

Mayhem 361

Chapter 361 – Sacred Orb (3)

The technique of focusing all his strength into a single point was, for Mok Gyeong-un, a method that surpassed his own realm and physical limitations.

As such, when forcibly halting this concentrated power, the backlash would inevitably affect himself.

-Crack! Crackle!

The sound of muscles tearing and ripping throughout his body echoed.

It was loud enough for even the blade user a few steps away to hear.

The blade user, who had been momentarily amazed at the halting of the sword draw, soon curved his lips into a sinister smile.

Stopping this one sword strike was indeed an excellent judgment.

‘But it was also a foolish choice.’

Thanks to enduring that tremendous backlash, not only was he in pain, but it would be difficult for him to move right now.

In a battle between martial artists of nearly equal skill, this was a fatal miscalculation.

-Whoosh!

The blade user moved.

As someone whose entire body's muscles had developed to maximize any movement, he could achieve ultra-high-speed movement with just basic body techniques.

-Swish!

The blade user's form scattered and instantly reached Mok Gyeong-un's front.

He unleashed his sword technique towards Mok Gyeong-un's vital points.

'Second form, Sword Extreme Form Control!'

There was no need to even use fire energy.

A situation where he could finish it with just sword techniques...

-Whoosh!

At that moment.

Mok Gyeong-un threw his body backward.

Seeing this, a strange light flickered in the blade user's eyes.

'He moved?'

Most of his muscles should have been torn, yet he endured the pain and forced himself to move?

It was an admirable level of endurance, enough to make one's tongue click in amazement.

He must have also sustained internal injuries, making it difficult to utilize his inner energy. It was impressive that he could show such movement in this state.

But the world of combat is cold.

No matter how admirable or worthy of respect an opponent might be, he had to die.

-Swish! Whoosh!

The blade user changed his sword technique, altering the trajectory to catch up with Mok Gyeong-un as he threw his body backward.

It wasn't something he could avoid just by dodging anyway.

Unless he had superhuman regenerative abilities like himself, who had absorbed the essence of spiritual beasts, his body wouldn't recover just by briefly avoiding attacks.

'Just give up already.'

The trajectories of the blade user's sword techniques aimed to slice off Mok Gyeong-un's arms.

At that moment.

-Hisssss!

The skin below Mok Gyeong-un's head, which had been glowing red and emitting steam due to blood flow, suddenly began to turn black, with veins bulging prominently.

This was the Evil Blood Shifting Technique.

But it didn't end there.

-Crack! Crack!

In this state of Evil Blood Shifting, the muscles near Mok Gyeong-un's joints swelled, filling in the torn areas.

-Clang clang clang clang clang!

Along with this, Mok Gyeong-un unleashed a sword-drawing technique of the Demonic Sword Art, blocking the blade user's changed technique.

The blade user was dumbfounded.

What kind of technique is this?

He displayed some bizarre techniques, gathering his power into a single point and then filling in the aftermath of stopping it.

-Flutter flutter flutter!

Whatever techniques they were, his strength had returned to a comparable level.

Thinking it was only temporary, the blade user unleashed a series of other sword techniques to subdue Mok Gyeong-un.

-Clang clang clang clang clang!

In an instant, the two exchanged about 10 forms.

Despite this, Mok Gyeong-un didn't give an inch and received his sword techniques.

When the blade user used techniques that exceeded the normal range of joint movement, Mok Gyeong-un countered with completely different sword-drawing techniques using both hands.

Thus, no openings were created.

-Whoosh!

Realizing this wouldn't work, the blade user infused his sword techniques with fire energy to push Mok Gyeong-un back forcefully, but in response, Mok Gyeong-un raised cold energy, creating a situation similar to before.

The surroundings became hazy with steam.

-Clang clang clang clang clang!

As visibility decreased and they had to rely on sound and energy sense to judge movements, the blade user's eyes grew complex.

How many techniques has he mastered to be able to endure like this?

It was impressive enough that he was still holding out when his energy should be depleting over time, but he was also filling in his deficiencies with these strange techniques he had learned.

-Grr!

He prided himself on having perfected the ultimate essence of sword techniques, compensating for all the weaknesses while competing with the brilliant genius known as the Sword Demon.

Moreover, hadn't he surpassed human limits in inner energy by obtaining two spiritual beast cores?

Yet why was he maintaining this stalemate?

'...Is this the beginning?'

As much as he hated to admit it, he was truly a naturally gifted martial talent of unprecedented caliber.

There was a reason he was called a legend.

-Clang clang clang clang clang!

They had already exchanged over 40 forms, yet he showed not even the slightest opening, making the blade user want to genuinely express his admiration.

But he hadn't come all this way just to admire and compete.

His ultimate goal was to take his life.

'I wanted to defeat him purely through martial skill, but I guess that was just my own desire.'

-Thud!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un's magic sword Evil Commandment Sword pierced the blade user's abdomen.

'This is?'

In an instant, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed.

Even with the steam obscuring vision and weakening concentration, that last sword strike wasn't something this man should have fallen for.

Right then.

-Grab!

'!?'

The blade user grabbed the sword embedded in him.

Then,

-Slash!

Mok Gyeong-un instantly let go of Evil Commandment Sword's hilt and tried to avoid it using the Clear Manifest Water Leaping Step, but his shoulder was still cut.

'So this was it?'

As his shoulder was sliced, Mok Gyeong-un realized.

As the stalemate continued and he became more accustomed to the sword techniques, the blade user had switched to an extreme strategy.

That strategy was to unleash techniques aiming for mutual destruction with every move.

By attacking with the intent of dying together, it naturally became possible to sacrifice flesh to gain bone.

'...So you've resorted to this.'

Mok Gyeong-un had anticipated this strategy to some extent.

It was a rational choice.

Even he would have employed such a strategy to face an equal or stronger opponent if he had such tremendous regenerative abilities that could regrow severed limbs.

'Now I need to create distance.'

If they fought at close range, he would continue to use techniques of mutual destruction.

For someone like himself without superhuman regeneration, this approach would only put him at a disadvantage.

Just as Mok Gyeong-un was about to create distance,

-Clang!

The blade user pulled out the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword embedded in his abdomen and threw it away, uttering incomprehensible words.

"Steam is moisture. Do you know what has a good affinity with moisture?"

'!?'

At that very moment.

-Crackle crackle crackle crackle!

Suddenly, the hazy surroundings full of steam were enveloped in blue lightning.

It was the lightning energy emitted by the blade user.

As the space filled with steam was dyed with lightning, the entire area became like a thundercloud.

-Zap! Zap!

In the space instantly filled with lightning, Mok Gyeong-un was electrocuted.

It wasn't something he could avoid.

He tried to protect his entire body with demonic energy to disperse the lightning energy, but he couldn't do anything about the muscle stiffening caused by the continuous lightning.

As his movements slowed down at that moment,

"It's over!"

-Whoosh!

The blade user unleashed his Extreme Swift Killing Blade to behead Mok Gyeong-un.

Unlike the electrocuted and stiffened Mok Gyeong-un, the blade user's blade, moving freely and even faster in the lightning, was truly the epitome of extreme swiftness.

-Slash!

It was an all too fatal strike.

Facing the extremely swift blade aiming for his neck, Mok Gyeong-un instantly sensed death.

'I can't avoid it.'

No matter how much he struggled, this was something he couldn't do anything about in his current state.

The moment he realized this, time seemed to slow down.

It was truly bizarre.

-Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!

To think that the extremely swift blade would appear so slow when he thought he was going to die.

They say humans see their entire life flash before their eyes before death.

It might be a process of looking back on the years they've lived.

However, for Mok Gyeong-un, who didn't place much significance on the years he had lived, death was just an end.

Because he thought it was just an end,

'Is this as far as I go?'

As he was about to accept this, suddenly,

-Mortal.

A single existence flashed through Mok Gyeong-un's mind.

It was none other than Cheong-ryeong.

'!?'

Why?

Why did she come to mind right before death?

Not his grandfather, not regret for not fully completing his revenge, why did her voice and face come to mind?

In that instant, Mok Gyeong-un wondered.

Her face came to mind so naturally, and he even felt a strange emotion of wanting to see her just one more time.

This was a first in his life.

As the feeling of wanting to see her grew stronger, a different emotion from acceptance arose in Mok Gyeong-un's mind.

'Not yet.'

It was the feeling that he had to live to see her.

But how could he survive this moment?

His body was stiff from the lightning, and the extremely swift blade was just a hair's breadth away from his neck.

Was there really a way to escape from a situation like this?

As he was filled with doubt, suddenly,

[Everything depends on how you think about it. In the end, it's all about your will to do it.]

The words that being had said in his mental image suddenly came to mind.

At that moment, on the border between life and death, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes came alive and his senses became extremely sharp.

-Thud!

“Ugh!”

At that moment, a death cry burst from the blade user's mouth.

The blade user's eyes shook wildly.

For good reason, as he was just about to behead him, but something sharp had pierced right through his heart in the middle of his chest.

‘Wh-what is this...’

It was clearly a sword, seemingly non-existent yet existing.

The blade user looked down.

There, a sharp blade was forming the shape of a sword without any medium, and this was...

“Invi...Invinsible Sword?”

There was no doubt.

Beyond the stage of becoming one with the sword, where even energy forms a sword.

It was the realm of the Invinsible Sword.

The blade user staggered with an unbelieving expression.

How could he, who had taken two spiritual beast cores and surpassed wall after wall to reach the realm of oneness with the blade, not yet reach this supreme realm...

-Shudder!

For a moment, the blade user's expression froze.

It was because he met Mok Gyeong-un's eyes looking at him.

The emotion he felt the moment he saw those eyes was singular.

‘Death.’

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes were depicting only his death.

Sensing this, the blade user's mind was filled with fear and terror.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un's form, free from the lightning, moved.

At this, the blade user's hand, staggering from having his heart pierced by the formless sword, reached for the pouch at his waist.

'I, I must escape...'

-Slash!

At that moment, a black line appeared and passed through the blade user.

-Thud!

Mok Gyeong-un appeared at the end of the black line, exhaling rough breaths.

"Haa... Haa..."

-Thump!

Then, the staggering blade user behind him fell to his knees on the ground.

At that sound, Mok Gyeong-un slowly turned his head.

There was the blade user, with a hole larger than a fist in the back of his head, through which the opposite side was clearly visible.

Chapter 362 – Sword (1)

“Ah...”

A gasp escaped Cheong-ryeong’s lips.

She had been watching the battle from above with a nervous heart.

Though she might have broader experience in many aspects, when it came to martial prowess, Mok Gyeong-un had long since surpassed her.

The opponent Mok Gyeong-un was facing was a monster who had not only reached the Profound Realm but also consumed a spiritual beast’s core, transcending human limits.

As such, it was difficult to predict the outcome of this battle.

Thinking that Mok Gyeong-un might lose if things went wrong, she had been preparing to intervene if necessary.

‘If it doesn’t work out, I’ll step in.’

Though the opponent was such a monster that she might not be of much help, she couldn’t let him die when their karmic connection had been established.

But when the hazy mist and thunderclouds obscuring her vision cleared, a surprising result unfolded.

Mok Gyeong-un had emerged victorious.

‘What... what on earth is that?’

The sword made of pure energy piercing the blade user's chest.

Seeing it, she couldn't help but be shocked.

It was a level of martial technique that she, who had never let go of her sword in life or even in death, had never imagined or experienced.

'...The true realm of Invinsible Sword, where a sword is no longer needed.'

She was genuinely impressed.

Clicking her tongue in admiration, she soon descended to where Mok Gyeong-un was.

However,

-Thump!

The form of the blade user who had been kneeling collapsed.

There was a gaping hole in the middle of his face that had been thrown backward, and looking at that, it seemed impossible for him to revive, superhuman regeneration or not.

As Cheong-ryeong approached Mok Gyeong-un,

'!?'

She suddenly halted.

This was because she saw Mok Gyeong-un smiling at her with an expression she had never seen before.

The smile was so radiant that Cheong-ryeong was momentarily dumbfounded.

Was this really an expression that the mortal she knew could make?

‘What... on earth...’

She knew that he usually wore a smiling expression, but since she was aware that there was almost no emotion in that smile, she had always considered it expressionless no matter how much she looked at it.

But this smile was completely different.

There was an inexplicable joy in his eyes as he looked at her.

‘...What’s this?’

As she stared at this, Cheong-ryeong felt a subtle feeling.

It felt as if her non-existent heart was beating.

Cheong-ryeong quickly turned her head away.

Making eye contact with him was strangely difficult.

It wasn’t because it was burdensome or repulsive, but just the act of making eye contact made her feel weird.

How should she describe this?

Embarrassment? Or shyness?

“It’s good.”

-Wh-what?

“I said it’s good. That I didn’t die and got to see Cheong-ryeong again.”

-Wh-what nonsense are you suddenly spouting?

Cheong-ryeong found herself stammering at Mok Gyeong-un’s unexpected words.

It’s not like he ate something wrong, but she couldn’t understand why he was suddenly making such an expression and saying these things.

Feeling at a loss for what to say, Cheong-ryeong tried to change the subject.

-You... just now...

Before she could finish her sentence,

Mok Gyeong-un suddenly walked backward,

-Step step step!

Standing in front of the fallen blade user,

-Slash slash slash slash!

He used his magic sword Plundering-killing Sword to split the blade user's neck and limbs.

The sight of the blade user split into six pieces was utterly gruesome.

Cheong-ryeong asked about this.

-Are you making sure?

"Yes. His head is practically gone, but just in case."

Mok Gyeong-un said this while shaking the blood off his sword onto the ground.

Cheong-ryeong shook her head at Mok Gyeong-un's judgment.

As always, he was someone who never left any loose ends in such matters.

"Hmm. Since I've already cut him up, should I chop the body into even smaller pieces?"

-Right here? Are you going to completely pulverize...

But then,

-Rumble rumble rumble!

The ground suddenly began to shake.

At this sudden phenomenon, Mok Gyeong-un glanced at the shaking ground and then said to Cheong-ryeong,

"It might be better to step back for a moment."

-Indeed, we should.

-Whoosh!

Just as Mok Gyeong-un lightly leapt backward and Cheong-ryeong flew to the rear,

-Boom!

Something huge burst out of the ground with a thunderous noise.

It was the monster Earth Mole Dragon.

The Earth Mole Dragon that suddenly appeared had burst through the ground exactly where the blade user's body, cut into six pieces, was lying.

The monster Earth Mole Dragon, which had swallowed the pieces of the blade user's body as it emerged, let out a roar as if satisfied.

-Groooooar!

It seemed that the demonic nature had exploded due to the blood spilled on the ground, causing it to surface.

After swallowing the blade user, the monster Earth Mole Dragon seemed to sense Mok Gyeong-un, glanced in his direction once, and then burrowed back into the ground.

-Rumble rumble rumble rumble!

As the Earth Mole Dragon disappeared into the ground, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said,

“I guess there’s no chance he’ll survive now.”

-...Indeed.

Should we say he was extremely unlucky?

Not only had he been turned into pieces of meat, but he had also become food for a monster.

As the presence of the monster Earth Mole Dragon completely vanished, Cheong-ryeong looked around at the devastated surroundings and said,

-I have more than one or two things I want to ask. About that blackening, and about forming a sword with energy.

“...I really don’t know about the blackening either.”

-Really?

“Yes. If I find out, I’ll be sure to tell Cheong-ryeong.”

-.....

At these words from Mok Gyeong-un, Cheong-ryeong’s expression became peculiar.

This guy seems to have changed somehow.

Originally, when he spoke, he was the type to leave no room for interpretation, as if trying not to give any openings.

But now he says he'll definitely tell her.

Why does he seem to have become so favorable?

As she was wondering about this, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

"Are you talking about forming a sword with energy like this?"

-Woong woong woong!

As Mok Gyeong-un extended his hand, energy condensed above it, taking the form of a sword.

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong couldn't help but exclaim in admiration.

-Amazing. You wielded a sword with energy. To think that making something non-existent exist in form could be possible like this.

"Indeed."

-It's as good as non-existent yet has form, so it should be called a formless sword.

"A formless sword? Invincible Sword?"

-Yes. That's what we should call it. But how on earth did you gain this insight?

"Insight?"

-Yes.

“Well, it’s not something I gained by trying to gain insight.”

