

Mayhem 421

Chapter 421 – First Realm (3)

At the same time.

Inside a hall filled with darkness.

-Jeo-jeo-jeok!

At the sound of cracking, the gaze of the being sitting on the stone throne, suppressing its anger, turned towards the wall where six candles were growing larger.

The space in front of the last candle was empty, and round jade tablets were standing in front of the other candles.

A small crack had formed at the tip of the round jade tablet in the middle of the five jade tablets.

At this, the eyeball on the forehead of the shadowy being sitting on the stone throne twitched and moved.

-It's Kang Yeom.

"He must have clashed with him. But the situation doesn't look good."

The cracking of the jade tablet meant nothing good for Kang Yeom's condition.

It signified that he was either injured or in a dangerous situation.

Then the eyeball on the forehead moved and a voice echoed:

-The power possessed by the First Realm is not just the martial arts we passed down. You know that well too, companion.

“...We’ll see soon enough.”

-Wait a little longer. Your wish will soon be fulfilled.

‘How could this be...’

The Bright Blade King Son Yun was at a loss for words.

He was a monster who had so easily blocked the combined attacks of supreme experts including himself.

But not only was Kang Yeom pushed back, but the moment he tried to reveal his hidden power, he was pierced through the chest in an instant with power concentrated into a single point.

It was truly overwhelming.

Is this really the same Mok Gyeong-un he knew?

‘...The real monster was someone else.’

It was a growth rate that was hard to believe was human.

At this level, even if it was the Society Leader, no, honestly speaking, even the Society Leader in his prime, one would wonder if they could face this monster.

‘Should I consider this fortunate?’

Although hope had arisen to save Wi So-yeon, the youngest disciple of the Society Leader, Son Yun was inwardly more worried about Mok Gyeong-un’s martial prowess.

He was too strong, even for being strong.

He had heard that the young miss cared for Mok Gyeong-un, but this guy was originally a hostage from the righteous path.

If someone with that level of martial prowess were to harbor rebellious thoughts, even by the slightest chance, it could lead to an extremely dangerous situation.

-Cha-cha-cha-cha-chang!

At that moment, the sound of clashing swords reached his ears.

He could see the Mad Swordsman Ji-oe fighting with the remaining masked individuals.

As he watched this, a glint appeared in Son Yun’s eyes.

He had noticed that a few among the masked individuals possessed exceptional martial prowess, but the four who had withstood Mok Gyeong-un’s stomp were even withstanding Ji-oe’s sword.

‘Even if he’s almost exhausted his true qi, to withstand like that against an expert of the Transformation Realm. They’re no ordinary beings.’

“Huu.”

Son Yun, who had been regulating his energy with simplified circulation, stood up.

Having escaped a fatal wound, it seemed he should help Ji-oe.

But then,

-Chwak!

As Ji-oe's sword tore the mask of one of the masked individuals,

'What?'

Son Yun and the Sword Demon Ji-oe, who was directly facing him, couldn't hide their surprise at the face hidden behind the mask.

This was because it was far from an ordinary human.

Fierce eyes reminiscent of a beast, no bridge of the nose with two small holes, and extremely sharp teeth.

It was nothing short of a monster.

"Damn old man."

The monster whose face was revealed expressed displeasure.

Then the monster, moving on all fours like a wild beast, showed strange movements as it avoided Ji-oe's sword technique and rushed to attack his back.

'Its movements are not human.'

However,

-Pak!

Ji-oe, turning backwards as if doing a backflip, stabbed his sword into the head of the monster aiming for his back.

-Puk!

“Kak!”

The monster, pierced by the sword, fell face down on the ground with a death cry.

“You old human bastard!”

“We’ll kill you!”

“Kwaaaaa!”

Enraged by their comrade’s death, three masked individuals rushed towards Ji-oe with fierce momentum.

Their movements were no less than the monster that had just died.

-Pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pak!

As Ji-oe, who had almost exhausted his true qi and stamina, moved his eyeballs rapidly and calmly tried to respond with minimal movement,

-Pu-pu-puk!

“Euk!”

“Keuk!”

“Kek!”

At that moment, a sword flew in, piercing through them one by one as if skewering them.

The masked individuals with holes in their bodies gasped in agony before collapsing.

Seeing this, the Sword Demon Ji-oe exhaled in relief.

What had pierced their bodies was black Sword Energy Controlled by Qi.

The one who had sent it flying was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

-Chak!

The Sword Energy Controlled by Qi, which had killed them in an instant, flew back and settled in the scabbard at Mok Gyeong-un's waist.

‘To handle even Sword Energy Controlled by Qi so freely. There's no room for doubt.’

The Bright Blade King Son Yun, who had been about to help Ji-oe, stuck out his tongue.

Mok Gyeong-un had undoubtedly reached the Profound Realm.

For a guy not even twenty to reach the highest realm in just half a year.

No matter how one thought about it, no, even seeing it, it was hard to comprehend.

But why is that guy still standing in front of him like that?

The reason for the Bright Blade King Son Yun's puzzlement was simple.

Mok Gyeong-un was still standing in front of Kang Yeom, who had died with a hole in his chest.

‘With a hole in his chest, yet he's standing there as if something might happen...’

-Flinch!

At that moment,

-Hwa-reu-reu-reu-reuk!

The entire body of the dead Kang Yeom was suddenly engulfed in tremendous flames.

“What?”

What's going on?

Why did a dead person suddenly spontaneously combust?

As he was wondering, the flames spread to the ground around the burning Kang Yeom, and soon it began not just to burn but to melt.

The heat surpassed that of ordinary flames.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un made a gesture of raising his right sword finger upwards while keeping one hand behind his back.

Then,

-Dung-dung!

The masterless swords around them rose up.

As Mok Gyeong-un stretched his hand towards the burning Kang Yeom, the swords all flew towards him at once.

-Shu-shu-shu-shu-shuk!

But then, an amazing thing happened.

The heat of the flames was so strong that the swords melted before they could even touch him.

It was as if they were blocked by an invisible wall of heat.

-Pa-seu-seu-seu-seu!

‘Heat that can melt swords...’

Gi Ok-ryeon, the daughter of Sun Rock Valley Master Gi Hae, couldn’t help but be amazed at this sight.

But this wasn’t the only problem.

As the heat gradually spread in all directions, the surrounding air began to ripple and distort.

It was like seeing a mirage.

-Shu-shu-shu-shu-shuk!

The swords that Mok Gyeong-un had sent flying with Sword Energy Controlled by Qi continued to fly towards the burning Kang Yeom, but they kept melting without even touching him.

Why does he keep sending swords when it's useless?

Does he feel the heat is not ordinary?

But Gi Ok-ryeon's eyes widened.

'Ah?'

The melted sword fragments had almost become molten iron, and these were gradually piling up, surrounding the burning Kang Yeom.

'Is this possible?'

When it had surrounded him up to about waist height, perhaps because half of the heat couldn't escape, the burning of the surrounding ground stopped.

Instead, the heat surged upwards, making the surrounding air hot.

-Pak!

It was then.

“Kuaaaaaaaaa!”

Kang Yeom, who was thought to be dead and burning, suddenly moved and broke through the molten iron trying to trap him, rushing towards Mok Gyeong-un.

-Pa-pa-pa-pak!

As he, who had become hot flames itself, launched his body, Mok Gyeong-un pulled his hand forward and then stretched out his palm as if performing a palm technique.

Then, a pure white energy exploded and enveloped the flames.

It was the extreme cold energy of the Ultimate Yin.

-Shwa-a-a-a-a!

As the extreme cold energy of the Ultimate Yin clashed with the flames, the moisture instantly filled the surroundings with hazy steam.

-Pat!

Breaking through the steam, Kang Yeom launched a hand blade towards where he was certain Mok Gyeong-un was.

Then, a sword energy in the shape of a blade made of flames stretched out, cutting through the steam as it passed.

-Hwa-reu-reu-reu-reuk! Chwak!

-Kwa-a-a-ang!

The flaming sword energy not only cut through the steam but rushed to a radius of over ten zhang, devastating the surroundings.

That wasn't the end.

From within the steam, flaming sword energies flew out in all directions one after another.

Due to this tremendous power, the Bright Blade King Son Yun and the surviving society members around had no choice but to create as much distance as possible to escape its aftermath.

'How is he still alive?'

Son Yun, who had moved as far away as possible from the radius where the flaming sword energies were flying, couldn't understand.

How could he still be alive with a hole in his chest? What kind of strange phenomenon is this?

Could he possibly be an immortal being?

As he was bewildered,

The flaming sword energies that had been continuously flying in all directions suddenly stopped.

Then, as the steam that had filled the surroundings cleared, something could be dimly seen.

It was,

'!!!!!!'

Kang Yeom, with all four limbs severed, lying face down on the ground, being stepped on by Mok Gyeong-un.

Hot heat was still flowing from him, but Mok Gyeong-un, seemingly unconcerned about this, had driven the demonic sword Evil Commandment Sword, made of black strong energy, into his head.

-Puk!

“Kek!”

The sword penetrated his head and came out through his mouth.

Despite such a cruel act, Mok Gyeong-un was looking down without showing any emotion.

At that moment, Kang Yeom’s severed limbs twitched, and blood vessels tangled as flesh tried to grow.

Then Mok Gyeong-un,

-Chwak!

Pulled out the sword he had driven into his head and cut off the areas above where regeneration was trying to occur.

-Chwa-chwa-chwa-chwak!

As his limbs were severed again, Kang Yeom let out a groan with a pained expression.

“Kuuuu.”

Kang Yeom was inwardly utterly bewildered.

He was a Imaemangnyang being who had lived for hundreds of years, and a high-ranking demonic beast capable of even human transformation.

Moreover, because he had achieved human transformation more elaborately than other Imaemangnyang, he could even implement blood vessels, allowing him to receive martial arts transmission from the Mok-gan and become a member of the First Realm that he favored.

But what exactly is this monster?

He, who had succeeded in absorbing the blood of a spirit beast that was almost his opposite and gained tremendous fire energy and regenerative power, was completely overwhelmed.

"Uuuu."

To him, who was suffering, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said:

"Does it hurt? How many times do I need to cut before you die? A hundred times, a thousand times, ten thousand times..."

-Flinch!

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, a chill ran down Kang Yeom's spine.

It seemed this monstrous human would really do just that.

"Kuuu. You bastaaaaard."

"It doesn't seem so good to be unable to die. Don't you agree?"

-Chu-reu-reu-reuk!

No sooner had those words ended than Kang Yeom's severed limbs tried to regenerate again, regardless of his will.

But it was literally a repetition.

As Mok Gyeong-un moved his sword again, his limbs were cut off even higher, leaving only the torso now.

-Kwang!

Mok Gyeong-un stomped on Kang Yeom's head, who was suffering, and said with a chilling smile:

"I wonder if we need to leave the torso. Wouldn't just the head be enough?"

At this, Kang Yeom shouted towards Mok Gyeong-un in an urgent voice:

"I'll, I'll hand over that human woman, so stop this."

Human woman.

The woman he was referring to was Wi So-yeon, the youngest disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society Leader.

Two masked individuals were still attached to Wi So-yeon's side.

They had already drawn daggers and were holding them to her neck as if ready to stab at any moment, so even the Sword Demon Ji-oe couldn't easily approach.

But then,

“You dispersed this level of force and even had the capacity to flee while taking her, yet you stalled for time. That means you had some other purpose...”

‘This guy?’

Kang Yeom’s eyeballs shook.

As he was thinking ‘surely not’, Mok Gyeong-un stared intently at the unconscious Wi So-yeon, then said with a cold gaze:

“That’s not the real one.”

‘!!!!!!’

Chapter 422 – First Realm (4)

“That’s not the real one.”

‘!?’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s cold words, the pupils of Kang Yeom from the First Realm of the Secret Society shook slightly.

However, he quickly concealed this and said:

“Haa... Haa... What are you talking about?”

“What am I talking about? Are you playing dumb?”

“...Judging by your attitude, it seems you don’t particularly want to save that human woman.”

At Kang Yeom’s words, Mok Gyeong-un snorted.

Then he spoke to the masked individual holding a dagger to the throat of the unconscious Wi So-yeon, the youngest disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society Leader:

“Kill her.”

“What?”

The masked individual couldn’t hide their bewilderment for a moment.

What is this guy thinking?

Not trying to save the hostage, but ordering to kill her?

“Mok Gyeong-un!”

At that moment, the Bright Blade King Son Yun called out his name loudly and pressed him.

He doubted his own ears when he heard what Mok Gyeong-un was saying to the masked individuals.

How could he say to kill the young miss without any hesitation?

“How can you...”

“It’s fake.”

“What?”

“It’s exactly as I said.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the Bright Blade King Son Yun’s expression twisted terribly.

He knew why the guy was saying such things.

He too had thought that these people were deliberately stalling for time despite having enough capacity to flee.

They clearly had some ulterior motive.

However, separate from this, he had been there the moment Wi So-yeon was kidnapped by them and had witnessed it with his own eyes.

“Stop provoking them. If anything happens to the young miss’s life, even slightly...”

“I told you it’s fake.”

“Mok Gyeong-un... That is undoubtedly the young miss. Everyone here knows this fact, even if you didn’t see it. How can you take such a reckless...”

“I don’t care when it was switched.”

“Ha!”

The Bright Blade King Son Yun became frustrated.

If this guy keeps being stubborn like this and the provoked enemies do something irreversible to the young miss in desperation, everything will be beyond recovery.

Son Yun glared at Mok Gyeong-un and said in a low voice:

“...Don’t tell me you want the young miss to die?”

“Of course not.”

“Then why...”

“If it were real, we couldn’t kill her more.”

“You...”

“They sent this level of force and went to great lengths to kidnap Wi So-yeon, yet thinking they would easily kill her is even more naive.”

“.....”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the Bright Blade King Son Yun closed his mouth.

There was some logic to what he said.

However, because the intention behind their delay was unclear, he still thought they should refrain from provoking them, in case the reason they kidnapped Wi So-yeon was merely to disperse the Heaven and Earth Society’s forces and divide their attention.

“Mok Gyeong-un, your words certainly...”

It was then.

“If you can’t kill her, I will.”

-Seuk!

Mok Gyeong-un extended his sword finger.

