poison Gu was still in his body.

And the one controlling that Poison Gu had merely changed from Associate Military Commissioner Sang Ik-seo to Mok Gyeong-un.

There was also a prohibition against speaking about this, but Ma Ra-hyeon, not wanting to worry his mentor So Yerin, lied.

It was better to do this than to hold her back.

“Is that true?”

“Yes, and thanks to Young Master Mok, I also secured evidence of the assassination plan that Associate Military Commissioner Sang Ik-seo was about to carry out. It’s in that place in the office.”

“...”

At Ma Ra-hyeon’s words, So Yerin silently turned her head and looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

If what Ma Ra-hyeon said was true, she should be grateful instead.

She glanced at Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha as well.

Whether intentional or not, thanks to him, she was able to confirm the survival and even save the Blood Demon she had been trying to rescue.

Furthermore, even the disciple Joo Woonhyang, who was connected to her, had almost been trapped in the underground golden prison and unable to escape, but Mok Gyeong-un had saved him.

Considering all this, she was entirely indebted to him.

At this, Six Offices Commander So Yerin clasped her hands together and bowed to Mok Gyeong-un.

“Young Miss?”

“Officer So?”

Ignoring the puzzled questions of Ma Ra-hyeon and Dam Baek-ha, So Yerin spoke in a respectful voice,

“Young Master Mok... I express my gratitude to you.”

‘!?’

At her attitude, a gleam flashed in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

He had been worried that things might become more troublesome, but he hadn’t expected her to express gratitude to him.

She seemed to have quite a strong sense of pride, but surprisingly, she was quick to acknowledge.

‘Well, it’s not like I did anything particularly deserving of gratitude.’

They were merely byproducts that occurred in the process of resolving his own matters.

However, there was no reason to refuse when she was expressing gratitude.

Mok Gyeong-un also clasped his hands and bowed to her, replying as a formality,

“It wasn’t something I did intentionally.”

“Even so, it doesn’t change the fact that I owe you in many ways, Young Master Mok. Therefore, I will make sure to repay this debt.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled inwardly.

She said she would definitely repay the debt, but she was speaking with a determined voice as if she were going to take revenge on an enemy.

It seemed she couldn’t internally accept being indebted to him.

However, thanks to this, a good card had appeared.

Now that he had safely gotten Holy Fire Priestess out of the underground golden prison, the remaining concern was leaving the imperial palace.

It seemed he could also receive her help in this matter.

Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said to her,

“Since you say you will definitely repay the debt, I have a suggestion. How about helping us leave the imperial palace?”

At this, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha also interjected as if it were a good opportunity,

“Young Miss. Why don’t we also leave the imperial palace with them this time? For the sake of rebuilding our sect...”

“Blood Demon. I’m sorry.”

“Pardon?”

“As I said before, I don’t have the qualifications you speak of.”

“Young Miss... Why do you keep saying that...”

“I apologize. And I still have things to do in the imperial palace.”

“What?”

Surprised by the unexpected refusal, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha frowned.

She had thought So Yerin would certainly go with them, but she hadn’t expected her to suddenly refuse.

No, even if not rebuilding the Blood Sect, she had at least expected her to leave this place together.

“...Why do you want to stay in a place like this?”

“That’s...”

So Yerin hesitated and glanced at the unconscious Joo Woonhyang.

They had made a promise to each other.

[So what do you want?]

[...I will overturn this rotten nation from within.]

[Joo Woonhyang... Do you know what you're trying to say now? That's...]

[Yes, this is treason.]

[!!!!!!]

Chapter 283 – Entanglements (3)

[Joo Woonhyang... Do you know what you're trying to say now? That's...]

[Yes, it's treason.]

[!!!!!!]

Treason.

She had never expected those words to come out of his mouth.

She still couldn't forget the determined look in that man's eyes.

She had met countless people until now, but he was the first to reveal such an absurd ambition.

‘Overturn... the nation?’

His martial arts were weak, and he had no power at all.

He had nothing to his name, yet how could such words come out of his mouth?

Nevertheless, she didn't ridicule this ambition.

This nation was rotten to the core.

The emperor was immersed in lust, and the powerful officials were only focused on fighting for power.

The people were suffering, but those in power and the privileged class were still busy exploiting them, and the people's livelihood was becoming increasingly destitute.

The people who should have been cultivating the land were starving to death or becoming bandits, harming each other.

This would only get worse, not better.

That's why So Yerin understood why Joo Woonhyang revealed such an ambition.

However, she couldn't judge whether he could achieve it or not.

No matter how rotten and festering, it was a nation.

Bringing down a nation was not something that could be done with the strength or ambition of a single individual.

But she wanted to watch.

She wanted to see if that man could achieve that ambition when people like herself and others lent their strength one by one.

“Young Miss?”

At that moment, Nine Blood Sect’s Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha called out to her.

“Ah... Yes.”

At this, So Yerin, who had been lost in thought, came to her senses.

She turned her gaze to Dam Baek-ha.

Her promise with Joo Woonhyang was not something she could mention to anyone, so she spoke of another reason why she had to stay in the imperial palace.

“…I’m searching for clues about the Great Calamity.”

At those words, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha frowned and spoke,

“When you say the Great Calamity, could it be?”

“Yes, that day. I’m searching for clues about the day that created the boundary between the current martial world and the old martial world.”

“Young Miss, that incident is already...”

“Yes, it’s an old story now. But my father lost his life in the process of searching for clues about it.”

“When you say your father?”

“His courtesy name uses the characters Jin, Yeong, and In.”

At So Yerin’s words, Dam Baek-ha spoke in surprise,

“Th-that person is the So Clan Leader, isn’t he?”

At her words, So Yerin replied in a bitter voice,

“…That’s right. I heard he was.”

“Aaah. The peerless So Clan Leader was alive.”

Dam Baek-ha nodded, finally realizing the position of So Yerin’s family.

However, on the other hand, she looked intently at So Yerin’s face as if she couldn’t understand.

That’s because if she was the daughter of Jin Yeong-in, the So Clan Leader, she should be of considerable age now, but no matter how one looked at it, she appeared to be only in her twenties.

It could be that she had achieved longevity, but there was no sense of spiritual energy that would suggest that.

At this bewilderment, So Yerin spoke as if reading her thoughts,

“At that time, all the people of Jin Clan lost their lives in the Great Calamity. I was born from my father’s connection with my mother while he was searching for clues about the Great Calamity.”

“Aaah, I see.”

Dam Baek-ha sighed in understanding.

So Yerin was the daughter of the So Clan Leader and carried his bloodline, but she was not someone who had experienced that era.

No, in the first place, the only one who knew about that era was probably herself.

Who would still be alive now?

Of course, what was really important wasn't that.

“But Young Miss... You said the So Clan Leader lost his life while searching for clues about the Great Calamity. What do you mean by that?”

She asked in a trembling voice.

At this, So Yerin replied with reddened eyes, clenching her fists tightly,

“...My father was murdered here in Kaifeng.”

“How... How could such a thing happen? Jin Yeong-in, the So Clan Leader, was one of the greatest masters of the era who surpassed the pinnacle. But how could he...”

“My father lost one leg and his left eye on the day of the Great Calamity. He said his martial arts were not as they used to be.”

“Even so, he wouldn't have been someone who could be easily defeated. For someone to be able to harm him... Could it be that he approached the clues about the day of the Great Calamity?”

“...It seems so.”

So Yerin still couldn't forget that night.

Her father, Jin Yeong-in, who had suffered severe injuries, barely escaped the imperial capital Kaifeng while holding her, and even on the verge of death, he transferred all his innate true energy to her.

On his deathbed, her father held her hand tightly and entrusted her,

[No more... Don't get involved in this matter anymore. Rin-ah... Please... your... life...]

Those were his last words.

He didn't want his daughter to avenge him or search for clues about the Great Calamity.

However, she couldn't do that.

She had lost her only blood relative.

-Drip!

A tear rolled down So Yerin's cheek.

Seeing this, Dam Baek-ha silently embraced her.

The feeling of losing a loved one was something she had experienced countless times throughout her long life.

Nevertheless, far from getting used to it, each time it happened, her heart felt like it was being torn apart.

Understanding this, she silently embraced her to comfort her.

“...”

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been staring intently at her, let out a small sigh.

Although he was clumsy with other emotions, he knew well the feeling of losing a loved one, so he just watched, but time was running out.

They couldn't stay here any longer.

The day of the Great Calamity or the old martial world, whatever it was, it was their matter anyway.

Meanwhile, So Yerin, who had been sobbing in Dam Baek-ha's arms, wiped her tears with her sleeve and spoke,

“Thank you.”

“Please don't mention it.”

“By the way, there was something I wanted to ask the Blood Demon.”

“You mean me?”

“I heard that you were the only one who experienced the day of the Great Calamity. Is that right?”

“...That's correct.”

At that question, Dam Baek-ha sighed and nodded.

Everyone else had passed away, so that was the case.

At this, So Yerin asked,

“I heard that on the day of the Great Calamity, you faced a four-headed demonic creature that turned five cities into ruins. Is that true?”

“Yes... That’s right.”

Perhaps recalling the memory of that day, Dam Baek-ha’s expression rapidly darkened.

For her, that day was no different from hell.

It was the day she lost countless loved ones and the day she received the curse of longevity (chang-sheng), which she would discard if she could.

So Yerin took a deep breath and spoke to her, whose energy had diminished,

“I heard that at that time, an absolute master appeared and barely killed the demonic creature, stealing its essence. Is that correct?”

“...”

At her question, Dam Baek-ha’s eyes wavered.

Her eyes were already picturing that day, which had become the distant past.

She, along with the executives of the Blood Sect, thousands of sect members, and martial artists of the Evil Faction Alliance, had gathered to fight day and night to kill the demonic creature.

However, even though all those martial artists fought with their lives on the line, killing the demonic creature was far from easy.

They had to cut off all its heads at roughly the same time to kill it, but they didn't know this properly, so after cutting off a head, it would regenerate not long after, and the battle continued endlessly.

[Three Venerables! Three Ancestooooors!]

[B-Blood Demon. Fourth Blood Demon has fallen in battle.]

[Huff huff. There's no more hope. That monster won't die!]

By the time they discovered the demonic creature's weakness, nearly 70% of their forces had already lost their lives.

However, with so many people dying, they finally learned that they could kill the demonic creature by cutting off all its heads, so they engaged in one last fierce battle.

It was around the time they had cut off two of the demonic creature's heads.

There was no way that the remaining 30% of their forces could withstand the demonic creature that they had barely dealt with even when all their forces were intact.

Almost everyone had lost their lives, and only a few remained alive.

It was at that moment.

Someone appeared.

“…It was a supreme swordsmanship I had never seen before in my life.”

“Swordsmanship?”

“Yes... Each sword move exceeded the range of motion of the joints and even surpassed the limits of the muscles. It was a monstrous swordsmanship used by that person.”

At these words, So Yerin frowned.

Regardless, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha continued,

“That person who suddenly appeared cut off the remaining two necks of the demonic creature that we had been struggling so much with.”

At his appearance, the survivors cheered.

They thought a supreme expert had come to their aid.

However, when the demonic creature died like that, the supreme expert smashed the demonic creature’s back shell and extracted the essence inside.

“Up to that point, there was no problem. We didn’t even know what the essence of a spiritual creature was in the first place, and our goal was simply to kill the demonic creature.”

But what followed was the issue.

The person who had extracted the demonic creature’s essence suddenly attacked the surviving martial artists.

With his abrupt actions, Dam Baek-ha realized that this person was not their ally.

“I tried to fight him along with the remaining sect members.”

However, she couldn’t do that.

When cutting off the demonic creature’s neck, she had swallowed some of its blood, which caused her internal organs to be overturned by lightning power, and she was engulfed in unimaginable pain.

Unable to endure that pain, she had to watch her sect members die as she lost consciousness.

“Ha...”

“…If the Elder hadn’t come, I would have lost my life as well.”

“Elder? Ah! It’s that person. I also heard from my father that he had gone to help.”

“Yes. If the Elder hadn’t arrived in time, I would also be in the netherworld.”

At her words, So Yerin asked in a hopeful voice,

“Could the Elder still be alive?”

“I apologize, but I don’t know. The last time I saw him was before I was imprisoned in the underground golden prison of the imperial palace here. It’s been decades.”

“Decades… Ah...”

“Until then, the Elder was also in good health. He was wandering near the Janggang River, carrying a bamboo fishing rod on his shoulder.”

‘Bamboo fishing rod?’

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been silently listening to their conversation, had a gleam in his eyes.

At the mention of an elder carrying a bamboo fishing rod, someone came to mind.

It was the elderly man with a pale face and a scholarly appearance that he had seen on the boat in the pouring rain.

‘…Is it a coincidence?’

Just mentioning that he had a bamboo fishing rod, the appearance and attire overlapped.

Even though it was just one thing.

However, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha said she had seen that elder decades ago.

If she, who had achieved immortality, called him an elder, he must be an extremely old man.

There was no way such a person could still be alive.

‘Or could it be possible?’

Come to think of it, there was a woman right in front of him who had achieved immortality in a youthful appearance, so there was no reason why there couldn’t be an old man who had lived a long time.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un abruptly asked them,

“Sorry to interrupt, but does that elder have a pale face, sharp eyes, and a scholarly appearance?”

‘!?’

As soon as he finished speaking, So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha simultaneously turned their heads.

Then the two of them approached him at the same time and said,

“What did you just say?”

“Did you say a scholarly appearance?”

Asked simultaneously, Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head and said,

“Before coming to Kaifeng, I had to cross a river, and there, I met an old man holding a bamboo fishing rod.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Dam Baek-ha looked at him with doubtful eyes.

Then she carefully spoke to So Yerin beside her,

“Young Miss. It might not be him. Although the appearance and attire seem similar, considering the Elder’s age, no matter how profound his internal energy is...”

-Swish!

Before she could even finish her words,

Mok Gyeong-un grasped his sword and assumed a stance.

‘!!!!’

Seeing this, So Yerin and Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha, who had been skeptical, momentarily looked at him with surprised eyes.

Then Mok Gyeong-un unfolded a sword technique.

-Swish swish swish swish!

A refreshing sword path reminiscent of a full moon.