-If it’s not something you gained by trying to gain insight, then how on earth did you reach such a supreme realm?

“Hmm.”

-Was it a sudden enlightenment?

“I suppose you could say it was similar. When I thought I might die from that person’s blade, I just burned with the will to live at the boundary between life and death.”

-...The boundary between life and death?

“Yes.”

Mok Gyeong-un had manifested a strong will at the boundary between life and death.

His will was so strong that it even gave form to energy, which normally cannot take shape by itself.

This was an insight that transcended becoming one with the sword.

It was a shocking awakening even for Cheong-ryeong, who had believed that the Profound Realm, the wall of walls, was the supreme realm.

-Your innate talent and martial prowess have surpassed the realm where I can teach you any further.

She had always refrained from excessive praise, believing it would hinder progress, no matter how strong Mok Gyeong-un became.

However, now that she judged he had reached a supreme realm that could no longer be called novice, she couldn't help but be honest.

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

"Not at all. There's still so much I don't know, so Cheong-ryeong needs to stay by my side and teach me."

-You're saying things you don't mean.

"It's not something I don't mean. I want Cheong-ryeong to keep staying by my side."

-.....

Cheong-ryeong was momentarily at a loss for words at Mok Gyeong-un's statement.

Given the flow of the conversation, it seemed he meant it in a different sense, but that gaze of his looking at her, along with his softened tone, made her conscious of it in a completely different direction.

Realizing that if this continued, she might get caught up in the atmosphere, Cheong-ryeong changed the subject again.

"You! Is your body condition alright?"

"My body?"

"Yes. If your body is fine, shouldn't we go up there?"

Cheong-ryeong pointed to the top of the cliff.

It was so deep that even the light shining from above seemed too far away.

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un examined his body condition.

Due to the aftermath of concentrating all his power into a single point and then stopping, all his muscles had been torn, so he had compensated for this using the Evil Blood Shifting Technique and other muscles to maintain movement.

But,

-Rustle rustle!

His body moved perfectly fine.

It seemed that after gaining the new insight, even the ruptured or torn muscles had all healed.

No, rather, the movement of his muscles seemed even smoother than before.

Should we say the elasticity had increased?

“I don’t think I need to do any energy circulation or anything like that.”

More importantly, there was an item he had dropped during the fight that he needed to retrieve.

Mok Gyeong-un scanned his surroundings.

Not far away, his unique weapon, the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword, was lying on the ground.

Around it were numerous sword and blade marks.

These were traces left from his exchange of sword techniques with the blade user.

'...I might have died if I had been unlucky.'

That's how strong, no, dangerous an opponent he was.

Not just the power of the spiritual beast core, but the blade user's blade techniques were truly a new world.

Thanks to the trajectories that completely ignored the body's joint range of motion and muscles, he had quite a hard time adapting when he first encountered them.

Of course, from the point he adapted, those trajectories became visible to his eyes, so dealing with them wasn't difficult.

However, this kind of perspective certainly seemed helpful.

-Why are you like that?

At Cheong-ryeong's question, Mok Gyeong-un extended his hand,

-Swish! Grab!

He retrieved the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword using the Void Object Grasping technique and replied,

"I was thinking about what it would be like to create a sword technique that surpasses the range of joint motion and the limits of muscles."

-The range of joint motion and limits of muscles? Don't tell me it's because of fighting that guy?

"Yes."

-Hmm. It certainly was an extraordinary blade technique, but would that be possible?

"Do you think it's not possible?"

-That was a blade technique only possible for someone with a completely different joint and muscle structure, and even overall body structure, from normal people. No matter how exceptional your memory is and how outstanding your ability to embody what you've learned, this seems like a separate issue.

Cheong-ryeong judged that this would be difficult even for Mok Gyeong-un.

How could it be possible without long years of training to change muscle structure and joint range of motion?

But then Mok Gyeong-un grasped the hilt of the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword and took the stance for the Demonic Sword Art's energy gathering technique.

-What are you trying to do?

"I thought I'd give it a try."

-Try?

"Yes. I thought I might be able to make the sword-drawing technique of the Demonic Sword Art even more complete."

-Whoosh!

No sooner had he finished speaking than Mok Gyeong-un tried to apply the blade technique he remembered the blade user using to the Demonic Sword Art, his own created sword-drawing technique.

If this was possible, it might increase the range of motion for trajectories in the empty parts of the sword technique.

So Mok Gyeong-un unleashed what was in his mind.

-Slash slash slash slash!

For Mok Gyeong-un now, the sword was a brush.

He drew trajectories with his sword as if brushing strokes on a blank canvas.

Cheong-ryeong, who had been watching this with a half-doubting gaze, gradually showed a strange light in her eyes.

This was because Mok Gyeong-un was truly extending the trajectories beyond the range of motion of his body's joints.

‘It’s still okay.’

This was also because his muscle elasticity had improved.

Perhaps because of this, the start was fine.

-Slash slash slash slash!

However, as expected, as the sword-drawing technique continued, he felt the pain of muscles tearing.

Since he was drawing trajectories that exceeded the range of joint motion and muscle limits, no matter how much he tried to endure, abnormalities were bound to occur.

-Crack! Crackle!

Although his body was strained, Mok Gyeong-un endured this and continued to demonstrate the technique.

Ordinary people would have already given up midway, unable to endure, but Mok Gyeong-un had extreme endurance for pain and could control his muscles to some extent.

Therefore, while he couldn't do anything about the range of joint motion, he compensated for the tearing muscles with other muscles and continued the technique.

-Slash slash slash slash!

The forms of the Demonic Sword Art with new trajectories added.

Watching this, an exclamation finally burst from Cheong-ryeong's lips.

-Ha!

It was truly amazing.

Until now, she had thought there was no sword technique closer to perfection than the Demonic Sword Art this guy had created.

Therefore, she had believed it was a sword-drawing technique that needed no further improvement, but as trajectories that surpassed limits were added to it, it evolved into an incredible sword technique where it became difficult to find weaknesses in any direction.

‘Was this possible?’

Cheong-ryeong was genuinely dumbfounded.

Is there really no limit to this mortal’s talent?

Just as she couldn’t help but admire this, it happened.

-Tap!

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been demonstrating the sword technique, suddenly stopped.

Cheong-ryeong asked,

-No. Why are you stopping?

“Ah.”

Then Mok Gyeong-un exhaled softly,

-Slash slash slash!

He carved letters into the cliff face with sharp energy.

(Impossible)

It meant “not possible.”

Since he hadn’t added trajectories to all sword-drawing techniques yet, Cheong-ryeong asked in confusion,

-What do you mean impossible? It seems quite possible.

“I don’t think it’s feasible right away.”

-Right away?

“Yes. Of course, if we force it, it might be possible someday. But if we continue from the point where the joints are already strained, they might completely misalign.”

-Didn’t you already take that into account?

“Yes. But... a thought suddenly occurred to me.”

-What thought?

“If we took the time to increase the range of joint motion and change the muscles to compensate, we could probably use this freely, but I think that would be a waste of time.”

-Huh? You wrote ‘impossible’ just because of such a reason?

“No. It’s because I think it would be difficult for anyone but me.”

-What?

“The Demonic Sword Art is already a sword-drawing technique that’s difficult for anyone but me to use just because of the number of sword forms. If we add sword forms that exceed the range of joint motion and muscle limits, it would become a sword technique that no one could learn.”

-.....

At these words from Mok Gyeong-un, Cheong-ryeong’s mouth closed.

Certainly, if this were completed, it would give birth to a sword technique close to perfection.

However, as the mortal said, this sword technique was already a sword-drawing technique that surpassed limits due to having too many sword forms, and if trajectories surpassing limits were added on top of that, who indeed could learn it?

His opinion certainly had a point.

For martial arts to continue for generations, there needs to be some degree of versatility.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and continued speaking.

“And even if we don’t consider someone else learning it, since I have the Invincible Sword anyway, there’s no need to forcibly train and change muscles and joints to compensate for empty trajectories.”

-Invincible Sword... Right. That’s true, you have that.

“Anyway, let’s stop adding trajectories here.”

-Well, if that’s what you’ve decided, so be it. But seeing you make such a decision, even though you keep talking about revenge, revenge... It seems you’re thinking about having disciples.

“Disciples?”

-Yes. Ahem.

For a moment, she was about to say 'descendants' but changed her expression to 'disciples' with a somewhat bitter voice.

Even if not descendants, he could still take on disciples.

To these words of hers, Mok Gyeong-un casually replied.

"Well. I suppose it wouldn't matter if I just kept it to myself and left, but it seems a waste to do so."

-Oh ho. So you've come to want disciples?

"Disciples are one thing, but if what that so-called prophet said is true, I might even have descendants."

-Descendants... Didn't you say you weren't interested in such things?

"I'm not interested."

-Then why suddenly talk about descendants? Did nearly dying suddenly awaken some instinct for species propagation?

"It wouldn't be bad to have them."

-It wouldn't be bad to have them?

"Yes. I think it would be fine even if Cheong-ryeong possessed someone to give birth to my child."

‘!!!!!!’

At Mok Gyeong-un's unexpected words, Cheong-ryeong's face and spiritual body froze as if turned to ice.

Chapter 363 – Sword (2)

“Yes. I think it would be fine even if Cheong-ryeong possessed someone to give birth to my child.”

-!!!!!!

Cheong-ryeong, frozen like ice, was at a loss for what to do.

As a vengeful spirit, she had remained in this world to resolve her grudge, but she was merely a spiritual body without even a physical form.

Thus, no matter what emotions she might develop, she considered them all meaningless.

But now, Mok Gyeong-un had shaken her with completely unexpected words.

-You... you... what... what are you...

She was so flustered that she couldn't speak properly.

Mok Gyeong-un's words were that shocking.

Does this mortal truly understand what he just said?

Is he perhaps mocking her?

As the bewildering emotions passed, anger began to rise.

-Mortal, do you know what you're saying right now?

“Why wouldn't I know?”

-What?

“I said I'd like it if Cheong-ryeong had my child.”

-Are you trying to play word games with me...

“It's not a word game.”

-If this isn't a word game, then what are you saying? Telling a dead vengeful spirit to bear a child, this is insulting to me...

-Grab!

Before she could finish speaking,

Mok Gyeong-un grabbed her hand.

Unlike other exorcists, he could directly touch her as if she were corporeal, even without high spiritual power.

-Grip!

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un firmly grasping her hand, she was so flustered she didn't know what to do.

-Wh-what are you doing?

“What does that matter?”

-What do you mean, what does it matter?

“What does it matter that you're a dead vengeful spirit?”

-What do you mean, what does it matter? I am dead, and you, mortal, are alive...

“What does being dead or alive have to do with liking someone?”

-.....

At these words from Mok Gyeong-un, Cheong-ryeong was at a loss for words.

It was truly bizarre.

She was merely a spiritual body, so she had no heart and no blood flowing.

Nevertheless, she was caught in the strange phenomenon of her face feeling hot and her chest pounding as if her heart was beating fast, making her unable to look at him.

‘Li... liking...’

Is this mortal really playing with her?

But Mok Gyeong-un's gaze as he looked at her was completely different from usual.

How could this guy, who was the very embodiment of emotionlessness, be looking at her with such warm eyes?

Looking into those eyes made her heart weak.

This shouldn't be happening, it felt like the long years she had stubbornly endured with only vengeance would crumble.

Then Mok Gyeong-un said to Cheong-ryeong,

"Do you dislike me, Cheong-ryeong?"

With that one question, Cheong-ryeong's heart was about to completely crumble.

She wasn't a fool.

She was constantly aware of the signs she felt from him and her own weakening heart.

That's why she had hoped as much as possible that this situation wouldn't occur.

But why is this guy trying to make her so weak like this?

Cheong-ryeong's hand, held by Mok Gyeong-un, was about to tighten.

-I... I...

At that moment, the image of someone wailing flashed through Cheong-ryeong's mind.

-Slap!

Cheong-ryeong hurriedly shook off Mok Gyeong-un's hand.

Then, biting her lip, she spoke in a resolute voice.

-This one does not.

“.....”

-This one exists only for revenge. Isn't it the same for you?

“.....Revenge.”

Hearing the disappointment in Mok Gyeong-un's voice, she turned her gaze away.

She felt that if she made eye contact, her heart might weaken unnecessarily.

But then Mok Gyeong-un continued speaking.

“That's right. Revenge was everything.”

‘Was?’

It's past tense.

What is he trying to say?

It feels like I shouldn't listen.

But then,

“I think it would be nice to be with Cheong-ryeong after the revenge is done.”

-Haa.....

Cheong-ryeong's eyes trembled.

Why are you, mortal, trying to make her weak when she's trying to resolutely push you away?

As she was merely a dead vengeful spirit, she no longer had any desire to be connected with anyone.

To her, who was like this, Mok Gyeong-un approached and said,

“But you're right too.”

-What?

Is he giving up?

Really?

The human heart is truly fickle.

As she sensed signs of giving up in his words, she felt somewhat regretful.

But then Mok Gyeong-un said,

“I was only thinking of myself. Not just me, but we need to finish your revenge too. Isn’t that right?”

-.....

“If both our revenges are finished, then could Cheong-ryeong like me too?”

-.....

Cheong-ryeong’s eyes, which had been avoiding his gaze, were now directed at Mok Gyeong-un again.

Why?

She had thought that, unlike others, she would never be attracted to such an emotionless being even if he were alive.

But you, mortal...

Right at that moment,

-Whoosh!

Mok Gyeong-un suddenly stretched his hand upward.

Then something flew and landed in his hand.

It was none other than a bracelet.

-...What is that?

At Cheong-ryeong's question, Mok Gyeong-un looked up at the top of the cliff with narrowed eyes and said,

"It seems to be the accessory Ye Song-ah always wears on her wrist."

Ye Song-ah.

The granddaughter of the Holy Fire Priestess.

Why had her bracelet, which she always wore, suddenly fallen down the cliff?

As she was wondering this, Cheong-ryeong said to Mok Gyeong-un,

-I don't know what's happening, but we should go up for now.

"...Indeed. But it seems you haven't answered my question yet."

At Mok Gyeong-un's directness, Cheong-ryeong's lips twitched as if she was about to say something, then clenched her fist and said,

-I'll consider it if the revenge is finished.

"Consider?"

-Yes!

"Can emotions be something to consider?"

-Hmph! Don't nitpick every little thing! This one's thoughts haven't changed.

"Ah. Is that so?"

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and smiled slightly.

Consideration ultimately meant leaving room for possibility, so it wasn't impossible.

Therefore, this was enough for now.

Just half a moment ago.

A young man and woman were standing with their backs to the broken cliff.

They were Ou Yeonwoo, the third son of Ou Cheonmu, the Master of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, and Ye Song-ah, the granddaughter of the Holy Fire Priestess.

These two were surrounded by sword disciples of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, and this scene was being observed by guests of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary and Jeong Myeong Sa-tae, an investigator from the Righteous Alliance and a member of the Hangshan Sect, along with Moyong Hak, the eldest son of the Moyong family.

How did it come to this?

It was because Ou Woong-seong, the second son of Master Ou, had exposed Ye Song-ah as a member of the Fire Faith Order.

[Hand over that object. It belongs to this young lady.]

When Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang spoke these words, Ou Woong-seong, who had noticed her identity, immediately started pushing the atmosphere as soon as he regained consciousness.

[Master! And honored guests, do you truly not understand? That mysterious swordsman, and the Fire Faith Order expert that this wench brought, caused this disaster trying to steal that glowing orb that was taken from that brat Yeonwoo!]

These words from Ou Woong-seong were enough to sway public opinion.

The perception of the Fire Faith Order wasn't very good even among martial artists, so people began to think that the cause of this incident originated from Ye Song-ah and Ou Yeonwoo.

“That's right. It makes sense.”

“If they hadn't come, this situation wouldn't have happened.”

“How many people have died?”

“Damn Fire Faith Order members.”

“Shh. He's still the Master Ou's son.”

“Son or not, it's because of them!”

Ye Song-ah's identity as a Fire Faith Order member and Ou Woong-seong's instigation were driving them into a corner.

Of course, not everyone was pushing them.

Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang, who had learned his younger brother Ou Yeonwoo's true intentions, stepped forward to try to calm the situation.