Then, about ten swords lying on the ground rose simultaneously and flew towards the two masked individuals and the unconscious Wi So-yeon.

“Mok Gyeong-un!”

The Bright Blade King Son Yun hastily launched his body to block this.

However, the Sword Demon Ji-oe blocked his path.

“I can’t let you interfere with my lord.”

‘This guy!’

Although Ji-oe was tired, he was still a supreme expert who had reached the Transformation Realm, surpassing the wall.

Even the Bright Blade King Son Yun, one of the Five Kings of the Heaven and Earth Society, had no chance of facing him one-on-one.

-Pa-pa-pa-pak!

After clashing for a few exchanges with sword fingers and hand blades without weapons, Son Yun was pushed back about five steps.

-Chwa-reu-reu-reu!

Meanwhile, the swords Mok Gyeong-un had sent flying had already reached the masked individuals, and those who had been aiming daggers at her neck finally moved to block them.

-Cha-cha-cha-cha-chang!

These individuals were also quite skilled, managing to deal with two or three of the flying swords.

However, with the swords that followed,

-Pu-puk!

“Kek!”

“Keuk!”

They had no choice but to breathe their last as their vital points were pierced.

And the swords they failed to block all flew towards the unconscious Wi So-yeon,

“Young miss!”

Gi Ok-ryeon and the society members following Wi So-yeon also hastily launched their bodies to try and block this, but the swords had already reached her.

But the moment the swords touched her,

-Cha-cha-cha-cha-cha-chang!

All the swords that touched Wi So-yeon's body shattered into pieces.

'!?'

At this sight, the eyes of the Bright Blade King Son Yun and the surviving society members under Wi So-yeon widened.

What on earth just happened?

As they were wondering, Wi So-yeon finally revealed stark white eyeballs.

Where the swords had struck her body, her clothes were torn, revealing her skin, which was covered in bizarre blue scales.

'This... can't be?'

That wasn't Wi So-yeon.

Was Mok Gyeong-un's prediction really correct?

A regretful sigh escaped from Kang Yeom's mouth at the sight of the fake Wi So-yeon whose non-human identity was revealed.

"Ahhh."

If Mok Gyeong-un or anyone else had been deceived and approached the fake Wi So-yeon, they would have lost their lives as the price for that carelessness.

But though it was regrettable, it couldn't be helped.

It seemed they would have to be satisfied with having bought time without being noticed while taking away the real Wi So-yeon.

It was then.

"Release that person! Kuaaaaa!"

The fake Wi So-yeon, whose identity was revealed, bared her sharp teeth and charged towards Mok Gyeong-un at tremendous speed.

But,

-Seuk!

Mok Gyeong-un made a gesture of slicing with his sword finger towards her.

Then,

-Chwak!

The fake Wi So-yeon's body was suddenly decapitated by an utterly transparent formless sword that appeared.

The severed head rolled on the ground as blue blood spurted like a fountain.

'!!!!'

Kang Yeom's eyes widened even more at this sight.

He had definitely heard about that transparent form of sword before.

He had heard that only those who had reached the realm of Sword Extreme, beyond the Profound Realm called the highest realm, could shape a sword with energy.

Does that mean this guy hasn't been using his full power against him at all until now...

-Chu-reu-reu-reuk!

At that moment, as Kang Yeom's severed body parts tried to recover, Mok Gyeong-un cut those parts off again with his sword.

-Chwa-chwa-chwa-chwak!

“Keuup!”

Looking down at the suffering Kang Yeom, Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth.

“If you answer three things, I'll show mercy and let you keep your life.”

“Three things?”

“The location of the real Wi So-yeon, the reason for taking her, and where Three Eyes's main body is.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Kang Yeom sneered as if dumbfounded even in his suffering.

“Kukuk... Kuhuhuhuhuu.”

“.....”

“Did you really think I would answer your questions? If you hoped for that...”

-Puk!

Before he could finish speaking, Mok Gyeong-un's demonic sword Evil Commandment Sword pierced through his lower back.

As Mok Gyeong-un added rotation to the sword,

-Chwa-reu-reu-reuk!

“Keugagaaaak!”

All the internal organs in his body twisted and were ground up.

The pain of having his body cut off was agonizing enough, but when the internal organs in his body were ground up by the whirlwind of sword energy, Kang Yeom was in so much pain that he sincerely wished for death.

However, having succeeded in absorbing the blood of a spirit beast by breaking through the enormous odds of absolute incompatibility, he couldn't die easily thanks to his tremendous regenerative ability.

“Kuuuu.”

“Speak. The real Wi So-yeon... Where did you take her?”

“Th-that person...”

“.....”

“You... You and the humans... will be eradicated. Enjoy what’s left of your life until then. Kuhuhuhuhuu.”

Kang Yeom forcefully sneered with a face distorted by pain, revealing teeth stained with blue blood.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un smirked and said as he pulled the demonic sword Evil Commandment Sword out of his back:

“There’s no helping it. Your will is quite strong, so it’ll be difficult to make you open your mouth.”

Is he giving up?

A glint appeared in Kang Yeom’s eyes.

He didn’t seem like the type to give up so easily over something like this.

-Tak!

Then Mok Gyeong-un bent down and placed his palm on his chest.

As Kang Yeom was wondering what this was about, Mok Gyeong-un raised the corner of his mouth slyly and said:

“But you know what? Do you think there’s no one else who can answer even if you don’t?”

“.....”

Kang Yeom snorted.

Among those deployed here, there was no one who knew important information about their Secret Society.

Even in the Secret Society, those who knew the exact flow of the grand plan were as rare as to be called extremely few, except for the First Realm, who could be considered the highest executives.

But then,

“When the half-white-haired woman with demonic energy similar to yours self-destructed with Three Eyes’s replicated eye, she surrendered without hesitation.”

‘Chunchu?’

At those words, Kang Yeom frowned.

When he mentioned the half-white-haired woman, he immediately understood who it was.

Although she had a somewhat difficult-to-control temperament, he thought she would never betray them because she knew that person’s fearsomeness.

But that woman surrendered without hesitation?

It was hard to believe.

“I’ll find out through her. And from you...”

-Shu-u-u-u!

“Huheuk!”

At that moment, Kang Yeom’s expression twisted.

This was because demonic energy was being sucked in through Mok Gyeong-un’s palm that was placed on his chest.

‘Wh-what is this?’

The being before his eyes was undoubtedly human.

But how could he absorb his demonic energy?

This was happening due to the Ritual of Binding, one of the subtleties of the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques.

Moreover, Mok Gyeong-un’s true qi wasn’t the energy of yang life.

It was demonic energy formed by combining the energy of the dead, extreme yin energy, and demonic energy absorbed from Imaemangnyang.

Given its fundamental nature, there was no reason for it to have any resistance to absorbing demonic energy.

-Shu-u-u-u!

He had been suffering from constant pain due to his regenerative ability, but Kang Yeom couldn’t help but be bewildered as Mok Gyeong-un absorbed the demonic energy he had accumulated until now.

“Kueoeoeo. St-stop!”

Of course, there was no way Mok Gyeong-un would even pretend to hear such cries.

-Hwa-reu-reu-reuk!

A glint appeared in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes as he absorbed Kang Yeom's demonic energy.

Unlike the demonic energy he had absorbed from Imaemangnyang until now, there was some unique energy coexisting.

This hot energy, which was of even higher purity than the Fiery Yang Energy, was closer to natural energy.

But as he tried to absorb this energy, Kang Yeom, who had seemed unlikely to ever betray Three Eyes, hastily shouted at him:

"Th-that human woman, if she's there, they said they could revive the sealed vengeful spirit!"

'!?'

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un stopped absorbing his demonic energy.

Chapter 423 – Soul and Spirit (1)

-Wake up.

-Bang!

"Kuhak!"

Na Yul-ryang, the chief disciple of the Society Leader, awoke spitting blood from the shock.

As Na Yul-ryang regained his senses, he couldn't hide his surprise at the being pressing down on his chest.

"Wi... So-yeon?"

-Don't talk nonsense.

-Puk!

"Kuk."

Na Yul-ryang let out a groan as sharp fingernails dug into his chest.

Though he was more patient than most due to his arrogance and strong pride, he strangely couldn't bear the pain.

He tried to remove the fingernails embedded in his chest.

But something was off.

'My body?'

It wouldn't move.

It wasn't that his body was paralyzed, but he felt pain as if most of his muscles had been severed. He couldn't understand what was happening.

As he tried to circulate his qi,

-Crunch! Crunch!

“Kuaaaaargh!”

The moment he tried to circulate his inner energy from his danjeon, an immense pain like needles piercing every acupoint in his body surged through him, and a scream, not a groan, burst from his lips.

This wasn't the kind of pain that could be endured with patience alone.

Na Yul-ryang instinctively knew that all his acupoints had ruptured and even his danjeon wasn't normal.

‘Why is my body...?’

Beyond severe injury, his physical body was damaged to the point where it was almost impossible for him to recover as a martial artist.

Why was his body so damaged?

Clearly, in his memory...

-Throb!

His head ached, and for a moment, unfamiliar memories flashed sporadically.

What the hell was this phenomenon?

As he wondered, Wi So-yeon, who had dug her fingernails into his chest...

Wait, is this woman really Wi So-yeon?

“You bitch... Who are you?”

She’s different from Wi So-yeon.

A pale white face devoid of vitality.

Though she looked exactly like Wi So-yeon, unlike the innocent-looking girl, this one exuded an aura of dignity and pressure that seemed to encompass her surroundings.

-Grab!

“Hup.”

The sharp fingernails digging into his chest touched something.

It was undoubtedly his heart.

The sensation of something touching his beating heart was filled with a sense of alienation and discomfort he had never experienced in his life.

To Na Yul-ryang, who was at a loss for words, the breathtakingly beautiful woman who looked exactly like his disciple Wi So-yeon, Cheong-ryeong, spoke.

-Heaven Vein gave me the pain of having my heart ripped out alive. That pain is beyond words.

“What... are you... talking... about...”

-The third eye inside you... No, Bi Yong-heon had entered. Even if it wasn't for long, you shared a body with him for a moment, so surely something must remain in that head of yours.

“Sharing a body...?”

-Throb!

His head rang, and once again, unfamiliar memories flashed by.

It was a scene of him fighting against Mok Gyeong-un.

High-level Heaven Vein sword techniques that were beyond his current level were unfolding from his hands, and Mok Gyeong-un was blocking those incredible sword strikes with equally formidable sword techniques.

‘What is this?’

Why were these memories lingering in his mind?

He couldn't understand at all.

The last thing he was fully conscious of was when the society members blamed everything on him...

“Mo Yak? Kueup!”

Suddenly, the image of Mo Yak's abruptly changed appearance flashed in his mind.

That's right.

She suddenly changed like a different person, put her finger into his empty right eye socket, and pulled out his eyeball...

-Thump! Thump! Thump!

His heart began to race madly, and his head felt like it was about to burst.

“Kuuuugh.”

The moment he recalled her appearance, Na Yul-ryang’s eyes turned bloodshot as if he had entered a state of qi deviation, and the veins on his forehead bulged severely.

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong’s eyes, which were about to interrogate Na Yul-ryang, filled with disappointment.

She had hoped that something would remain in his head, but judging from his current state, it seemed he was just broken.

‘Bi Yong-heon!’

Anger surged within her.

Whether he was truly human or not was still unknown, but to damage the successor who inherited his own martial arts, Heaven Vein, like this.

Was everything except herself just a piece on a game board to him?

-Pak!

Cheong-ryeong pulled out the fingernails she had embedded in his chest.

This guy, who had lost his martial arts and had his body and mind damaged beyond repair with his danjeon and blood vessels ruptured, seemed unlikely to resurrect as a martial artist.

'...Just being alive must be a living hell for him.'

She had intended to kill Na Yul-ryang, who inherited Heaven Vein's martial arts, after extracting information.

However, given that not only his physical body but also his mind was so severely damaged, it seemed this guy was finished even without taking his life.

That's when it happened.

Sensing an approaching presence, Cheong-ryeong looked in that direction.

-Ta-ta-ta-tak!

There stood a woman with one eye closed, bruised and swollen, breathing heavily.

It was Mo Yak, Na Yul-ryang's loyal subordinate.

"Young Master!"

As her shout rang out, a strange thing happened.

Na Yul-ryang, who was about to enter an irreversible state of qi deviation, regained consciousness in his eyes.

Then, he was seen looking at Mo Yak with trembling eyes.

‘This bastard...’

The moment he heard the voice of that mortal woman, his crumbling consciousness returned.

It seemed almost impossible for him to recover, but it was surprising.

As Na Yul-ryang’s eyes reddened upon regaining consciousness, Cheong-ryeong felt a peculiar emotion.

‘...’

The reason she had intended to spare Na Yul-ryang, who had inherited Heaven Vein’s martial arts, was because she thought his mind was too damaged for recovery.

But if his mind had returned, that changed things.

She had decided to take everything away from Heaven Vein to wash away her grudge.

-Creep!

Her fingernails lengthened as blood-red spirit energy flowed out.

This might be the perfect moment.

She thought he was an emotionless bastard, but the moment he saw that mortal woman, his eyes became tender.

These two clearly loved each other.

‘That’s it, isn’t it.’

The corners of Cheong-ryeong’s mouth twisted upwards.

-Whoosh!

As Cheong-ryeong lightly waved her long pipe, Mo Yak’s approaching body was suddenly bound by blood.

-Swish!

“Ah.”

“You bitch!”

As she was suddenly captured, Na Yul-ryang tried to forcibly raise his upper body despite his damaged state.

However, with all his blood vessels ruptured and muscles overexerted to the point of tearing, there was no way he could move properly.

“Kuuugh.”

As he struggled, unable to properly raise his upper body,

-Suk!

Cheong-ryeong lifted his body with her spirit energy.

-If you want to see, I should let you see.

She had intended to show him the sight of his loved one dying painfully anyway.

You bastards who inherited the blood and martial arts of Heaven Vein can never be happy.

As Cheong-ryeong was about to extend her long pipe towards Mo Yak, Na Yul-ryang twisted his body frantically and shouted.

“Kuuugh. Stop! What are you trying to do?”

-What do you think I’m going to do?