So Yerin's eyes trembled as she watched this.

Having inherited all the martial arts related to her family from her father, she recognized at a glance what sword technique Mok Gyeong-un was using.

‘Moonless Void Sword!’

Chapter 284 – Entanglements (4)

It was when Six Offices Commander So Yerin and Nine Blood Sect's Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha were having a long conversation.

The masked Embroidered Uniform Guard Ma Ra-hyeon, who had been worried that helping Mok Gyeong-un's kidnapping of the underground golden prison's prisoners might lead to trouble, was relieved and quietly observing.

As he stood there silently, Ma Ra-hyeon's gaze had at some point shifted from So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha to someone else.

It was an old woman wearing a prisoner's uniform, Holy Fire Priestess.

His initial interest in Holy Fire Priestess was due to her old age.

‘…How was someone so elderly imprisoned in the Eternal Hell Prison?’

He had heard that the Eternal Hell Prison was where only the worst felons were held.

Those imprisoned there were said to be mostly traitors or those who had reached an uncontrollable level, but that old woman seemed strange.

That's because there were no signs of her having cultivated internal energy.

Even if she had concealed her martial arts, her footsteps were no different from ordinary people.

‘What crime did she commit?’

And why did Mok Gyeong-un bring her out?

As he was wondering, Ma Ra-hyeon, who had been intently staring at the Holy Fire Priestess's face, frowned.

At first, it was just curiosity about who she was.

But strangely, her face seemed familiar.

‘Strange.’

Had he ever encountered a prisoner from the Eternal Hell Prison in the underground golden prison?

Like Six Offices Commander So Yerin, he had never been assigned to the Fourth Office.

But why did her face seem familiar?

After staring for a while, Ma Ra-hyeon's eyes narrowed like needles.

'I definitely saw her.'

Although it was very old and faint, he had seen that old woman before.

Ma Ra-hyeon's pupils contracted as he couldn't take his eyes off Holy Fire Priestess, trying to let it pass without much thought.

Ma Ra-hyeon tried to remember her somehow.

Instinctively, he felt that he shouldn't just overlook it.

Obsessed with the compulsion to remember at all costs, he couldn't even hear the conversation between So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha.

Then,

-Swish!

As if sensing the gaze staring at her intensely, the Holy Fire Priestess unconsciously looked at Ma Ra-hyeon.

As their eyes met, the Holy Fire Priestess wondered why he was doing that.

She had been instinctively avoiding his gaze because he was wearing the Embroidered Uniform Guard attire, but being stared at so intently made her uneasy.

However,

‘Huh?’

The Holy Fire Priestess’s eyes also narrowed.

She hadn’t noticed before, but she discovered the azure eyes visible through the gaps in his mask.

Seeing this, the Holy Fire Priestess couldn’t hide her shock.

She unknowingly twisted her body and muttered softly,

“Priest Mayera?”

However, as a skilled martial artist, there was no way Ma Ra-hyeon wouldn’t hear this.

‘Priest Mayera?’

The moment he heard this, Ma Ra-hyeon’s eyes trembled violently.

As he was concentrating with all his might to remember the familiar face, forgotten memories stirred and surfaced in his mind.

It was Ma Ra-hyeon’s childhood.

Standing next to his mother, Ma Ra-hyeon was watching someone who was busy packing and preparing to leave.

Unlike the mixed-blood Ma Ra-hyeon, he was a perfect Westerner with blond hair and azure eyes.

Dressed in Chinese attire rather than Western clothing, the Westerner approached his mother, hugged her, and patted Ma Ra-hyeon's head.

(My son)

With those words, the Westerner turned and headed towards the door.

In front of the door stood a middle-aged woman with a graceful appearance, leaning on a cane with a blue jade bead embedded in it.

The middle-aged woman was none other than the old woman.

He now understood why her face seemed familiar but he couldn't remember.

It was because it was a long time ago, and her face had become so haggard and wrinkled that it didn't come to mind.

The Westerner spoke to the old woman in a clumsy manner,

[You've waited a long time.]

[No, Priest Mayera.]

[Let's go now.]

[Thank you. Having Priest Mayera from the main order in the homeland accompany us will be a great strength to the believers of our order.]

At her words, the Westerner showed a peculiar expression.

That expression was utterly bitter.

It was as if he was going to a place from which he could not return.

And that bitter face was the last one Ma Ra-hyeon saw of the Westerner.

‘…Father.’

The Westerner was none other than Ma Ra-hyeon’s father.

Is foreboding always accurate?

When leaving, his father had promised to return.

But in the end, he never came back.

What returned were a few of his father’s belongings, and upon receiving the news of his death along with those items, his mother was unable to overcome her grief and passed away after a prolonged illness.

-Clench!

Now everything came back to him.

His mother, who had a bad feeling and begged his father to stay.

His father, who had been conflicted until the end.

And that old woman who had persuaded his father to go with her.

-Squeeze!

Ma Ra-hyeon's nails dug into his clenched fists.

Anger suddenly surged.

If only that old woman hadn't appeared and taken his damned father, his mother wouldn't have died from grief, and he wouldn't have been dragged around by slave traders for years, labeled as a mixed-blood.

‘This bitch!’

Nevertheless, that old woman never showed up in front of them.

She had babbled about personally coming to take his father because he was a priest of the main sect in the homeland, but in the end, the one who delivered the news of his death was a low-ranking believer they had never heard of.

Unable to contain his anger, Ma Ra-hyeon approached the Holy Fire Priestess.

‘This guy?’

The Holy Fire Priestess took a step back for a moment.

The moment she saw Ma Ra-hyeon's azure eyes, she was reminded of someone.

But that someone had died.

A long time ago.

So it meant it was someone she didn't know, but the moment she saw those burning eyes, she could instinctively tell it was anger.

-Step!

As he approached silently, the Holy Fire Priestess's eyes wavered.

At first, she didn't understand where this anger came from.

But the moment Ma Ra-hyeon took two steps forward, someone flashed through her mind.

It was,

‘Could it be?’

The mixed-blood boy she had seen at Priest Mayera's house.

A boy with black hair because he was a mix of Chinese and Western blood, but with an exotic appearance and azure eyes that resembled his father's.

The Holy Fire Priestess was momentarily engulfed in shock.

If that boy were alive, he would have grown up and become an adult by now.

‘How could this be...’

Was he really alive?

When she went back there, no one was there.

Even if she wanted to ask someone, they lived deep in the mountains, so she couldn't even inquire about their whereabouts.

At this, Holy Fire Priestess spoke to the approaching Ma Ra-hyeon,

“Could you possibly be...”

Right then,

-Swish swish swish swish!

Mok Gyeong-un suddenly unleashed a sword technique.

Although it was a technique she had never seen before, the grandeur contained in the sword path was so tremendous that everyone couldn't help but have their attention stolen by it for a moment.

The sword technique, reminiscent of a full moon, had many sword intentions despite its uncomplicated trajectory.

‘…Ha!’

Even Ma Ra-hyeon, who had been consumed by anger, couldn't take his eyes off it.

As a martial artist, it was impossible to ignore the sword technique Mok Gyeong-un was demonstrating.

‘How can such complexity be contained within simplicity?’

It wasn’t just Ma Ra-hyeon who had this thought.

Even from the mouths of So Yerin and Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha, who knew what sword art Mok Gyeong-un was using, exclamations of admiration flowed out.

As she watched the sword technique, So Yerin’s eyes widened.

The reason was that the Moonless Void Sword Mok Gyeong-un was using was different from what she knew.

‘Different.’

The trajectory of the sword moves was different.

The unnecessary sword paths that existed in the original sword stances were gone, and each of the original sword paths was thoroughly focused on killing the opponent.

However, the sword stances of the Moonless Void Sword that Mok Gyeong-un demonstrated even broke away from the framework of the existing sword paths.

-Flow!

Tears flowed down So Yerin’s cheeks as she watched this.

It was a sword path that made even her heart swell.

Even though the sword path moved freely, breaking away from the framework of the original stances, it didn’t deviate from the framework of the Moonless Void Sword.

‘Was it real?’

Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha even opened her mouth and stuck out her tongue.

The sword technique Mok Gyeong-un was demonstrating now was close to perfection.

If the sword she had seen from the Elder in the past was filled only with killing intent, the current sword was the embodiment of freedom itself.

‘Undoubtedly. It’s the Elder’s sword.’

Even if the form was different, the sword intent couldn’t change.

However, what was astonishing was the Moonless Void Sword, which was known as one of the Five Great Sword Arts of the Central Plains even back then.

To think that such a sword art could evolve to this extent.

Indeed, the Elder was an unparalleled genius.

-Plop!

At that moment, someone was seen sitting on the ground.

It was none other than the masked Embroidered Uniform Guard Ma Ra-hyeon.

Ma Ra-hyeon, who had been staring intently at Mok Gyeong-un’s sword, closed his eyes as if he had gained some enlightenment and entered a state of meditation.

‘Ha? Look at this guy.’

He was a very lucky fellow.

The sword Mok Gyeong-un was demonstrating now was close to the pinnacle of swordsmanship, surpassing the state of transcendence.

If one couldn't gain any enlightenment after seeing that, it could only be said that they lacked talent.

Dam Baek-ha glanced at So Yerin.

Judging by her flushed face and inability to take her eyes off the sword technique, it seemed she had also gained enlightenment.

‘…As expected of his descendant.’

Dam Baek-ha had briefly clashed with So Yerin.

Her martial prowess was not inferior even when compared to herself, who had cultivated martial arts for a long time.

No, it was difficult to fathom its end.

Yet despite that, she gained further enlightenment here.

She was indeed a person of great talent.

Blood couldn't be deceived.

-Swish!

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un stopped demonstrating the sword technique.

It was to prove that he had met the old man, so there was no need to display the entire stance.

As Mok Gyeong-un stopped midway, So Yerin's eyes were filled with regret.

‘Ah...’

That's because it was a moment when she was about to grasp something.

It wasn't a small enlightenment but a huge starting point that could lead to a higher realm.

However, as Mok Gyeong-un stopped the sword technique, the starting point she was about to touch and enter a state of contemplation also ceased.

As a result, she couldn't help but smack her lips in disappointment.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“As you can see, I received teachings from the Elder. But I don't know if it's the same Elder that Officer So knows...”

“Wait... Did you say you received teachings just now?”

“Yes.”

“Directly from him, Young Master Mok?”

“Well, yes.”

Thanks to that, he was able to create the Demonic Sword Art on his own.

However, at Mok Gyeong-un’s answer, So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha looked at each other with surprised eyes.

Then,

-Bam!

Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha knelt on one knee in front of Mok Gyeong-un, suddenly clasped her hands together, and paid her respects.

‘!?’

Chapter 285 – Entanglements (5)

As Nine Blood Sect’s Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha suddenly paid her respects, Mok Gyeong-un, who became puzzled, asked,

“Why are you doing this all of a sudden?”

At that question, Dam Baek-ha raised her head and said to Mok Gyeong-un,

“Please forgive my previous rudeness. Dam Baek-ha, the Blood Demon of the Blood Sect, formally greets the disciple of the Elder.”

Although it was somewhat awkward, she paid proper respects.

However, it wasn't just her.

Six Offices Commander So Yerin, who had been hesitating for a moment, also bowed respectfully to Mok Gyeong-un with her hands clasped together, though not as much as Dam Baek-ha.

-Swish!

“Hmm. I don't understand at all.”

As Mok Gyeong-un expressed his bewilderment, Dam Baek-ha replied,

“Although our sect reveres the strong, we cannot ignore the distribution of authority.”

“Distribution?”

“Yes. If none other than the Elder himself imparted martial arts to you, it's no different from being the most senior in our sect.”

“Senior?”

At these words, Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head.

It wasn't that he was ignorant of etiquette, but Mok Gyeong-un wasn't well-versed in the widely known rules or principles of the martial world.

As a result, this turned out to be quite coincidental, contrary to Mok Gyeong-un's intentions.

It wasn't that martial artists were unaware of etiquette.

Whether in government or private affairs, martial artists also formed a group and inherited their martial arts, so they sometimes valued etiquette even more, depending on the situation.

This could be considered one of those cases.

‘Hmm.’

The old man Mok Gyeong-un had met in the pouring rain, holding a bamboo fishing rod.

Unlike his humble appearance, everything from his martial arts was extraordinary.

But for a figure from the old martial world to treat that old man with such respect, just how long had he lived, and what was his identity?

At this, Mok Gyeong-un asked,

“Who is this Elder you mentioned that you say he is no different from being my most senior?”

At his words, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha asked back with a puzzled look,

“Could it be that you don’t know who the Elder is?”

“It’s not that I don’t know, but he didn’t tell me. Anything other than enlightenment.”

“Ah...”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Dam Baek-ha glanced at So Yerin.

As if So Yerin had the same thought, she made a peculiar expression and nodded.

Then Dam Baek-ha turned her head again and said,

“Didn’t the Elder tell you anything?”

“No. He never revealed it in the end.”

“I see. If that was the Elder’s intention, I also cannot tell you.”

“What?”

“It’s exactly as I said. If the Elder didn’t reveal his identity to you, there must be a great reason behind it.”

“Is there a reason why it shouldn’t be revealed?”

Mok Gyeong-un said as if he couldn’t understand.

Then Dam Baek-ha carefully said,

“There must be a purpose behind the Elder not revealing this to you.”

“Purpose? Do you have any idea?”

“The Elder had already left the martial world a long time ago.”

“Leaving means retirement?”

“Yes. That could be one meaning. The Elder had turned his back on the martial world for a very long time. It was even when I was young and inexperienced. If it weren’t for that incident, he would have revealed himself even less.”

“That incident?”

“…The day of the Great Calamity.”

At Dam Baek-ha’s words, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been curious anyway, asked,

“Come to think of it, I heard you two talking earlier that the boundary of the martial world was divided based on the day of the Great Calamity. Can I know what that is?”

“You mean… the day of the Great Calamity?”

“Yes.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Dam Baek-ha sighed, almost like a lament, and said,

“Indeed, for someone of your generation and the current martial artists, the day of the Great Calamity has become too much of a distant past.”

“Judging by the term ‘Great Calamity,’ it must have been a huge incident.”

“Even that is an understatement. Because of that day, countless people in the Central Plains lost their lives, and more than 80% of the martial artists died.”