"Please calm down, my sword disciples and honored guests. It's too hasty to conclude that this happened because of them. With the Righteous Alliance investigators here, we can make a judgment after a thorough investigation..."

"What do you mean calm down? Second Young Master Ou Woong-seong is right! If it weren't for your third brother who joined the Fire Faith Order and that wench, none of this would have happened!"

"That's right! If it weren't for them, neither the tragedy of the Namgoong family nor this disaster here would have occurred. What on earth are you saying, Junior Master?"

But it was not enough to soothe the crowd that was already as angry as it could be.

They were convinced that all the blame lay with Ou Yeonwoo and Ye Song-ah, who were Fire Faith Order members, and believed they should pay the price.

Moyong Hak from the Righteous Alliance seemed to share this opinion,

"Sa-tae. I'll arrest them for now. Those who fell off the cliff died by the Master's hand, so send the Alliance's warriors to retrieve the bodies and escort these two."

"Amitabha. patron Moyong, let's observe for a moment."

"Observe? This is clearly..."

"Your opinion has merit, patron, but you're being too swayed by instigation."

"Sa-tae..."

At Jeong Myeong Sa-tae's words, Moyong Hak sighed as if frustrated.

As an assigned investigator, he needed to draw some conclusion one way or another.

But luckily, that monstrous true culprit who was hard to subdue had essentially mutually destroyed himself with the Fire Faith Order expert, and those perceived to be the root cause were right here.

It should be a simple matter of just escorting them, so why observe?

At that moment, someone among the guests stepped forward and spoke.

“What are you trying to do by determining the root cause here and now?”

It was Ji-oe, who had been staying in this Sword Valley the longest among the guests.

When Ji-oe stepped forward, the guests showed incomprehensible reactions.

“No, Senior Ji-oe! Senior Gok-o has died, how can you say such things now?”

“That’s right. It’s crystal clear that they brought about this incident, so how can you say not to determine the root cause?”

“If you’re not going to let the deaths of our seniors and juniors pass like this, then step aside.”

Most of the guests in the Sword Valley were close friends.

With more than half of them having been brutally sacrificed, their anger was not likely to subside easily.

But Ji-oe was also someone with an even fierier temper than them.

“Silence!”

When Ji-oe shouted with internal energy in his voice, those who had been clamoring all closed their mouths at once.

When it became somewhat quiet, Ji-oe spoke again.

“We are sword disciples and martial artists. We’re angry about the deaths of Gok-o and the others, but that was because our martial arts and swordsmanship were inferior to that damned blade user. But why are you ignoring that and saying these young ones should take responsibility as if they’re the root cause?”

“It’s not a matter of attitude, senior.”

“They’re Fire Faith Order members...”

“That damn Fire Faith Order! Fire Faith Order! Are you going to kill every Fire Faith Order member you see? A martial artist’s death ultimately comes from not being strong enough in the law of the jungle. Why can’t you see the essence?”

At Ji-oe’s rebuke, some looked ashamed.

This was because they were people with strong pride as martial artists.

However, there was someone who was instigating to prevent this atmosphere from settling down,

“Senior Ji-oe. If it weren’t for those Fire Faith Order members, that blade user wouldn’t have appeared, this horrible tragedy wouldn’t have happened, and my arm wouldn’t have been cut off. Surely you’re not trying to defend them?”

It was Ou Woong-seong, the second son of the Master.

At his words, the guests and martial artists stirred again.

“The Second Young Master is right. How can you defend them?”

“Ha! You’re truly heartless. Is senior Gok-o’s death because he was weak? Are you saying all weak people should die unfairly?”

“Wh-what did you say?”

Ji-oe was dumbfounded at their reactions.

If there was a situation where cause and effect should be examined because everything has a causal relationship, it should be examined, but right now, their anger was being instigated by the glib tongue of that Master’s second son.

That guy was making things more complicated by blaming this and that.

“Please calm down!”

Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang tried hard to calm them down, but it was useless.

Seeing this, the second son Ou Woong-seong laughed inwardly.

It was truly a blessing in disguise, wasn’t it?

Only after losing his arm did he come to his senses, and although he was in agony at first, later he saw this as an opportunity.

He didn't understand why his older brother suddenly tried to help them, but if he could use this as an excuse to accuse him of trying to help a Fire Faith Order member, what would happen?

It seemed possible that he might even be able to have the position of Junior Master stripped away.

‘It all depends on Father’s decision.’

Ou Woong-seong looked at Master Ou Cheonmu, who was standing on the cliff looking down.

Master Ou Cheonmu had been looking down for a long time, not taking his eyes off, perhaps to see what had happened to those two monsters.

‘How deep is that place, how could they survive?’

Even for peerless experts, not only was the depth of this cliff tremendous, but due to the valley winds, it was almost impossible even to descend with a rope.

No matter how strong those guys were, it was safe to say there was almost no chance of survival.

At that moment, Master Ou Cheonmu, who had been looking down the cliff, finally raised his head and turned around.

“Huu.”

As he took his gaze off the cliff and turned around, everyone’s attention focused on him.

Eventually, Master Ou Cheonmu approached where Ou Yeonwoo and Ye Song-ah were, with his hands behind his back.

Then Ou Yeonwoo prostrated himself on the ground.

“Fath-, no, Master. This incident is absolutely not related to us. Or even if it is, it has nothing to do with Miss Ye here.”

“Yeonwoo!”

Ye Song-ah was dismayed at his words.

Ou Yeonwoo's intention was clear.

He was trying to save her, at least.

Knowing his affection, Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang also knelt on one knee, clasped his hands, and spoke respectfully.

“Master. This son will investigate this incident. So for now...”

“Ah! Didn't brother say that? That the orb belongs to that young lady, so return it? Brother, what connection do you have with that Fire Faith Order wench that you tried to help her?”

Before he could finish speaking, Ou Woong-seong interrupted loudly.

‘You?’

Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang glared at Ou Woong-seong in disbelief.

He knew that the second son had always been overly greedy and envious, but he didn't expect him to seize this situation as an opportunity and cling to it like a jackal.

But now was not the time to glare at that guy.

“Master! It’s slander. It seems that child is driving these children and me into a corner out of resentment for losing his arm...”

“Enough.”

At that moment, Master Ou Cheonmu finally spoke.

At his words, everyone, including Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang, closed their mouths.

The leader here was Master Ou Cheonmu, and it was safe to say that all decision-making power rested with him.

Ou Cheonmu then looked at someone and spoke.

“Young lady, are you the owner of that shining orb?”

At this question, her face immediately darkened.

Given the situation, she didn’t expect complete fairness, but the Master’s question itself wasn’t creating a very favorable situation.

“Th-that’s...”

“Just answer the question. Are you the owner of that orb?”

It was then.

Ou Yeonwoo suddenly stood up and shouted.

“Father, that’s mi... ugh.”

Ou Yeonwoo, who was about to say the sacred orb was his, couldn’t continue speaking.

This was because his mouth was forcibly shut by Master Ou Cheonmu’s profound true energy.

At this attitude of his father, even Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang’s expression hardened.

Because so many people had died, including the Namgoong family and the guests of the Sword Valley, it seemed that Father was not going to let this incident pass.

‘Ah, Yeonwoo. Yeonwoo.’

Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang bit his lip hard, feeling sorry.

Even if he wanted to protect him, if Father was determined to hold them responsible, there was no way to prevent it.

Then Master Ou Cheonmu spoke again.

“This will be the last verbal question. Young lady, are you the owner of that orb?”

-Flutter flutter!

The atmosphere was not ordinary.

Although he hadn’t revealed his aura, Ye Song-ah was trembling, sweating coldly as if she was suffocating from the weighty question.

Gripped by fear, she couldn’t say anything.

It felt like the moment she answered this question, the Master would immediately behead her.

Master Ou Cheonmu shook his head.

Then he approached her even closer and said,

“If you still don’t answer, I’ll take that as a positive...”

-Flinch!

Ou Cheonmu suddenly stopped speaking.

Then he immediately turned his head with a hardened expression.

Everyone’s gaze, which had been focused on Master Ou Cheonmu, turned in the same direction as him, towards the cliff edge.

‘!!!!!!’

Everyone’s expressions turned to surprise.

This was because they saw a being floating up above the cliff edge.

It was that monster-like expert who had fallen with the blade user.

Chapter 364 – Sword (3)

A being floating up from the cliff edge.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

Color returned to the face of Ye Song-ah, the granddaughter of the Holy Fire Priestess, who had been terrified by the strong pressure of Master Ou Cheonmu's questioning.

The same was true for the third son, Ou Yeonwoo, who had inadvertently raised his head from his prostrate position.

He had thought Mok Gyeong-un had died from the blade user's mutual destruction technique.

Yet he had survived from down there.

-Murmur murmur!

The surroundings stirred.

The sword disciples and guests of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary had their eyes wide open in surprise.

The scene unfolding before them was undoubtedly,

“Fl-floating on air?”

It was the Aerial Void Path, considered the highest realm of body techniques along with walking on air.

Those gathered here were all martial artists by nature, so they couldn't help but admire this sight.

‘Ha!’

Even Ji-oe, who was the most senior among the guests, was equally surprised.

More than the Aerial Void Path, he was amazed that the one who had been fighting to the death with the blade user as they fell off the cliff had actually survived.

This result spoke of only one thing.

‘To think that even such a monster was no match for him.’

It meant victory.

It was truly a complex feeling.

As a fellow swordsman, he felt pride that a martial artist wielding a sword had defeated the blade user who acted as if only the Way of the Blade was the truth, but where on earth did such a person come from?

Moreover, because this person had survived, the situation became even more uncontrollable.

-Shing! Shing!

Just looking at how many of the sword disciples were reaching for their sword hilts in amazement was enough to tell.

This was the same for the two experts from the Righteous Alliance, Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect and Moyong Hak.

Knowing that this blade user who had returned alive from the cliff was in league with the Fire Faith Order woman, they had no choice but to draw their swords.

“Sa-tae, what should we do about this?”

When Moyong Hak asked quietly with a tense face, she replied with a serious expression.

“Let’s be prepared for now, patron Moyong. Now that he has come back to life, we don’t know how the situation will unfold.”

If one side was overwhelmingly dominant, the situation would inevitably calm down quickly one way or another.

But if both sides were evenly matched, it was different.

The situation would escalate again.

‘Amitabha. This is serious. The pinnacle of the current martial world, the Six Heavens, and an expert approaching that level... It might turn into another bloodbath.’

If they let their guard down even a little, another tragedy could occur from the aftermath.

Jeong Myeong Sa-tae believed they needed to prepare thoroughly before that happened.

‘Damn it!’

In this tense situation, the second son Ou Woong-seong couldn’t hide his dismay.

He had instigated the situation to his liking, thinking the guy had surely died.

But with his return, the situation had completely changed.

If that monster-like guy targeted him with malice, the only one who could protect him was his father, Master Ou Cheonmu.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un, who had floated up above the cliff, spoke.

“Did you ask whose sacred orb it was?”

A clear and confident voice, though it sounded polite.

Although it wasn’t a loud voice, everyone could hear it.

Moreover, strangely enough, upon hearing his voice, they felt their insides churning as if they had sustained internal injuries.

‘…His true energy is extraordinary.’

‘I thought he would have depleted quite a bit of true energy surviving from down there.’

‘He’s a monster.’

They couldn’t help but be more tense at the voice still overflowing with true energy.

Then Ou Cheonmu looked at Mok Gyeong-un and answered.

“That’s right.”

Ou Cheonmu also gradually revealed his energy, infusing his voice with true energy.

His voice also resonated throughout the surroundings.

As one called the pinnacle of the Central Plains martial world, and one of the more experienced among them, his internal energy was no less profound than that of an inner court expert from Shaolin's Orthodox Sect.

‘As expected of Master Ou.’

‘Thanks to the true energy in the Master’s voice, my churning internal energy is settling down.’

‘He’s truly impressive.’

Even if that guy was a monster comparable to the Six Heavens, his opponent was a true member of the Six Heavens.

He was the pinnacle recognized by all martial artists of the Central Plains.

With such a Master, the audience believed that no matter how strong that guy was, he could be subdued without incident.

Then Mok Gyeong-un continued his answer.

“What is your intention in asking whose sacred orb it is?”

“.....”

It was just a question.

But with that one question, the audience fell silent once again.

This was because the meaning behind Mok Gyeong-un’s question was crystal clear.

-Gulp!

Everyone's gaze turned to Master Ou Cheonmu.

How this situation would unfold depended on his answer.

If Master Ou Cheonmu stepped back here, the atmosphere could be eased more, but if that happened, the reputation and face of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, which had suffered numerous casualties from an outsiders' fight, would be damaged.

This was the same for him as one of the Six Heavens.

It was then.

“The patriarch of the Namgoong family. The elites of the Namgoong family, and the guests here. Their deaths are related to the blade user who was fighting with you. That person's goal was clearly that orb and you people. Yet do you think this master is wrong to ask for accountability?”

-Roar!

No sooner had he finished speaking than Master Ou Cheonmu's energy rose fiercely.

He had instantly raised his power to the ten-star level.

At his words and the impressive aura he was revealing, the sword disciples of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary and the guests cheered like soldiers with raised morale.

“Waaaaah!!!”

‘Haah... Should I say this is fortunate!’

Ou Woong-seong, who had been watching tensely, inwardly sighed in relief.

If his father had shown a retreating stance here, even he, who had instigated this situation, would have been in a difficult position.

Ou Woong-seong's gaze then turned to the third son Ou Yeonwoo and Ye Song-ah.

‘We must capture them.’

Father wouldn't lose to that guy, but if we capture them, even that monster-like guy would have a weakness and become distracted.

But then Mok Gyeong-un walked through the air towards where Ou Cheonmu was and said,

“This is quite strange. If you're going to assign blame like that, then if your sons hadn't taken the sacred orb from them, wouldn't none of this have happened?”

‘!?’

At that moment, the expressions of the second son Ou Woong-seong and Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang hardened.

Even Ou Woong-hwang, who had tried to help the third son Ou Yeonwoo and Ye Song-ah, hadn't mentioned the fact that he had subdued them and taken the sacred orb, thinking it was to correct something wrong.

But now that Mok Gyeong-un had revealed this, it seemed like the most fundamental responsibility lay with them.

“What do you mean they took the sacred orb? What is this nonsense?”

Master Ou Cheonmu looked at Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang and asked.

At this, Ou Woong-hwang became flustered and didn't know what to do.

“Master, that's...”

His mind became complicated.

He had taken the sacred orb thinking that the youngest, Ou Yeonwoo, had fallen for the Fire Faith Order, a heretical sect that deceived the masses, so he still didn't think it was greatly wrong.

However, when it came to tracing the responsibility for this tragic situation, there was no room for excuse.

But then,

“Master! When that brat Yeonwoo brought something like a Fire Faith Order orb to our sect and worshipped it, are you saying we brothers should have just watched? How can this be our responsibility? This is entirely the fault of Yeonwoo and those people who brought such a dangerous object to our sect.”

At Ou Woong-seong's urgent cry, some of the stirring guests once again glared at Ou Yeonwoo and Ye Song-ah with resentful eyes.

That's right, in the end, they are the problem.

If those Fire Faith Order members who deceive the masses hadn't come to this Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, the sacred place of swordsmanship, this wouldn't have happened in the first place.

Seeing this scene, someone clicked their tongue.

It was Ji-oe.

‘Blame... blame... blame... How did it come to this? Isn’t assigning blame ultimately just venting frustration about something that has already happened?’

From the beginning, this incident was no different from a man-made disaster that no one could have easily prevented.

But seeing these people trying to determine the root cause, instigated by a glib tongue taking advantage of the situation, he felt disillusioned.

So finally, Ji-oe said,

“So many have been sacrificed, yet you want to keep assigning blame to the very end and make this situation even bigger? I will remove myself from this matter.”

-Whoosh!

With those words, he used his lightness skill to distance himself from them.

Seeing this, some of the guests shouted at Ji-oe.

“How irresponsible!”

“Are you saying we should just let it go when so many fellow swordsmen who discussed the sword have died?”

“We’re disappointed, Brother Ji!”

“Disappointed? Hmph!”

Ignoring their criticism, Ji-oe shouted towards the Master.