-Whoosh!

As Cheong-ryeong swung her long pipe,

-Crack!

Mo Yak’s left arm bent backwards, and the elbow bone protruded through the flesh.

“Aaaaargh!”

“Stop! Stop it!”

-Does it hurt? This isn’t even a thousandth of the pain you gave me. It’s just the beginning, so it’s troublesome if you’re already making a fuss.

“Let her go. Kill me instead. If you have a grudge against Heaven Vein, then me... Mmph!”

Na Yul-ryang's mouth was forcibly shut.

Having lost almost all his strength, he couldn't even resist.

-Don't worry. I'll kill you too.

As Cheong-ryeong swung her long pipe towards Mo Yak again,

-Crack!

"Aaaaaaargh!"

Mo Yak's right arm bent backwards, and similarly, the bone protruded.

She was already severely injured from the estate and had lost an eye, causing heavy bleeding. With both arms now broken, beyond the pain, her face turned deathly pale.

Seeing her in this state, Na Yul-ryang shouted as if possessed by rage.

"Mmmph!"

He had never lost his arrogance and pride in any situation.

But watching the woman he cherished dying before his eyes, he felt his heart being torn apart for the first time in his life.

-Clench!

Seeing Na Yul-ryang like this, Mo Yak, perhaps feeling the same heartache, bit her lip tightly and struggled with all her might to endure the pain.

This was the moment she had been waiting for.

Cheong-ryeong had been waiting to return all the suffering she had experienced before her death.

That's why she had been waiting so eagerly for this moment, but...

'...'

Watching them, Cheong-ryeong didn't feel her grudge being settled or any sense of satisfaction.

Instead, she felt bitter and empty inside.

'Why? Why is this?'

Hadn't she decided to eradicate everything related to Heaven Vein without leaving a trace during the hundred years she spent as a vengeful spirit?

Yet, watching their suffering didn't make her feel better; rather, it made her feel frustrated.

Why was that?

She couldn't understand.

Could it be that after waiting for so long, she was feeling sympathy for them?

That couldn't be.

She wasn't just a spirit, but a vengeful spirit.

She remained in this world solely because of her grudge, so how could she feel such emotions towards those who were no different from her enemies?

‘No. No. How could I have such petty sympathy for them?’

That’s right.

It must be because she learned that Bi Yong-heon of Heaven Vein, the final destination of her grudge, was still alive.

That’s why she didn’t feel much emotion towards the suffering of others who weren’t him.

With the main culprit still around, her grudge couldn’t be easily settled with just these people.

‘I need to see him suffer...’

As she thought that everything would be resolved once she saw him in agony, she saw Na Yul-ryang and Mo Yak staring intently at each other without words.

Though they weren’t speaking, these two who had resolved themselves to death were conveying their feelings for each other through their eyes.

‘...’

It was truly peculiar.

Seeing them like this, Cheong-ryeong momentarily thought of Mok Gyeong-un before ‘him’.

As she recalled Mok Gyeong-un, Cheong-ryeong’s heart ached terribly.

‘Mortal...’

If she were to settle all her grudges, her soul would have no more lingering attachments to this world and would depart from this realm.

That would also mean the end of her connection with the mortal.

That is the fate of the relationship between the living and the dead.

-Throb!

Suddenly, Cheong-ryeong’s heart ached.

What was this?

She was a vengeful spirit made of ethereal energy, so why did her chest feel so tight and painful?

But just then,

“Cough, cough... Ryu So-wol. Please stop.”

Cheong-ryeong’s gaze turned towards the source of the coughing voice, weakened by internal injuries.

“Master?”

Na Yul-ryang said with surprised eyes.

The one who suddenly appeared was none other than the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader.

The Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader, who appeared with a pale complexion due to severe internal injuries, glanced at Na Yul-ryang once, then,

-Tak! Tak! Tak!

He flicked his fingers in succession.

The small bursts of energy from his fingertips struck Na Yul-ryang's acupoints, subduing him.

As Na Yul-ryang fell asleep, the Society Leader then flicked his fingers towards Mo Yak as well.

He flicked more times, and,

-Ta-ta-ta-tak!

He struck Mo Yak's blood-stopping points and sleep acupoints, also putting her to sleep despite her severe bleeding.

Seeing the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader put them to sleep, Cheong-ryeong's eyes grew fierce again.

Unlike these young ones, this bastard is a direct descendant of Bi Yong-heon.

An inheritor of that blood.

-Right. You were here too.

Cheong-ryeong began to draw up her spirit energy, about to unfold the blood realm of the ghost domain.

But then,

-Thud!

Suddenly, the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader fell to his knees before her.

Then he bowed his head to the ground.

'!?'

Cheong-ryeong's expression hardened.

What the hell is this bastard doing?

Could it be that now...

"Ryu So-wol. What you want is the extinction of the Heaven Vein bloodline, isn't it? Please spare their lives."

-Huh?

"Although I took in and taught Na Yul-ryang, he doesn't inherit the blood of Heaven Vein."

To these words, Cheong-ryeong replied curtly with an incredulous look on her face.

-So what? He inherited Heaven Vein's martial arts, so he's clearly Heaven Vein. You can't deny that.

“...I know. But if you go by that logic, your grudge would only be settled by killing everyone in the Heaven and Earth Society.”

Cheong-ryeong let out a cold sneer.

-Hmph! That's not impossible.

“In the end, although that person, no, Bi Yong-heon took everything away, it was you who laid the foundation and set everything up. No matter how strong your hatred for Heaven Vein is, would you deny and eradicate everything you created with your own hands?”

-Grooooowl!

At these words, the surroundings were suddenly dyed red with blood.

As Cheong-ryeong's killing intent reached its peak, even the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader unconsciously swallowed hard at its weight.

It wasn't because he feared her, but because her hatred exceeded his expectations.

But he understood.

After seeing 'that' record of the past, he realized that Heaven Vein had committed an unforgivable sin against her and Moon Vein.

That's why he wanted to end all the wrongdoings in his generation.

But if her anger was to this extent, it wouldn't end with just an apology and offering his own life.

The Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader, who had let out a sigh, slowly raised his head to look at Cheong-ryeong and spoke.

“Then... I suppose we have no choice but to make a deal.”

-A deal?

“That’s right.”

-You’re ridiculous. Mortal... No, you’re about to lose everything to the Heavenly Demon, and you think you can make a deal?

To her words, the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader replied in a low voice.

“If that so-called Heavenly Demon you believe in fails to save my youngest disciple, Wi So-yeon, you will face the worst crisis, let alone your revenge.”

-What?

“If that happens, there will be only one way to save you, Ryu So-wol.”

-Save me? What nonsense are you spouting now?

“...The moment the alchemy that unites the soul and spirit falls into his hands, you will never be able to escape his grasp, even before you can settle your hundred-year grudge.”

‘!?’

Chapter 424 – Soul and Spirit (2)

“...The moment the alchemy that unites the soul and spirit falls into his hands, you will never be able to escape his grasp, even before you can settle your hundred-year grudge.”

'!?'

Cheong-ryeong's expression hardened at the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader's meaningful words.

What the hell is he talking about?

Alchemy that unites the soul and spirit? What on earth does that mean?

Her mind became confused, and she was at a loss for words. She stared blankly at the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader before her eyes widened and she spoke.

-...What's with that wench?

That wench.

She meant Wi So-yeon, the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader's youngest disciple.

She had found it strange how eerily similar the girl looked to herself.

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

Cheong-ryeong recalled how she had attempted to possess her, only to nearly have her spirit body forcibly trapped in that body.

Her voice rose.

-What is this? Why does that wench look like me?

“...I don’t know the exact principles either, but if the records are correct, Wi So-yeon was born from your soul.”

‘!!!!’

Cheong-ryeong was confused by those words.

Wi So-yeon is her soul? What the hell does that mean?

As far as she knew, the soul and spirit were one.

Just then, someone’s voice was heard.

“I’ll explain that.”

Cheong-ryeong and the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader’s gazes turned in that direction.

There stood a man with a terribly burned face and no eyes, leaning on a cane.

Seeing the man with the cane, the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader spoke with a wary look in his eyes.

“You are...”

He clearly remembered him as someone from the Elder Council.

However, Cheong-ryeong, who had been with Mok Gyeong-un, knew his true identity.

-Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul.

“Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul?”

-That mortal’s true identity. He’s one of the Six Direction Gods and a follower of Three-Eyes, no, Bi Yong-heon. Though not anymore, of course.

‘Six Direction Gods?’

The Six Direction Gods.

They were the six gods considered the pinnacle of diviners.

Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul was one of the Six Direction Gods and had been following Three-.

However, after being defeated by Mok Gyeong-un and revealing information, he almost died due to a prohibition left by Three-Eyes, but he swore loyalty to Mok Gyeong-un to survive.

Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul spoke as he walked over, leaning on his cane.

“Both the soul and spirit can be considered spirits.”

-Spirits?

“The reason they’re divided into two is because spirits can be divided into two types of essence.”

-Two types of essence?

“The soul ascends to heaven for reincarnation and then descends again. On the other hand, the spirit is both an essence and the residual thoughts accumulated through life, as well as the remnants of the physical body.”

-...

"Conversely, the spirit should return to the earth, but because it's an essence born from that life, it remains even after death while the physical body decays. If it harbors strong resentment during this period, it becomes a ghost. That's what we call a vengeful spirit or ghost."

-I don't know that. I just...

To Cheong-ryeong's words, Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul waved his hand lightly as if to calm her and said.

"Of course. But this is where it gets important."

-What are you talking about?

"Even though the spirit is an essence accumulated through the physical body, it's also an element that forms the spirit. The soul is yang that rises to heaven, and the spirit is yin that returns to earth. The soul and spirit that have gone to heaven and earth meet again when the time comes and are reborn anew. This is what Taoism and Buddhism call..."

-Reincarnation...

One is born, dies, and is born again.

This is called reincarnation.

It could be said to be the providence and natural order that sustains the world.

Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul nodded and continued speaking.

"That's right. Reincarnation. However, as I just mentioned, reincarnation can only occur when both the soul and spirit are present. For instance, if the soul attains enlightenment and reaches nirvana, or if the spirit is trapped by resentment and becomes a ghost without returning to the earth, they can't meet again and thus can't reincarnate."

-But what about that Wi So-yeon?

"It's exactly as the Society Leader said."

-Exactly as he said? You just said with your own mouth that the soul and spirit must come together for reincarnation...

"Yes, that's how it should be. But Mok-gan broke that law."

-Broke the law?

"Originally, the soul would be purified through the process of ascending to heaven and passing through the celestial gate. However, Mok-gan separated your soul and spirit and kept them captive."

-Is that even possible?

"It's nearly impossible, but he has existed for ages, changing countless bodies, so his knowledge is close to that of an immortal."

This was the reason Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul followed him.

Myeong-ryul wanted to obtain his vast knowledge to cure his burns and eyes that couldn't be healed due to a curse, and to surpass his limits as a diviner.

-...So you're saying that mortal wench Wi So-yeon is a physical body born from my soul that Bi Yong-heon captured and kept?

“That’s correct.”

-But even if he captured the soul, without the spirit...

“Because it’s incomplete, it’s difficult for the physical body to maintain itself. From what I’ve heard, the bodies containing your soul born through various wombs couldn’t even last a few years.”

-Grr!

Cheong-ryeong gritted her teeth at Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul’s words.

Her anger surged to the point where her teeth chattered.

Not only did he imprison her vengeful spirit for nearly a hundred years, but he also held onto her soul that should have ascended to heaven and did such a thing?

No matter how obsessed he was with her, this was beyond excessive.

-...So that wench Wi So-yeon succeeded in forming a physical body without the spirit?

“Complete success is impossible.”

-What do you mean by that?

“From the beginning, the soul, spirit, and reincarnation are literally the providence that forms the world itself. How could even a being with vast knowledge arbitrarily achieve such a natural order?”

-Meaning?

"The physical body of Wi So-yeon is also incomplete. That's why a body with only a soul can't continue to endure and tries to crumble."

At these words, the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader muttered in an angry voice.

"Heavenly Yin Severed Meridians."

"...That's right. That phenomenon can also be said to have occurred because the physical body couldn't endure."

The Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader had thought that Heavenly Yin Severed Meridians was just her innate affliction.

However, after learning the truth, he realized it wasn't so.

Even though she was born from the best womb, Wi So-yeon's body was in an incomplete state without the spirit, so to compensate for the lack of yin energy, her body itself endlessly generated and went berserk trying to fill it.

-Crazy bastard...

A harsh curse spilled from Cheong-ryeong's lips.

Though she hated him, his madness was truly abhorrent.

Although the soul and spirit were separated, wasn't the soul still essentially herself?

To capture her soul and forcibly make it be born repeatedly, only to die each time – his obsession was the worst itself.

-Did he revive a body with just the soul out of obsession for me?

“...You would know that better than I do.”

-Obsession... obsession... Haa...

Suddenly, Cheong-ryeong found something incomprehensible.

If he was so obsessed with her that he would create a new body with just the soul, why did he seal away the spirit separately?

-I don't understand. If he had such remarkable abilities, wouldn't it have been better to reincarnate me from the beginning without separating the soul and spirit? Wouldn't that have fulfilled his desires?

To her question, Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul shook his head and answered.

“Of course, that would be true. But as I mentioned earlier, because the spirit is made up of residual thoughts from the physical body, it becomes a ghost if filled with resentment. In that case, it can't unite with the soul, which can be considered yang.”

-Hmph! Then couldn't he have resolved my resentment by sacrificing himself?

“It's not a problem that can be approached so simply.”

Sacrificing oneself was tantamount to suicide.

Even if he achieved reincarnation as desired, he wouldn't obtain what he wanted.

And,

‘...There is one thing I'm curious about.’

Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul also had one doubt here.

Although he didn't know exactly what happened at that time, did Mok-gan really not know this principle that a spirit full of resentment and a soul couldn't become one over a hundred years ago?

If he knew this principle, was there any need to take everything away from her and fill her with resentment?

‘Perhaps this is Mok-gan’s way of Bi Yong-heon...’

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong looked at the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader and spoke.

-You just said that a spirit full of resentment that becomes a ghost can't become one with the soul. But what is this alchemy that unites the soul and spirit?