“80% of martial artists?”

More than 80%.

It meant that the vast majority of martial artists had died.

What on earth happened that so many martial artists lost their lives?

Was it because of the demonic creature called Dragon Turtle, Yong-gwi that they mentioned earlier?

“Did that spiritual creature Dragon Turtle cause that?”

“It wasn’t just the Dragon Turtle.”

“Saying it wasn’t just Dragon Turtle sounds like there were other things as well.”

“Yes. Because on the same day, strange monsters and all sorts of spiritual creatures suddenly appeared in various parts of the Central Plains and turned the entire region upside down.”

‘!?’

Numerous monsters and spiritual creatures appeared in the Central Plains on the same day and turned it upside down?

Mok Gyeong-un frowned.

Is such a thing even possible?

Meanwhile,

“I heard that even here in the imperial capital Kaifeng, a bizarre spiritual creature called Flaming Qilin, which spewed flames like lava, appeared and slaughtered countless people.”

So Yerin added as if to chime in.

“Flaming Qilin? Was it also caught?”

“I don’t know. I also searched through various records of the imperial palace, but there was no record of Flaming Qilin being caught or killed because it disappeared halfway. Anyway, too many people died because of the day of the Great Calamity. You understand why the boundary between the old martial world and the current martial world was created, right?”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un stated his guess.

“Is it a matter of transmission?”

“Yes. That’s right. As the disciples and masters of each sect all died, their lineages were completely cut off. Even those who could transmit teachings through whispers were gone, so the basic system of martial arts collapsed.”

“As the Young Miss said, because of that, the level of the martial world regressed incomparably to the past, with the day of the Great Calamity as the turning point. Although it seems to have recovered quite a bit while I was imprisoned here in the underground golden prison.”

Dam Baek-ha clicked her tongue and said.

She was the only one who had directly experienced the old martial world and the turning point after that day.

As a result, she trembled even more as she recalled that day.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un stroked his chin and said,

“Strange. Monsters and spiritual creatures that you might see once in a lifetime suddenly appeared in various parts of the Central Plains on the same day and carried out a massacre... It’s indeed worthy of being called a Great Calamity, but something...”

“It’s strange, right?”

So Yerin interjected.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un nodded.

After reading various divination books, including the Classic of Mountains and Seas, Mok Gyeong-un had learned quite a bit about monsters.

Among the monsters he learned about, with the exception of a very few, there were virtually none that exhibited group behavior like humans or beasts.

However, it was incomprehensible that such monsters and spiritual creatures seemingly united in purpose and revealed themselves to the world, causing such a Great Calamity.

“As if...”

“It seems intentional, right?”

“...That’s right. The so-called spiritual creatures are known not to have group behavior. Moreover, I heard they don’t even leave their designated territories.”

“Spiritual creatures? You even know about that... Ah!”

So Yerin, who had been puzzled by Mok Gyeong-un’s words, suddenly recalled the earlier event.

It was the strange smoke door Mok Gyeong-un had created.

In any case, this man seemed to be proficient not only in martial arts but also in bizarre and miraculous divination arts.

At this, So Yerin said as if it was fortunate,

“Rather, Young Master Mok, you might be more of an expert in this field than us.”

“I only learned the basics.”

“Your skill in divination arts is not something to be dismissed as just the basics. Anyway, I had something I wanted to ask if there was someone knowledgeable about monsters.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged.

“I don’t know if I can provide an answer that would be of much help.”

“I’m just asking.”

“What is it?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, So Yerin opened her mouth with a meaningful look.

“Young Master. Can those spiritual creatures called monsters and spiritual beings be artificially controlled to carry out a massacre?”

“…Artificially controlled?”

“Yes.”

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

Artificially controlling the spiritual creatures, the so-called monsters, ultimately meant this.

‘Familiars.’

Familiars were the connection that allowed these beings to be commanded.

The stronger the self-awareness, the more difficult it becomes to command them, but occasionally, among diviner masters with outstanding curse power or divination arts skills, there were those who used monsters as familiars.

Of course, the higher the level, the stronger the monster's self-awareness becomes, making it more difficult to use as a familiar.

“If we only consider the concept of commanding, it's not impossible.”

“It's not impossible?”

“Yes. If we only consider the concept.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Commanding is possible, but I don't know if it's possible to command so many monsters at the same time in such a way.”

“?”

“To use a monster as a familiar, the curse power of the connected diviner master, the sorcerer, must reach a certain level. The greater the curse power or strong mental strength, the higher-level monster one can subdue, but I know that usually, it’s difficult to subdue even one monster as a familiar. Because in the first place, a connection is no different from a soul being linked to another soul.”

“That means?”

“Considering this, it can be seen as virtually impossible to artificially command the numerous monsters that appeared in various parts of the Central Plains.”

“Ah...”

A sigh escaped So Yerin’s mouth at the conclusion Mok Gyeong-un reached.

She seemed to have a sense of disappointment, as if the answer was different from what she had expected.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un raised his index finger and said,

“Well, even so, as Officer So said, the feeling of artificiality cannot be erased.”

“But you said it can’t be controlled, Young Master.”

“Control and creating a situation are different.”

“What do you mean by creating a situation?”

“Even if they can’t be controlled one by one, creating conditions that stimulate the monsters and making them go on a rampage seems to be a separate issue.”

Mok Gyeong-un had already seen it at the Blood Cave Valley of the Heaven and Earth Society.

Although not commanding as familiars, he had seen them manipulate monsters through conditions.

It was none other than the Monstrous Beast Gal-jeo.

Originally, when the Gal-jeo, which inhabits the North Sea near Mount Bukho, was released into the mountains of the Blood Cave Valley, it rampaged and harmed numerous disciples.

“Then is there a possibility?”

“If we consider it in that direction, there is a slight possibility. Moreover, since you said it occurred almost simultaneously, even more so. However...”

“However what?”

“To make all sorts of monsters in the Central Plains go on a rampage to the extent of encompassing the entire region, diviner masters or tremendous manpower knowledgeable in divination arts and monsters would be needed, but considering that no clues have been discovered even after the Great Calamity occurred until now, this is also extremely slim...”

“Could this be a clue?”

At that moment, So Yerin interrupted Mok Gyeong-un’s words.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un asked with a puzzled expression,

“Clue?”

“Yes. My father found a clue.”

With those words, So Yerin untied her golden belt and very carefully detached something attached to the inside.

It was an extremely old piece of paper with traces of being burned in various places.

She handed it to Mok Gyeong-un.

“This is?”

“It’s heavily damaged, but try unfolding it first.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un carefully unfolded the paper that seemed like it would crumble.

As he unfolded it, a gleam flashed in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

That’s because in the burned part, there was something that looked like a red pattern drawn, and below it was

..... (Geup-geup-yeo...)

The latter part was burned off.

‘…Incantation.’

With the beginning missing and only “geup-geup-yeo” remaining, and the pattern being only a small part of the whole, it was impossible to know what divination art they were trying to use.

However, this was definitely an incantation for divination art.

“How did you find this?”

“I don’t know exactly since my father found it. But the place he found it was here in the imperial capital Kaifeng.”

“The imperial capital?”

“Yes. My father said he had been searching for clues and found someone who had a clue related to the day of the Great Calamity.”

“Is this that clue?”

“Yes.”

“I see. This definitely seems to be a divination art, but most of the text is burned off, so I can’t know exactly what it is. Do you have anything you heard related to this?”

“No. It seems my father heard something from the person who gave him the clue. That’s why he said he was going to consult a diviner master in Kaifeng.”

“Ah. He probably did that because there are traces of a divination technique, even if only a little.”

“Yes, but...”

“But?”

“On the night my father went to find the famous diviner master in Kaifeng, he was murdered.”

‘!?’

“How could such a thing happen!”

-Clench!

At her words, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha couldn’t contain her anger.

It was anger at the fact that none other than the survivor of the Matchless Clan and another descendant of that person had lost his life in such a futile way.

Staring intently at So Yerin, whose eyes had reddened as if recalling that day, Mok Gyeong-un spoke in a dry voice,

“Did you find that diviner master?”

“…No. I couldn’t find him. After my father was murdered, I went to searchin that place, but there was no one. Even all the diviner masters said to be in Kaifeng had disappeared overnight.”

“All the diviner masters disappeared?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm.”

It was truly coincidental.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at the burned and damaged paper called a clue.

Then he asked,

“What happened to the person who gave this clue?”

“…Couldn’t find him.”

“What?”

“At that time, only my father had met the person who gave the clue. Since he only knew that the person was in the imperial capital...”

“So you’ve been searching until now?”

“That’s right.”

That was the very reason Six Offices Commander So Yerin became an Embroidered Uniform Guard.

If she became an Embroidered Uniform Guard, she could access the information of all residents in the imperial capital and Kaifeng and also have investigative authority, so it was a measure she had devised.

In her own way, she was making every effort to find clues.

‘Is this all?’

However, judging that this alone was not much of a clue, Mok Gyeong-un seemed to have lost interest and tried to fold the clue paper So Yerin had given him.

As he folded the paper once and then twice,

‘!?’

Suddenly, Mok Gyeong-un stopped folding.

There was something he hadn't seen when he unfolded the paper because a part was covered.

It was another thing engraved on the back of the damaged paper.

It was none other than,

'A symbol?'

A symbol of a single line vertically penetrating the center of the character two (二).

Chapter 286 – Escape Attempt (1)

A symbol of a single line vertically penetrating the center of the character two (二).

Staring intently at this, Mok Gyeong-un's mind became complicated.

This charred remnant was definitely said to be related to the day of the Great Calamity.

In fact, since it was also part of the evidence that a divination art, or a technique, was used, he hadn't thought anything more or less of it, but this was completely unexpected.

'Didn't they say the day of the Great Calamity occurred during the era of the old martial world?'

However, the fact that this clue related to the day of the Great Calamity had a symbol meant one thing.

'...Does this mean that the organization of the symbol existed even back then?'

Mok Gyeong-un's expression turned strange.

He was convinced through various information he had collected that the organization of the symbol was related to his grandfather's death.

However, he didn't know that the organization of the symbol had existed for such a long time.

What the hell are these guys trying to do?

They're also related to the Fire Faith Order and closely connected to the Heaven and Earth Society.

And although it's not certain, if the clue is correct, they're also related to the day of the Great Calamity, which is said to have killed countless people.

‘What could it be?’

It wasn't strange for an organization to have existed for a long time.

However, this organization wasn't one that everyone knew about and was close to a secret group.

Moreover, the things this organization has been doing so far are different from other organizations.

If this organization is closely related to the day of the Great Calamity, they become the mastermind who drove the entire Central Plains into the worst crisis.

‘Ha.’

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

The more he learned about them, the harder it became to fathom their purpose and scale.

He had started with the sole purpose of capturing his grandfather's enemy, but the more he dug, the more it felt like it was just the tip of the iceberg.

‘Hmm.’

Mok Gyeong-un stroked his chin.

He had thought that he only needed to capture the enemy who killed his grandfather, but now that he knew the scale of the mastermind was beyond expectations, it seemed like it wasn't a problem he could approach simply.

‘…I need to have more cards.’

When he thought the mastermind was a martial artist, he believed that he only needed to be strong to the desired level.

But the situation was gradually changing.

If the scale of the mastermind was at a level he couldn't handle alone, he also needed to prepare his own set of cards accordingly.

At that moment, Six Offices Commander So Yerin spoke to Mok Gyeong-un.

“Young Master Mok. Did you discover something?”

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un held up the symbol and said with a smile,

“It seems we are connected in many ways, Officer So.”

“Connected?”

“This is a symbol.”

“Symbol? What is it?”

“Yes. It’s the symbol used by a certain organization.”

“That means... This clue is related to that organization of the symbol?”

“I can’t be certain, but the fact that this is on the clue that Officer So’s father obtained, which is said to be related to the day of the Great Calamity, means there’s a very high probability of that.”

“What kind of organization is it?”

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

“I don’t know that well either.”

“You don’t know?”

“Yes. I’m also trying to find out about this organization of the symbol.”

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un glanced at the Holy Fire Priestess.

She definitely knew something about this organization.

Otherwise, there would be no reason for the organization of the symbol to secure the safety of the Fire Faith Order members and try to find out something through Holy Fire Priestess.

Meeting Mok Gyeong-un's eyes, the Holy Fire Priestess made a strange expression.

Meanwhile, So Yerin said to Mok Gyeong-un,

"I apologize, Young Master Mok. May I ask why you are trying to find out about this organization of the symbol?"

She had also been investigating based on the clues of the Great Calamity for a long time to find her father's enemy.

However, she hadn't been able to find out anything so far, so when Mok Gyeong-un said that this symbol was related to a specific organization, she became curious.

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un replied nonchalantly,

"Because I have a very big debt to pay."

-Flinch!

A gleam flashed in So Yerin's eyes.

Although she hadn't known Mok Gyeong-un for very long, she had never seen him express any special emotions.

However, for the first time, she detected a faint but killing intent in Mok Gyeong-un's voice.

This meant one thing.

'They have a hostile relationship.'

If that was the case, it was truly coincidental.

They had met for different purposes, but at the intersection, there was the same goal.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un said with a smile,

“It seems Officer So and I have some aligned interests.”

“…What a coincidence. I had the same thought.”

If their objectives were the same, there was no need to confront each other; it would be better to join hands.

At that moment,

-Swish!

Someone familiar appeared, penetrating through the warehouse building.

It was none other than Cheong-ryeong.

Suddenly appearing, Cheong-ryeong approached Mok Gyeong-un and said as if it was absurd,

-What are you doing? Mortal. Why are you still here?

She had expected him to have moved to the outside of the outer castle by now, according to the plan.

However, when she couldn't see him, she sensed the connection and came looking for Mok Gyeong-un.

-I went through the trouble of killing the Prince Gyeongjin to distract the Embroidered Uniform Guards, yet you're dawdling here.

-It's not dawdling; there was a bit of a situation.

-Situation or not, because of the underground golden prison, the troops of the Embroidered Uniform Guards have already set up formations at all the gates of the outer castle, and the eunuchs of the East and Western Depots have started searching inside the castle. If you don't hurry, you really won't be able to leave.

-...We've delayed quite a bit.