“Master Ou! If you want to assign blame, this old Ji will say one thing. It’s impossible that someone like you, a peerless expert who has reached the realm of enlightened grandmaster, wouldn’t have sensed the danger here. Yet you didn’t come immediately because of your obsession with perfecting the sword. If you, the master of this sanctuary, had come just a little earlier, surely there would have been fewer casualties. Can we say this isn’t your fault?”

“.....”

“If you truly want to make a wise choice, don’t be swayed by your second son’s instigation or saving face. To prevent greater harm, you should stop here.”

At his cry, which was like a needle piercing the heart, the hall fell silent.

Or should we say it became solemn?

Although they had been instigated by the second son Ou Woong-seong, they too had been thinking something similar to some extent.

If Master Ou Cheonmu, called the pinnacle of the current martial world, had come to the Sword Valley just a little earlier, there might have been fewer casualties.

However, no one could blame him for this.

No, they couldn’t muster the courage to do so.

Who would have the guts to assign blame to a peerless expert like him, when they had come here to gain insight into the sword from Ou Cheonmu?

As a result, many were at a loss for words out of shame.

Of course, not everyone was like this.

Moyong Hak, the investigator from the Righteous Alliance, said to Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect in a frustrated tone,

“Why is Senior Ji-oe doing this? When we should be supporting Master Ou, doing this to undermine morale...”

“No. Senior Ji-oe’s words are correct.”

“What?”

“Amitabha. Now that the one who became the root cause is dead, assigning blame here will only escalate the situation further. To prevent greater sacrifices, we must stop here.”

“But Sa-tae, they are the Fire Faith Order...”

“Just because the Fire Faith Order is called a heretical sect doesn’t mean they can be held responsible for everything. As an assigned investigator, you must not lose impartiality for the sake of clarity.”

“.....”

At her rebuke, Moyong Hak closed his mouth.

Though he still couldn’t accept it, Jeong Myeong Sa-tae was a wise Buddhist, wiser than anyone.

No matter how frustrating it was, he couldn’t disrespect her opinion.

And ultimately, the decision here rested with Master Ou Cheonmu, the master of this Spiritual Sword Sanctuary.

Everyone's gaze, including Moyong Hak's, turned to him.

How would he judge?

If he stops here, surely greater sacrifices can be prevented.

However, if he takes a step back, it will damage the reputation and face of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, which has suffered numerous internal casualties from outsiders' fight.

In the end, no matter what he chose, there would be losses.

It was then.

-Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

The aura of Master Ou Cheonmu, who had raised his power enough to cause wind pressure all around, subsided.

At this, the expressions of everyone watching tensely became gloomy.

Is he ultimately taking a step back, risking even his face as one of the Six Heavens, to prevent greater sacrifices?

But right at that moment,

-Whoosh!

Suddenly, Master Ou Cheonmu flew towards the direction of the cliff edge.

Along with this, Ou Cheonmu, who had drawn his sword, swung his sword energy towards the cliff wall.

-Slash slash slash slash!

The sword energy flowing from the tip of his sword began to carve sword marks into the cliff.

But it wasn't just simple sword marks.

‘Letters?’

‘Could it be?’

-Slash slash slash slash!

What was being engraved on the cliff wall was none other than writing.

Sword

Way

Sword

Extreme

-Slash!

Master Ou Cheonmu, who had written the words in one breath without stopping, then kicked off the air and returned to where he was originally.

At his divine might, exclamations flowed from the mouths of all those present.

“Aaah!”

Everyone here was a sword disciple.

For them, who handled swords, the divine might that Master Ou Cheonmu had just shown and those words were awe-inspiring in themselves.

This was the same even for Ji-oe, who had been about to leave in disappointment at this situation.

Ji-oe couldn't help but admire the writing engraved on the cliff.

‘Ou Cheonmu... I thought you were only immersed in sword crafting, but your Way of the Sword has deepened even further in the meantime.’

It was incomparable to what was engraved on the broken stele.

It was truly befitting of the number one swordsman, infinitely close to the extreme of the sword.

Then Master Ou Cheonmu looked at Mok Gyeong-un and spoke.

“Many sacrifices have already occurred. Assigning blame here is no longer meaningful.”

“Then what is this now?”

“Although this Master is taking a step back to prevent greater sacrifices, before being a craftsman, I too am a martial artist and sword disciple.”

“.....”

“This Sword Valley is a place to discuss the sword. If you are also a sword disciple, try to surpass this Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword to leave this place.”

‘Ah!’

At these words from Master Ou Cheonmu, exclamations flowed here and there.

It was truly an excellent move.

As the leader of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, Ou Cheonmu had swallowed his pride and taken a step back to prevent greater sacrifices.

However, by proposing to discuss the sword rather than fighting with force, he had come up with an exquisite strategy to maintain his pride as a martial artist and sword disciple.

‘As expected!’

Ou Cheonmu was the one respected by all swordsmen of the Central Plains.

While competing might be influenced by various factors, when it came to discussing the sword alone, it was no exaggeration to say he was the best under heaven.

No matter how strong that guy was, it was impossible for him to surpass Master Ou Cheonmu in swordsmanship.

‘Amitabha. Indeed, an excellent move, Master Ou.’

Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect also admired his excellent move.

With this, Master Ou had maintained his pride as one of the Six Heavens and prevented greater sacrifices, a splendid...

“Interesting. Is this all you propose to discuss about the sword?”

‘!?’

At that moment, everyone’s expressions changed terrifyingly at the words Mok Gyeong-un casually uttered.

What did this bastard just say?

Did he dare say ‘Is this all’ after seeing that sword skill of such a high level?

Wasn’t he truly arrogant?

To feel no enlightenment or awe after seeing the writing on the cliff meant he had no qualification to discuss the sword...

-Swish!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un walked on air towards the cliff.

Then he held his sword intent next to the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword, and stretched out his hand forward.

Surely he wasn’t going to challenge that enlightenment directly?

It was a moment of bewilderment.

-Slash!

A sharp energy spread in all directions in an instant.

Then, an unbelievable thing happened before everyone's eyes.

He didn't swing his sword or make any strokes.

Yet,

(Sword)

In the middle of the Sword Valley cliff, wasn't the character for 'Sword' engraved in huge writing?

'!!!!!!'

The eyes of all the sword disciples watching this shook wildly.

How could such a thing be possible?

He had written 'Sword' in a single stroke.

'This can't be...'

'No. What is this?'

This was an incredible feat that even Master Ou Cheonmu, who had completed the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword, couldn't do.

Some sword disciples looked at him in confusion.

And then,

-Drip!

They saw Master Ou Cheonmu, his face wet with cold sweat, unable to take his eyes off the 'Sword' engraved on the cliff.

Chapter 365 – Sword (4)

Drip!

The face of Ou Cheonmu, Master of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, was instantly covered in cold sweat.

His eyes wouldn't leave the single character for 'Sword' that Mok Gyeong-un had engraved.

Though it appeared he was just staring on the surface,

-Slash! Clang clang clang!

He had already fallen into a mental state where he was competing against the sword intent contained in the 'Sword' character.

No, the expression 'competing' wasn't accurate.

Overwhelmed by the sword intent, despite having achieved the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword, he was struggling just to defend against it.

‘How could this be...’

Though it was just a single character, this sword intent contained immeasurable power.

To handle that power, he tried to unleash all the sword techniques containing his enlightenment, but he couldn’t approach it in any way.

‘There are no openings.’

He employed all the sword techniques he knew to find a weakness, but he couldn’t compare to this ‘Sword’.

This was truly the sword close to the extreme that he had been longing for.

How could such a thing happen?

It made his generations of crafting and training with swords seem futile.

“Ah...”

He wasn’t the only one who had fallen into shock.

More than half of those present had fallen into a mental state upon seeing the ‘Sword’ Mok Gyeong-un had engraved, and they couldn’t come to their senses, gripped by trembling.

This was especially true for those who had dedicated everything to the sword.

The same was true for Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect.

‘…How could this be’

She was quite intelligent, enough to gain enlightenment just from seeing the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword.

But this was on a completely different level.

If Master Ou’s Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword was like seeing the soliloquy of a lofty blade user who had climbed to the peak of a mountain, this ‘Sword’ was on an entirely different track.

Rather, it showed the ultimate through the sharpness of the sword itself.

It was truly arrogant, no, boundlessly presumptuous.

It was as if it was saying that under heaven, only this was a ‘Sword’.

‘It’s a sword that subjugates everything.’

This was the honest feeling she had.

Any sword disciple would inevitably fall into shock, trembling, and a sense of defeat.

-Clang!

Eventually, even the sword she was holding fell.

The Sword Valley was dyed in silence as if everything had stopped.

The only sounds that could be heard were the helpless dropping of swords here and there.

-Clang! Clang!

Watching this, Ou Yeonwoo, who was prostrated, couldn't hide his inner excitement.

‘Is this... the one the Order has been waiting for?’

Although he had directly seen Mok Gyeong-un’s strength, he had inwardly expected that he wouldn’t match his father, who could be called the pinnacle of the current martial world, one of the Six Heavens.

Yet here were his father, Master Ou Cheonmu, and these many sword disciples, unable to hide their shock at the ‘Sword’ character engraved on the cliff.

The reactions around were the same.

Just looking at this, the winner of this sword discussion had been decided.

Ou Yeonwoo’s eyes reddened.

He had been afraid of losing his love, Ye Song-ah.

But with this, neither his father Ou Cheonmu nor anyone else here would hold her responsible, so it seemed he could rest easy.

-Thud!

Feeling so grateful, Ou Yeonwoo bowed deeply to Mok Gyeong-un, hitting his forehead hard on the ground.

He was truly a savior.

But then,

“Huk!”

At that moment, someone’s shout was heard from somewhere.

Looking in that direction, they saw Ou Woong-seong, the second son of Master Ou, holding onto the ground with one hand near the cave leading out of the Sword Valley.

When had he gone there, when he had been nearby until just now?

As they were wondering,

“Where are you going?”

“Y-you...”

“Come here.”

-Grab!

Mok Gyeong-un, who was walking on air down towards the cliff, made a gesture of pulling him with his hand.

Then Ou Woong-seong, who had been holding onto the ground with his left hand, was forcibly pulled.

“Aaaah!”

-Scrape scrape scrape!

He struggled so hard that his fingernail marks were left on the ground.

Eventually, even his fingernails were torn off, leaving blood marks.

“Young Master Ou!”

“Catch the Young Master!”

Hearing his screams, some of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary’s sword disciples who had shallow mental states due to lack of enlightenment were startled and tried to stop this.

However,

-Thud!

As Mok Gyeong-un lightly raised his hand upward,

-Thwack!

The body of the second son Ou Woong-seong, which had been dragged along the ground, floated up, flew past them to near Mok Gyeong-un, and was thrown down onto the ground.

‘Damn it!’

Ou Woong-seong, sprawled on the ground, didn’t know what to do.

Seeing his father, Master Ou Cheonmu, and most of the sword disciples unable to hide their amazement and shock, he thought everything had gone wrong and believed he needed to escape this place somehow.

But to be caught like this before he could even run away...

Feeling dismayed, Ou Woong-seong seemed to think better of it and shouted,

“Wh-what are you doing? The Master took a step back and agreed to end this by discussing swords, so why are you committing such violence?”

“Violence? What an interesting thing to say.”

At that moment, the sword disciples of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary hurriedly ran over to try to protect Ou Woong-seong.

“Don’t touch Young Master Ou!”

“Protect Young Master Ou!”

Just as they were about to get close to the second son Ou Woong-seong,

-Slash!

Mok Gyeong-un drew a line of sword intent in front of them.

A line made of sword energy was created on the ground, and they had no choice but to stop momentarily.

Mok Gyeong-un warned them in a dry voice,

“I advise you not to cross that line.”

Though there wasn’t particularly any killing intent in it, the pressure made the sword disciples unable to easily cross the line with stiffened faces.

However, just because they couldn’t cross the line didn’t mean their mouths were frozen too.

“Is this how you repay the kindness shown by the Master?”

“Do you really want to go against our sect?”

Mok Gyeong-un ignored their protests.

Instead, he approached the second son Ou Woong-seong and said,

“Not content with coveting something that wasn’t yours, you’ve been quite troublesome.”

“Wh-what are you talking about? I didn’t covet anything, I was just trying to protect against the dangerous Fire Faith Order...”

-Slash!

Before he could finish speaking,

‘!?’

-Thud!

Something fell to the ground, flapping.

At that moment, a scream of pain burst from Ou Woong-seong's mouth.

“Aaaaargh!”

This was because his one remaining left arm had been cut off.

He had just stopped the bleeding on his right arm, but now with his left arm cut off too, his face instantly turned pale due to the blood gushing out like a fountain.

“Y-you madman!”

“Young Masterrrr!”

Seeing the second son Ou Woong-seong rolling on the ground, staining it with blood, the sword disciples shouted and tried to cross the line.

Right at that moment,

-Rumble rumble! Whoosh!

On the cliff ground lay the swords of the sword disciples who had died because of the blade user.

Suddenly, these masterless swords all rose up at once and flew like living things to block the path of the sword disciples.

Their expressions hardened at the eight or so swords blocking their way.

“This... Sword Control with Energy?”

It was the marvel of Sword Control with Energy.

With not just one, but eight swords blocking their way, they were momentarily at a loss, caught off guard by the pressure of this amazing sight.

They had occasionally seen Master Ou Cheonmu, one of the Six Heavens, demonstrate Sword Control with Energy.

But even then, it was just one sword, or at most two or three.

Yet seeing eight swords being controlled simultaneously before their eyes, they even began to doubt.

‘This can’t be.’

‘No matter what, he can’t be stronger than the Master, right?’

‘Is it just a bluff? No, for a bluff, this is...’

The movement of the swords was not ordinary.

Each sword felt as if it were truly alive.

If he could really control this many swords not just with simple air grasping but with the marvel of Sword Control with Energy, he would be nothing short of a monster beyond imagination.

As they were suppressed by these controlled swords, unable to move, Mok Gyeong-un approached the second son Ou Woong-seong rolling on the ground and continued speaking.

“It’s not over yet.”

“Urgh... Wh-what are you going to do to me...”

“That tongue.”

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un reached out his hand.

Then,

“Uuuurgh! Hak!”

The second son Ou Woong-seong’s mouth was forcibly opened, and his tongue stuck out.

The eyes of Ou Woong-seong, who was even shedding tears from the pain of his severed arms, shook wildly.

No matter how you looked at it, this monster-like guy’s goal was clear.

It was his tongue.

“Uh... uhma... ple... plehaa...”

Unable to pronounce properly because his tongue was caught, he made unintelligible sounds.

It looked like he was pleading to anyone who saw.

At that moment, someone hurriedly ran over and knelt on the ground.

They were none other than Ou Yeonwoo and Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang.

“Master of the Holy Fire, please stop.”

“Sir! I will apologize, so please show mercy to my brother!”

As if they had coordinated beforehand, they tried to protect the second son Ou Woong-seong.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un smiled slightly and said,

“What close brothers you are. But that’s that, and consequences are consequences.”

-Swish!

“Aak!”

As Mok Gyeong-un moved his hand slightly, the second son Ou Woong-seong’s tongue began to twist and turn.

It seemed he wasn’t going to cut it off, but twist and tear it out.

At this, Ou Yeonwoo desperately shouted, hitting his head on the ground,

“Please! Please! Save my brother!”

“Who said anything about killing him? I’m just extracting the price for carelessly wagging that three-inch tongue.”

Mok Gyeong-un's attitude was utterly firm.

But then, someone's voice was heard.

"You shall stop."

'!?'

At that moment, the surroundings stirred.

The owner of the voice was none other than Master Ou Cheonmu.

He had somehow regained his senses after being immersed in a mental state, unable to take his eyes off the 'Sword' engraved on the wall.

As Master Ou, one of the Six Heavens, was the only one in this place who could stop that monster-like person, everyone's eyes showed relief.

As if responding to these expectations, Ou Cheonmu approached where Mok Gyeong-un was and said,

"Are you trying to pull out that child's tongue?"

"Rather than pulling out, tearing off would be a more fitting expression."

-Roar!

No sooner had he finished speaking than Master Ou Cheonmu's true energy burst out in all directions.

Anyone could see he was enraged.

Seeing him like this, all those around first felt relief, but then couldn't help feeling anxious inside.