“It’s exactly as it sounds. He has been searching for alchemy that forcibly unites the soul and spirit for a long time.”

-Don’t tell me the reason is...

“That’s right. It’s to make you, the spirit full of resentment, and Wi So-yeon, the soul that formed a physical body, become one.”

-Ha!

Cheong-ryeong sneered.

The very person who turned her into a vengeful spirit now wants to forcibly unite her soul and spirit to revive her to fulfill his obsession?

-Foolish bastard. Does he think I'll do as he wishes just because he revives me like that?

"If one masters the alchemy to handle the soul and spirit, one can freely manipulate the residual thoughts contained within them as well."

The Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader agreed with Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul's words and said.

"It was written that way in the records as well."

-What?

"It says that everything will be resolved if the parts of the residual thoughts in your spirit that are full of resentment and unnecessary memories are blown away."

-...

At these words, Cheong-ryeong's expression hardened.

All this time, while burning with resentment, she had wondered why he had imprisoned her in a secret manual made of heart.

But now all those questions were answered.

Even after a hundred years, he hadn't let go of his obsession with her.

For the sake of merely possessing her, because of such severe obsession and madness, he took away all of her clan and everything she loved?

-Bi... Yong... Heon!

-Grooooowl!

As her killing intent materialized, the surroundings rippled with an even deeper purple hue.

It was gradually darkening beyond purple.

-Flinch!

‘This can’t be.’

They say that the spirit energy of a vengeful spirit depends on how long it has existed or how strong its resentment is.

But as her spirit energy rose terrifyingly, Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul couldn’t help but be inwardly surprised and stick out his tongue.

Though unintended, her hatred after learning the whole truth seemed to have dug even deeper, almost to the point of the abyss.

But strangely, this wasn’t all.

-Flutter flutter flutter!

Although he couldn’t see, his senses were extremely developed and he used his main power to substitute for this, so he could feel the connection linked to Cheong-ryeong’s spirit body trembling strongly.

For some unknown reason, Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul furrowed his brow at this sight he had never seen before.

But at that very moment,

-Crack!

The connection that looked like a red thread linked to her suddenly broke.

A connection is close to the providence that links spirit mediums and diviners.

But for it to break?

'How?'

-Pak!

In the blink of an eye, the surroundings were covered in blood.

It happened so suddenly that Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul couldn't hide his bewilderment.

How could the ghost domain be formed so quickly?

As he was greatly surprised,

-Pak! Bang!

His body flew backwards and hit the wall, becoming fixed in place as if someone had grabbed him.

"Kuk!"

He wasn't the only one who flew back.

-Bang!

“Cough, cough!”

Although he had severe internal injuries due to the prohibition, even the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader, who had reached the Profound Realm beyond the Wall of Qi, couldn't properly control his body against her tremendous spirit energy.

Despite drawing up his qi, he was barely managing not to be pushed back.

Cheong-ryeong spoke in a chilling voice overflowing with ghost energy.

-Tell me. Where is he?

“Cough, cough... I don't know.”

-If you don't tell me, I'll start by killing your disciples and then everything alive remaining in the Heaven and Earth Society.

-Swish!

Blood rose up and wrapped around his entire body, tightening strongly.

Despite the pain, the Society Leader endured it and spoke.

“Haa... haa... I really don't know. But there is a way to draw him out... Ryu So-wol, don't you know it too?”

-...Speak.

“The Ghost Blade... found traces of alchemy that can forcibly unite the soul and spirit.”

‘!!!!’

Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul’s ears trembled at the Society Leader’s words.

He knew that even the soul transfer technique, the forbidden art he had barely found, was derived from a treasure left behind by an evil person called a calamity in the time of the old murim.

‘Did they find the treasure of Wicked Heart Granny?’

Chapter 425 – Soul and Spirit (3)

Western Shanxi Province, southern part of Xing County.

A strange war was taking place around a huge estate there.

It wasn’t a fight between people, that is, between humans and humans.

On one side were martial artists, and on the other were beings with bizarre forms that were neither beasts nor humans; they were called anomalies or demons.

-Kwaaaaa!

There were various kinds of anomalies, such as those that spewed poisonous mist from their mouths, moved with agile body movements as if using internal cultivation, and tore bodies apart with long claws.

Although they were beings that seemed terrifying just to look at, the human side, that is, the martial artists, were not overwhelmed by them at all, but rather were pushing them back with overwhelming force.

Their numbers alone seemed to be as many as two thousand.

Flags were raised here and there on the martial artists' side, which gave an indication of what group they were.

[Evil Alliance]

[Second Alliance Leader]

[Fifth Alliance Leader]

[Sixth Alliance Leader]

The Evil Alliance.

It was one of the three powers dividing the current martial world, formed by the remnants of the old martial world and the evil sects of the current martial world.

Three of the Alliance Leaders of this Evil Alliance participated in this war.

They were Second Alliance Leader Hae Yeok-won, the Invincible Golden Body, Fifth Alliance Leader Yoo Gyeong, the Asura Destruction Blade, and Sixth Alliance Leader Gwi Sa-man, the Evil Tranquil Sword.

Among them, Second Alliance Leader Hae Yeok-won was also one of the Eight Stars, considered the highest masters of the current martial world.

How did such formidable supreme masters of the Evil Alliance end up fighting these demons?

It was for the sake of a single person.

-Swoosh!

“Waaaaa!”

“It’s the True Blood Golden Body!”

The martial artists of the Evil Alliance cheered at the sight of a middle-aged man with a large build, his muscles swelling with a brown hue and steam erupting from his entire body.

“Hmph!”

-Bang!

The middle-aged man kicked off the ground, launching his body to strike down with both fists on the head of a huge demon that looked like a mix between a tiger and a wild boar.

The demon’s head shattered, its chin hitting the ground as it collapsed.

“Kuhuhehe. Just big in size. Not much else.”

The name of this muscular middle-aged man with an unkempt beard was Hae Yeok-won.

He was one of the main pillars of the Evil Alliance, worthy of receiving the title of one of the Eight Stars.

At that moment, a demon with agile movements rushed at Hae Yeok-won’s back as he was laughing.

Just then,

-Swish swish swish swish!

Someone flew in, unfolding sword techniques like flashes of light with both hands, slicing another demon's body into dozens of pieces.

-Thud thud thud thud!

“Don’t let your guard down, Alliance Leader Hae.”

“I knew you’d save me. Yoo Gyeong.”

“You sure talk well.”

The long-haired man who smirked, holding swords in both hands, was Yoo Gyeong, the Fifth Alliance Leader of the Evil Alliance, known as the Asura Destruction Blade.

These two men had one thing in common: they were both from the Old Blood Sect, which had been the most powerful force in the old martial world.

-Rustle rustle! Pak pak pak pak!

“Huk!”

“W-what is this?”

Just then, tree roots near them suddenly elongated, binding the bodies of the Evil Alliance martial artists so they couldn’t move.

The martial artists were bewildered and tried to break free, but the tree roots kept rising and wrapping around them even more.

Seeing this, Yoo Gyeong clicked his tongue.

“Huh. Seems like this is some kind of sorcery too.”

-Pat! Swish!

Fifth Alliance Leader Yoo Gyeong flew towards the tree that could be considered the center of the roots and cut it down.

As the large old tree lost its strength and fell, Yoo Gyeong, just in case, used the Three Realms True Fire technique to burn the tree.

-Whoosh!

The tree, which had been moving its roots as if alive, shook violently as if in pain while burning.

“How bizarre.”

“Damn it!”

Yoo Gyeong turned his head towards the direction of the estate where a voice was heard.

There, he saw diviners holding talismans and forming hand seals.

‘I thought it would be an easy fight, but it’s turning out to be quite troublesome.’

He had wondered why they had been asked for help just to fight a group of diviners.

But now that he was actually facing them, they were clearly different from ordinary diviners.

They truly lived up to their reputation as a group led by one of the top six diviners among the Sixty-Four Divination Halls.

They controlled demons stronger than average martial artists as spirit mediums and used bizarre sorceries to give the martial artists a hard time.

Of course, there were monsters on this side that even these demons and diviners couldn't touch.

"Kwahahahaha!"

-Crunch!

Hae Yeok-won broke the two horns of a red bull-shaped demon charging at him.

Not content with that, he lifted it up and threw it backwards.

-Bang!

Second Alliance Leader Hae Yeok-won was this type of monster.

Martial artists called him the Invincible Golden Body because he became virtually invincible when he unleashed his True Blood Golden Body, a unique qi cultivation method.

Although the era of the old martial world was forgotten by everyone after the day of the great calamity, the Hai family was said to have produced the world's strongest fighter in the past, making them a renowned martial arts family.

-Swish swish swish!

Of course, he was no pushover either.

Fifth Alliance Leader Yoo Gyeong, who had turned one of the demons into pieces of meat, spoke to Hae Yeok-won in a low voice.

"It's been almost half an hour since the young lady infiltrated, but there's still no news. It's worrying."

To his concern, Second Alliance Leader Hai replied with a laugh.

"Kuhehe. Don't worry. It's not just anyone, but that person who could be called a legend of the Old Blood Sect, along with the Sixth Alliance Leader, the Evil Tranquil Sword."

"That's true, but..."

It was taking longer than expected.

They had been holding off the diviner group's forces for over half an hour, yet there was still no news. It was impossible not to worry.

Even though they went in as an elite few, three supreme masters had entered.

If they hadn't been able to subdue them yet, it seems that diviner who received the title of one of the Six Direction Gods was no ordinary being.

Fifth Alliance Leader Yoo Gyeong looked at the main hall of the estate.

[Spiritual Word True Origin Pavilion]

Spiritual Word True Origin Pavilion.

“Cough... cough...”

A middle-aged man wearing golden diviner robes, with a sword piercing his abdomen, was coughing up blood.

The identity of this middle-aged man was Gi Jin-mun, the pavilion master of this Spiritual Word True Origin Pavilion and a diviner who had received the title of one of the Six Direction Gods.

How did one of the six best diviners end up in this state?

Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun, who had been coughing and spitting blood for a while, painfully raised his head to look at someone's back.

That someone was a woman in Embroidered Uniform Guard attire with a red vest and golden belt.

The identity of this beautiful Embroidered Uniform Guard woman, whose clothes were stained with blood here and there, was none other than So Ye-rin, the Six Offices Commander.

-Suk!

Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun tried to slightly move his middle finger.

At that moment,

-Swish!

“Kuaaaaargh!”

Gi Jin-mun’s middle finger was cut off.

The one who cut it was a woman with long nails and a seductive appearance, who was Dam Baek-ha of the Blood Saint from the Old Blood Sect.

Dam Baek-ha warned Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun in a voice filled with killing intent.

“If you move even a single finger, I’ll kill you regardless of the young lady’s orders.”

“Kuuuu. You vicious thing!”

“If you understand, stay still.”

The reason Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha was so wary of him was simple.

Though they had infiltrated this place to subdue him secretly, they encountered difficulties.

They thought they could easily subdue him if they didn’t give him a chance to use sorcery or spells, no matter how godly a diviner he was said to be.

However, the title of one of the Six Direction Gods was indeed not given for nothing.

‘We cut off one of his arms in a surprise attack, yet we barely managed to subdue him.’

He was strong enough to make one marvel.

They thought spells could only be cast by chanting incantations or using talismans, but this man cast spells so quickly there was almost no opening, giving them a hard time.

Even though he had prepared spells to be cast at any time, his skills truly matched his reputation.

“Hmph.”

And thanks to an unexpected spy, they almost had a big problem.

It was because of the person who had infiltrated with them.

There was a corpse on the floor, not only burned all over by lightning qi but also cut in half.

This corpse was Gwi Sa-man, the Sixth Alliance Leader of the Evil Alliance, known as the Evil Tranquil Sword.

Looking at this, Dam Baek-ha clicked her tongue.

‘If I hadn’t been behind...’

The young lady would have been in danger.

In the moment So Ye-rin pierced Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun’s abdomen with a swift thrust, Gwi Sa-man suddenly tried to behead her.

She blocked him by raising lightning qi.

[What are you doing?]

[Kuk!]

Having failed to kill her, Gwi Sa-man, even as he was being burned by the lightning qi, then tried to kill the subdued and immobilized Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun.

As if trying to silence him.

However, So Ye-rin, who had raised sword qi on her sword in that instant, ducked in and sliced his waist, resolving the situation.

‘What’s going on?’

Although the Evil Alliance was formed by gathering numerous evil sects, how could there be a spy hidden among its executives?

It could have been a big problem.

It seems that when this matter is concluded, she should tell Second Alliance Leader Hae Yeok-won to conduct a large-scale spy hunt.

Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha, who was keeping her eyes on Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun, glanced at So Ye-rin.

She was examining documents in a hidden safe.

But something about the atmosphere felt strange.

“Young lady?”

Why is she focusing on that so intently, holding her breath?

As she wondered, Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun spoke.

“Cough, cough... I’m sure I told you... Nothing will change even if you look at that.”

Meanwhile, So Ye-rin, who had been intensely focused on the documents, turned around and approached Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun with them in hand.

Then she spoke in an angry voice.

“You, no, what does the Secret Society intend to do with this?”

To her question, Gi Jin-mun laughed while coughing up blood.

“Cough, cough... Kuhehehehe. Well. I told you that knowing won’t change anything...”

-Puk! Crunch!

“Kueup!”

At that moment, So Ye-rin twisted the sword stuck in his abdomen.

The pain of his internal organs being twisted and torn by the sword blade was indescribable.

So Ye-rin glared at him fiercely and said.

“You think I’ll let things go as you wish.”

“Kuuu... haa... haa... It’s not... a matter of... letting things go... or not... Even if your ancient ancestor were to be revived... You absolutely... can’t... stop...”

-Crack!

At that moment, Pavilion Master Gi Jin-mun's head exploded.

So Ye-rin wiped her face with her sleeve, splattered with brain matter and blood.

Then she quickly brought the document behind her back, which had almost been soaked in blood, and looked at it.

On the old document paper was a map, with several places marked in red.

Among them, one place caught her eye.

It was the northern part of Shaanxi Province.

'...'

After staring at this for a while, she spoke to Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha.

"I'm sorry, but may I ask you for a favor?"