-If you know, then hurry up.

-I'll have to do that.

As he responded like that, So Yerin suddenly frowned and looked towards where Cheong-ryeong was.

It wasn't just her.

Nine Blood Sect's Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha was also looking with eyes filled with vigilance.

-Ho. These beings have unusual spiritual perception.

Cheong-ryeong was amazed.

She had reached a level close to Indigo Spirit and was hiding her spiritual power to the maximum, yet these two were capturing her faint traces with their senses.

Even if they couldn't see her, something would feel uncomfortably stimulating their sixth sense, not just their five senses.

-Swish!

At that moment, So Yerin drew out her innate true energy and tried to approach where Cheong-ryeong was.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un blocked her way and said,

“It seems we’ve delayed too much.”

“Delayed?”

“Yes, unlike the original plan, I met Officer So and stayed here for too long.”

“Ah... Are you going to leave the imperial palace?”

“As you can see.”

Mok Gyeong-un pointed to Holy Fire Priestess with a nod and said,

Originally, the purpose was to kidnap her, who had been imprisoned in the Eternal Hell Prison.

“You said you would remain here, Officer So, right?”

“...Yes. I have things to do.”

“Then I think we’ll have to part ways for now. If we obtain useful information from the inside and outside, let’s meet later and exchange it.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, So Yerin nodded.

Even if they had the same purpose, there was no need to stick together.

Rather, if they each gathered information from the inside and outside and combined it, they could get closer to their goal.

“By the way, Young Master Mok. How are you going to leave the imperial palace?”

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un looked at the masked Embroidered Uniform Guard Ma Ra-hyeon, who was sitting cross-legged and entering a state of meditation.

As if he had just finished organizing his enlightenment, he was slowly opening his eyes.

-Rattle rattle rattle rattle!

Three large carts loaded with food waste containers were lined up.

In the imperial palace, where tens of thousands of people reside, including the outer and inner palace, the leftover food and such from that day are classified and used as fodder for livestock or fertilizer for cultivation.

For this purpose, food waste carts leave the imperial palace several times a day.

There were three palace servants pulling these food waste carts, and they were Mok Gyeong-un, Seop Chun, and Mong Mu-yak wearing human skin masks that had been prepared in advance.

And next to these food waste carts, as if escorting them, was the masked Embroidered Uniform Guard Thousand-men Commander Ma Ra-hyeon Ra-hyeon.

After traveling for a while, a fork in the road appeared.

-Swish!

At that moment, Six Offices Commander So Yerin appeared about a dozen jang away and pointed in a direction with a hand gesture.

At her signal, Ma Ra-hyeon nodded and said to Mok Gyeong-un and the others who were pulling the carts,

“To the right path.”

At this, they pulled the carts to the right and moved.

Their method was as follows.

Six Offices Commander So Yerin would go ahead and guide the path so that the food waste carts could move in a direction where there were no search teams from the Embroidered Uniform Guards, Eastern Depot, or Western Depot.

Originally, So Yerin’s role could have been sufficiently handled by Cheong-ryeong alone, but she had volunteered to help with their escape, so they left it to her.

-Rattle rattle rattle rattle!

Among these food waste containers, there were ones where the Holy Fire Priestess and Nine Blood Sect’s Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha were hiding.

‘Whew.’

‘Damn it.’

Those who were inside the containers filled with mixed food waste were internally feeling like they were going to die.

It was because the mixture of food waste emitted a nauseating smell like vomit.

However, from the perspective of those who had endured all sorts of torture and interrogation while imprisoned in the Eternal Hell Prison, this much was not unbearable.

-Rattle rattle rattle rattle!

Worry filled the eyes of So Yerin, who had been moving ahead and guiding them.

For now, she was avoiding the search teams by heightening her five senses and spiritual perception, but soon they would reach the central gate of the outer palace.

Normally, if it was a food waste cart, they would just let it pass, but since the imperial palace was in chaos due to the underground golden prison incident, there was a high probability that search teams would be guarding that place.

‘We must not get caught.’

If it weren’t for Holy Fire Priestess, the escape would have been relatively easier.

However, to get out while taking her, who hadn’t even properly cultivated martial arts and couldn’t even walk without a cane due to her old age, they had to be as cautious as possible.

‘At least the fortunate thing is that there are no Embroidered Uniform Guards in the search teams.’

For some reason, the Embroidered Uniform Guards were nowhere to be seen.

If they were also in the search teams, it would have been quite difficult to help.

Here, she didn't know the exact reason, but this was something that happened thanks to Cheong-ryeong.

Because Cheong-ryeong, possessing Prince Gyeongjin's body, had jumped to his death shouting that the Embroidered Uniform Guards had driven him to suicide, most of the urgently summoned Embroidered Uniform Guards were detained in Bigyeong Palace.

Although they had missed the optimal opportunity to escape before the search began, it could be said to be the last chance to escape since the Embroidered Uniform Guards were still absent.

-Rattle rattle rattle!

Like that, the food waste carts they were pulling reached the central gate of the outer palace, which Six Offices Commander So Yerin had been concerned about.

As expected, the Embroidered Uniform Guards and Western Depot eunuchs had set up formations at the central gate pavilion of the outer palace.

The one commanding them was the Supervising Attendant, the position just below the Junior Eunuch of the Western Depot.

“Stop.”

As the Supervising Attendant stopped the carts, the masked Embroidered Uniform Guard Thousand-men Commander Ma Ra-hyeon Ra-hyeon stepped forward.

Ma Ra-hyeon showed his identification tag to the Western Depot Supervising Attendant and said,

“I am Ma Ra-hyeon, Thousand-men Commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard. These are food waste carts. The inspection was completed before departure, and I received orders to let them out...”

“Please step aside, Commander.”

“What...”

“Not what, but since a red alert has been issued, all entry and exit must undergo an inspection procedure.”

“…I understand.”

“Check them.”

“Yes!”

As the Western Depot Supervising Attendant gave the order, the Western Depot eunuchs began opening the lids of the food waste containers on the carts.

Each time a lid was opened, tension filled the eyes of Ma Ra-hyeon, Seop Chun, and Mong Mu-yak, who were wearing human skin masks.

If they were caught here, everything would be ruined.

-Click! Click!

The Western Depot eunuchs, who were opening the food waste containers while covering their noses with their sleeves, had already reached the containers where Holy Fire Priestess and Dam Baek-ha were hiding.

As the food waste container was opened, it was filled with food waste.

‘Huff.’

The Holy Fire Priestess, who was holding her breath inside, remained still as if she were dead.

She had been prepared in advance and learned how to hold her breath, but she hadn’t properly cultivated martial arts and was of old age, so it was difficult for her to hold her breath for a long time.

Like that, all the lids were opened.

The Western Depot eunuchs who had inspected this soon signaled to the Western Depot Supervising Attendant that it was fine.

Fortunately, it seemed they hadn’t been discovered.

“Since there doesn’t seem to be any problem, let them pass through the central gate...”

“No. Not yet.”

“…Not yet? What’s the problem?”

“Lend me a sword.”

As the Supervising Attendant stretched out his hand and spoke to one of the Embroidered Uniform Guard, he took out a sword from the scabbard at his waist and brought it over.

Ma Ra-hyeon frowned.

‘Could it be?’

It was that moment.

The Western Depot Supervising Attendant stabbed the sword into one of the food waste containers.

-Stab!

‘!?’

The expression of Seop Chun, who was watching this from up close, stiffened.

He thought they would pass safely, but the worst situation had occurred.

The Western Depot Supervising Attendant wasn't just stabbing the inside of the food waste container once but was frantically stabbing it all over.

-Stab! Stab! Stab! Stab!

Then,

“Here, you saw it, right? Guards warriors, please do this to each food waste container as I did.”

“Understood.”

They were stabbing the inside of the foo”Understood.”

-Shing! Shing! Shing!

The Embroidered Uniform Guard, who understood the words of the Western Depot Supervising Attendant, drew their swords.

Then, one or two of them divided up and went to the food waste carts.

At this, Mong Mu-yak and Seop Chun, who were in front of the carts, hesitated for a moment with perplexed eyes, wondering what to do.

Since it had come to this, should they subdue these guys?

However, there were too many of them to do that.

There were nearly fifty of them, and if they couldn't subdue them all at once, they would blow the small horn around their necks and request assistance.

-Stab! Stab!

But it was no longer a situation to consider that.

They were stabbing the inside of the food waste containers with swords, and if they got stabbed by that, not only would they be discovered, but the Holy Fire Priestess might die.

At that moment, an Embroidered Uniform Guard tried to bring his sword towards the food waste container where Holy Fire Priestess was.

‘Damn it!’

Mong Mu-yak, who thought there was no other way, finally tried to step forward and take action.

But right at that moment,

-Poof!

Suddenly, a hand popped out from one of the food waste containers.

“Gasp! Wha-what...”

The Embroidered Uniform Guards warrior who had tried to stab the food waste container was startled and tried to shout.

But before he could, the hand that had popped out from the food waste suddenly flicked its fingers.

-Flick!

As soon as the fingers were flicked like that,

-Thud! Thud! Thud!

The Embroidered Uniform Guard and the Western Depot eunuchs nearby all collapsed on the spot with their eyes rolled back, falling unconscious.

At that sight, Ma Ra-hyeon’s eyes widened, as did those of Mong Mu-yak and Seop Chun.

But while they thought everyone had fainted, there was one person among them who had endured it.

He was the Western Depot Supervising Attendant, who had the deepest internal energy among them.

“Th-this is...”

-Pak!

“Mmph!”

Someone covered his mouth.

“You made things bigger. It would have been nice if you had just let us pass.”

The one whispering in his ear while covering his mouth was none other than Mok Gyeong-un, who was wearing a human skin mask.

“Mmph mmph!”

The Western Depot Supervising Attendant, flustered, tried to shake off Mok Gyeong-un’s hand.

But before he could,

-Crack!

Mok Gyeong-un twisted the Supervising Attendant’s neck.

With his neck twisted in the opposite direction, the Supervising Attendant’s breath was cut off.

Mok Gyeong-un gently placed his dead body on the ground and looked at the hand that had popped out from the food waste container.

The hand with sharp nails belonged to none other than Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha.

Looking at her popped-out hand, interest stirred in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

Chapter 287 – Escape Attempt (2)

The entrance to the underground golden prison was literally a scene of chaos.

Due to the sudden collapse of the Eternal Hell Prison, the Fourth Office's Embroidered Uniform Guards were in disarray.

If the head of the Fourth Office, Six Offices Commander Im Gyu-weol, had been present, there would have been a command system in place, and they would have tried to handle the situation somehow, but now they were only focused on determining whether there were any escapees from the underground golden prison.

Amidst this, an even more perplexing situation occurred.

That was,

‘H-how...’

The Fourth Office's Thousand-men Commander Mak Myeong-ho was not just tense but even breaking out in cold sweat as he prostrated himself.

In front of him was a being he couldn't even dare to look at.

An old man with a pale complexion and a haggard appearance, leaning on the luxurious jade seat of a palanquin, wearing a golden dragon robe.

That being was none other than,

‘Has Your Majesty come to this place?’

The emperor.

As the emperor who ruled this nation personally arrived, Thousand-men Commander Mak Myeong-ho's mind was turning blank.

The situation was already the worst in the history of the Fourth Office, and his head was filled with thoughts of how to handle this matter, but now he had no idea what to do.

Then, the emperor's voice was heard,

“If it's red smoke, does it mean the Eternal Hell Prison has collapsed?”

“…Th-that…”

Thousand-men Commander Mak Myeong-ho was so shaken that he couldn't answer properly.

Then someone beside him urged,

“Can't you answer properly?”

At the heavy voice, Thousand-men Commander Mak Myeong-ho's eyes wavered.

He could tell who it was as soon as he heard it.

There were two guards and close aides who officially assisted the emperor by his side.

Among them, he was the most widely known and was no different from a direct superior to himself.

“Hurry up and answer the question.”

“Y-yes! The Eternal Hell Prison has collapsed!”

The face of Mak Myeong-ho, who was prostrating, became distressed.

Now that His Majesty the Emperor had personally come here, it was over, regardless of handling the situation.

Even if they managed to handle it, they would be held responsible for this incident.

The probability of losing his head was the highest, and even if not, he would be exiled or imprisoned in the golden prison.

As he was suffering while imagining what would happen in the future, the emperor's voice reached his ears,

“Then someone attempted to escape, but did anyone come out?”

“N-no, Your Majesty. I was guarding the entrance, but there was not even the slightest sign of it until the red smoke rose. Please believe me.”

“Are you saying there was an attempt to escape from the Eternal Hell Prison, but no one came out?”

“That is correct, Your Majesty.”

“Hmm.”

At the groaning sound as if deep in thought, Mak Myeong-ho's lips became parched.

Surely, there were no escapees while he was standing guard.

No, there shouldn't be.

That way, even if he was held responsible, he could at least save his life.

At that moment, the emperor spoke,

“Seong-baek, in your opinion, since the Eternal Hell Prison has collapsed, do you think there will be no escapees?”

“If the Eternal Hell Prison has collapsed, those who attempted to escape would have also fallen and lost their lives when the ground caved in.”

“Can you be certain of that?”

“I cannot guarantee it.”

“Why is that?”

“Those imprisoned in the Eternal Hell Prison are freaks that we cannot let down our guard even for a moment. As Your Majesty knows, it is a place with all sorts of monsters who have survived for decades without eating anything. We cannot ignore the variables.”

“Variables...”

“...”

“Seong-baek.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“How many people in the Eternal Hell Prison, no, in this entire imperial palace, can deceive you with that so-called martial arts of yours?”

At the emperor’s question, an answer came without a moment’s hesitation.

“There are none, Your Majesty.”

“None?”

“That is correct, Your Majesty.”

He displayed tremendous confidence.

Then the emperor said with the corners of his mouth raised,

“If you put your mind to it, how long do you think it would take to search the entire imperial palace?”

“Within three quarters of an hour would be sufficient.”

“Then go and come back.”

“However, Your Majesty...”

“By my side are the Chief Eunuch Gwak of the Inner Palace Administration and him. You don’t need to worry. Rather, if there was an escape attempt from the Eternal Hell Prison, it wouldn’t have happened spontaneously in a short period. Just in case, hurry up.”