They had thought that with the Master taking a step back, a fight wouldn't break out.

But because of that person's actions, the atmosphere had changed.

No matter how good-natured Master Ou was, from the standpoint of a parent with children, this wasn't a situation that could be tolerated.

'So it's come to this after all.'

'The aftermath might be huge.'

Everyone watched tensely.

But right at that moment,

-Swish!

Master Ou Cheonmu's body trembled slightly, and then, suppressing his anger, he clasped his hands together and showed respect to Mok Gyeong-un.

Everyone couldn't hide their bewilderment at this sight.

Why on earth was he doing this?

Then Master Ou spoke.

“The child has already paid enough of a price with both arms cut off. If you take his tongue as well, his situation would be no different from death. Please, in your generosity, show mercy.”

‘!?’

Everyone was shocked.

They had thought he would surely be unable to contain his anger and fight, but Master Ou suppressed this and stepped back once again.

Was it parental love? Or patience to prevent greater sacrifices?

Despite this, Mok Gyeong-un seemed not to care at all, smiling slightly and saying,

“I apologize. It seems I’ve shown enough mercy by not killing him. And decisively, I don’t possess a generous heart.”

-Swish!

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un slightly moved his finger.

Then the second son Ou Woong-seong’s tongue, which was already half-twisted, turned even more.

-Crunch!

“Aaaaargh!”

Ou Woong-seong screamed and rolled on the ground in such pain.

He was already deathly pale from excessive blood loss, and if the bleeding wasn't stopped quickly, he might lose his life.

Then,

-Shing!

Master Ou Cheonmu drew his sword from its scabbard.

Would this finally lead to a fight?

At that moment,

-Slash!

Something no one expected happened.

Master Ou Cheonmu grabbed his sword with the opposite hand and cut off his own right arm.

-Thud!

His right arm fell helplessly to the ground.

‘!!!!!!’

Everyone was too shocked to speak as they stared at it.

For him, a craftsman and sword disciple, his right arm was as precious as a thousand-year treasure.

Yet he cut it off without a moment's hesitation.

As everyone stood there with their mouths open, Master Ou Cheonmu, gripping his bleeding wrist and enduring the pain, spoke.

“Haa... haa... A child's wrongdoing originates from the parents who taught them. Let this serve as the price instead.”

Chapter 366 – Sword (5)

Master Ou Cheonmu's right arm, still twitching as if sensation remained, spurting blood.

-Crack crack crack!

The ground where the right arm had fallen was split in several directions as if struck by a sharp sword.

His right arm, which had reached the realm of Oneness with the Sword and the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword through long years of training, was like a sword itself.

This alone showed how high a realm he had reached in swordsmanship, but even more shocking was,

‘M-Master?’

‘Why did he do it himself?’

He had cut off his own right arm, which could be called the treasure of a craftsman and sword disciple.

At this sight, everyone was momentarily speechless.

Why on earth did he make such a choice?

He was the master of this Sword Valley, called the sacred place of swordsmanship, and the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, as well as one of the Six Heavens, the pinnacle of the current martial world.

No matter how one thought about it, there was no reason for him to go this far.

Even if that monster-like person's swordsmanship was beyond imagination, no one here thought Master Ou Cheonmu would be inferior to him.

“Ah... Urgh...”

The eyes of the second son Ou Woong-seong, whose tongue was caught by Mok Gyeong-un's true energy, shook wildly.

He too was greatly shocked.

He had thought his father would surely fight for honor and pride.

Although he was a son, he wasn't particularly favored compared to his older brother, the Junior Master, in martial arts, or his younger brother Yeonwoo in craftsmanship skills.

Therefore, he didn't have high expectations of his father.

He thought it would be fortunate enough if he just wasn't left to die.

But,

‘Wh... why?’

Why did he cut off his arm that he cherished so much?

Is a painful finger still a finger?

Enough to throw away his pride as a martial artist and his life as a craftsman?

Although he was narrow-minded and wayward compared to his brothers, at this moment, he couldn't help but feel complicated emotions, welling up inside.

“Ugh.”

Seeing Ou Woong-seong shedding tears, people thought that Master Ou Cheonmu was indeed a father.

A father who could sacrifice anything for his son.

However,

“Ha!”

‘They're mistaken.’

Ji-oe, who was watching this scene from afar, snorted.

Right now, they thought Master Ou Cheonmu had unhesitatingly sacrificed his precious arm to save his son.

But from his perspective, it wasn't like that at all.

Humans tend to see only as much as they know.

In this place, excluding Master Ou Cheonmu, the only one who had reached the highest realm in both swordsmanship and martial arts, surpassing the wall, was himself.

At most, Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect might vaguely guess as she was approaching the wall, but that sword engraved on the wall was truly in a league of its own.

He too had been momentarily gripped by a sense of defeat upon seeing the trace engraved on that cliff.

This was incomparable to the shock of seeing the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword.

An unattainable, distant height.

‘That’s a real monster.’

A monster who had reached a realm that even Master Ou Cheonmu couldn’t attain.

To be honest, if Ou Cheonmu and that person were to fight, it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say the outcome was somewhat predetermined.

Unless some special variable occurred, Master Ou Cheonmu’s victory would be difficult.

He knew this himself, which is why he cut off his own arm.

‘Cunning old man.’

Ji-oe had been here for a long time, so he knew well how cunning Ou Cheonmu, a figure respected by the world, was.

He was a man who, under the pretext of guiding later generations with his Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword, kept numerous swordsmen here and shared their insights to further develop himself.

He never takes actions that result in a loss for himself.

That's why even when crafting swords, he received the recipient's unique sword techniques in return.

Who else could make such a bold request?

‘If we clash, he loses everything.’

That's why Ou Cheonmu made the extreme choice of cutting off his own arm.

In fact, those present still believed in Ou Cheonmu, so they didn't realize, but he could see it.

If he didn't show at least this much sincerity, who knows how the opponent might react.

‘He's secured his justification.’

Given this, even that monster-like person would find it difficult to persist further.

He had even cut off his right arm for his son, so going beyond this would be crossing the line.

If there's a minimum level of propriety, he should stop here.

Although Ou Cheonmu had lost an arm, thanks to the public perception that he sacrificed for his son, he wouldn't lose his pride as a martial artist.

But right at that moment,

“You've done something unnecessary.”

‘!?’

“One’s own mistake is simply one’s own mistake.”

“What are you...”

“I clearly said it. You’ve done something unnecessary.”

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un moved his hand.

Then the second son Ou Woong-seong’s tongue twisted and finally tore partially, causing blood to burst out.

-Splurt!

“Aaaagh!”

It was on the verge of being completely torn off.

At this sight, Ou Cheonmu finally couldn’t contain his anger and shouted,

“How dare you!”

“It’s not ‘How dare you’. I never told the Master to take responsibility as a parent. And one’s own mistake should rightfully be one’s own responsibility.”

“What?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s firm words, Master Ou Cheonmu became not just angry, but dumbfounded.

As Ji-oe had predicted, he had realized through the trace on the cliff that even if he competed with Mok Gyeong-un, his chances of winning were low.

Therefore, he cut off his right arm, swallowing tears of blood, to gain the justification of sacrificing for his son.

‘This is a fight that must be avoided.’

There was too much to lose, so he had to avoid fighting even in this way.

Cutting off his right hand was a great sacrifice by anyone’s standards.

However, he had trained his left hand to some extent to pursue an even higher level of swordsmanship, so losing this wouldn’t be the worst-case scenario.

All of this had been somewhat calculated.

But,

‘Is this person really?’

Even after showing such submission by cutting off his own right arm, he still insists on taking that child’s tongue?

It was truly bewildering.

There was no longer any justification for endurance.

Rather, if he didn't step forward in this situation, it wouldn't be his honor, but his face that would hit rock bottom.

-Grip!

In an instant, Ou Cheonmu's mind became complicated.

If he fought to maintain face, defeat was inevitable.

But if he didn't step forward here, he would be branded a coward who didn't lift a finger even as his son was being brutally treated.

It was truly a dilemma.

'I was foolish...'

What he thought was an excellent move turned out to be a losing move.

Normally, in such a situation, one would stop out of propriety, but this person's actions were the opposite of expectations.

Perhaps it would have been better to fight risking his life rather than cutting off his arm.

It was then.

-Swish!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been making a gesture of twisting, stopped and said,

“It seems I’ve become quite soft-hearted.”

“.....”

A look of puzzlement flashed in Ou Cheonmu’s eyes.

He thought he would have to fight after all, but suddenly stopping like this, what was his intention?

Had he changed his mind after taking a hard line?

But then,

“The Master’s filial heart for his child is so touching, if I were to tear out his son’s tongue here as well, it wouldn’t look very good, would it?”

“…Then are you also backing down?”

“I suppose so. However, I don’t particularly like leaving loose ends.”

“Loose ends?”

Is he asking for a pledge not to seek revenge?

If that’s the case, he could certainly give it.

He hadn’t even thought about revenge in the first place.

He had surpassed wall after wall and reached the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword over many years.

But this person was clearly much younger than himself.

How could he dream of catching up and seeking revenge in any lifetime?

‘…I have too much to lose.’

The more one has in hand, the more one thinks of consolidation rather than future troubles.

To this, Ou Cheonmu spoke in a cautious voice.

“It was an action to save my child, how can you blame this? If your anger has been appeased by this, this old man too wishes to make a clear end here.”

“It’s good that you’re magnanimous. But I tend to be quite cautious.”

Ou Cheonmu inwardly clicked his tongue.

What a difficult person.

How can someone who has reached such a high realm be so cautious?

Or is he meticulous?

To this, Ou Cheonmu exhaled softly and said,

“Then what do you want? If you want a promise, I can even leave it in writing.”

“In writing. Not bad. But something written on paper can always be torn up.”

“…Then what on earth do you want?”

“I have some sense of shame, so asking for your danjeon to be destroyed seems excessive... Since it's come to this, how about receiving your remaining arm as well?”

‘!!!!!!’

At that moment, Ou Cheonmu's expression twisted terribly.

He wondered what on earth he would demand, but he never imagined he would ask for his remaining arm as well.

-Murmur murmur!

The surroundings stirred.

Has this person truly gone mad?

Even though Master Ou had put aside his pride as one of the Six Heavens and made such concessions for his son, to ask him to cut off his remaining arm as well?

He had truly crossed the line.

At this,

“Master! This is not right!”

“We will help the Master too!”

“The second young master will understand the Master’s heart. You must not submit!”

“You don’t need to endure any longer!”

Cries of anger burst out from here and there.

At their boiling cries, strength entered Master Ou Cheonmu’s hand holding the sword in his left hand.

Not content with cutting off his son’s two arms, he asks for his remaining arm.

He had certainly crossed the line properly.

No more...

“It seems many are angry. But you should listen to the end of what I was saying.”

“To the end? Now that...”

“If the Master, with great spirit of sacrifice, cuts off his remaining left arm himself, I’ll reattach one of your son’s arms.”

“What?”

At these words from Mok Gyeong-un, everyone was dumbfounded.

How could he reattach an arm that had already been cut off?

To spout something that can't be done even if a god came down, is he taking the Master and themselves for fools?

“Don’t you believe me?”

Mok Gyeong-un said with a slight smile.

They shouted,

“What nonsense are you talking! Master! This person is insulting you.”

“There’s no need to listen. Right now...”

But then,

-Slash!

At that moment, one of the swords floating with the Sword Control with Energy technique flew and cut off the arm of one of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary’s sword disciples who was shouting.

“Aagh!”

-Clang!

At this sudden sword strike, everyone around drew their swords.

Was he really going to do this?

At that moment,

-Whoosh!

“Huk!”

As Mok Gyeong-un opened his hand and pulled, the sword disciple whose arm had been cut off was forcibly flown to the front of Mok Gyeong-un by his vast true energy.

Although he was a first-class expert, compared to Mok Gyeong-un’s realm, he was no better than a bug on the ground, so he couldn’t withstand the true energy.

-Swish!

“Are you truly going to see this through to the end?”

Master Ou Cheonmu aimed his sword held in his left hand at Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said,

“Since you don’t believe me, I’m just trying to show you.”

“What do you...”

It was then.

-Float float!

The severed arm rose up and flew towards the sword disciple who was caught by the true energy.

In that state, Mok Gyeong-un lightly struck the acupoints on the severed part.

Then, as if the bleeding had been stopped, the blood somewhat ceased.

“It will hurt a bit.”

“Wh-what are you doing...”

-Thud!

At that moment, the floating severed arm attached to the severed part of the sword disciple's arm.

In that state, Mok Gyeong-un held sword intent in his right hand and placed it on the severed part.

Then with his left hand,

-Tap! Tap! Tap! Tap! Tap! Tap!

‘Lim! Tu! Jeon! Jae! Jin! Gae!’

He formed the abbreviated hand seals of the Nine Character Resurrection Technique.

As he formed the hand seals, red heat flowed from the tip of the sword intent in Mok Gyeong-un's right hand.

“Huh?”

The sword disciple was startled and didn't know what to do.

However, his body was forcibly bound by the true energy, so he couldn't move at all.

Then Mok Gyeong-un moved the sword intent along the severed part.

In that state,

‘Eastern Blue Emperor Great General God, I invoke you. Central Yellow Emperor Great General God, I invoke you. Western White Emperor Great General God, I invoke you. Northern Black Emperor Great General God, I invoke you. Central Yellow Emperor Great General God, I invoke you.’

He chanted the incantation inwardly.

-Sizzle!

Along with this, smoke rose from the severed part where the sword intent passed.

The sword disciple screamed in pain that felt like burning.

“Aaaaargh!”

Seeing the sword disciple suffering like this, Master Ou Cheonmu finally stepped forward.

He was the only one who could face this person.

“Stop right now!”

-Whoosh!

Ou Cheonmu, who had kicked off the ground, narrowed the distance in an instant and aimed for Mok Gyeong-un's brow.

Then Mok Gyeong-un, as if using the sword disciple as a shield, put him in the path.

‘This!’

Because of this, Ou Cheonmu had to change the trajectory of his sword.

-Slash!

Ou Cheonmu, who had brilliantly changed direction with a variation technique, created sword shadows in more than ten directions, forming a shape like fully bloomed flower buds closing in reverse.

Everyone couldn’t help but admire his splendid sword technique.

It was so excellent that even the sword technique he displayed with his left hand, not his right, made people wonder why he had stepped back earlier.

But then,

-Thud!

Mok Gyeong-un thrust the sword disciple’s head into the center of the trajectory of the closing flower buds.

Ou Cheonmu’s eyes shook.

Although he had diligently trained his left hand as well, with his skill he could precisely avoid this and aim for Mok Gyeong-un, but if the trajectory deviated even a little, the sword disciple would die.

-Whoosh!

Finally, Ou Cheonmu gave up on unleashing his technique, created distance, and shouted,

“How can you be so cowardly...”

Ou Cheonmu’s eyes widened as he shouted.

This was because the sword disciple who had been suffering until just now had unknowingly moved his severed arm.

“Huh?”

The sword disciple who had unconsciously moved it now seemed to realize this, looking at his previously severed arm in surprise.

The pain had disappeared, and he could move his arm and fingers freely at will.

The sword disciple’s expression became one of disbelief.

“Th... this is...”

The other sword disciples and guests around also had the same reaction.

They had been wondering what on earth he was doing, but the sword disciple’s severed arm had really been reattached.

It was a sight unbelievable even after seeing it.

While everyone was amazed, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“I told you, didn’t I? That I could reattach a severed arm.”

“.....”

“Did it sound like empty words?”

This was a healing technique called the Three Marvels Method.

Although there were several tricky conditions, if these were met, it was a miraculous technique that could even reattach a severed arm.

Among these conditions, the biggest restriction was that it required the subject’s primal energy.

In simple terms, it meant sacrificing part of one’s lifespan.

Naturally, the stronger the technique, the greater the restrictions had to be, but since it didn’t consume one’s own primal energy, it was a useful method.

“Now. What will you do? If you give your remaining arm, I’ll reattach your son’s arm. The choice is entirely up to you, Master.”

“.....”

Master Ou Cheonmu was speechless at Mok Gyeong-un’s proposal.

As the greatest craftsman in the Central Plains and one of the Six Heavens, he could usually maintain the upper hand in any deal, no matter who came.