"How can you call it a favor? Please give me your orders."

"...Thank you. Without the Blood Saint's help, it would have been difficult alone."

"Please don't say such things. This isn't just your matter. Baek-ha has also been waiting for the day to take bloody revenge on them."

Dam Baek-ha showed fighting spirit filled with killing intent.

She was also that excited about this matter.

So Ye-rin, the Six Offices Commander, handed over the document she was holding and said.

“Please take this to Young Master Mok Gyeong-un at the Heaven and Earth Society.”

“This? But this is...”

“I’ve memorized it in my head, so I don’t need it anymore.”

“...Understood. Then, are you returning to the Imperial Palace in Kaifeng...”

“No. I think I need to go to northern Shaanxi Province.”

“Northern Shaanxi Province? Could it be...”

Before Dam Baek-ha could finish speaking, So Ye-rin answered with a bitter smile.

“Yes... It’s my dear hometown.”

Around the same time at the Heaven and Earth Society.

The Society Leader, forcibly held by Cheong-ryeong’s spirit energy, spoke with difficulty.

“Haa... haa... I really don’t know. But there is a way to draw him out... Ryu So-wol, don’t you know it too?”

-...Speak.

“The Ghost Blade... found traces of alchemy that can forcibly unite the soul and spirit.”

-The Ghost Blade?

“Cough, cough. That’s right.”

At those words, Cheong-ryeong’s expression, which had been uncontrolled by anger, became strange.

Hadn’t she been trying so hard to find him together with the mortal?

But that wasn’t important right now.

-Where is the Ghost Blade?

To her question, the Society Leader said.

“The northern edge of Shaanxi Province. Where there are ruins of a collapsed fortress.”

Chapter 426 – Soul and Spirit (4)

‘Is this all there is to him.’

Mok Gyeong-un sneered as he looked at Kang Yeom, the First Realm of the Secret Society, whose entire body had shriveled up and turned into a mummy-like state.

He had absorbed all the energy within Kang Yeom’s body.

He could immediately utilize the demonic energy that he had converted from the monster energy, but he isolated the fire energy, which was close to natural earth energy, that had coexisted in Kang Yeom's body.

'How could he simultaneously possess such opposing energies?'

Mok Gyeong-un found this puzzling.

If it was difficult even for him, this natural earth energy should have been the absolute antithesis for a demon like Kang Yeom, yet it coexisted within his body.

Still, since he possessed it, it was a high-purity energy that could be utilized in some way.

-Tak!

Mok Gyeong-un removed his hand from Kang Yeom's body, which had breathed its last after having all its internal energy sucked out.

Then he recalled their final conversation.

[T-that human wench, if she's present, they said the sealed vengeful spirit could be revived.]

[Revive a vengeful spirit? What do you mean?]

[I don't know the details. But from what I've heard, both that wench and the vengeful spirit were originally supposed to be one.]

[One?]

[...I'll tell you what I know, so please spare my life.]

[If I deem it useful, I'll consider it. So, what can you tell me? Finish what you were saying. What does it mean that they were originally one?]

[That's all I know. That person said if that body and the vengeful spirit could become one, your wish would be fulfilled.]

Your wish would be fulfilled?

What the hell does that mean?

Is he trying to resurrect her by possessing Wi So-yeon, who looks exactly like Cheong-ryeong, with Cheong-ryeong's spirit?

But isn't that just simple possession?

'Ah!'

Suddenly, Mok Gyeong-un remembered how Cheong-ryeong had attempted possession but failed.

It was a strange phenomenon.

What kind of existence is Wi So-yeon to Cheong-ryeong for that to happen?

Puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un thought for a moment and asked.

[Does the premise 'if they could become one' imply that there are other necessary conditions or that they can't easily become one?]

[...I know that some kind of sorcery condition is needed. It wasn't my assigned task, so I don't know the details.]

'It wasn't my assigned task...'

This means that the necessary conditions haven't been met yet.

If the conditions had been met from the beginning, he couldn't have talked like this.

What Three- needs are three things.

It seems it can be seen as Cheong-ryeong, Wi So-yeon, and the sorcery to make them one.

Mok Gyeong-un, with his unique insight, had organized the situation with limited information.

[Alright. Then tell me where they're taking Wi So-yeon.]

[They'll take her to Mok-gan.]

[Then it's simple. Where is Mok-gan?]

[That place is a space hidden by sorcery, so unless that person sends a subordinate, even its location can't be known.]

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un sneered.

[Then you don't really know anything?]

[W-wait. Among the First Realm, Destruction Emperor and Ghost Blade have been around the longest, so I believe they know that person's exact location.]

[Destruction Emperor, Ghost Blade?]

[Yes. Destruction Emperor is on a mission so his location is unknown, but Ghost Blade is said to follow the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader, so you should be able to find out.]

[Hmm.]

[I've told you everything I know. So please, have mercy...]

-Tak!

-Swoosh!

[W-wait, this is different from what you sai... Kuhek.]

[Most of the information you know is abstract and requires an extra step.]

[E-even so...]

[I don't feel it's worth sparing you for information that's not even proper. And...]

-Swoosh!

[Kueeeeeee.]

[I'm not foolish enough to keep alive something that's better off dead.]

With that, Mok Gyeong-un absorbed all the remaining energy in Kang Yeom's body using the Ritual of Binding.

"My Lord."

At that moment, Sword Demon Ji-oe approached him.

Ji-oe was inwardly marveling at Mok Gyeong-un's actions.

To him, who had lived close to the middle path without leaning towards good or evil his entire life, every one of Mok Gyeong-un's actions was shocking.

'Even though he begged so much to be spared, not only did he kill him, but to do this to him...'

It was truly a cruel act.

Is this the demonic nature he should learn?

It seems it will take quite some time to adapt.

Anyway,

"I apologize. You told me to save that young lady Wi So-yeon, but because I was late..."

-Flinch!

At that moment,

Mok Gyeong-un looked at Ji-oe and then turned his head somewhere else.

“My Lord?”

-Shudder!

Ji-oe was so taken aback that he unconsciously took a step back.

This was because an immense killing intent suddenly arose from Mok Gyeong-un, and it was so intense that it was overwhelming.

‘Why suddenly like this?’

-Pat!

Just then, Mok Gyeong-un suddenly flew off somewhere.

“My Lord!”

Why is he doing this?

Leaving behind the puzzled Ji-oe, Mok Gyeong-un flew towards somewhere.

The place he was urgently heading to was the main plaza of the Heaven and Earth Society.

The reason for his hurry was that the connection linking him to Cheong-ryeong had suddenly broken.

‘Cheong-ryeong!’

There was only one meaning to a perfectly fine spirit medium’s connection breaking.

It meant that she had ceased to exist.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un, whose mind became confused beyond anger in an instant, was heading to the last place he had sensed her.

It was a building located right next to the main hall.

As Mok Gyeong-un, who thought something had happened to Cheong-ryeong, approached the place, he couldn't help but frown.

This was because a terrifyingly ominous spirit energy was flowing out from the building.

‘This is?’

It was an extremely dense, dark ghost energy.

Yet strangely, this energy felt familiar.

As he broke through towards the source,

-Bang!

The place was covered in blood everywhere, and he saw Cheong-ryeong grabbing someone's neck.

That someone was none other than the Society Leader.

What the hell is going on here?

He had rushed here in one breath thinking something had gone wrong because the connection was cut, but not only was Cheong-ryeong fine, she was emitting an even more ominous and stronger spirit energy than before.

At this level, it far surpassed when she had become a purple spirit.

“Cheong-ryeong?”

Though he didn't know why her connection had been cut and her spirit energy had increased so explosively, Mok Gyeong-un felt he should stop Cheong-ryeong for now.

Judging by her current momentum, it seemed she might snap the Society Leader's neck.

“Cheong-ryeong... I don't know what happened, but let's calm down for a moment. With me...”

-Pak!

At that moment, as Cheong-ryeong waved her hand,

-Paaaaang!

Blood gushed from the floor, surging like a wave to engulf Mok Gyeong-un.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un drew his demonic sword Evil Commandment Sword to cut through the blood wave.

However,

-Paang!

Mok Gyeong-un's sword, which was meant to cut through the blood wave, was instead repelled.

As a result, his body was swept away by the wave.

‘The blood?’

He knew her spirit energy had increased explosively, but he didn't expect it to repel even his intentional strike.

Inwardly amazed, Mok Gyeong-un seemed to think this wouldn't do, so,

-Chwak!

He concentrated his power on the tip of his sword and pierced through the blood wave in one go.

-Paang!

No matter how powerful the blood wave was, when he unified his power into a single point, a large hole was inevitably created.

As he passed through this hole, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes widened.

The reason was,

-Crunch!

She had snapped the neck of the Heaven and Earth Society Society Leader, who had been muttering something with bloodshot eyes.

The Society Leader, with his neck broken, lowered his head with a bitter look in his eyes, as if he had already accepted death.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un's mind became complex in an instant.

Even if he had decided to kill all of the Heaven Vein clan, it was premature to kill him when he hadn't properly found out anything from the Society Leader yet.

Especially since he was somewhat related to his grandfather's death, and they needed to find out where Three- was hiding...

-Splash!

The dead Society Leader's body fell into a pool of blood.

Cheong-ryeong's eyes, as she turned her head, were seen to be dyed dark red without any white.

How much anger does it take to become like that?

“…Cheong-ryeong.”

-Mortal.

“Why are you doing this? What has made Cheong-ryeong so...”

-This is where our connection ends, mortal.

With those cold and resolute words, Cheong-ryeong made a gesture of clenching her hand.

Then, the blood pooled on the floor rose up in the shape of a hand and grabbed something.

‘!?’

It was none other than Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul.

Myeong-ryul was in a miserable state, unable to do anything with his jaw torn off and both arms severed.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un felt he should stop her.

Though it was difficult to guess the exact reason right away, there must be something behind her immediate attempt to kill these two people.

-Pat!

Mok Gyeong-un hurriedly raised his Invisible Sword.

-Chwak!

The incredibly sharp Invisible Sword cut off the wrist made of blood.

-Pu pu pu pu puk!

But at that moment, countless blood thorns flew from all directions, piercing Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul's entire body.

With his entire body pierced, Myeong-ryul's life ended right there.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un's gaze grew cold.

Cheong-ryeong spoke to Mok Gyeong-un.

-Now that the connection is severed, you can no longer constrain me. I will resolve my grudge myself. So, mortal, you should go live your own life now.

It was a cold tone that seemed to imply she would cut not only the connection as a spirit medium but truly all connections.

It wasn't just because there was nothing binding her anymore.

Having learned the whole truth, Cheong-ryeong no longer wanted to drag Mok Gyeong-un into Bi Yong-heon's obsession and madness.

In truth, she was more anxious than angry.

She was afraid that if she went deeper, something might go wrong and even Mok Gyeong-un might walk into danger.

So she felt she had to settle this herself.

After all, she was the origin of all this.

'I'm sorry, mortal.'

-Swish swish swish swish!

Then, all the blood in this space swirled around Cheong-ryeong, threatening to engulf her.

She intended to disappear while protecting herself with blood like this.

As her resentment deepened and surpassed its limits, she thought that now even Mok Gyeong-un wouldn't be able to stop her easily.

It was at that very moment.

-Chwak!

The blood whirlwind surrounding her body was split by the Invisible Sword.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un appeared before her.

Thinking he was trying to stop her, she extended her hand infused with spirit energy to push him away, but,

-Pak!

Mok Gyeong-un grabbed her wrist as if snatching it, pulled her close, and said firmly.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t let you go. You’re already my life, Cheong-ryeong.”

Chapter 427 – Soul and Spirit (5)

“I’m sorry, but I can’t let you go. You’re already my life, Cheong-ryeong.”

‘!!!!’

The moment she heard Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Cheong-ryeong’s dark red eyes briefly returned to normal, if only for an instant.

However, it didn’t last long.

When the connection was intact, she often resonated with Mok Gyeong-un's emotions.

While their time together played a part, the influence of their connection couldn't be ignored.

But because Cheong-ryeong's very existence was formed from resentment, from the moment the connection was severed, even if she wavered emotionally for a moment, her inherent nature as a vengeful spirit was bound to intensify.

‘No.’

Cheong-ryeong gritted her teeth, holding back her heart that almost wavered for a moment.

Then she shook off Mok Gyeong-un's hand gripping her wrist with all her might.

-Pak!

‘!?’

At her cold rejection, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes trembled slightly, though barely noticeable.

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong recalled what the Society Leader had said.

[The northern edge of Shaanxi Province. Where there are ruins of a collapsed fortress.]

-...Are you certain the sorcery to unite soul and spirit is there?

[Cough, cough... The Ghost Blade has been searching for traces of the old martial world where alchemy was long practiced. Though it was right under our noses, we didn't expect it to be there, but it should be certain.]

-...

Without the alchemy, Bi Yong-heon couldn't achieve what he wanted.

Then, naturally, she could draw him out using this as bait without needing to find him.

Finally, she could settle things with him.

The moment to end this long grudge was not far off.

Then the Society Leader spoke.

[But you should hurry. They too have dug close to those traces.]

-I'll do so without you urging me.

[Cough, cough... Haa... And there's one more thing to be cautious about.]

-What should I be cautious of?

[Ryu So-wol... I understand your grudge is deeper than anything else, but this fight is absolutely disadvantageous to you.]

-No. Not anymore.

Though she was angry, she wasn't alone.

She had tried to fight alone, but there was a reliable ally by her side.

‘Mortal.’

With him, she felt she could overcome anything.

His potential had surpassed her expectations and he had overcome numerous adversities.

And,

-There's nothing particularly disadvantageous. Even if he's obtained a body containing the soul, he can't achieve what he wants unless the other two conditions are met.

Cheong-ryeong thought that if she used this situation, they could gain an even more advantageous position.

But then,

[...That's not what the Society Leader means.]

Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul, trapped by the blood, interjected cautiously.

She asked curiously.

-What are you trying to say?

To her question, Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul hesitated for a moment before speaking.

[...Wi So-yeon, or rather, the body containing your soul, may be in its last life.]

-What are you talking about?

The body containing the soul is in its last life?

It was hard to understand what he meant.