“…I, Gu Seong-baek, accept Your Majesty’s order!”

-Swish!

As soon as those words ended, the figure of the one called Gu Seong-baek disappeared.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at the hand of Nine Blood Sect's Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha, which had popped out of the food waste container, with interest.

To him, who had his spiritual eyes open, it was visible.

The strange-shaped ripples that had spread from Dam Baek-ha's hand.

Mok Gyeong-un could tell that this strange-shaped energy was identical to what she had tried to use on him in the Eternal Hell Prison.

But at that time, he had wondered what the hell it was.

However, as this energy flowed out in all directions, interesting results occurred.

It seemed to stimulate the senses of the targets contacted by the energy to deceive them, and they all fainted.

‘…Sound. The shape of the energy would be a hand seal.’

Although he couldn't know the exact hand seal, he roughly guessed based on the shape.

The thought is repeated in a certain way.

And that repeated thought stimulates and deceives the opponent's senses.

That means it's a kind of suggestion.

‘Interesting.’

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

Then someone's voice was heard,

-What was that just now?

It was Cheong-ryeong.

She had been observing the situation from the air and came down to provide assistance when she judged that things had gone awry.

But she was puzzled when the Embroidered Uniform Guard and Western Depot eunuchs suddenly fainted.

-I don't know exactly either. It seems to be a kind of suggestion.

-Suggestion?

-Yes. I've seen it before in my grandfather's books. If you stimulate with sound or something visible and repeat it...

-Bam!

“Puah.”

At that moment, Dam Baek-ha's face popped out of the food waste container.

Not just her, but Holy Fire Priestess, who had been enduring inside the midst of food waste, also couldn't bear it and stuck her face out.

“Huff huff.”

“Elder, are you alright?”

Seop Chun asked the Holy Fire Priestess.

No matter how much he had taught her how to hold her breath, it must have been even more difficult for her to endure since she was old and hadn't cultivated martial arts.

“I'm... I'm fine. Huff... huff.”

At Seop Chun's question, the Holy Fire Priestess nodded with a pale face and replied.

Honestly speaking, not only the smell of the food waste but also holding her breath was all difficult, but she was enduring it by gritting her teeth.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un approached Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha, who was catching her breath, and said,

“How about continuously utilizing that technique from earlier?”

“What do you mean?”

“If that technique is a kind of suggestion, it can deceive the opponent's perception itself, so wouldn't it be possible to make them perceive us as if we don't exist in the first place?”

‘!?’

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha's eyes widened.

She had never told Mok Gyeong-un about this technique.

No, there was no reason to tell him in the first place.

But how did Young Master Mok know that this was a kind of suggestion?

As she was wondering, someone appeared at that moment.

-Swish!

The one who approached them was Six Offices Commander So Yerin, who had changed her outer clothing to the attire worn by palace maids at some point.

In her right hand, she was holding a black mask, so it seemed she was trying to conceal her identity and mobilize force.

Looking at the fainted Embroidered Uniform Guard, she said,

“You used the Illusion Sutra, didn't you?”

“Yes. As expected, you know about it too, Miss. My master directly learned it from him.”

“I see. Then rather than hiding in the food waste containers, it would be more helpful to use the Illusion Sutra.”

“…That’s difficult.”

“Why is that?”

“Unlike his bloodline, I didn’t cultivate the innate true energy I possess, so I can’t use the suggestion consecutively. At least, thanks to consuming the blood of a spiritual creature, my original energy has increased, making this much possible, but using it continuously within a day is beyond my capacity.”

“Ah...”

At this, So Yerin nodded as if she understood.

To her, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha said,

“Then how about you using the Illusion Sutra, Miss?”

At her words, So Yerin spoke as if she was in a difficult position,

“Even if I want to use it, I can’t.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“My father said that even my grandfather, who was still the So Clan Leader, couldn’t learn the Illusion Sutra from his grandfather. So I don’t know how to do it either.”

“Ah!”

At her words, Dam Baek-ha exclaimed in surprise instead.

“I’m truly delighted. It seems that he imparted this skill to my master only for this day. To have an opportunity to repay the favor received to his descendant like this.”

“Blood Demon...”

“Before we leave this place, I will teach you the hand seals of the Illusion Sutra, Miss.”

“…Thank you. But I think we need to hurry before that. Since the search team at the central gate has all fainted, they will soon notice and all the search forces will gather here.”

“I understand.”

Like that, they closed the food waste container lids again and hurriedly departed.

Now that they had passed the central gate, if they could just reach the south gate of the outer castle quickly, the probability of being able to get out somehow would increase.

Pulling the food waste carts, they accelerated even more.

Since So Yerin was scouting the surroundings on the ground and Cheong-ryeong in the air, there wouldn’t be any problems with the route itself.

Moving without any obstacles, they gradually approached the south gate.

But as they were moving for a while like that,

-Rattle rattle rattle rattle!

-Flinch!

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been pulling the cart, suddenly stopped.

As Mok Gyeong-un abruptly stopped the cart, Mong Mu-yak and Seop Chun also stopped and asked in puzzlement,

“My lord. Why are you suddenly doing this?”

“…They’re coming.”

“What do you mean by that?”

-Bam!

At that moment, Blood Demon Dam Baek-ha, who had been hiding in the food waste container, suddenly opened the lid and popped out.

With an expression filled with vigilance, she assumed the stance of the Blood Jade Hands.

Dam Baek-ha swallowed dryly as she looked in the northwest direction.

It had been a long time since her spiritual perception had been stimulated to this extent.

“Hey, you little brats. Hide together with the young old woman.”

“What?”

-Swish!

As they were puzzled, Six Offices Commander So Yerin appeared in front of them with her face covered by a black cloth.

So Yerin had already drawn her sword at some point.

“Officer So?”

The masked Embroidered Uniform Guard Ma Ra-hyeon also asked in puzzlement at their reactions.

Then So Yerin waved her hand behind her and hurriedly said,

“Commander Ma Ra-hyeon. Step back. Hurry!”

As soon as her words ended,

-Goooooooo!

The true energy in all directions became so heavy that it was difficult to breathe, and in an instant, Ma Ra-hyeon’s legs staggered as if his shoulders were being pressed down.

‘Wh-what the hell is this...’

It wasn’t just him.

Mong Mu-yak and Seop Chun also grimaced at the tremendous pressure.

‘Oh no!’

‘What kind of energy?’

An immeasurably vast energy was enveloping the entire surroundings, and the two of them felt their hearts racing intensely.

-Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Their gazes slowly turned towards one place.

-Step step!

A handsome middle-aged man with chiseled features, wearing a black robe and a golden belt, appeared there.

Seeing the handsome man walking with his hands behind his back, So Yerin's eyes trembled intensely.

‘Ah... Why him of all people.’

The worst had occurred among the anticipated situations.

That Embroidered Uniform Guard in the black robe was the one standing at the pinnacle of the Embroidered Uniform Guards as a working-level official, along with the Northern Pacification Commissioner Hyun Soon.

Embroidered Uniform Guard Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek.

Guarding the emperor by his side, he was the supreme master of the imperial palace and was referred to like this in the martial world.

The Blade King of the Northern Sect, one of the Six Heavens.

“There are three who have surpassed the wall. No need to go easy on them.”

-Shing!

An enlightened grandmaster-level expert occupying one seat among the six heavens, known as the pinnacle of the Central Plains martial world, was now drawing his blade towards them.

Chapter 288 – The Northern Sect Blade King (1)

Gu Seong-baek, the Southern Pacification Commissioner.

His other title as the Emperor's bodyguard was the Northern Blade King, the current pinnacle of the martial arts world and one of the Six Heavens.

The most famous anecdote about him was when he split three large ships led by the Changjiang River Gang on the Yangtze River with a single blade stroke.

Thanks to this tremendous battle, the Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek newly ascended to the peak of the martial arts world, which was originally called the Five Heavens.

-Srrng!

The gaze of Gu Seong-baek, who was drawing his blade, swept past Mok Gyeong-un disguised as a palace maid wearing a human skin mask, So Yerin the Six Offices Commander wearing a palace maid outfit with a black mask, and Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint covered in food waste from head to toe.

‘It’s clear.’

He had received the Emperor’s order and was quickly scanning the inner palace and the entire outer palace.

Expanding his perception to the maximum, he found them in an instant.

Finding them was not that difficult.

No matter how much they tried to conceal their energy, it would be stranger if he, known as the pinnacle of the Central Plains martial arts world and one of the Six Heavens, couldn't find them when he put his mind to it.

‘Faint energy.’

Gu Seong-baek’s sharp gaze turned towards a food waste container after passing by the three people.

Although it was hidden, he detected a subtle energy.

Judging by the extremely ordinary energy, it seemed to be the target they were trying to hide and take away.

Other than that,

‘There’s a traitor.’

Gu Seong-baek’s gaze turned to Ma Ra-hyeon, the Thousand-men Commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard wearing a mask.

Ma Ra-hyeon, whose eyes met his, soon let out a rough breath and took a step back.

‘This is... a Six Heavens...’

Ma Ra-hyeon was utterly perplexed.

He thought he had become much stronger after achieving enlightenment, but just the pressure of his energy alone made it difficult to breathe. That man was a monster itself.

It was that moment.

-Pak!

Gu Seong-baek raised his unique blade, the Golden Dawn Moon, with one hand.

The moment his blade rippled with a blue light.

This was Blade Qi.

‘What kind of energy condensation is this?’

Seop Chun and Mong Mu-yak couldn’t hide their bewilderment at the sight.

The blue Blade Qi that formed in an instant without any signs the moment he raised his blade was truly marvelous.

However, the problem was the target of the killing intent that accompanied this marvel.

-Pak!

Gu Seong-baek, who had raised the large Golden Dawn Moon with one hand, swung it mercilessly towards where Mok Gyeong-un, So Yerin, and Dam Baek-ha were.

The moment he swung his blade, the blue Blade Qi took the form of a gigantic blade and struck down ruthlessly in a tyrannical blade strike.

-Kwaaang!

The ground split and fragments rushed in all directions due to the Blade Qi that stretched over ten jang.

The view was briefly obscured by a dust storm, but this disappeared with just a light gesture from Gu Seong-baek.

As the hazy dust disappeared, Gu Seong-baek's eyes glinted with interest.

Thanks to Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint, whose hands were stained with red Blood Jade, and So Yerin in a black mask holding a sword rippling with blue Sword Qi, the impact of the damage did not reach Ma Ra-hyeon, Seop Chun, Mong Mu-yak, or the food waste cart.

“Not bad.”

It was not a merciful strike, as they had crossed the wall.

However, those two masters had exquisitely deflected the force of his blade strike.

They were no ordinary individuals.

‘Red hands. The Blood Jade hands of the immortal witch.’

The moment Gu Seong-baek saw Dam Baek-ha's Blood Jade hands, he instantly recognized that she was an escaped prisoner.

He was also part of the Embroidered Uniform Guard, so he knew this information.

Gu Seong-baek's sharp gaze turned towards the food waste container.

In conclusion, they were prisoners attempting to escape and thieves trying to assist them.

-Ssk!

Gu Seong-baek pointed at the food waste container with his left hand and spoke.

“Who is inside that? Who are you trying to take...”

-Ssrk!

Before he could even finish his words.

Something blurry appeared behind Gu Seong-baek and tried to behead him in an instant.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un wearing the human skin mask.

Mok Gyeong-un, who utilized the Brilliant Water Crossing Steps for high-speed movement in the instant So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha blocked Gu Seong-baek's blade strike, targeted his back.

However,

-Pak! Chaaaaeng!

Gu Seong-baek blocked Mok Gyeong-un's sword without even looking back, moving his blade behind him.

‘Blocking it without even giving a glance?’

This wasn't the end.

The moment Gu Seong-baek's blade and the sword clashed,

-Paaang!

Due to the strong rebound, Mok Gyeong-un's body was pushed back nearly ten steps.

-Chrrrrrr!

Mok Gyeong-un's pushed back sword trembled severely.

Then, cracks soon appeared on it.

-Crrrk!

‘A regular sword can't withstand it.’

He had brought one belonging to an Embroidered Uniform Guard, but with a single clash, the sword's lifespan had been exhausted.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed.

He was aware that the opponent was an extraordinarily powerful expert, but he was stronger than anyone he had ever encountered before.

It was no exaggeration to say that he had completely transcended human limits.

‘This is the current pinnacle of the martial arts world...’

He had heard that there was only one Six Heavens in the Imperial Palace.

Gu Seong-baek, the Southern Pacification Commissioner.

‘He’s different.’

Mok Gyeong-un had met another one of the Six Heavens before.

He was the leader of the Heaven and Earth Society.

When he met the leader, his martial arts were inferior to now, and the leader himself was significantly weakened due to illness, so despite his strength, he didn’t feel an overwhelming pressure.

However, a Six Heavens in peak condition was truly in a league of his own.

He had indeed reached the realm of a superhuman.

-Kssh!

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong, who was watching from above, tried to descend to where Mok Gyeong-un was.

Instantly, Gu Seong-baek slashed his left hand towards the sky.

Then, sharp Sword Intent rippled and split the empty void.

-Cheong-ryeong!

-...It’s fine.

Cheong-ryeong, who had ascended even higher instead of descending, clicked her tongue.

She knew that the higher one's martial arts, the more sensitive their perception was, but she was trying to conceal her Spirit Power to the maximum and there was still some distance.

However, she didn't expect him to accurately launch Sword Intent towards her.

“Hmm.”

Gu Seong-baek, who had launched the Sword Intent, raised an eyebrow and soon turned his head to speak to Mok Gyeong-un.

“Strange. It definitely felt like there was something there.”

“...”

“Anyways, you're quite peculiar. You have clearly crossed the wall, but the energy I sense from you is very minimal. It's one of two things. Either you have mastered a unique energy circulation technique or you're strong enough to deceive the root.”

-Pak!

As soon as those words ended, Gu Seong-baek's figure appeared right in front of Mok Gyeong-un.

-Chak!

Gu Seong-baek's Golden Dawn Moon slashed at Mok Gyeong-un's neck.

To be precise, it slashed an afterimage.

-Ssrk!

As the beheaded afterimage dispersed, Mok Gyeong-un's figure had already dug into Gu Seong-baek's right side.