But not this time.

He had never encountered someone so cunning.

To say he would reattach his son's severed arm if he gave up his remaining arm?

“Hurry and choose. Will it be your son’s arm or your own?”

-Grip!

Ou Cheonmu bit his lip hard.

He had never met someone so vicious.

From the start, there was no real choice in this proposal.

He would lose everything no matter what he chose.

If he cut off his arm, it would be as good as ending his life as a martial artist or craftsman, and if he didn’t cut it off, it would be like abandoning his son, and he would have to fight this person anyway.

If that happened, he would lose everything all the same.

-Drip!

A situation where he could choose nothing, caught between a rock and a hard place.

The Master’s forehead was now drenched in sweat, and his head throbbed as if it would split.

-Murmur murmur!

He couldn't hear a thing as those around him clamored.

Ou Cheonmu's dazed gaze eventually turned to Mok Gyeong-un.

-Shudder!

Ou Cheonmu's expression froze when he saw Mok Gyeong-un's face.

He was smiling as if all this was enjoyable, but that smile was full of malice.

The bastard was testing him, no, toying with him.

‘Evil spirit... This person is truly like an evil spirit.’

Now he understood.

From the beginning, the bastard was aware that he was trying to avoid fighting under the pretext of doing it for his son.

That's why he induced this situation.

A situation where no matter what he chose, it would be the worst outcome.

-Tremble!

Realizing this, Ou Cheonmu felt, for the first time in his life, intense fear and terror towards another human being.

It wasn't because he was a peerless sword master surpassing himself.

This person, like an evil spirit, thoroughly manipulated and subjugated even the hearts of others.

In the end, unable to choose anything, Ou Cheonmu,

-Thud!

Fell to his knees on the spot.

“Master!”

“Father!”

Everyone cried out in surprise at this sight.

But Ou Cheonmu no longer heard anyone else's gaze or voice.

Suffering as if his head would explode between two paths filled only with the worst outcomes, he finally let go of everything as if attaining enlightenment.

-Thud!

Ou Cheonmu then bowed his head to the ground before Mok Gyeong-un and said,

“This old man begs for forgiveness like this. I will do anything you want, so please show mercy.”

‘!!!!!!’

Chapter 367 – Sword (6)

“This old man begs for forgiveness like this. I will do anything you want, so please show mercy.”

‘!!!!!’

For a moment, silence fell.

Everyone looked at Master Ou Cheonmu with shocked expressions.

How could such a thing happen?

Not only had he cut off his arm, but now he had even knelt down – he who was the Master of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, called the sacred place of swordsmanship, and one of the Six Heavens, considered the pinnacle of the current martial world.

‘…This isn’t right.’

‘Is it really because of the second young master?’

‘Isn’t this tantamount to a declaration of defeat?’

Only now did the sword disciples of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary and the guests start to find this strange.

No matter how precious a son might be, it was inconceivable for someone called the pinnacle of martial artists to so easily discard his dignity.

Could it be that he judged there was nothing he could do no matter what he chose?

As everyone was speechless with shock, it happened.

-Thud!

At that moment, the youngest, Ou Yeonwoo, hurriedly approached, prostrated himself, and said,

“Master of the Holy Fire, I too will beg like this. Please show mercy!”

“Young Master!”

The sword disciples of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary shouted in angry voices at Ou Yeonwoo’s action.

It was frustrating enough that the Master was showing such a sight in front of the guests, but what was this?

But it wasn’t just him.

-Thud!

Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang also approached, knelt beside him, and bowed his head.

And in a solemn voice, he said,

“If it’s difficult to quell your anger, I, as the Master’s successor, will offer my head in front of everyone. Please, in your mercy, end this here.”

“What?”

“Why is even the Junior Master doing this?”

Those watching couldn't hide their frustration.

Why were Master Ou Cheonmu, who was called close to the best in the world in discussing swords, and his family lowering themselves to this person, enduring such shame?

They took pride as sword disciples and considered the Master's sword to be the best under heaven, which is why they gathered here, calling this place the sacred ground of swordsmanship.

For them, the sight of the one they respected subjecting himself to such humiliation was something they absolutely could not understand, no, could not accept.

-Clang! Shing!

The guests too drew their swords.

One by one, they shouted.

“Master! If you’re doing this to prevent your son and those here from being sacrificed, stop now. We too are martial artists. We are prepared to die at any time.”

“That’s right! If the Master leads, we will all follow!”

“Don’t show weakness to the enemy!”

“That’s right! Let us be the Master’s strength!”

“Let’s not just watch, but help Master Ou and protect the Sword Valley with our own hands!”

“Waaaaaaah!!!”

The sword disciples and guests, who were not just angry but enraged, raised their morale and shouted.

Seeing them like this, Moyong Hak, dispatched as an investigator from the Righteous Alliance, who was watching from a distance, couldn't contain his excitement and said,

“Sa-tae. Shouldn’t we help too?”

At his words, Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect spoke with a serious face.

“…It doesn’t seem like a problem that can be solved by helping.”

“What do you mean? Master Ou is being toyed with by that Fire Faith Order member, with his son taken hostage. Are you saying we should just watch?”

“Amitabha. patron Moyong, do you truly not understand why Master Ou is doing this?”

“What?”

“Master Ou isn’t doing this because of his son and the guests.”

“What do you mean?”

“…I hope this humble monk’s judgment is wrong, but it seems Master Ou believes there’s no hope even if he fights that person.”

‘!?’

At these words, Moyong Hak’s eyes widened.

What does this mean?

Are you saying that Master Ou, one of the six grand masters called the pinnacle of the current martial world, bowed his head, sensing defeat even before fighting, to an unheard-of newcomer?

It was incomprehensible.

Even if that person was strong, it was impossible for him to be overwhelmingly stronger than Master Ou, who had reached the extreme in swordsmanship.

Then, shouldn't he fight risking his life to protect his own honor?

Even if the other was strong, for an expert of Master Ou's level, shouldn't he fight risking his life to protect his own honor?

Where has his pride as a martial artist gone?

‘It seems some are feeling disappointed.’

Ji-oe, who was watching the situation as if it were someone else's business with his hands behind his back, inwardly clicked his tongue.

In the end, this happened.

He had thought such a situation wouldn't occur due to his reputation and the reverence of the Central Plains people, but it did.

‘As expected, Ou Cheonmu, you were ultimately just a craftsman.’

Ou Cheonmu's martial arts had reached a level that everyone could acknowledge.

When one is said to be close to the best in the world in discussing swords, isn't that almost the highest praise?

It certainly was.

However, Ji-oe, who had stayed here for a long time and experienced Master Ou Cheonmu, believed he crucially lacked two things.

One of those was,

‘Lack of actual combat experience.’

It would be fair to say that Ou Cheonmu had the least actual combat experience among those called the current top martial artists of the Six Heavens and Eight Stars.

The Spiritual Sword Sanctuary was close to a neutral sect not belonging to the orthodox sects.

The reason was that for a long time, they had focused more on activities as craftsmen rather than as martial artists.

As a result, they had never particularly been hostile to or fought with other sects.

‘At most, it was just martial arts competitions or sword discussions with the guests of the Sword Valley.’

Since their insights had increased by experiencing numerous secret techniques and sword techniques of many sword disciples accumulated since the previous generation, they couldn't help but be outstandingly strong in martial arts competitions or sword discussions.

However, they had never actually fought a life-or-death battle even once.

Nevertheless, the reason Master Ou came to be called one of the Six Heavens was because Jung Hyeon-mun, who was also one of the Six Heavens and the leader of the Righteous Alliance, had a sword discussion with Master Ou and acknowledged that he had reached the extreme of swordsmanship.

Because of this, martial artists recognized him as one of the Six Heavens.

But,

‘He actually lacks pride as a martial artist.’

Martial artists shouldn’t just be good at theory.

They trained in martial arts to protect themselves and fight others.

Furthermore, martial artists were those who cut down enemies.

However, Master Ou Cheonmu, no, the Ou clan of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, had a clear sense of mission and pride as craftsmen, but lacked the will to fight someone.

Without the will to fight, naturally, there was no way they could have pride as martial artists.

‘Ah, Master Ou. You’re finally showing your limitations.’

Ji-oe sighed and felt disappointed.

He had vaguely sensed that he lacked the will to fight, but when placed in an extreme situation, it was revealed to be true.

‘He was only half complete.’

Ji-oe, shaking his head, shifted his gaze away from Master Ou Cheonmu.

The time he had spent here trying to break the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword wasn't wasted, but he no longer had interest in someone who had revealed his own limitations.

No, there was no reason to be interested anymore.

An opponent who could further draw out his will to fight had appeared.

-Swish!

His gaze naturally turned to Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un glanced at the prostrated Master Ou Cheonmu and his two sons, then snorted and said,

“It seems the people behind you want you to fight me, Master.”

At this, Master Ou Cheonmu raised his head and spoke.

“My members and guests, please do not step forward anymore. This is a matter that this old man and the sir here must resolve.”

“Master! How can you say that?”

“We are prepared to risk our lives...”

“Silence!”

At his thunderous shout, the sword disciples and guests were startled into silence.

When they quieted down, Master Ou Cheonmu continued speaking without even giving them a glance.

“That sword on the cliff is in a place even this old man cannot reach. How can you, who cannot even properly see that, risk your lives? Do not interfere any further.”

“.....”

At his firm resolve, the sword disciples and guests closed their mouths.

Not only was it difficult to step forward when the Master spoke so decisively, but disappointment was evident in their eyes.

They were gathered here solely out of respect for him.

Although they might be lacking in skill, they had the will to fight risking their lives if he led them.

However, seeing him ultimately abandon his pride as a martial artist and choose humiliation and defeat for himself, their will was also broken.

Ignoring them, Master Ou Cheonmu bowed his head again and said,

“I will do as you, no, as the noble sir wishes. Please show mercy.”

‘Ah.’

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been staring at him thoroughly lowering himself, clicked his tongue.

He had become interested when he saw him cut off his own arm and pushed him to see how he would respond this time, but it turned out differently from what he had wanted, so he lost interest.

He belonged neither to the pride of a martial artist nor to paternal love for his child.

-What do you intend to do now?

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong's voice rang in his ear.

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged at this.

-Well, I should end it moderately.

-If you're going to end it moderately, why did you push so hard?

-Well... To eliminate future troubles, I needed to make sure... And even though I knew the difference in martial arts, I was curious how someone who had reached this level would react.

-...Wasn't fighting that blade user enough?

-If I competed properly with one of the Six Heavens, I could gauge what level I'm at.

-What?

Cheong-ryeong was exasperated.

Only this mortal would try to gauge how far he had come by facing the Six Heavens, called the pinnacle of the current martial world.

For this extremely cautious guy to act so boldly, he must have some confidence in his own strength.

‘…The time is ripe.’

Cheong-ryeong didn’t show it, but she was gradually becoming excited.

No matter how talented the mortal was, she had thought it would take at least ten years to take revenge.

However, this monster-like guy had shortened this to an unbelievable level.

In just half a year, he had reached a level equal to or surpassing the Six Heavens.

‘It might be possible now.’

There was already a considerable force built up within the Heaven and Earth Society, and the subordinates gathered outside were no ordinary people either.

Now, the revenge she wanted might be possible.

No, with this guy, it would be possible.

‘It’s not far off.’

She couldn’t hide her inner excitement.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un withdrew the true energy that was about to tear out the second son Ou Woong-seong’s tongue.

As he withdrew the true energy from his tongue, Ou Woong-seong collapsed on the ground.

“Urgh...”

“Quickly stop the bleeding. He might die from blood loss.”

At these words, Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang rushed to the fallen Ou Woong-seong, pressed his blood-stopping points, and hurriedly wrapped the severed part of his arm with cloth torn from his clothes.

Watching Ou Woong-seong barely saved from death, Master Ou Cheonmu unconsciously breathed a sigh of relief.

No matter what, a child was still a child.

Mok Gyeong-un said to him,

“You said you could do anything, but how far can you go?”

‘!?’

At these words, Master Ou Cheonmu’s expression became subtle.

He had felt extreme fear towards Mok Gyeong-un and had practically surrendered, but seeing him speak like this, he became afraid of what he might demand.

“…This old man will do anything within his power.”

He drew a line, unable to accept demands like cutting off his arm.

It meant to demand within limits he could accept.

“Within your power... Then it shouldn’t be particularly difficult.”

“If you want a sword to be crafted, I could make the finest sword befitting you...”

“No. These swords are enough for me.”

Mok Gyeong-un casually tapped the two magic swords at his waist and said nonchalantly.

“Then, let the Master and the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary swear loyalty to me.”

‘!!!!!!’

For a moment, everyone doubted their ears.

Chapter 368 – 7th Heaven (1)

“Then, let the Master and the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary swear loyalty to me.”

‘!!!!’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s unexpected demand, Master Ou Cheonmu’s expression twisted terribly, incomparable to before.

Until now, no matter how surprised he had been, he had tried to maintain his composure as much as possible.

However, this time, it was difficult to maintain it.

Although he had said with his own mouth that he would grant anything desired, he never expected a demand to swear loyalty.

“This person truly!”

“Master!”

“It cannot be!”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s demand, the sword disciples of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary and the guests rose up.

No matter how disappointed they were with the Master’s submissive behavior, this was a completely different matter.

Even if they didn’t know his exact identity, everyone knew that person was a Fire Faith Order member.

The Fire Faith Order was an organization suppressed by the country for the crime of deceiving the masses.

Telling the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary to join such an organization was tantamount to telling them to turn against the country and the people of the Central Plains.

“Master, this is not right. Joining the Fire Faith Order would ultimately...”

-Whoosh!

A guest who was shouting towards the Master suddenly had to stop speaking, startled by a sword hilt that stopped an inch in front of his brow.

Though stopped, the sword controlled by energy still carried an aura as if it would pierce his forehead at any moment, leaving the guest rolling his eyes, not knowing what to do.

Then Mok Gyeong-un's voice reached his ears.

“You've been mistaken from the start, but who said I was a Fire Faith Order member?”

“What?”

“I can't say I have no connection with them, but I'm not a Fire Faith Order member.”

“What do you mean?”

“I'm just myself. And...”

-Swish!

As Mok Gyeong-un raised his hand, the remaining seven swords floating in the air flew around in all directions like living things, showing a threatening appearance.

Feeling wary, the sword disciples and guests took defensive stances.

-Swish! Swish!

The speed at which the swords flew around was incredibly fast.

Their eyes were tinged with tension.

With seven swords flying around independently, they couldn't help but think inwardly that he was a monster.

Even controlling one or two swords would greatly divide one's attention, but moving this many swords simultaneously with the marvel of Sword Control with Energy was beyond their level of comprehension.

“You keep telling the Master he shouldn’t do this or that, but why don’t you step forward yourselves?”

“.....”

No one opened their mouth at Mok Gyeong-un’s provocative words.

There weren’t even any who rashly stepped forward.

Although it looked like they were simply flying around on the surface, the seven swords were intricately interlocked as if forming a battle formation, trapping them.

If they stepped forward carelessly, they might be the first to fall.

Seeing them like this, Mok Gyeong-un sneered.

“Are you really the ones who said you could give your lives for the Master? Don’t you have the courage to fight unless the Master steps forward first?”

Would such provocation go unchallenged?

A middle-aged swordsman among the guests couldn’t contain his anger and shouted, trying to launch himself towards Mok Gyeong-un.

“Who says we have no courage! I, Bi-yong Sword Woong-seong, will...”

-Thud!

“Ugh!”

A sword controlled by energy pierced through his right shoulder.

With a death cry, the swordsman who had identified himself as Woong-seong fell forward, clutching his shoulder.

“Brother Woo!”

Another swordsman who was close to him tried to step forward.

Then a sword brushed past his face.

“Huk!”

-Thud!

His severed left earlobe fell to the ground where the sword had passed.

The swordsman, clutching his cut ear, froze as if turned to ice, unable to move from that spot.

The same was true for the others.

They thought they might suffer the same fate if they moved carelessly.

Then someone shouted.

“We must move simultaneously!”

“That’s right. No matter how good his Sword Control with Energy is, it’s only seven swords. How could he block us if we all move at once?”