[As I mentioned earlier, the soul ascends to heaven and goes through a purification process by passing through the celestial gate.]

-So?

[But your soul has been forcibly placed into wombs and reincarnated for a hundred years without going through that process.]

-What's your point? Is there something else besides being born imperfectly?

[It's not just the physical body that deteriorates.]

-What?

[The soul too will deteriorate if it doesn't undergo purification, and eventually it will cease to exist.]

Cheong-ryeong's expression hardened at Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul's meaningful words.

What could it mean for the soul to cease to exist?

Wasn't the soul originally one with the spirit?

If one of them, the soul, disappears, does that mean something will happen to me, the spirit, as well?

To her, at a loss for words, Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul spoke as if regretful.

[If the soul completely ceases to exist instead of ascending to heaven, you, the spirit, will also cease to exist. Because the soul and spirit are born with one fate.]

‘!!!!!!’

For a moment, Cheong-ryeong seemed shocked and didn't know what to do.

If the soul ceases to exist, she too will completely cease to exist?

Doesn't that mean there will be no afterlife, nothing at all?

It literally meant the end of existence.

‘If the soul ceases to exist... the spirit dies. If the soul ceases to exist...’

Cheong-ryeong's mind became complex.

She had thought that everything would end once she resolved the grudge she had built up for a hundred years and stopped his madness and obsession.

But this...

-Drip!

Tears of blood flowed from her eyes.

‘…It’s too cruel.’

Beyond anger, Cheong-ryeong could only shed bloody tears and sigh at the frustration of everything seeming blocked.

Although he had taken everything precious from her, she thought she could escape this cycle if she just took her revenge, but he was pushing her to the edge until the very end.

If Bi Yong-heon were to come out in desperation at the last moment and kill Wi So-yeon, who had her soul, everything would be in vain.

She looked at her trembling palm.

For a moment, his image and Mok Gyeong-un’s flashed by simultaneously.

[You were beautiful… So beautiful, like a single red peony.]

[I can’t help that I’ve already come to like you.]

-Clench!

Cheong-ryeong bit her lip hard.

If her grudge is resolved and she leaves this world, could she meet him again?

Would it be good to give up everything and be with the mortal?

She had thought many things.

But all of that was in vain.

If he doesn't get what he wants and thinks the game is up, he will eventually make an extreme choice.

If that happens...

‘…Mortal.’

She would cease to exist before him.

She wasn't afraid of death or ceasing to exist.

She had long since transcended such things.

But what would happen to Mok Gyeong-un after she ceased to exist?

-Drip!

Would she never be able to see him again?

That was too frightening and sad.

Cheong-ryeong clutched her chest and bent over.

It was too painful.

‘…Is it a predetermined tragedy no matter what I do?’

In the end, he would make that choice, and she would cease to exist.

No matter how many strategies she thought of, she couldn't find a clear answer.

The ending was the same.

Now she understood why he went to such lengths to take Wi So-yeon away.

If Wi So-yeon were in their hands it would be different, but if she fell into his hands, he would hold the final card.

‘Bi... Yong... Heon!’

She was at a loss for words at his madness and obsession.

What should she do?

If the ending was the worst no matter which path she took, the only choice left for her was to choose the lesser evil.

The only move that came to her mind was one.

It was to resolve the situation by herself alone.

‘Draw him in with the alchemy and end all of this together.’

That was the only answer.

It could be said to be an ending where they would perish together.

-Clench!

‘Mortal...’

She couldn’t drag Mok Gyeong-un into this path of carnage.

If Mok Gyeong-un were with her, it would provoke him even more, and in the worst case, she might cease to exist in front of him before even taking her revenge.

If she showed such a sight before him, it would be too tragic.

‘I must cut ties.’

Only then could she end it as just her own tragedy.

She couldn’t bear to see him grieve over losing someone again.

Cheong-ryeong then looked at Grand Divination Master Myeong-ryul and the Society Leader.

‘He will try to help somehow.’

Then she had to block that in advance.

If she killed them, the only ones who knew about the Ghost Blade’s whereabouts and this secret, even he would have no choice.

Then Cheong-ryeong approached them, revealing her killing intent.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t let you go. You’re already my life, Cheong-ryeong.”

Though she wavered momentarily at Mok Gyeong-un’s sincere words, she soon cut off all her emotions with resentment and anger.

-...I’m not.

“Don’t lie. You’re wavering, aren’t you?”

-It’s not a lie. If I hadn’t been bound by the connection, I would have left you long ago.

“...”

-To me, you were just a tool for revenge.

“That’s not...”

-No, it is. The man I loved no longer exists in this world. You can never replace him.

At those cold words, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes wavered.

For the first time, Cheong-ryeong read the change in Mok Gyeong-un’s emotions and her heart surged.

But she had no choice.

She had to detach him emotionally as well to resolve the situation alone.

‘I’m sorry, mortal.’

Swallowing her bitterness forcibly, Cheong-ryeong concentrated all the spirit energy of the blood realm of the ghost domain and fired numerous swords made of blood towards Mok Gyeong-un.

-Swish swish swish swish swish swish!

“Cheong-ryeong!”

While cutting through the swords flying at incredible speed with his Invisible Sword, Mok Gyeong-un tried to grab her, but,

-Swish!

The blood whirlwind surrounding her suddenly shrank and then disappeared.

Cheong-ryeong, who had surpassed even the purple spirit level, disappeared as if blending with her surroundings when she attempted to escape in earnest, making it difficult to find her.

-Rustle!

Eventually, the blood that had filled the surroundings disappeared.

The blood realm had been dispelled.

Mok Gyeong-un, who was about to open his qi sense and unleash all his eye power, stopped.

Rationally, he felt he should catch her, but strangely, he couldn’t do it seeing her trying to push him away continuously.

Why?

What made her forcibly push him away?

There must be something.

But with all of them dead, it was difficult to guess what had happened.

If they were alive, maybe something...

-Flinch!

Mok Gyeong-un turned his head somewhere.

He saw a man and a woman collapsed in a corner.

They were Na Yul-ryang, the Society Leader's first disciple and chief disciple, and Mo Yak, his loyal subordinate and the woman he cherished most.

As Mok Gyeong-un looked at them, his eyes narrowed, then,

-Suk!

He reached out to one of them.

It was Mo Yak.

The moment Mok Gyeong-un made a gesture of pulling, her body rose up on its own and was sucked into Mok Gyeong-un's hand.

-Pak!

Grabbing her neck, Mok Gyeong-un whispered in her ear.

“You... Why are you pretending to be unconscious when your acupoints have been unsealed?”

-Gulp!

Caught off guard, Mo Yak unconsciously swallowed dry saliva.

In a deep valley about thirty li east of the Heaven and Earth Society's main compound.

There, a group of masked people were catching their breath.

One of the masked figures was carrying a backpack, on which something that looked like a coffin was loaded.

One masked person tapped the coffin with their hand and muttered.

“She won't wake up, right?”

To this question, the masked person carrying the backpack on their shoulders answered.

“They said she'd be in a state of suspended animation for two weeks, so she won't wake up for a while. If it seems otherwise, we can just keep applying acupoint seals periodically, so what's the problem?”

“I guess so.”

The masked person who seemed to be the leader approached them and said.

“Enough chatter. We’re leaving now.”

At this, the masked people stood up with regretful looks in their eyes.

As they stood up, someone somewhere was pondering this situation.

That somewhere was inside the coffin.

-Tak!

The being who should have been in a state of suspended animation inside the coffin opened their eyes wide.

That being was Wi So-yeon, or more accurately, Guard Go Chan who had possessed Wi So-yeon.

Go Chan clicked his tongue as if in a difficult situation.

‘I managed to succeed in possession because of the suspended animation, but what do I do now?’

Chapter 428 – Political Situation (1)

It was merely a coincidence that occurred quite fortuitously.

-A body! Isn’t there any body I can enter?

Guard Go Chan, who could no longer possess the body of Young Master Jang Neung-ak in the midst of the fierce battlefield, was desperately trying to find a new body.

But there was a problem here.

Because the battlefield was so intense, the only available bodies were either on the brink of death or already dead.

Entering such corpses would be meaningless.

Moreover, although he was a vengeful spirit, he had been forcibly made so by Mok Gyeong-un's technique, so his rank was low, and he had so little experience that he had never possessed a body on his own before.

Therefore, rather than entering a body that would cause unnecessary trouble, he wanted to carefully choose a body with both good social status and martial prowess, like Jang Neung-ak's.

However, finding such a body in the midst of a battlefield where people were killing each other was not an easy task.

‘Hmm. Would that one be good enough?’

It looked like a great hall master of the sect.

He had just lost a battle and was on the verge of death, but the condition of his body wasn't too bad.

So he entered this body, but,

[You were still alive. I'll make sure to kill you this time!]

[Huh? W-wait! I'm...]

-Chwak!

[Kek!]

As soon as he entered, he was attacked by a nearby enemy and the body died with its neck cut.

It was absurd.

Who could have predicted that he would die immediately after entering?

So he entered another body that seemed relatively intact and usable, but,

[What? Weren't you dead?]

[Wait...]

-Puk!

[Y-you... bas...tard... I'm try...ing to... speak... Kuuu.]

Once again, as soon as he entered, the body died with its heart pierced before he could even recover.

If he had been of a higher rank, he might have been able to freely control the body and quickly induce recovery, but it was too much for Go Chan.

‘Damn it. Should I try targeting an enemy instead?’

However,

[Die!]

[Kek.]

This was a repetition of the same situation, regardless of whether it was an enemy or an ally.

After losing his life about three times in this manner, Go Chan judged that it was practically impossible to possess a new body on the battlefield.

So he thought he should get any body from a safe place away from the battlefield.

Go Chan, who had learned that he could move upwards when in spirit form because his body was light, rose up and looked for a suitable place, when,

‘Huh?’

He saw a group of masked individuals gathered at a certain point, even though most of the forces, including the enemy, were gathered in the main square of the sect.

Go Chan was about to ignore them given the situation, but he discovered someone unconscious among the masked individuals.

She was none other than,

‘Wi So-yeon?’

It was undoubtedly Wi So-yeon, the youngest disciple of the Society Leader.

He had certainly heard that the master had sent someone to protect her.

But why was she in that state?

Go Chan pondered for a moment.

After considering whether to find a body or follow them, his choice was the latter.

‘It feels like I might suffer again, but I smell the scent of merit.’

So thanks to her being in this unconscious state, he easily entered Wi So-yeon’s body, but,

‘What should I do now?’

-Seuk!

First, touching this coffin, it feels sturdier than expected.

I don’t know what it’s made of, but it doesn’t seem like it would break with moderate force.

And each of these masked individuals was no ordinary expert.

Judging by the speed of their lightness skills, each one was at least a peak expert, and especially their leader had reached the extreme of the supreme realm.

‘Even though Wi So-yeon’s body is strong...’

It might be difficult to face them head-on alone.

It seemed he should look for an opportunity to escape.

-Master!

-Pa-reu-reu-reu-reu!

-Master!

-Pa-reu-reu-reu-reu!

He had been taught by Mok Gyeong-un how to communicate as a food spirit.

So he was deliberately transmitting his thoughts with trembling to indicate his location through the connection, but it seemed he hadn't noticed yet.

‘Surely this coffin isn't made with some kind of spell, is it?’

Unfortunately, Go Chan's guess was correct.

Although he had hurriedly entered the coffin with Wi So-yeon, he hadn't noticed that special talismans were attached to every gap in the coffin.

[Acu...point...]

Mok Gyeong-un remembered the Heaven and Earth Society Leader's last silent, desperate cry before his neck was broken by Cheong-ryeong's hand.

He had clearly tried to tell him something, and it was about acupoints.

Why was that?

Now he seemed to understand its meaning.

“Kek...”

Mok Gyeong-un grabbed the throat of Mo Yak, Young Master Na Yul-ryang's confidant, and said:

“You... Why are you pretending to be unconscious when your acupoints have been unsealed?”

“Kek kek. I, I...”

-Seuk!

“Kek, wh-what are you doing?”

As Mok Gyeong-un moved his hand towards her chest, she couldn't hide her bewilderment.

However, with her neck gripped and unable to move her body at all, there was nothing she could do.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had placed his hand in the center of her chest, said expressionlessly:

“What an unusual acupoint technique.”

Paralysis points to prevent body movement and fainting points had been sealed, but the method of sealing the fainting points was different from the usual.

It seemed they were set to unseal slowly so that even those sensitive to energy wouldn't notice, allowing only consciousness to return.

In conclusion, this was done deliberately.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed.

'It was intentional.'

Did they anticipate a situation where they might have to kill themselves?

Mok Gyeong-un looked at the corpse of the Heaven and Earth Society Leader, who had died with a broken neck.

Despite dying like that, there was no trace of resentment or suffering on his face and in his eyes.

As if he had willingly accepted it.

Did he try to do something until the end, even though it had become a situation he couldn't control?

'Why?'

It doesn't make sense.

This person clearly inherited the blood of Bi Yong-heon of the Heaven Vein.

Then why is he trying to walk a path so opposed to him?

Anyway, this woman knows the answer to why Cheong-ryeong left alone, rejecting him.

"Speak. What conversation took place?"

“Kek kek... I, I...”

“You’re not going to spout nonsense about not hearing, are you? My current mood is not one I want to ask anyone twice about.”

Although her body was paralyzed and she couldn’t move due to the sealed acupoints, Mo Yak couldn’t easily open her lips due to the chilling sensation that ran down her spine.

She was already aware of how strong this monster was and knew there was nothing she could do.

However,

-Seuk!

Mo Yak’s gaze turned towards the unconscious Young Master Na Yul-ryang.

Looking at him, she then spoke with eyes full of determination, as if ready to throw away her life:

“If... if you promise... in public... to spare... the Young Master’s life... I’ll... I’ll speak.”

“You’re not in a position to negotiate.”

“Th-then kill me.”

At her words without hesitation, one of Mok Gyeong-un’s eyebrows raised slightly.

This woman is also one of those types of people.

The type who can throw away their own life for others without hesitation.

“I see.”

A tone as if resigned.

At this, she thought Mok Gyeong-un had accepted her deal.

If one recalled the conversation he had just had with that vengeful spirit, that being seemed quite precious to him.