Thanks to his high-speed movement, he could somewhat match Gu Seong-baek's speed.

However,

-Ssk!

Gu Seong-baek, who lightly dodged Mok Gyeong-un's Sword Intent-infused finger strike by tilting his head back without turning around, grasped Mok Gyeong-un's wrist with the Golden Silkworm Hands technique at lightning speed.

Then, he swiftly kicked Mok Gyeong-un's abdomen.

-Pok!

‘Kuk.’

Mok Gyeong-un's body soared upward.

Matching that, Gu Seong-baek tried to swing his Blade Qi-infused Golden Dawn Moon at Mok Gyeong-un.

At that instant, blue Sword Qi blocked the Blade Qi Gu Seong-baek was unleashing.

No, it wasn't completely blocked as it was repelled back.

‘Strong.’

The one who was repelled back was none other than So Yerin wearing a black mask.

Sensing the threat to Mok Gyeong-un, she had intervened midway and blocked the Blade Qi, but the power was so strong that she was instead repelled back.

However, that wasn’t the end.

-Chak chak chak chak chak!

At that moment, Gu Seong-baek successively launched Blade Qi at them.

It was Projectile Blade Qi.

The flying blue Blade Qi was accurately targeting Mok Gyeong-un and So Yerin, who had soared upwards and been repelled back.

-Six Offices Commander!

Mok Gyeong-un’s voice transmission reached So Yerin’s ears.

When she looked back, Mok Gyeong-un had already extended his foot towards her.

So Yerin, who was being repelled back, hurriedly somersaulted,

-Whirrr!

She twisted her body and kicked her foot against Mok Gyeong-un's sole.

-Pang!

The bodies of the two, who had kicked each other's soles in midair, were repelled in opposite directions.

Thanks to that, the flying Projectile Blade Qi narrowly passed between them.

So Yerin, whose vigilance had heightened due to the relentless attacks, searched for Gu Seong-baek even while being repelled back.

‘Where is he?’

However, Gu Seong-baek had already headed towards the food waste container, and Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint was blocking him.

‘Blood Jade Hands 8th Move – Blood Claw Thousand Shatter!’

Raising her Blood Jade Hands to the extreme, she attacked Gu Seong-baek while unleashing the ultimate move.

Her claws tried to tear Gu Seong-baek apart with unstoppable force, but Gu Seong-baek easily blocked it with just his left hand without even moving the Golden Dawn Moon in his right hand.

-Pa pa pa pa pak!

‘What?’

Dam Baek-ha was dumbfounded.

She didn't expect him to block the ultimate move of her energy-infused Blood Jade Hands so easily.

He wasn't employing any special techniques, but with just light footwork matching her ultimate move, he was blocking it extremely exquisitely.

Thanks to that, she clearly realized.

‘This bastard... has crossed the wall of walls.’

Dam Baek-ha inwardly clicked her tongue.

Due to the Great Calamity, the older generation of the Old Martial Arts World had collapsed, so she thought such a supreme master of this level would no longer appear.

However, it seemed many things had happened during the decades she was imprisoned.

Seeing a monster like him blocking her way was proof of that.

-Pa pa pa pa pak!

-Urk!

Every time she clashed hands with Gu Seong-baek, she felt her insides swelling up.

As the energy was transmitted through her viscera, she felt nauseous.

Gu Seong-baek, who judged himself to be in a superior position, was raising his inner energy, and its impact was being rapidly transmitted to her.

-Grr!

Dam Baek-ha's eyes turned fierce.

‘Although this one’s energy has only weakened from being trapped in the underground golden prison unable to do anything, I am the Sixth Blood Saint of the Great Blood Cult.’

-Pachi! Pachi!

Blue lightning sparks erupted from Dam Baek-ha's right hand.

‘Hmm?’

Sensing the manifestation of lightning power, Gu Seong-baek hurriedly blocked his face with the Golden Dawn Moon in an instant.

-Pachichichichi!

At that moment, due to the strong lightning, his body was pushed back about three steps.

‘Lightning power paralyzes the energy. Then...’

Gu Seong-baek, who was being pushed back, chose not to condense his energy on the blade but to release it instead.

Employing the Blossom Connecting Branches of Justice, he raised his blade upward,

-Pachichichichi!

The lightning that was entering through the blade soon spread out into the void.

The blue flames that spread like tree roots were truly spectacular.

“Hmph.”

Dam Baek-ha snorted as if annoyed.

She expected him to be able to somewhat resist lightning power since he had crossed the wall of walls, and as expected, he released it using the Blossom Connecting Branches of Justice.

His response and judgment were too fast.

It was that moment.

Mok Gyeong-un and So Yerin were rapidly rushing towards Gu Seong-baek's back using high-speed movement.

Matching this, Dam Baek-ha also tried to pressure him from the front by igniting lightning once again.

It was that exact instant.

-Pak!

Gu Seong-baek thrust his blade Golden Dawn Moon into the ground with one hand.

‘Earth Shatter Wave Slashing Form!’

-Cha cha cha cha cha!

With the spot where he thrust the Golden Dawn Moon as the center, the ground split, and the fragments created by the splitting along with Blade Qi flew like hidden weapons towards his surroundings.

‘What?’

‘Oh no!’

Mok Gyeong-un, So Yerin, and Dam Baek-ha, who were trying to attack him simultaneously, hurriedly deployed defensive techniques to block the flying Blade Qi and fragments.

-Cha cha cha cha cha chaeng!

Although they were merely blocking, the sound of metal clashing and air exploding spread in all directions like thunderclaps.

It was so loud that it was painful to the ears.

Moreover, the surrounding palace walls and buildings were collapsing due to the repelled fragments and the aftermath.

-Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Witnessing this confrontation, Ma Ra-hyeon, Mong Mu-yak, Seop Chun, and the others were at a loss for words.

This fight had already surpassed the level they could intervene in.

If they rashly intervened trying to help, they might instead suffer severe injuries or lose their lives from a single strike unleashed by them.

“…Is this a confrontation between superhumans?”

“Damn it. To think my ankles would be caught in a place like this.”

At Seop Chun’s remark that was close to a lament, Mong Mu-yak let out a rough sound.

Who would have thought that a supreme master who had reached the pinnacle of the martial arts world would appear right before reaching the summit?

At that moment, Ma Ra-hyeon approached them and spoke.

“There’s no point in us staying here. We won’t be of any help. Now that it has come to this, we need to move while they are fighting.”

“Move?”

“Yes. If we stay, we will only be a hindrance.”

The two, who thought Ma Ra-hyeon’s judgment was correct, soon nodded their heads.

Now that it had come to this, they had to at least avoid being a hindrance.

So they tried to abandon the remaining food waste carts and at least take the cart Holy Fire Priestess was riding in to move.

However,

-Rumble rumble rumble!

“Over there!”

“A fight is breaking out over there!”

They saw a huge crowd rushing from the direction of the southern gate of the outer palace where they had to go.

They were Embroidered Uniform Guards and the eunuchs of the Western Depot.

This wasn't the end.

-Rumble rumble rumble!

“Waaaaah!!!”

“It's over there! Imperial Guard Secret Camp, head northwest!”

“Imperial Guard Armory Camp, block the path leading north!”

‘Damn it.’

The forces capable of wielding military power within the Imperial Palace were already rushing in from all directions.

They were engaged in a confrontation intense enough to shatter the palace walls and buildings, so it would be stranger if this went unnoticed.

The complexions of the three people who were caught in a desperate situation rapidly darkened.

From the moment their ankles were caught by the supreme master of the Imperial Palace, known as the pinnacle of the Central Plains martial arts world and one of the Six Heavens, the situation had already reached a point where they couldn't escape.

‘Is this the end?’

It was when they were gradually feeling despair.

Right at that moment.

-Swaaaa!

At that instant, a bizarre incident occurred.

Blood began to rise from the ground and slowly ascend into the air.

The Embroidered Uniform Guards and the eunuchs of the Western and Eastern Depots, who were rushing in, stopped in bewilderment at the horrifying phenomenon.

“What in the world is this?”

Ma Ra-hyeon touched the rising blood droplets with his hand.

The foul smell and this warm and sticky sensation were undoubtedly blood, rather than an illusion.

Mong Mu-yak and Seop Chun looked at each other at this strange phenomenon.

‘This is?’

They knew about this.

Because they had experienced it on that rainy day in that village.

-Swish swish swish swish swish swish!

The blood droplets that were rising at that time soon flowed in reverse into the air, dyeing the sky blood-red like a pouring rainstorm.

As blood dyed everything in all directions, everyone who had rushed to the vicinity couldn't hide their shock.

This literally evoked the image of hell.

What on earth was this bizarre phenomenon in broad daylight?

While that was happening, the blood that was flowing in reverse in the air swirled and condensed, and someone revealed their appearance there.

Wearing a crown and holding a pipe, it was none other than Cheong-ryeong.

-Pak!

‘What the hell is that?’

Gu Seong-baek, the Southern Pacification Commissioner who was deploying a technique to deal with multiple opponents, frowned as he pulled out the Golden Dawn Moon he had thrust into the ground.

What exactly was that inhuman existence?

No matter how he looked at it, it didn't feel like a living human being.

While he was doing that, Cheong-ryeong waved her pipe.

-Swish!

-Swaaaa!

Then, around the place where they were, blood suddenly surged up like a reverse waterfall and created walls in all directions.

‘Could it be?’

Looking around, Gu Seong-baek could realize that he had been cut off from the surroundings by the blood waterfall.

Even the sight and presence of the Embroidered Uniform Guards rushing from all directions were blocked.

-Step step!

Meanwhile, Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint, Mok Gyeong-un, and So Yerin were surrounding him from front and back.

-Ssk!

The Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek put the Golden Dawn Moon on his shoulder and spoke with a face that hadn’t lost any composure.

“I don’t know what kind of sorcery you’ve used, but do you think the outcome will change because of this?”

“Well, we haven’t used our full power yet.”

“What?”

As he was questioning back, Mok Gyeong-un soon reached out his hand somewhere.

Then,

-Kwajik!

-Ssuk!

A food waste container shattered, and two swords flew out from inside.

They were none other than Gu Yaja’s demon swords, the Evil Commandment Sword and Plundering-killing Sword.

-Pak!

The moment he grasped the two demon swords in his hands, an ominous black energy began to surge from Mok Gyeong-un’s entire body along with a demonic aura.

‘…He was concealing his energy?’

Gu Seong-baek’s eyes narrowed at the rapidly surging vicious energy.

However, that wasn’t the end of it.

-Gooooo!

At some point, So Yerin's hair turned red, and the blade she was holding was dyed blood-red.

It was an extremely evil and murderous energy.

-Pachichichichi!

Behind, Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint, whose entire body was covered in blue lightning, could be seen.

At the energy of the three people that had completely changed from just a moment ago, the eyes of the Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek, who had been utterly composed, became quite serious.

Chapter 289 – The Northern Sect Blade King (2)

Cheong-ryeong, who had manifested her spiritual body, looked up at the blood-stained sky.

When Cheong-ryeong, known as the 100-year vengeful spirit, was at the Blue Spirit level, it was nearly impossible to deploy the Ghostly Domain during the day when yang energy was abundant.

This was because the dead belonged to the world of yin.

However, as Cheong-ryeong's spiritual power approached the Indigo Spirit level, known as the apex of vengeful spirits, she could deploy the Blood Domain of the Ghostly Domain to a certain extent even during the day.

‘…But it's difficult to maintain it for long.’

Due to the abundant yang energy and the wide range of the domain deployment, the spiritual power consumption was rapid.

If it were nighttime, the situation would be somewhat different, but not now.

She had to hurry.

-Ssk!

As Cheong-ryeong waved her pipe, blood hands rose from the ground, further confusing the Embroidered Uniform Guards and the eunuchs of the Eastern and Western Depots who were in disarray due to the sudden situation.

“W-what the hell is this?”

“How can something like this happen in the Imperial Palace in broad daylight?”

“Don’t be confused! It’s all an illusion!”

“Get a hold of yourselves!”

The commanders tried their best to boost their morale.

However, this was not a mere illusion.

The Ghostly Domain created by a vengeful spirit whose level had reached near the peak was literally a space of horror and fear.

-Paaak!

-Cha cha cha cha!

“Aaargh!”

“Let go! Let go of me!”

Chaos ensued due to the blood thorns and blood hands surging from all directions.

However, this would not be visible to the eyes of the four at the center of the Blood Domain.

The domain had been thoroughly isolated.

Cheong-ryeong looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

‘For now, I did as you wished, Mortal. But will escaping really be possible?’

She was worried.

The opponent was a monster who had crossed the wall of walls and truly reached the Profound Realm.

No matter how much Mok Gyeong-un’s demonic energy had increased to a level close to the Profound Realm, there was bound to be a difference compared to someone who had truly reached that realm.

She recalled just a moment ago.

[Cheong-ryeong, is the Ghostly Domain possible?]

[Ghostly Domain?]

[Yes. Can you temporarily restrain the Embroidered Uniform Guards rushing in with the Blood Domain and also isolate the space with that fellow?]

[...It's possible. But I can't maintain it for long due to the abundant yang energy at this time.]

[I see. We'll have to try to resolve it within that time.]

[Wait, resolve it? Weren't you asking me to isolate that monster separately in the Blood Domain for a while?]

[Yes. That's right, but including the three of us as well.]

[You?]

Cheong-ryeong stared intently at Mok Gyeong-un.

She had done as he stubbornly insisted as if he had some kind of plan.

However, the opponent was one of the Six Heavens, known as the pinnacle of the current martial arts world.

Even if they launched a joint attack against such an individual, what were the chances of winning?

-Pachichichichi!

Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint of the Nine Blood Cult, who had gained immortality and lightning power by consuming the blood of the spiritual creature known as the Dragon Demon, raised her fighting spirit to the maximum.

Even for her, who had lived for a long time, a world completely dyed in blood was bound to appear terrifying and bizarre.

However, there was something that caught her eye even more than that.

‘Ah, to see that appearance again.’

What caught Dam Baek-ha’s eye was So Yerin, the masked Six Offices Commander, whose hair had turned red and who was holding a blade dyed in blood.