Right at that moment,

Mok Gyeong-un lightly waved his hand,

-Swish swish swish swish swish swish!

‘No way?’

‘It, it got even faster?’

Not only did the seven swords fly around at a speed incomparable to before, but they also brushed past between them, threatening to cut them if they moved even a little.

Just a moment ago, they thought they had found a solution, but now they were at a loss, suppressed by the aura of the swords flying at tremendous speed.

To them in their bewildered state, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Shall we test how long it would take me to kill all of you?”

-Flinch!

At these words, everyone’s expressions hardened.

Master Ou Cheonmu might be able to annihilate everyone here within a quarter-hour if he put his mind to it.

But if that monster, whom even such a Master had given up fighting, was determined to kill them, how long would it take?

A quarter-hour? No, half of that?

“A-are you threatening us now?”

“It’s not a threat, I’m just telling you what’s about to happen.”

“Wh-what?”

As they were flustered, Mok Gyeong-un glanced at Master Ou Cheonmu and said,

“If loyalty is burdensome, let’s change the conditions, Master.”

“What do you mean?”

“Don’t interfere with what happens from now on. Then I’ll guarantee the lives of the Master and your sons.”

‘!?’

At these words from Mok Gyeong-un, the eyes of the sword disciples and guests trapped between the flying swords controlled by energy shook wildly.

Until just a moment ago, the incident was a conflict with the Master’s family.

But suddenly, the sparks had flown to them, and in an instant, a knife was at their throats.

Truly, the human heart was unfathomably fickle.

As the life-threatening sparks flew to them, their gazes, without exception, turned to the Master.

“.....”

Master Ou Cheonmu sighed at their gazes.

Their gazes seemed to say they would resent him if he didn't help them.

‘He's not someone I can handle.’

Ou Cheonmu inwardly clicked his tongue.

This person was an expert at driving situations to extremes.

If he had to watch their deaths helplessly because of the condition to grant any request, ultimately, he and the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary would have to bear all this resentment.

‘Aah.’

How did he end up at odds with such a devil-like person?

It was truly lamentable.

-Swish swish swish!

“Oh no?”

“The swords?”

The trajectories of the flying swords controlled by energy began to narrow gradually.

It really looked like he intended to kill them all.

At this, Ou Cheonmu shouted,

“Do you really intend to kill them?”

Mok Gyeong-un answered without stopping the swords controlled by energy,

“I told you, didn’t I?”

“This is excessive. They were merely trying to help this old man.”

“If they tried to help, isn’t this level of readiness natural?”

“That’s...”

“It’s called meddling when you interfere without the ability to handle it yourself. They’re just paying the price for their meddling.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s firm words, Master Ou Cheonmu finally had to make a choice.

He bowed his head to the ground and shouted,

“I swear loyalty to you, noble sir!”

His shout echoed loudly throughout the cliff-surrounded area.

‘Ah... Father.’

Ou Woong-hwang, the eldest son and Junior Master, couldn’t hide his bitterness at his father’s choice to finally swear loyalty.

Although he had no choice, as a son, it was unpleasant to see his father forcibly submit to someone.

But how could spilled water be returned?

He had to accept it.

-Swish!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un made a gesture of lowering his hand.

Then,

-Clang! Clang!

The swords that had been flying through the air lost their power and fell to the ground.

The sword disciples of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary and the guests, freed from the threat of the swords controlled by energy, were relieved but didn’t know what to do out of guilt as they looked at the Master.

It was because Master Ou Cheonmu had finally sworn loyalty to save them.

They couldn’t help but feel sorry for this.

-Swish!

A strange light flickered in Master Ou Cheonmu's eyes as he raised his head to check if Mok Gyeong-un had stopped threatening them.

It was because of the gazes of those looking at him.

Just a moment ago, they had seemed to not understand his choice.

But now it was the opposite.

‘…Don’t tell me he intended even this?’

Ou Cheonmu looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

Seeing him smile slightly as he looked at himself, Ou Cheonmu felt goosebumps all over his body.

What on earth was this person?

He had thought he had simply driven the situation to extremes and ultimately obtained what he wanted.

But it wasn’t just that.

‘Did he create justification?’

The sword disciples and guests, perhaps because they thought they had been saved by his oath of loyalty, showed no disappointment or dissatisfaction with this choice.

It was as if they thought this choice was natural and unavoidable.

‘Hah...’

This might be his true terror.

The ability to move even the hearts of others at will was a frightening power.

Just like Master Ou Cheonmu, who was deeply afraid of Mok Gyeong-un even after swearing loyalty, there was another person who viewed this situation seriously.

She was Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect, dispatched as an investigator from the Righteous Alliance.

‘For Master Ou to swear loyalty to someone?’

This was not something that could be simply overlooked.

Master Ou Cheonmu was one of the Six Heavens, called the pinnacle of the current martial world.

Even if he had lost his will to fight due to lack of real combat experience and acknowledged defeat, he was still a peerless expert of the grand master level who had surpassed wall after wall.

Moreover, as Master Ou Cheonmu was a craftsman and sword disciple respected by all swordsmen of the Central Plains, he had tremendous influence.

‘This is serious.’

That person possessed martial arts worthy of being called a new seventh heaven.

For such a person to take Master Ou Cheonmu under his wing would disrupt the balance of power that had been maintained until now.

‘I must quickly inform the Alliance headquarters.’

This was an issue that warranted convening the entire council of elders of the Righteous Alliance.

Although he declared he wasn’t a Fire Faith Order member, judging from his reckless actions, he was definitely not an orthodox sect member.

If he was from an evil sect, this incident could be considered an even worse outcome than the annihilation of the Namgoong family’s leader and their elites.

‘But how can I find out who he is?’

It would be troublesome if she carelessly stepped forward and became at odds with him.

As she was pondering this, coincidentally, Master Ou Cheonmu asked Mok Gyeong-un,

“Although I have sworn loyalty, I still don’t know your esteemed name. How should this lowly one address you?”

To this question, Mok Gyeong-un answered briefly,

“Cheonma. Call me Cheonma (Heaven Demon).”

‘!!!!’

At these words, Jeong Myeong Sa-tae’s eyes widened.

On her way here, she had heard one strange rumor.

It was a story that the One Hundred and Eight Arhat Formation of Shaolin, called the birthplace of the Orthodox Sect's martial arts, had been broken by a single True Enlightened One Step.

As it was such an absurd story, she had dismissed it as mere gossip.

But she remembered exactly what they had called it.

‘Heaven Demon’s Sovereign Step.’

They had definitely said that.

Chapter 369 – 7th Heaven (2)

-Sizzle!

Although gripped by pain that felt like burning every time Mok Gyeong-un’s sword intent touched him, Master Ou Cheonmu didn’t show any signs of pain or utter even a single groan.

“Huu.”

He merely regulated his breathing.

Of course, it was partly due to his strong endurance, but it was also because of his dignity.

As one called one of the Six Heavens, the pinnacle of the current martial world, it was difficult to show weakness in front of his children.

Watching him, the second son Ou Woong-seong inwardly clicked his tongue.

He, whose arm had been reattached first, couldn’t endure the pain and had screamed.

Yet seeing his father's expression not changing at all, he felt both admiration and even more guilt.

‘…If I hadn't coveted that orb, would this have happened?’

Yes.

Maybe it wouldn't have.

That's why he felt even more guilty.

What pained him even more was that neither his father nor his brothers blamed him.

Even that youngest brother Ou Yeonwoo, born of a different mother, whom he had resented and tormented so much.

That boy had bowed his head for his sake.

Even his elder brother, who had been practically backstabbed by him.

-Drip!

A tear rolled down the cheek of the second son Ou Woong-seong, whose eyes had reddened.

He wasn't aware of it, but Mok Gyeong-un was closely observing this.

Although he had ended it after receiving loyalty from Master Ou Cheonmu and the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, he had been considering killing him if necessary because he had continued to create troublesome situations.

But seeing his gaze and attitude change so noticeably, he felt puzzled.

-That is what it means to be human.

Cheong-ryeong's voice rang in Mok Gyeong-un's ear.

To this, Mok Gyeong-un replied through voice transmission.

-What do you mean by that?

-What do you think distinguishes humans from beasts?

-Isn't it the use of tools and the ability to think?

He answered with the most decisive differences.

Cheong-ryeong inwardly clicked her tongue and said,

-...Of course, there's that. But humans also change.

-Change... you say?

-Yes.

-Mortal, you seem to think humans are inherently unchanging because you don't trust anyone, but human beings change as they experience many things. For example, the emotion of regret would be part of that.

-Regret? Isn't that also a kind of learning?

-Don't view all emotions simply rationally. Emotions belong to the realm of sensibility.

-If Cheong-ryeong says so, then it must be.

Mok Gyeong-un answered with a slight smile.

Seeing him like this, Cheong-ryeong muttered softly.

-And you're changing too.

-Pardon?

-It's nothing.

-You clearly said something.

-I said it's nothing!

At her firm exclamation, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged.

No matter how much she muttered, there was no way he couldn't have heard the words ringing in his ear.

'Changing, she says...'

He didn't know in what aspect she was saying such things.

He felt he was still the same as ever.

-Sizzle!

Having successfully completed the Three Marvels Method, Mok Gyeong-un removed his hand from the wound on Master Ou Cheonmu's severed right arm.

“Try moving it.”

At these words from Mok Gyeong-un, Master Ou Cheonmu carefully tried moving his arm.

-Swish!

‘Ah!’

Ou Cheonmu's eyes trembled.

He had only moved it a little, but sensation returned to the arm that had been filled with emptiness just moments ago.

It was truly remarkable.

Although it was no longer surprising after seeing the second son Ou Woong-seong's arm reattached, he couldn't help feeling overwhelmed as his arm moved.

At this, Master Ou Cheonmu knelt on one knee before Mok Gyeong-un, clasped his hands, and said respectfully,

“This old one offers thanks for the noble sir's generous grace.”

-Thud!

“We brothers also thank you!”

Following him, the eldest son Junior Master Ou Woong-hwang, the second son Ou Woong-seong, and the third son, the youngest Ou Yeonwoo, also knelt on one knee and showed respect.

Regardless of how it happened, they were simply grateful just for reattaching their father's and brothers' severed arms.

Mok Gyeong-un waved his hand lightly at them as if bothered and said,

“This much is only natural. I understand, so would you all please rise...”

-Rip!

-Clang!

At that moment, a leather scabbard tore and Evil Commandment Sword, one of Mok Gyeong-un's magic swords, fell to the ground.

It seemed that although it was made to serve as a scabbard, it couldn't withstand Evil Commandment Sword's sharpness and finally tore.

Then Master Ou Cheonmu, noticing this, opened his mouth with surprised eyes.

“Noble sir, is that perhaps the Evil Commandment Sword sword?”

“As expected of a sword craftsman, you recognize it at a glance. There have been people who sensed the sword's demonic nature, but you're the first to immediately recognize what sword it is, Sect Leader.”

Indeed, it was rare for someone to recognize what sword it was at a glance without extensive knowledge about swords.

In that sense, he couldn't help but feel puzzled that he recognized the sword's name instantly.

But then,

“How could I not know? That sword was made by our clan's ancestor, Ou Yezi. How could this descendant not recognize it?”

‘!?’

Ou Yezi.

A man from the state of Yue during the Spring and Autumn period, considered the greatest craftsman.

The swords he made were all renowned and called legendary swords that transcended time.

A strange light flickered in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

He had heard that he was called a sword craftsman to the extent that there were rumors of him being a descendant of Ou Yezi, but it wasn't a rumor, it was none other than the truth.

A forest about 30 ri away from the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary.

There, a group of warriors with visible signs of fatigue were panting and catching their breath.

The clothing of these people bore the emblem symbolizing the Righteous Alliance.

“Huu... Huu...”

Among these exhausted people, there was one who was slowly regulating his breathing, though not as tired as the others – it was Moyong Hak, the eldest son of the Moyong family.

What could be the reason that even he, leading the Righteous Alliance warriors, was so exhausted?

Moyong Hak raised his head and looked up at the trees.

‘Why on earth is she doing this?’

In fact, he too didn’t know the reason.

Just because of her one word that they needed to hurry, they had to use their lightness skill without rest as soon as they left the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary.

Thanks to this, even he, with relatively solid internal energy, couldn’t help but be exhausted.

Meanwhile, someone landed in front of him.

-Thud!

It was none other than Jeong Myeong Sa-tae of the Hangshan Sect.

She, who had descended with graceful body techniques, breathed a sigh of relief and said,

“Amitabha. Fortunately, it seems there is no pursuit.”

At these words, Moyong Hak asked in a tone of incomprehension,

“Pursuit? What do you mean by that, Sa-tae? Don’t tell me you did this because you thought that monster-like person might have set trackers on us?”

“That’s correct.”

“What?”

He had thought it unlikely, but was it really because of that they had used their lightness skill recklessly as soon as they left the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary?

“Sa-tae. But didn’t that person say with his own mouth:”

[Righteous Alliance? Ah. I think I’ve heard of it. They say it’s one of the three powers dividing the current martial world along with the Heaven and Earth Society and the Four Evils Alliance.]

[Amitabha. That’s correct.]

[From the look in your eyes, you seem quite worried, monk.]

[...Not at all, patron. How could this humble monk do such a thing? Rather, I’m grateful that you’ve resolved the true culprit behind the Namgoong family tragedy, which was a concern for our Alliance.]

[I didn’t particularly do it for the Righteous Alliance, but if it helped you, then I suppose there’s no need for us to be at odds with each other.]

[.....]

Jeong Myeong Sa-tae also remembered the last words that person had said.

He hadn't exactly spoken in a roundabout way.

It clearly meant that they shouldn't create reasons to be at odds with each other.

From their standpoint, they didn't particularly want to make him an enemy, so if the other party took the initiative like this, it wasn't bad.

Moyong Hak had taken this at face value.

He thought that the other party wouldn't want to be at odds with a huge organization like the Righteous Alliance either.

But Jeong Myeong Sa-tae didn't take it so literally.

“Patron. Does ‘let’s not create reasons to be at odds’ sound purely friendly to you?”

“…Are you saying it has a different meaning?”

“To this humble monk’s ears, it sounded like he could handle it even if reasons to be at odds arose.”

“What?”

“I didn’t say this at the scene because there were many ears listening and eyes watching, but this isn’t something our Alliance, no, the current martial world can simply overlook.”

“Is it because a new peerless expert has appeared?”

“It’s not just a new expert. As you must have realized too, patron Moyong, he will soon be called the seventh heaven by martial artists.”

At these words, Moyong Hak couldn't hide his excitement.

“The, the seventh heaven? You mean he'll become one of the Seven Heavens?”

“…It's not about becoming one. When this incident spreads, he will establish himself as a new heaven.”

He broke the One Hundred and Eight Arhat Formation of Shaolin, called the birthplace of the Orthodox Sect's martial arts, with just one True Enlightened step, and Master Ou Cheonmu of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, one of the current martial world's six pinnacles, acknowledged defeat without even fighting, swearing loyalty after seeing the sword mark on the cliff.

With just these two actions, he was already writing a legend surpassing the other Six Heavens.

What she was worried about wasn't the emergence of this new powerhouse.

“An expert who has reached the realm of grand master has entered under someone stronger than him. Just that alone is already distorting the balance of power.”

“Ah!”

At her meaningful words, Moyong Hak finally realized the seriousness of the situation.

The problem was that the new powerhouse didn't just defeat an existing powerhouse, but subjugated him.

An expert at the level of the Six Heavens was no different from a one-man sect by himself.

Just by taking such a being under his wing, this person had essentially shattered the balance in the current martial world and created a new landscape.

“The fact that he subjugated Master Ou and took him under his wing, when he could have ended it with just a competition, means his actions might not end with simply making a name for himself.”

“So that’s why you were worried about pursuit.”

“Yes, he might want to delay the spread of news about his actions.”

“…Sa-tae.”

“What is it?”

“Thinking about it, isn’t this even more serious?”

“What do you mean?”

“Doesn’t the fact that he just let us, members of the Righteous Alliance, go mean that he doesn’t care even if his actions become known?”

‘!!!!!!’

At these words from Moyong Hak, Jeong Myeong Sa-tae’s expression became even more serious.

This made sense.