Mo Yak exhaled in relief.

It was no different from gambling, but it was truly fortunate.

“If... if you promise... in front of everyone...”

-Seuk!

Before Mo Yak could finish speaking, Mok Gyeong-un made a light gesture, and the unconscious body of Young Master Na Yul-ryang slowly rose.

Mo Yak cried out in shock:

“What are you-!”

-Kkwak!

As Mok Gyeong-un made a gesture of clenching his hand,

-Pu-seuk! Pu-seuk!

Na Yul-ryang's entire body tightened, and blood burst out from various places.

“You! Kek kek...”

“If you try to be clever and filter something in your mind while talking, I'll burst him and kill him like this.”

-Kkwa-a-ak! Kwa-deu-deuk!

Na Yul-ryang's skin began to twist and tear.

He hadn't regained consciousness despite this happening, perhaps because no special acupoint technique had been used on him.

‘This, this guy is an evil spirit.’

The gentle voice he had used when talking with that vengeful spirit was nowhere to be seen, and he was now cruelty and coldness incarnate.

It was hard to believe it was the same person.

Mo Yak, suffering with bloodshot eyes, finally cried out:

“Stop! I'll... tell... everything.”

In the end, she surrendered.

‘So Wi So-yeon is the soul (hun), and Cheong-ryeong is the spirit (baek) containing the resentment?’

Mok Gyeong-un, who had learned through Mo Yak what had happened inside, let out a faint sigh.

He had thought there must be some reason, and now he finally had the answer.

It was the choice made by her, who considered the situation to be as unfavorable as possible at the point when Wi So-yeon was taken by Three .

To bear all the karma alone.

‘She deliberately cut off her emotions.’

It truly wasn’t that she had used him as a tool for revenge.

It was to push him away ruthlessly so as not to hurt him, because it could become a fight that couldn’t be won in any way.

-Kkwak!

Mok Gyeong-un’s fist clenched.

Upon learning her true intentions, Mok Gyeong-un realized what was immediately important.

The urgent priority was to recover Wi So-yeon who had been kidnapped by them, and to prevent Cheong-ryeong from going alone to that place where there was said to be an alchemy to unite the hun and baek.

He had to hurry.

‘I need to find Wi So-yeon first.’

Having determined the order of what needed to be done, Mok Gyeong-un immediately went outside the building.

But the moment he came out, a thunderous cheer erupted.

“Waaaaaaaaah!!!!”

It was a massive cheer that made heaven and earth shake.

With the leaders subdued, the battlefield could already be considered their victory.

The society members, who had killed and subdued all the enemies, couldn’t help but shout cheers of excitement when Mok Gyeong-un, who would become the new master of the Heaven and Earth Society, appeared.

-Pa-pa-pa-pa-pat!

Numerous executives approached Mok Gyeong-un’s side.

The Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang, the Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon, Seop Chun, the Demon-Subduing Fist Master and mad monk Ja Geum-jeong, the masked Ma Ra-hyeon, and other key confidants were all safe, although they had suffered some injuries.

-Kung!

Among these executives, the Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang knelt on one knee before Mok Gyeong-un, clasped his hands in respect, and shouted loudly:

“We congratulate you on the victory, my lord!”

-Kung! Kung!

The executives and all those who had been cheering likewise paid their respects to Mok Gyeong-un and shouted:

“We congratulate you on the victory!”

As thousands of society members shouted, the entire square seemed about to lift off.

Seeing these people excited and elated by the victory, Mok Gyeong-un’s footsteps, which were about to leave the Heaven and Earth Society immediately for his purpose, became heavy.

He had been thinking only of recovering Wi So-yeon and Cheong-ryeong.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been looking at the majestic scene of numerous people paying their respects and looking up to him, was about to take a step.

-Tak!

Now is not the time to celebrate this or do anything else.

They’ve won anyway, so even if he leaves right away, it shouldn’t be a big problem...

[Long ago, I wanted to become a great master and founding patriarch leading a new world.]

For a moment, Cheong-ryeong’s words echoed in his mind, and his footsteps faltered.

Why are her words coming to mind at this moment of all times?

Isn't that not what's important right now?

[Become a great master who embraces everyone.]

-Kkwak!

Her voice resounded so clearly in his mind that Mok Gyeong-un's clenched fist tightened.

Cheong-ryeong's earnest wish.

Recalling this, he couldn't carelessly disregard everything.

‘.....’

At this, Mok Gyeong-un, facing all the society members looking up to him,

-Chang!

Drew his sword and raised it as if to imprint the joy of victory.

At that moment, another thunderous cheer erupted.

“Waaaaaaaaah!!!!”

Faced with the surging heat of the crowd, Mok Gyeong-un was caught in a strange emotion for the first time in his life.

Chapter 429 – Political Situation (2)

The grand conference hall of the Righteous Alliance.

Gathered there were the leaders of the Nine Great Sects and Seven Great Families, who formed the core of the Righteous Alliance.

The martial arts world referred to them as the Seventeen Mighty Rulers[1].

Normally, this meeting would have twenty attendees, including the Alliance Leader, Vice Leader, and Chief Commander. However, only fourteen Mighty Rulers were present at this conference.

The Alliance Leader, Vice Leader, and three Commanders were absent, greeting an envoy from the Imperial Palace. The abbot of Shaolin Temple, who typically abstained from worldly affairs, was also missing. The head of the Sichuan Tang Family, one of the Seven Great Families, was not present either. As for the Namgoong Family, they had yet to elect a new family head after Namgoong Jin's death at Spiritual Sword Sanctuary.

In truth, this meeting of the Mighty Rulers had been called due to several recent incidents.

After the great battle between the righteous and evil factions in the past, the martial arts world had been relatively quiet for a while.

However, starting with the Domineering Steps incident at Shaolin Temple, the martial arts world had become tumultuous because of one individual. They could no longer simply observe the situation.

“Huh. Elder Jeong, is that true?”

“Amitabha. It is true. Elder Jeong Myeong, who was dispatched as an investigator to Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, confirmed it personally.”

At Hengshan Sect Leader's, Elder Jeong Han's words, the faces of the Mighty Rulers grew serious.

It was understandable, as they had gathered to discuss the actions of the so-called seventh heaven, the Heavenly Demon, whose behavior was far from righteous.

The fact that Ou Cheon-mu, the sect leader of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary—a major pillar of the neutral faction and one of the current Seven Heavens—had sworn allegiance to this individual at such a significant location was shocking.

“How could this have happened.....”

This was not a matter that could be taken lightly.

The Seven Heavens were considered the pinnacle of the current martial arts world.

For one of the Seven Heavens to submit and swear allegiance to another of the Seven Heavens meant that the balance maintained by the three major factions was beginning to crumble.

Moreover,

“I can’t understand what’s happening. First, there’s that mysterious bladesman who killed the head of the Namgoong Family, and then there’s that strange force that annihilated the disciples of the Qingcheng Sect.”

The head of the Namgoong Family, Namgoong Jin—one of the Eight Stars—and the entire force of the Namgoong Family had lost their lives to a mysterious bladesman.

Although they had heard that this individual was defeated by the Heavenly Demon, the newly emerged member of the Seven Heavens, the appearance of such an unknown master was not good news in the current situation.

“Take a look at this.”

Jin Sokja, the sect leader of the Qingcheng Sect, placed a rubbing on the round table.

It showed a symbol of two parallel lines with a single vertical line intersecting them in the middle.

“Is this the mark?”

In response to Gu Cheolja of the Huashan Sect’s question, Jin Sokja nodded.

“Yes. This was the scar found on my sect’s disciples. I don’t know what force left this mark, but they are no ordinary individuals.”

“What do you mean by no ordinary individuals?”

“If my judgment is correct, all of their corpses were killed with a single sword strike, but this wasn’t just any ordinary strike.”

“If not an ordinary strike, then what do you mean?”

“It appears to be the Sword Technique of Controlling the Sword with Qi[2].”

“What? The Sword Technique of Controlling the Sword with Qi?”

The Sword Technique of Controlling the Sword with Qi was a skill that only supreme masters who had surpassed the wall and reached the pinnacle of the Transformation Realm could perform.

If that was the case, it could only mean that the person who annihilated them was at least on par with the Eight Stars.

Just how many incidents had occurred in this short period?

At that moment, an old beggar holding a faintly green-colored staff spoke up.

“It seems peace has lasted too long.”

He was Hong Wonseok, the current leader of the Beggars' Sect.

Clicking his tongue and speaking nonchalantly, his words prompted Gu Cheolja, the sect leader of the Huashan Sect, to reproach him.

“Leader Hong. How can you say such a thing? Are you suggesting that someone is deliberately causing these incidents to disrupt the peace?”

“Since we've maintained good relations with the government, there have been small conflicts, but never such major incidents in succession. Do you view this as a simple matter?”

“.....”

Gu Cheolja of the Huashan Sect fell silent at Hong Wonseok's words.

He, too, had to agree inwardly.

One incident might be overlooked, but when multiple events occurred in succession, one could only suspect that some plot or scheme was afoot.

At that moment, someone spoke up.

“But hasn't one organization been particularly quiet lately?”

The speaker was Peng Il-hyeon, the head of the Northern Peng Clan.

The Northern Peng Clan had suffered a significant blow to their power and influence due to the incident involving Imperial Concubine Seo at the Imperial Palace, and they were now close to being ostracized, under strict surveillance.

“Amitabha. Clan Leader Peng. Are you referring to them?”

At Elder Jeong Han’s words, everyone naturally thought of one particular group.

A force that had been unusually quiet lately.

Unlike the Evil Alliance, which had been constantly clashing with others, it was the Heaven and Earth Society, whose leader was rumored to be ill.

“That’s right. Those who have been laying low until now, but orchestrated the incident with Imperial Concubine Seo at the Imperial Palace.”

“Hmm.”

Some nodded at his words, as if finding them reasonable.

The Heaven and Earth Society had been keeping a low profile since the war between the righteous and evil factions, as if conserving their strength.

They couldn’t rule out the possibility that they were involved in these recent incidents.

Seeing an opportunity, Peng Il-hyeon, the head of the Peng Clan, tried to press the issue.

“If all these incidents are related to the Heaven and Earth Society, and we turn a blind eye to them, it would be even more.....”

However,

“It’s hard to say for certain, isn’t it?”

“Clan Leader Hwangbo?”

The one who interrupted was Hwangbo Seong, the head of the Hwangbo Clan, another of the Seven Great Families.

The Hwangbo Clan was particularly at odds with the Northern Peng Clan.

As he stepped in, Peng Il-hyeon couldn’t help but show his discomfort.

“What’s so hard to see?”

“Of course, we can’t rule out the Heaven and Earth Society’s involvement, but if we blow things out of proportion due to personal grudges, that would also be problematic.”

“What!”

-Bang!

Peng Il-hyeon slammed the round table forcefully.

However, despite his anger, most of the Mighty Rulers showed little reaction.

Some even had hints of mockery on their faces.

‘Kuk.’

Peng Il-hyeon's expression twisted.

He had lost half of his family's power due to the incident where the Outer Court Clan Leader Peng Seok-im had attempted to violate Imperial Concubine Seo, and was now under strict surveillance, almost to the point of ostracism.

As a result, his influence was no longer as great as it once was.

Feeling that he had exposed his weakness, Clan Leader Peng Il-hyeon suppressed his anger and spoke to Hwangbo Seong, the head of the Hwangbo Clan.

“…… This is not about personal grudges. Clan Leader Hwangbo, aren't you the one letting emotions cloud your judgment and denying my words?”

“Not necessarily. Isn't the Silent Strides, which is responsible for sending spies to the Heaven and Earth Society, under your management, Clan Leader Hwangbo?”

“Leader Hong?”

Silent Strides.

It was an organization known only to a select few within the Righteous Alliance.

These were secretly trained spies, not officially acknowledged by the righteous factions that advocated justice and chivalry, and thus rarely mentioned.

However, this was a high-level conference attended only by the Mighty Rulers who were privy to such information, which is why the leader of the Beggars' Sect openly brought it up.

“If Clan Leader Hwangbo says so, doesn't that mean he has some information regarding the Heaven and Earth Society?”

“We received one piece of information, though it’s uncertain whether it’s genuine or disinformation.”

“Uncertain information? What do you mean?”

At Leader Hong’s question, Hwangbo Seong’s eyes narrowed.

Recently, he had received information from an unknown source.

As far as he knew, most of the Silent Strides agents infiltrated into the inner circle of the Heaven and Earth Society had lost their lives.

However, a piece of information came through the secret communication network of the outer circle, using a password.

The problem was that the person who sent this password had made contact using the identification tag of a Silent Strides agent who had been deployed to Corpse Blood Valley but was believed to be dead.

‘They claimed to be a hostage brought from the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.’

Half a year ago, the renowned martial arts family, the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, had suddenly announced their withdrawal from the martial arts world.

The reason for this was unknown, but the person who sent the information through the secret communication network identified themselves as a hostage from the Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

Although he was still in the process of verifying this and hadn’t officially announced the information, he said,

“The information suggested that a major internal conflict is about to erupt within the Heaven and Earth Society.”

“A major internal conflict?”

“Could it be that the condition of the Heaven and Earth Society’s leader has worsened?”

“If the uncertain information turns out to be true, that might be the case. Then it would be difficult to assume that those facing an internal conflict are related to.....”

-Thud!

At that moment,

Everyone’s attention turned to someone sitting on the right side of the round table.

There, they saw someone clutching the area around their left eye, sweating profusely and frowning in pain.

It was Danmok Inho, the head of the Danmok Family, one of the Seven Great Families.

“Clan Leader Danmok? Are you alright?”

“You don’t look well, Clan Leader Danmok.”

In response to their concerns, Danmok Inho waved his hand dismissively, then spoke with one eye closed, as if it was uncomfortable.

“Ah. I injured my eye during recent training. Please excuse me.”

“Oh. If it’s difficult, perhaps you should rest.....”

“It’s nothing. More importantly, I also have some interesting information to share. Shall we discuss that?”

“Interesting information? What do you mean?”

As everyone focused on him, Danmok Inho slightly raised the corners of his mouth and spoke in a meaningful tone.

“I have information that the seventh heaven, who is the core of this agenda, has started an internal war within the Heaven and Earth Society.”