The phenomenon of her hair turning red was none other than something that could only be achieved by the Blood Heavens Great Luo Cultivation that only the Blood Patriarch of the Blood Cult could master when reaching a certain realm.

As a devoted follower of the Blood Cult, she couldn’t help but be moved by that sight.

However, that moment was short-lived.

-Ssrk!

The Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek made the first move.

His target was not the two people in front of him,

-Chak!

‘I’m first?’

It was none other than herself.

The blade that flew at a tremendous speed, unfit for a large broadsword, was set to behead Dam Baek-ha in an instant.

-Pak!

She narrowly avoided it by launching her body back with lightness skills.

However, as the blade brushed past her, it didn't completely slash through but stopped midway.

-Paaak!

‘What a monster.’

At this, Dam Baek-ha couldn't hide her inner astonishment.

Retracting the force midway while swinging was not easy even for masters.

Moreover,

-Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The moment Gu Seong-baek's Golden Dawn Moon stopped midway, the ground split and wind pressure erupted due to the vast true energy infused in it.

To retract such force midway, he was indeed a monster.

-Pang! Whirrr!

Gu Seong-baek, who had stopped the blade edge like that, rotated it and swung the blade in reverse, trying to target Dam Baek-ha's head once again.

Then, Dam Baek-ha lowered her body to avoid the trajectory of the blade, and,

-Pachichichichi!

She dug into Gu Seong-baek and tried to dig out his heart with her Blood Jade Hands infused with lightning, using all her strength.

However, at that moment, Gu Seong-baek lightly tilted his body to the side,

-Pak!

He grasped Dam Baek-ha's wrist and kneed upward.

-Pok! Ukk!

“Aargh!”

With a single strike, her arm bent in the opposite direction, and the broken bone pierced through her elbow and protruded out.

Enduring the pain, Dam Baek-ha tried to tear apart Gu Seong-baek's left hand grasping her wrist with her Blood Jade Hands.

However,

-Paaak!

In that state, Gu Seong-baek pulled her wrist, and her balance was shattered.

Not missing this opportunity, Gu Seong-baek released the Golden Dawn Moon he was holding and tried to pierce Dam Baek-ha's face with a Blade Qi created with his bare hands.

‘Oh no!’

But at that instant, a blood-dyed sword tried to slash Gu Seong-baek’s right arm.

It was So Yerin.

Unable to avoid it, Gu Seong-baek released Dam Baek-ha’s wrist he was holding and retreated nearly six steps in an instant with graceful lightness skills.

-Pa pa pa pa pa pak!

As he tried to create distance, So Yerin chased after him, not wanting to miss the chance, and unleashed an ultimate move.

‘3rd Move – Hidden Fish Form Sword!’

The sword initiated a transformation, and its trajectory wavered like a soft willow branch, simultaneously targeting seven vital points on Gu Seong-baek’s upper body.

-Swa swa swa swa swa!

However, Gu Seong-baek surprisingly avoided her sword by moving only his upper body.

Even in the midst of that, he made a gesture as if pulling his hand,

-Pak!

He grabbed the Golden Dawn Moon with Empty Hand Interception, and in an instant, he tried to split So Yerin in half.

Faced with his tremendously tyrannical blade strike, So Yerin hurriedly raised her inner energy to the 10th level and lifted her sword to block it.

-Chaaaaaeng!

“Kuk!”

However, So Yerin, who was inferior in inner energy, was pushed back while coughing up blood.

-Chrrrrr!

‘I shall slash you like this.’

Gu Seong-baek, who was aware that he was far superior in inner energy, pushed So Yerin back even more strongly, intending to overwhelm her with this.

-Chrrrrrr!

‘2nd Move – Diving Clam Sword.’

At that moment, So Yerin, who was being pushed back, suddenly bent her knees and kicked the ground, explosively pushing back Gu Seong-baek’s Golden Dawn Moon and launching a counterattack sword strike.

-Chaeng!

‘Using my own force?’

Interest glinted in Gu Seong-baek’s eyes.

It was the first time he had seen a sword strike that utilized his own tyrannical momentum with the Blossom Connecting Branches of Justice.

-Cha cha cha cha cha cha!

As the invigorated sword energy rushed in like crazy, Gu Seong-baek also countered it.

The clash of their sword and blade sent blue sparks and air-splitting sounds spreading in all directions.

-Cha cha cha cha cha cha chaeng!

In an instant, they clashed about eight moves.

-Gasp!

Gu Seong-baek hurriedly lowered his head.

As soon as he lowered his head, the Evil Commandment Sword covered in black energy brushed past his hair on the back of his head.

Along with that, So Yerin also had to retreat back while deploying footwork.

Otherwise, the sword Gu Seong-baek had avoided might have pierced her instead.

Moreover,

-Pak!

Mok Gyeong-un's sword wasn't the end of it.

'!?'

Gu Seong-baek, who had lowered his head in an instant to avoid the sword, had his pupils tremble for a moment at another sword flying from the left.

This wasn't simply swinging a sword with the opposite hand.

Different sword strikes were being unleashed simultaneously.

The Moonless Void Sword strike was unleashed with the right hand, while the Demonic Sword strike was unleashed with the left hand.

'Unleashing completely different sword strikes with both hands?'

Putting aside the fact that both sword strikes were supreme, how did he master such a unique technique?

Even he, who had crossed the wall of walls, couldn't do this.

Gu Seong-baek couldn't help but inwardly admire it.

-Pak!

This time, judging that he couldn't avoid it or do anything else, Gu Seong-baek stabbed the Golden Dawn Moon into the ground, using it as a support to twist his body.

-Chak!

The blade of the demon sword Plundering-killing Sword slightly brushed Gu Seong-baek's left shoulder.

Along with the burning sensation, he felt the demonic energy penetrating the brushed area.

‘Demonic energy?’

He felt as if the demonic energy was further aggravating the wound.

Sensing this strange discomfort, Gu Seong-baek hurriedly slashed off the skin of the brushed area himself.

-Chak!

At the same time, he launched his body back to avoid the sword strikes unleashed by Mok Gyeong-un.

-Pa pa pa pak!

He consecutively somersaulted four times in the air to create distance.

Not wanting to miss this opportunity, the three of them launched their bodies towards Gu Seong-baek.

Then, Gu Seong-baek, while somersaulting, rotated his body and scattered Projectile Blade Qi created with both hands to prevent the three from approaching.

-Cha cha cha cha cha cha cha!

Mok Gyeong-un, So Yerin, and Dam Baek-ha likewise blocked the flying Blade Qi with Sword Qi and Claw Qi.

However, even if it was the same Qi, there was a difference in the true energy infused, so they were inevitably pushed back.

-Cha cha cha cha chaeng!

-Chrrrrrr!

This was the case for So Yerin, whose energy had greatly increased due to the Blood Heavens Great Luo Cultivation, and it was the same for Dam Baek-ha, who utilized the energy of the spiritual creature's power, lightning.

The true energy of Gu Seong-baek, who had crossed the wall of walls, was different in its strength.

However, there was one person who broke through his attack and entered.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

-Cha cha cha cha cha chang!

With the demon sword Plundering-killing Sword held in his left hand, Mok Gyeong-un deflected the flying Blade Qi in reverse using the profound principle of the Scripture of Transferring True Qi and advanced towards Gu Seong-baek with unstoppable momentum.

‘This fellow, his inner energy is higher than the other two.’

Gu Seong-baek also sensed this, and he finally stopped rotating and made a gesture of waving his hand.

-Ssk!

-Be careful!

At So Yerin's voice transmission ringing in his ears, Mok Gyeong-un, who was pushing forward, kicked the ground twice.

This was the Wind God Steps he had secretly learned from Ma Ra-hyeon.

-Srrk!

Mok Gyeong-un's figure split into two left and right.

-Ssk!

And between them, the Golden Dawn Moon flew and passed through.

He thought Gu Seong-baek had pulled the blade with Empty Hand Interception, but soon, the Golden Dawn Moon flew like lightning towards one of the split Mok Gyeong-un figures.

-Chak!

‘Blade Control Technique?’

It was none other than the Blade Control Technique.

It was a technique that could only be unleashed by those who had crossed the wall of walls, also known as the Qi Blade Control Technique.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un reached out his hand towards the blade.

-Ssk!

If he could interfere with the connected true energy, he could disrupt the Blade Control Technique.

He had already tried it once against the Qi Sword Control Technique of the Heaven and Earth Society Leader.

So, he tried to disperse the connection of true energy using the Ritual of Binding of the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques.

However,

-Woooong!

As the Qi Blade Control gathered energy, blue Qi was infused into it.

‘!?’

The energy that was trying to disperse further condensed, and the interference failed.

Not stopping there, the blade stained with Qi flew as if it were alive and unleashed a tyrannical blade strike towards Mok Gyeong-un, slashing his figure.

-Chak!

As one of the split images disappeared, Gu Seong-baek moved his hand.

‘You’re next.’

Then, the Golden Dawn Moon flew towards the remaining Mok Gyeong-un.

-Ssk!

It was so fast that it seemed like a streak of lightning rushing in.

However, at that moment,

-Pachichichichichik!

Lightning surged upward, and the Golden Dawn Moon flying due to the Qi Blade Control was deflected upward.

Beneath it, Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint was stretching her hands upward.

‘Her arm?’

Interest glinted in Gu Seong-baek’s eyes.

Dam Baek-ha’s elbow, which had been broken with the bone piercing through the flesh and protruding out, had somehow healed.

‘Annoying. Is it the power of immortality?’

Gu Seong-baek clicked his tongue at her tremendous regenerative ability.

Soon, the Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek, who had created distance from the three, gathered his Golden Dawn Moon that had soared due to the lightning with his true energy.

-Ssk! Pak!

Holding the Golden Dawn Moon, Gu Seong-baek looked at the three in turn and spoke.

“Although it’s the Emperor’s order, I set out with a light heart, but it seems that’s not possible.”

“Then it would be appreciated if you just stepped back.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s sarcastic remark, Gu Seong-baek chuckled.

Then, he thrust the Golden Dawn Moon into the ground and spoke.

-Puk!

“I have my position, so that’s impossible. Besides, it’s not often I get the chance to face three martial artists close to the Profound Realm simultaneously.”

-Gooooo!

It was the moment those words ended.

Gu Seong-baek’s energy, raised to the 10th level of inner energy, soared to an incomparable level compared to before.

At his tremendous momentum, the vigilance in the eyes of the three further heightened.

The Northern Blade King Gu Seong-baek, one of the Six Heavens who had been holding back some of his power until now, was about to use his full strength.

Chapter 290 – The Northern Sect Blade King (3)

The energy Gu Seong-baek raised with his inner energy at the 10th level was incredibly sharp, as if it would envelop flesh, and just by exuding it, it even created a whirlwind of true energy in all directions.

At his tremendous momentum, the eyes of the three people were further colored with vigilance.

“Then let’s start again.”

-Pak!

With those words, Gu Seong-baek struck the blade body of the Golden Dawn Moon that was thrust into the ground with his palm.

Then, the wide blade body of the Golden Dawn Moon cracked into three sections.

Everyone was puzzled by his sudden action.

But at that moment, when Gu Seong-baek stamped his foot towards the ground,

-Kwang!

The edge of the Golden Dawn Moon’s blade body that was thrust into the ground split into three and floated upward.

‘The blade split?’

Surprisingly, the Golden Dawn Moon was an abnormal weapon in which three blades were combined into one.

As Gu Seong-baek drew a line with his hand, the Golden Dawn Moon that had split into three and floated began to revolve around him as if swimming.

Seeing this sight, Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint clicked her tongue.

‘To unleash the Qi Blade Control Technique not with one blade, but with three blades... He has truly reached the pinnacle in manipulating true energy.’

She couldn't help but admire him, even if he was an enemy.

It could be said that just unleashing the Qi Blade Control Technique with a single weapon alone consumed a great deal of true energy and mental strength.

However, Gu Seong-baek was displaying the Qi Blade Control with three blades.

Even during the Old Martial Arts World era when she roamed, it was extremely rare for someone to reach that level of mastery with blades.

It was that moment.

-Swish swish swish swish!

Gu Seong-baek, who had created a circular formation with the Qi Blade Control by rapidly revolving the three blades of the Golden Dawn Moon around him, launched his body towards them.

-Pat!

Mok Gyeong-un, Dam Baek-ha, and So Yerin moved accordingly.

Judging that the three blades of the Qi Blade Control revolving around Gu Seong-baek were unusual, they maintained their distance without hastily closing in.

Even Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint, who had the deepest experience and knowledge among the three, had never heard of a supreme master at the level of a great sage unleashing the Qi Blade Control in this manner.

‘What the hell is it?’

It was an instant of puzzlement.

“If you won’t come, I’ll go to you.”

-Ssrk!

At that moment, Gu Seong-baek’s figure blurred.

His blurred figure reached in front of them in the blink of an eye.

Gu Seong-baek, who had instantly closed the distance, reached out his hand towards So Yerin, who was at the forefront.

-Cha cha chak!

Then, the three revolving blades of the Qi Blade Control intricately interlocked and created a dazzling trajectory.

‘What?’

It was as if three supreme masters were launching a joint attack.

If they were to hold the blades directly and launch a joint attack, they would inevitably have to maintain a distance from each other to prevent clashing.

However, that was not the case with the three blades of the Qi Blade Control.

Since there was no risk of clashing with each other, the trajectories of the blades could be narrowed, allowing for a more precise combination.

‘There’s no gap.’

Unable to find any openings in the joint attack unleashed by the three blades of the Qi Blade Control, So Yerin thought she had no choice but to block it at once.

So, she firmly stamped her foot.

-Kwang!

In that state, So Yerin pulled her sword and thrust it forward.

‘True Chasing and Turning Sword!’

Then, a whirlwind of Sword Intent arose from the tip of the sword and clashed with the joint attack created by the three blades of the Qi Blade Control.

-Cha cha cha cha cha chaeng!

As the ultimate moves fiercely collided, a tearing metallic sound along with blue sparks scattered in all directions.

The two ultimate moves that clashed head-on seemed to form a stalemate at a glance.

However, since she was inferior in inner energy, So Yerin’s feet were gradually being pushed back.

-Chrrrr!

But there was no way the other two would just stand by and watch this.