The opponent might be so confident that he doesn’t even care if his actions are revealed to the Righteous Alliance’s ears, or he might be ready to create a new order.

To this, Jeong Myeong Sa-tae said,

“This won’t do. Patron, we need to hurry to a branch office to send a messenger bird, and then we should go straight to the Alliance’s headquarters.”

This place, full of the smell of iron and still filled with heat, was Master Ou Cheonmu’s workshop.

Many famous swords that made a name in the current martial world were born here.

Among them, the sword that many swordsmen considered the best was Ilhwu, the unique weapon of Jeong Hyeon-mun, the leader of the Righteous Alliance.

Jeong Hyeon-mun, one of the Six Heavens, was known to have never been defeated since obtaining Ilhwu, and Ou Cheonmu’s reputation as a craftsman soared to the heavens after that.

Many people considered it a great wish to enter this place and ask Ou Cheonmu to craft their unique weapon.

-Tap!

Master Ou Cheonmu, who had been examining the torn leather scabbard, put it down and said,

“A leather scabbard will have difficulty withstanding the sword’s sharpness.”

To these words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and replied,

“Yes, it was a bit precarious.”

He had somewhat expected this, as he always carried the sword.

Master Ou Cheonmu politely extended both hands.

“I need to craft a scabbard suitable for the sword, may this lowly one examine the sword for a moment?”

“…Will you be alright?”

“What do you mean?”

“Evil Commandment Sword is set to reveal its desires when touched by anyone other than me.”

“I see… So it’s as I’ve heard.”

Master Ou Cheonmu nodded and stared intently at the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword.

But that gaze was strangely bitter.

It’s a sword made by Ou Yezi, who could be considered his ancestor, so why is he looking at it with such eyes?

“What’s wrong? Is there something wrong with the sword?”

Mok Gyeong-un lifted the sword to examine it.

What was surprising was that despite being so old and having absorbed much blood, the blade of the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword was still sharp and without a single blemish.

Even excellent iron would inevitably have its edge damaged after long use and clashing, so this was truly strange.

Then Ou Cheonmu brought thick work gloves and said,

“That sword is made of a very special iron called Gwanya black iron, so its blade probably won’t be damaged until its lifespan is completely over.”

Ou Cheonmu put on the gloves and extended both hands again.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un handed him the sword.

If necessary, he could subdue him and take it back, and inwardly, he was also curious about what would happen if a peerless expert at the grand master level like him held Evil Commandment Sword.

-Tap!

Ou Cheonmu received the sword while wearing gloves.

The sword body trembled subtly.

Although it wasn’t in direct contact because of the gloves, it might be showing aversion to being in someone else’s hands.

But then, as Ou Cheonmu injected true energy into the sword,

-Woong woong woong!

The sword’s cry rang out, and the trembling of the sword body stopped.

‘Did he subdue it?’

A strange light flickered in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

Indeed, perhaps because he had achieved the Way of the Sword, Extreme of the Sword, he seemed to be at a level where he could control even Evil Commandment Sword's demonic nature.

It wasn't for nothing that he was called one of the Six Heavens.

Having suppressed the sword's spirit with his true energy, Ou Cheonmu spoke in a bitter voice.

"A sword can be illuminated by itself, but truly, the element of a great sword is that it can make its owner shine the brightest. However, this sword has a nature completely opposite to that."

"....."

"To think there's a sword that drives its owner to the brink of death unless they can overcome its demonic nature."

Ou Cheonmu shook his head.

Then, scanning the sword body with both eyes, he continued speaking.

"Our ancestor Ou Yezi said that making this and four other demonic swords was the most regrettable thing he did in his lifetime."

"Five demonic swords... He said making them was shameful?"

Were there demonic swords other than Evil Commandment Sword and Plundering-killing Sword?

More than that, it was unexpected to hear that he expressed shame after making the swords.

This was because Mok Gyeong-un quite liked Evil Commandment Sword and Plundering-killing Sword.

“Is it because they became demonic swords?”

“That might be part of the reason, but the reason our ancestor regretted making these demonic swords lies elsewhere.”

“What is it?”

To Mok Gyeong-un’s question, Master Ou Cheonmu answered in a meaningful voice.

“It’s because human flesh and blood, and their grudges, are imbued in these demonic swords.”

“Is that so?”

‘!?’

For a moment, Master Ou Cheonmu frowned.

Is this really all the reaction he has?

Chapter 370 – Sword, and Sword (1)

“It’s because human flesh and blood, and their grudges, are imbued in these demonic swords.”

“Is that so?”

‘!?’

At Master Ou Cheonmu's words, Mok Gyeong-un looked at the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword with an interested gaze.

He had thought there must be some story behind it because he felt a strong demonic nature from the sword, but to think it contained human flesh and blood.

Does that mean a life was sacrificed to make the sword?

‘…Is this all?’

Master Ou Cheonmu frowned.

He had expected him to be greatly surprised or disgusted when told what went into the demonic swords, but instead he showed interest, which inwardly made him click his tongue.

He had thought he was different from ordinary people, but this went beyond just being bold.

Or was his way of thinking entirely different?

Then Mok Gyeong-un asked while looking at the sword,

“To do this for not just one, but five swords, was there some special reason?”

‘……’

Different.

Indeed, very different.

Inwardly clicking his tongue, Ou Cheonmu soon answered.

“This lowly one doesn’t know the exact reason either. Only a record remains in our family that five demonic swords were born at someone’s request.”

“You’re saying five swords were made simultaneously at someone’s request?”

“That’s correct.”

“Hmm. What an unusual person. To ask for the creation of not just ordinary swords, but five such unique demonic swords.”

“…That’s why our ancestor considered making these demonic swords shameful.”

“Because they were made with someone’s life?”

“Exactly as you say.”

“Then couldn’t he have refused?”

“If he had refused, our family line would have been cut off.”

“Ah, I see.”

Mok Gyeong-un nodded.

So it seems they were born not from a request, but under threat.

Master Ou Cheonmu sighed and said,

“It’s truly ironic beyond words. Although I couldn’t completely subdue the sword’s spirit, I never imagined this sword would come to me on the day I completed it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Because today, I fulfilled our family’s long-cherished wish.”

“Your family’s wish?”

“Yes, I created a sword made of Gwanya black iron with my own hands.”

Hearing the subtle excitement in his trembling voice, Mok Gyeong-un wondered and asked, pointing with his chin at the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword,

“Come to think of it, didn’t you say Evil Commandment Sword was also made with Gwanya black iron?”

“That’s correct.”

“Then why do you say it’s ironic? Is there a reason you’re talking as if it’s something special?”

To this question, Master Ou Cheonmu answered while looking at the blade of the magic sword Evil Commandment Sword.

“Gwanya black iron is not a metal that can be handled by simple methods.”

“Can’t be handled by simple methods... Don’t tell me?”

[It’s because human flesh and blood, and their grudges, are imbued in these demonic swords.]

Suddenly, Mok Gyeong-un recalled what Master Ou Cheonmu had said earlier.

He nodded as if agreeing and said,

“That’s right. It’s not to make them into demonic swords, but strangely, this special metal called Gwanya black iron cannot be melted and shaped without human flesh and blood.”

“Truly a strange metal.”

“Beyond strange, this metal is truly monstrous.”

The fact that a life must be sacrificed to melt it and create a shape was beyond strange, truly bizarre.

That’s why among blacksmiths who had carried on their trade for a long time, no one who knew even a little about this Gwanya black iron thought of handling it.

For them, this metal was cursed before it was the best metal.

‘Ah, so that’s what it was.’

Mok Gyeong-un now understood why he couldn’t hide his excitement when he said he had made a sword with Gwanya black iron.

So he asked,

“I see. When you said it was your family’s wish, do you mean you succeeded in making the sword without using human flesh and blood?”

To this question, Master Ou Cheonmu smiled and nodded.

Ou Yezi, called the greatest craftsman, felt guilt and regret while making these demonic swords with someone's life.

However, what distressed him even more was his shame as a craftsman.

Ou Yezi was tormented until the moment of his death because of this Gwanya black iron that couldn't be handled without sacrificing someone's life.

Because the craftsman couldn't handle the metal and succumbed to it.

Thus, this became a generational task and wish for the Ou clan.

“As the noble sir said, our Ou clan has put in effort for generations to wash away the shame of our ancestor Ou Yezi, and today we have finally completed it.”

This was why he had been secluding himself and focusing on his work for a while.

He had refused to craft swords for many people because he was close to resolving this task.

The only regret was,

‘If only I had half a quarter-hour more, no, just a quarter-hour...’

Not only could he have fulfilled the wish, but he could have created his greatest masterpiece.

But unfortunately, it wasn't realized.

If only that swordsman and Mok Gyeong-un, who became the noble sir, hadn't appeared, the result might have been different, but there was no use lamenting what had already happened.

In the end, it wasn't fated to be a masterpiece.

'I don't know if such a sense will come again, but there's still enough time left.'

He had achieved his family's wish in his generation, now he just needed to create the masterpiece of his lifetime.

Then he would have no regrets in life.

But then he saw Mok Gyeong-un staring at something.

"Noble sir?"

"I've been wanting to ask for a while, is that completed sword over there?"

Mok Gyeong-un pointed with his thumb.

Master Ou Cheonmu couldn't hide his surprise.

This was because there really was a sword where Mok Gyeong-un had pointed.

'...How did he know?'

This sword hadn't properly established its sword spirit.

This was because his mind had been distracted at the moment he needed to concentrate, causing the sword spirit to become twisted.

Therefore, the sword's aura wasn't well manifested.

Moreover, the workshop was overflowing with such incomplete swords, so it was nearly impossible to find it by the sword's aura alone.

-Roar!

However, unlike him, something else was visible in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

He could see the natural energy of the surroundings gradually gathering towards somewhere hidden.

“May I take a look?”

“That sword... No, it's fine.”

A craftsman doesn't show an improperly completed sword to others and destroys it.

That was the stubbornness and pride of a craftsman.

But it was the noble sir's order, so it was difficult to refuse, and it seemed a waste to just destroy a sword that could have become a masterpiece after only he had seen it.

“Please, take a look.”

Mok Gyeong-un had reached an even higher realm of swordsmanship than himself.

There was no harm in hearing his expert opinion.

As Mok Gyeong-un moved his steps to where the final work was done in the workshop, a dark-colored sword came into his view.

It didn't even have a scabbard because the work of establishing the sword spirit was being done.

But then,

‘!?’

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes trembled as he looked at it.

Ou Cheonmu, who was behind, couldn't see this, so he spoke with half expectation and half concern.

“The blade is particularly dark because it's mixed with ten thousand year cold iron. Although it's regrettable that the sword spirit is twisted, just this alone could be called close to the greatest masterpiece. I wonder if the noble sir finds any lack...”

Ou Cheonmu stopped mid-sentence and moved to the side.

He had sensed something strange.

‘What?’

Ou Cheonmu couldn't hide his puzzlement.

This was because Mok Gyeong-un was staring at the sword with blank eyes, as if in a state of selflessness, as if he had fallen into a mental state.

‘Why?’

He knew the sword was close to perfect enough to be called a masterpiece.

But could one fall into a mental state just by looking at the sword's form?

Could he have seen something that he himself couldn't see?

In the mental image.

The surroundings are quite different from the place he knew.

Even the color of the sky is different, and in this strange place where the world seems about to collapse, he was wielding something.

It was none other than a sword with a brilliant ink color.

That sword looked very similar to the one Master Ou Cheonmu had made.

The only difference was,

-Roar!

The sword felt as if it had its own will, and it was incomparably fierce and vicious.

And strangely, this ferocity was familiar.

This was the roaring demonic nature itself.

In the mental image, he wasn't moving of his own will, and his sword movements were rough and clumsy.

However, the sword was handling all of him and drawing out his utmost potential.

After wielding the sword for a while like that, he finally stopped, and then as he released the force he was applying to the sword,

-Slash slash slash slash!

The ink-colored sword suddenly split apart and decomposed, changing into the form of a ring.

‘Ah.....’

Mok Gyeong-un, coming out of the mental image, looked at the sword without a scabbard.

He didn't know when he had fallen into it, but this sword was clearly very similar to what he had seen in his mental image.

So Mok Gyeong-un asked Master Ou Cheonmu beside him,

“This sword... Did you really conceive and make it yourself?”

‘!?’

At this question, Master Ou Cheonmu's expression instantly hardened.

Frowning as if his words were blocked for a moment, Master Ou Cheonmu spoke in an incomprehensible tone.

“...May I ask why the noble sir is asking that?”

“Because I’ve seen the sword before.”

“You mean you’ve seen this sword, no, a sword in this form before?”

“Yes.”

At these words, even more doubt clouded Ou Cheonmu’s eyes.

Puzzled by his reaction, Mok Gyeong-un asked,

“If not, it’s fine. It’s just that the final completed form of this sword I saw doesn’t seem to end with this.”

“Ah.....”

As soon as Mok Gyeong-un’s words fell, a sigh flowed from Master Ou Cheonmu’s mouth.

He wondered why he was reacting like that, but soon Ou Cheonmu approached the ink-colored sword, grasped the handle without a scabbard, and lifted it.

“There are no absolutes in this world, it seems.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m truly ashamed.”

“.....”

“I thought no one would know this because several generations have passed, and I wanted to realize this perfect form with my own hands, but I never imagined the noble sir would know about it.”

“So there was an original sword?”

“That’s correct.”

-Tap!

With his answer, Master Ou Cheonmu put the sword down again and went somewhere.

He took out an old, worn book from a bookshelf in one corner of the workshop.

Having brought the book, the Master flipped through it and then opened a certain part to show Mok Gyeong-un.

‘!?’

A strange light flickered in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes as he saw this.

This was because the book had detailed records of the sword’s form, and even described that it could be decomposed to form a ring shape.

“What... is this?”

“It’s a record left by this lowly one’s great-grandfather.”

“A record left by your great-grandfather? Then did your great-grandfather make this sword?”

At that question, Master Ou Cheonmu hesitated for a moment and then shook his head.

“No. At this point, how could I not tell the truth to the noble sir? This is what my great-grandfather recorded after seeing it a hundred years ago.”

A hundred years ago?

It was older than he thought.

Mok Gyeong-un couldn't hide his puzzlement.

What was that mental image just now?

Usually, when he saw a mental image, it could be said that he was reading residual thoughts left in traces of enlightenment or remnants.

But strangely, upon seeing a newly born sword, he saw a scene that was familiar yet unfamiliar.

Does that mean he saw a scene from a hundred years ago?

Something felt odd.

Then Master Ou Cheonmu continued speaking,

“My great-grandfather came to see this sword through a horrific tragedy.”

“A tragedy?”

“Yes. As you know, our Ou clan rarely leaves this Sword Valley as we craft swords without rest for even a day, but my great-grandfather agreed to personally deliver a completed sword to fulfill the request of a brilliant female swordsman with whom he had a usual acquaintance.”

“To personally deliver it, they must have been quite close.”

“Looking at the records my great-grandfather left, it seems he built a friendship out of admiration for the female swordsman’s delicate yet excellent sword skills.”

“Oh, is that so?”

“Yes, he praised her sword as being like viewing an elegant moon.”

“…An elegant moon, you say?”

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

The idea of a sword technique reminiscent of the moon suddenly struck him.

Among the sword techniques he knew, only two evoked the moon.

They were the Moonless Void Sword and Cheong-ryeong’s Moon Sword Technique.

Then he walked to one side of the workshop and took out one of the wooden boxes piled on top of a shelf.

It too was covered in dust, having been neglected for a long time.

-Tap tap!

Master Ou Cheonmu, dusting it off with his hand, came carrying the long wooden box and said,

“What’s that?”

“A sword that has lost its owner.”

-Click!

As Ou Cheonmu opened the wooden box, along with the scent of aged wood that hadn’t been opened for a long time, a sword appeared.

It was a sword with a blade so white it was pure white.

A small exclamation flowed from Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth at the sight of its radiance that hadn’t been lost even after a hundred years.

“Ah.....”

Then Cheong-ryeong’s trembling voice was heard in his ear.

-Mortal.....

-What’s wrong? Ah... Come to think of it, if it was a hundred years ago, that would be when Cheong-ryeong was alive and active, right?

To that question, an completely unexpected answer came from Cheong-ryeong’s mouth.

-This is... my sword.

‘!?’