Mok Gyeong-un and Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint tried to take advantage of the gap while narrowing their bodies to the left and right, aiming for Gu Seong-baek's opening as he unleashed the Qi Blade Control.

However, this was a trap.

-Ssk!

Gu Seong-baek's fingers moved slightly.

At that moment,

-Cha cha chak!

-Gasp!

Mok Gyeong-un, who was unleashing a sword strike, hurriedly twisted his body and pulled back.

-Chak!

In an instant, something sharp brushed past his neck by a hair's breadth.

It was none other than one of the three Golden Dawn Moon blades.

-Puk!

“Ugh!”

Unlike Mok Gyeong-un, who narrowly avoided it and only had a slight cut on the side of his neck, one of the Golden Dawn Moon blades pierced Dam Baek-ha's thigh.

She also somehow avoided one of the Golden Dawn Moon blades that flew at her by surprise.

However, she couldn't avoid the other blade that followed.

‘This won’t do.’

But Gu Seong-baek wasn’t satisfied with this.

The one Gu Seong-baek thought he should kill first was none other than Dam Baek-ha.

It was because of her marvelous recovery ability that was close to super-regeneration.

-Pak!

Gu Seong-baek chased after Dam Baek-ha, whose figure was disturbed due to her pierced thigh, grabbed one of the Golden Dawn Moon blades, and tried to behead her.

Even if she had achieved immortality, he didn’t think her life would continue if her head was cut off.

-Pachichichik!

To keep Gu Seong-baek in check, Dam Baek-ha unleashed the claw force of her Blood Jade Hands infused with lightning power.

However, Gu Seong-baek lightly slashed it with Blade Qi, and,

-Chak!

He tried to behead her as well.

The blade of the Golden Dawn Moon was heading towards her neck without hesitation.

-Chaeng!

Mok Gyeong-un slashed down with the Plundering-killing Sword and kicked Dam Baek-ha to the side, interrupting Gu Seong-baek's blade.

-Pok!

Thanks to that, the path of the blade deviated, and Dam Baek-ha was able to avoid being beheaded.

Gu Seong-baek, whose attempt to kill Dam Baek-ha was thwarted, immediately reached out his left hand towards Mok Gyeong-un.

Then, two of the Golden Dawn Moon blades flew towards Mok Gyeong-un.

-Cha cha cha chaeng!

Mok Gyeong-un swung the demon swords Evil Commandment Sword and Plundering-killing Sword and blocked the two Golden Dawn Moon blades.

As the two Golden Dawn Moon blades were engaged like this, Dam Baek-ha and So Yerin didn't miss this opportunity and unleashed their ultimate moves towards Gu Seong-baek.

In response, Gu Seong-baek increased the size of the Blade Qi to over five zhang and simultaneously repelled them.

-Chaaaaaang!

As the two were pushed back, Gu Seong-baek immediately created distance and waved his hand.

Then, the two Golden Dawn Moon blades that were confronting Mok Gyeong-un were recalled back to him.

Gu Seong-baek shouted at them.

“Give up on killing one at a time.”

With those words, the moment Gu Seong-baek reached out his hand, the three Golden Dawn Moon blades crossed and rotated with tremendous momentum, flying towards them.

The force of the whirlwind created by the three Qi-infused blades,

-Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwang!

It caused the blood that had pooled on the ground due to the Blood Domain to disappear and left a huge impact on the ground.

If one were to be hit properly even once, their body would be torn to shreds and disappear.

However, the problem was that the power of these Golden Dawn Moon blades was the ultimate move of the Qi Blade Control, so it would continue endlessly unless Gu Seong-baek stopped.

-Cha cha cha cha cha cha!

The whirlwind of the Qi Blade Control rotating in a blue light flew towards them as if a dragon was striding through the air.

‘The power is unbelievable.’

Dam Baek-ha unconsciously swallowed her saliva.

Then, So Yerin’s voice reached her ears.

It wasn’t just her.

So Yerin’s voice transmission also reached Mok Gyeong-un’s ears.

-Young master. We will block that. When an opening is created, aim for the Southern Pacification Commissioner with the profound principle of unification that overwhelmed me before.

-Pat!

It was the moment those words ended.

As So Yerin took the lead and launched her body, Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint followed.

The two seemed to be heading to collide head-on with the three blades of the Qi Blade Control that flew like a dragon.

‘Foolish.’

Gu Seong-baek chuckled and soon brought his hands together.

And when he reached out towards them, the rotational force intensified, and the blue dragon became even more colossal.

The surroundings were on the verge of being split by the sharp wind pressure of the Sword Intent due to the tremendous momentum.

-Crack crack crack crack!

-Grip!

So Yerin tightly gripped her sword.

Then, she consecutively stamped the ground.

‘Wind Shadow Eight Types!’

At that moment, the wind rose, and her figure blurred, splitting into not two, but eight afterimages.

‘!?’

Seeing that, Gu Seong-baek frowned.

Afterimages were ultimately the result of high-speed movement, so if the figure split into eight, just how fast was she moving?

-Pa pa pa pa pa pak!

So Yerin’s figure, split into eight like that, rushed towards the blue Qi Blade Control dragon.

Then, So Yerin's eight split afterimages spread out in each direction and stamped their feet on the ground.

-Kwang!

The eight afterimages of So Yerin, who had stamped their feet, simultaneously pulled their swords and thrust them out.

Then, the whirlwind of red Sword Energy created from her swords surged towards the blue dragon.

The red whirlwinds surging from eight directions became like a huge wind net, pressuring the blue Qi Blade Control dragon.

-Cha cha cha cha cha cha cha cha!

Thanks to that, the dragon, whose momentum was bound, couldn't move an inch.

This wasn't the end.

“Haaaaah!”

-Pachichichichichik!

Dam Baek-ha, who had leaped high towards the whirlwind of the three Blade Qi bound by the red whirlwind net, unleashed a massive Penetrating Force Qi infused with the essence of her Blood Jade Hands and all her lightning power.

Lightning power possessed the properties of rigidity and paralysis.

As the Penetrating Force Qi of lightning struck the trapped Qi Blade Control dragon, it gradually began to lose its rotating force.

‘Now.’

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been watching for an opportunity, launched his body.

He gathered the twenty-four sword techniques into one and combined their power into a single point, aiming for his heart.

-Gasp!

Gu Seong-baek’s gaze, who had been concentrating on controlling the Qi Blade Control, hurriedly turned.

Gu Seong-baek’s pupils trembled.

The moment he saw the unified sword flying towards him at a single point, he could instinctively sense it.

‘How can there be such a sword?’

It was unbelievable.

This single sword strike Mok Gyeong-un was currently unleashing was a realm that even he, who had crossed the wall of walls, had not yet reached.

What the hell was going on?

In an instant, Gu Seong-baek’s mind became complicated.

The ultimate move of the Qi Blade Control unleashed with the three Golden Dawn Moon blades consumed a tremendous amount of true energy and mental strength.

The moment he released the force he had been maintaining, the impact would come rushing in.

-Grit!

However, there was no time to think about that impact.

As Gu Seong-baek released the force he had been maintaining for the ultimate move, he twisted his body.

At that moment,

-Chaaaaaang!

A black line brushed past him in the air.

Mok Gyeong-un appeared where it had brushed past.

-Ssrk!

Along with that, the blue whirlwind dragon formed by the Qi Blade Control that had been set to devastate the surroundings had disappeared.

At this, So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha, who had barely held it back and exhausted most of their true energy, simultaneously looked towards Mok Gyeong-un.

“Haa... haa...”

‘Did it succeed?’

Then, they looked at the Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek.

He was staggering while holding his chest with both hands. Had the unified power penetrated his heart?

-Clang!

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un dropped the Plundering-killing Sword he was holding in his left hand.

Then, blood dripped from his left hand.

-Drip drip!

Mok Gyeong-un looked at his shoulder.

His shoulder was half slashed, and if a little more force had been applied, he would have lost one of his arms.

Seeing this, So Yerin wondered if the single sword strike that had gathered his power had failed.

However, the staggering Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek soon knelt on one knee, and,

-Splat!

His entire left hand had been severed, and blood was gushing out.

‘!!!!!!’

It was a completely unexpected outcome.

This was due to Gu Seong-baek's judgment.

If it hadn't been in the midst of unleashing the ultimate move, he might have been able to avoid it or do something about it. However, Gu Seong-baek, who had suffered internal injuries due to the impact of retracting his true energy, was paralyzed for an instant.

And in that instant of paralysis, a single sword strike with unified power aimed at his heart.

Gu Seong-baek, who believed he couldn't block this unified power without any damage, made a choice.

It was to accept the sacrifice.

He concentrated all his energy on his left palm to block his heart and tried to slash Mok Gyeong-un's shoulder in an instant to somehow reduce the unified power.

This was the result of doing everything he could.

“Huu... huu.”

Gu Seong-baek, who had lost his left hand along with internal injuries, quickly regulated his breathing and circulated his energy.

Although he was injured, it wasn't a fatal wound.

If he controlled his internal energy a bit, he could still fight.

It was that moment.

-Crack crack crack crack crack!

The blood-red sky cracked, and the Blood Domain that had been overturning the surroundings disappeared.

Cheong-ryeong, who was in the air, muttered with a fatigued expression.

-I've reached my limit.

Maintaining such a wide-ranging Ghostly Domain during the day, not at night, was her limit as well.

“Huh?”

“I-it's become bright.”

-Murmur murmur!

As the Ghostly Domain was released, the Embroidered Uniform Guards and the eunuchs of the Eastern and Western Depots, who had been in chaos and confusion, looked around in a daze.

Then, the commanders who discovered the Southern Pacification Commissioner, Mok Gyeong-un, So Yerin, and Dam Baek-ha in the middle of the devastated area shouted.

“Capture them! Capture them!”

At this, the Embroidered Uniform Guards pulled themselves together and ran.

So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha, who had exhausted most of their energy, had darkened complexions at the sight of the numerous warriors rushing in from all directions.

With their remaining energy, it might be difficult to face all of them along with the Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek, who, although injured, was still formidable.

As if reading this atmosphere, Gu Seong-baek opened his mouth.

“You absolutely cannot escape. Surrender.”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un picked up the dropped Plundering-killing Sword with his other hand and said.

“We don’t know that yet.”

“You fought splendidly, but you are exhausted. On the other hand, even if I am injured, once I recover the flow of my internal energy, the situation will return to how it was.”

“Yes, that’s why we’re going to leave now.”

“What?”

It was that moment.

“Heum-won.”

Mok Gyeong-un looked up and called out something.

It was that exact instant.

Despite the Blood Domain being shattered, the ground suddenly darkened, and the sound of flapping along with gusts of wind abruptly swept through.

At this, everyone looked up in surprise.

“W-what is that?”

“A bird? What kind of bird is that big?”

The thing descending was an incredibly huge bird.

However, it had a grotesque appearance that was vastly different from an ordinary bird.

With the upper body of a bird and the lower body of a hornet with a stinger, this was none other than the Demonic Beast Heum-won.

Heum-won was the only Imae Mangryang that Mok Gyeong-un had tamed as his spirit beast.

“Get on the cart!”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s shout, So Yerin and Dam Baek-ha, who were equally dumbfounded, reflexively launched their bodies towards the food waste cart.

Mong Mu-yak, Seop Chun, and Ma Ra-hyeon, who had already heard Mok Gyeong-un’s instructions and were waiting in puzzlement while excluding the food waste container with Holy Fire Priestess inside, also lost their words at the sight of the colossal Heum-won.

‘When the hell did he tame something like this?’

While they were marveling like that, So Yerin, Dam Baek-ha, and then Mok Gyeong-un had already boarded the cart.

Then, as if it had been waiting, the descending Heum-won snatched the cart with its huge talons.

-Flap flap!

Heum-won, who had snatched the cart like that, tried to take off into the sky again.

At this, the commanders, who had been momentarily stunned by Heum-won's appearance, soon shouted at the Embroidered Uniform Guards.

“We can't let them go! Shoot arrows!”

“We mustn't let them escape!”

At that command, the Embroidered Uniform Guards who had bows hurriedly fired arrows.

However, when Heum-won flapped its wings, the arrows were instead deflected by the tremendous wind pressure.

-Pa pa pa pa pak!

“D-dodge!”

“Aaargh!”

An incident occurred where those who had been firing arrows were instead injured by the arrows flying back.

Heum-won had flown up about twenty zhang like that.

“Kuk!”

The Southern Pacification Commissioner Gu Seong-baek spat out a clump of black blood.

He had regained the flow within his body through energy circulation.

Having quickly recovered his body, he stood up and immediately unleashed his inner energy, once again deploying the Qi Blade Control with the three Golden Dawn Moon blades.

“You think I’ll let you go!”

With a shout, Gu Seong-baek utilized the Bow Body Projectile Shadow technique to soar into the sky using elasticity.

Seeing him flying up in an instant, So Yerin tried to draw her sword.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un said.

“Aaah. It seems the message was delivered.”

“What do you...”

-Gasp!

At that moment, So Yerin looked somewhere with surprised eyes.

It wasn’t just her.

Dam Baek-ha the Sixth Blood Saint also widened her eyes and looked in a certain direction of the Imperial Palace.

-Gooooo!

From there, an extremely ominous and evil energy was surging, and the energy was so strong that they couldn't help but have their gazes drawn to it.

At that time, the pupils of Gu Seong-baek, who had been soaring into the air with the Bow Body Projectile Shadow, trembled violently.

‘Your Majesty?’

He also sensed this ominous energy, just like them.

However, the place where it was emanating from was none other than where His Majesty the Emperor was.

At this, Gu Seong-baek, without a moment's hesitation, used the Golden Dawn Moon blades he was deploying with the Qi Blade Control in midair as a support and once again unleashed the Bow Body Projectile Shadow.

-Pang!

Seeing Gu Seong-baek change direction in midair and head towards that place, everyone plopped down and let out a sigh of relief.

What on earth was happening?

In the direction of the inner palace, far from where they were.

-Gooooo!

In a palace where people rarely passed by, there was a being blatantly exuding an ominous energy.

The peerless beauty in splendid attire was none other than the concubine Ho, no, the Hundred-Faced King, Golden Nine-Tailed Fox.

Openly revealing her energy, she lifted the corners of her mouth and muttered.

“You owe me one, Cheonma (Heavenly Demon).”