‘!?’

At the same time.

In the guest house prepared to receive the envoy from the Imperial Palace.

An unexpected situation was unfolding there.

The high-ranking official who had come as an envoy was lying on the floor with his head severed, and two masters were fiercely clashing swords.

A middle-aged man who had been unsheathing his sword with bare hands created some distance and pointed at his opponent with his left hand forming a sword seal.

Suddenly, a uniquely shaped sword lying on the floor rose on its own and extended, unleashing a sword energy.

-Swoosh!

The opponent caught the hilt of the flying sword energy with the marvelous technique of “Ritual of Binding.”

Despite the blue sparks flying from the strong energy, the sword didn’t fall.

-Crackle crackle!

Seeing this, the middle-aged man’s eyes flashed with surprise.

‘He’s catching the sword energy controlled by qi with the marvelous Ritual of Binding?’

This was an extraordinary feat that even he, who had surpassed the wall of walls, couldn’t easily accomplish.

The identity of the middle-aged man was none other than Jeong Hyeon-mun, the leader of the Righteous Alliance.

The man who had caught the sword energy with the Attaching sword technique smirked and said to Jeong Hyeon-mun.

“Is this the famous ‘Il-hwi’?”

It was the precious sword created by Ou Cheon-mu, the sect leader of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary.

Looking at the smirking man, Jeong Hyeon-mun, the leader of the Righteous Alliance, spoke with a voice full of suspicion.

“..... You’re not Wi Takhyeon.”

“What are you talking about? If I’m not Wi Takhyeon, then who is Wi Takhyeon?”

The identity of the man mocking Jeong Hyeon-mun was Wi Takhyeon, the Sword of Fulfilled Ambition and Defiance[3], the vice leader of the Righteous Alliance.

Looking at him, Leader Jeong Hyeon-mun inwardly denied it.

It couldn’t be.

The Wi Takhyeon—no, his sworn brother Wi—who had been with him for so long would never arbitrarily kill an envoy from the Imperial Palace.

And even though he was one of the Eight Stars, his martial prowess had increased too rapidly.

Leader Jeong Hyeon-mun glanced at Commander Zhuge, who had fallen with his right leg severed, and raised his qi even further.

If he didn’t subdue him quickly, the Chief Commander’s life might be in danger.

As the war had ended, members of the society were clearing the corpses and prisoners overflowing in the square, and the wounded were being urgently moved to the medical ward.

In the main hall on the first floor of the headquarters, where the signboard of the Heaven and Earth Society had been destroyed, all the executives except for the injured had gathered.

Mok Gyeong-un, the leader, was seated on the stone throne in the hall. On the left side of the upper platform in front of him were Ou Cheon-mu, the sect leader of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, leading the loyal followers brought from outside, including the masked Ma Ra-hyeon, the Subduing-Demon Ja Geum-jeong, and others like Seop Chun and Mong Mu-yak.

On the right side were Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang, Poison King Baek Sa-ha, Shadow Clan Master Hwan Ya-seon, Corpse Blood Valley Master Lee Ji-yeom, and others.

Standing in the center of these executives, right in front of Mok Gyeong-un's gaze, was a beautiful woman with graying hair who exuded an alluring aura.

She was Chunchu, the highest-ranking executive of the Secret Society.

Despite being a prisoner who had surrendered, Chunchu was looking at Mok Gyeong-un with a relaxed, smiling face.

She was the first to speak.

“I thought you'd be in a hurry, but I guess not?”

She had a good idea of the real objective Mok Gan was aiming for in this war against the Heaven and Earth Society.

That's why she thought the man in front of her would be quite anxious.

She had intended to use this to lead the negotiation, but what was with that inexplicably relaxed demeanor?

Of course, the reason was simple.

It was due to the voice echoing loudly in Mok Gyeong-un's head.

-Master..... It's me, Go Chan. Master? Master? Can you really not hear me? I'm possessing Wi So-yeon's body, but I don't dare try to escape. Master? No, fuck, I could understand when there was a talisman on the coffin, but now the lid is open and you still can't hear me? Is this bastard's ear rotten or what?

Chapter 430 – Political Situation (3)

It was truly a fortuitous turn of events.

Mok Gyeong-un had thought that recovering Wi So-yeon would be quite challenging.

However, he never imagined that the most difficult condition would be resolved due to an unexpected variable.

‘A variable.’

The corner of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth twitched slightly.

[You’ll certainly feel the difference between having trusted companions by your side and not.]

He had never taken Cheong-ryeong’s words lightly, but fundamentally, he believed that in the very end, he could trust no one but himself.

But who could have predicted that Go Chan, of all people, would play such a crucial role?

Because of this, Mok Gyeong-un became interested in the concept of cause and effect.

-No, fuck. Can you really not hear me?

-Swoosh!

Mok Gyeong-un formed a hand seal with his left hand, grasped the connection linked to Go Chan, and conveyed his thoughts.

-I understand, so wait.

-Gasp! M-Master. Did you perhaps hear what I just said...?

-What did you say?

-Phew.

Go Chan was so flustered that he let out a deep sigh of relief at Mok Gyeong-un's words.

-N-Nothing at all.

Mok Gyeong-un inwardly chuckled at Go Chan's reaction.

It could have been the worst obstacle, but since he had made a crucial contribution, he was just overlooking the continuous cursing.

-So what should we do, Master? It's difficult to tell you the exact location. But if you follow the connection...

-You don't need to worry about that. Soon... No.

Suddenly, something flashed through Mok Gyeong-un's mind.

He had intended to simply bring back Go Chan and Wi So-yeon's bodies, but he realized he could use this situation to his advantage.

So,

-Stay in that state for a while.

-What? Stay? You mean keep doing this?

-Yes.

-..... Huh? Uh? Um... Understood.

What else could he do when told to wait?

Although he felt cramped staying in the coffin, he had no choice but to wait reluctantly, as he couldn't escape without Mok Gyeong-un's help anyway.

-Swoosh!

Mok Gyeong-un touched another connection and sent his thoughts along with a hand seal.

-Stop the search for Wi So-yeon. Follow the Diabolic Beast Alyu and secure Cheong-ryeong's location.

It was a message sent to the Demonic Beast Heumwon.

Even though he wanted to wrap up the Heaven and Earth Society's affairs as quickly as possible, he couldn't immediately start searching, so he had sent the Demonic Beast Heumwon, who could traverse the air, in advance.

While Mok Gyeong-un was giving instructions to the ghost servant he had made his familiar, Seop Chun, finding the lack of response strange, spoke up.

“My Lord. If you're uncomfortable, we can detain her separately for interrogation.”

At these words, Chunchu, the highest-ranking executive of the Secret Society, laughed and said,

“You’re going to interrogate after I’ve surrendered? How discourteous.”

“You find this amusing? I heard that over dozens of our allies died by your hands. It wouldn’t be strange to behead you right now and display your head as a warning...”

“Step aside, young one.”

“What?”

“Even if I’ve been captured, I still have my own standards.”

“Huh?”

Seop Chun’s expression turned incredulous at Chunchu’s sarcasm.

Most of those in the main hall were executives who could be called the lord’s loyal followers.

Although he might lack experience compared to the others here, he believed his loyalty to Mok Gyeong-un was no less than anyone else’s.

-Shing!

Seop Chun half-drew his Mad Dance Sword and spoke with a voice filled with killing intent.

“It seems I need to teach you some manners.”

“Stop.”

At that moment, Ja Geum-jeong, the Subduing-Demon and rogue monk, restrained him.

Others might not know, but he was one of the few in this place who had crossed blades with Chunchu, the highest-ranking executive of the Secret Society.

That's why he knew her tremendous martial prowess better than anyone else.

Even though his skills had improved tremendously while serving the lord, the opponent was a monster capable of going toe-to-toe with Ou Cheon-mu, the sect leader of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, who was on par with the Seven Heavens' great masters.

If they were to fight, Seop Chun wouldn't last more than a few moves.

“If you say so, my face...”

“Keuheuheu. No need to save face. That woman isn't an ordinary human to begin with. The only ones here who could face her one-on-one are the master and that old man.”

“Hohoho.”

Ou Cheon-mu, the sect leader of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, burst into laughter at being called an old man.

He had finally joined in earnest, but this was the first time he had experienced such an atmosphere as a member of a group at his age.

‘To think that crazy monk would swear loyalty to our lord, I've lived long enough to see everything.’

Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang inwardly clicked his tongue.

Most of those bearing the title of the Three Madmen were not the type to serve under anyone.

Yet, two of them had come under the command of their lord, Mok Gyeong-un.

This was quite surprising.

The Mad Swordsman Ji-oe was one thing, but what shocked everyone the most was undoubtedly Ou Cheon-mu, the sect leader of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary.

Who could have imagined that he would recruit one of the Seven Heavens under his command?

They had worried about weakening their forces due to the numerous casualties after the internal war, but now there was no need for concern.

They had been replenished with new strength.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

“Since you surrendered voluntarily, if you give the answers I want, I’ll treat you accordingly.”

“Now we’re talking.”

“Where is the main body?”

“.....”

Chunchu was momentarily speechless at Mok Gyeong-un’s direct question.

Judging by his mention of the main body, this man seemed to know more than she had anticipated.

Well, perhaps this was why Mok Gan had gone to such lengths to intervene personally?

“Why are you silent?”

“…… It’s not that I’m silent, I’m just surprised. Seeing that you’ve even figured out that it’s not the main body, it’s no wonder the great Mok Gan felt threatened. Are you really the being from the prophecy? The Heavenly Demon.”

At these words, the executives couldn’t hide their bewilderment.

Not many understood the conversation between these two.

Ignoring this, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

“Let’s cut out the unnecessary talk. Tell me where Mok Gan’s, no, the Three-Eyes’s real body is.”

“You’re strange. That’s not what’s urgent right now. Wi So...”

-Rumble!

Before she could finish her words.

Her eyebrows twitched under the immense pressure bearing down on her.

An tremendous force was pressing down on her, the pressure so intense that her knees were about to buckle.

-Crack!

Even the soles of her feet began to crack.

‘This man... Is he trying to subdue me with sheer force?’

She could still endure for now.

However, if the force increased any further, she felt she wouldn’t be able to withstand it without revealing her true form as a demon fox, not just her human form.

-Rumble!

As expected, the oppressive force grew even stronger.

Was this man not using his full power when he fought Mok Gan?

To be able to suppress her to this extent with just the energy he exuded while sitting still.

He was so strong that it made her wonder if he was really human.

‘Tch.’

There was no other choice.

If she revealed her true form, she would have to show her ugly appearance instead of this beautiful form.

As someone who loved her current appearance more, she didn’t want that.

So,

-Thud!

‘I’ll play along.’

Chunchu simply knelt down.

Seeing her like this, a glint appeared in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

Having opened his third eye, he could see the demonic energy she was suppressing.

It seemed she was hiding her power as a demon fox, just like the other highest-ranking executive, the deceased Kang Yeom or whoever it was.

Given her tone and behavior, she seemed quite prideful, so what was her intention?

It didn’t seem like she had truly surrendered because her master had been defeated and she was at a disadvantage.

“If your purpose is clear, it’s obvious that you’ll take me to where he is, so there’s no need to track and find him.”

“That’s right. I really like you.”

Kneeling, she licked her lips while showing her cleavage.

Seeing this, Ou Cheon-mu, the sect leader of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, and Poison King Baek Sa-ha frowned and turned their heads away.

They thought she was truly a bewitching woman.

However, despite her alluring appearance, there was no change in Mok Gyeong-un’s gaze.

Rather,

“I told you to cut out the unnecessary talk.”

“…… You really have a charm that makes me feel motivated after a long time.”

“Sigh.”

-Swoosh!

Mok Gyeong-un slightly raised his sword-formed fingers.

At that moment,

-Flinch!

Feeling the chilling sword energy behind her, she hurriedly tried to move her body forward, but,

-Thud! Thud!

She couldn't move either forward or backward.

This was because two formless swords that had been created in mid-air intersected and pressed against the back of her neck.

‘What is this?’

Chunchu instinctively knew.

Although she couldn't see clearly, this sharp energy that had crossed behind her neck and penetrated the floor would be difficult to block even if she returned to her true form.

Chunchu slightly raised her head and looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

‘…… Is it possible?’

Could this man be a worthy opponent to that monster-like Mok Gan?

She had naturally chosen to surrender and pretend to switch sides for his sake, but she wasn't interested in dying in vain.

Staring intently at Mok Gyeong-un, she opened her mouth.

“Like Kang Yeom or Ghost Blade said, you too might have the potential.”

At the mention of Ghost Blade, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been about to move his sword-formed fingers to pressure her further, stopped.

“Potential? What are you talking about?”

“I'm currently making the biggest gamble of my life.”

“A gamble?”

“That's right. Mok Gan will find out soon, and when that happens, I'll pay the price one way or another. Probably in the form of death.”

At her words, a glint appeared in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

Was this woman not trying to pull some trick, but actually surrendering?

Doubt and bewilderment arose simultaneously.

If she were just a third-tier member of the Secret Society, not an executive-level figure, it would be understandable, but she held a high position in the Secret Society.

Moreover, was a non-human being really trying to betray the Three-Eyes and side with him?

While doubt was still stronger, she spoke.

“Listen, this is important. There are only two highest-ranking executives who know Mok Gan’s location.”

“Ghost Blade and Destruction Emperor.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Chunchu furrowed her brow and said,

“Did Kang Yeom tell you that?”

“Yes.”

“…… Acting all noble and ancient, but in the end, he spilled everything. he must have been terribly afraid of dying.”

Chunchu clicked her tongue.

She had thought that Kang Yeom would keep his mouth shut even if it meant death.

However, it seemed true that you only know someone's true nature when they face a crisis.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un spoke to her.

"If you're going to repeat the same words as him, you won't be of much use either."

"No. I'm not useless. I mean, such a charming woman is offering to be on your side."

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un snorted and said,

"I'm already getting bored. What should I do?"

-Swoosh!

As Mok Gyeong-un slightly moved his sword-formed fingers, the formless swords intersecting at her neck began to move.

Feeling the sharp energy about to cut into her neck, Chunchu clicked her tongue and said,

"You're really a difficult man to handle. You. Well, fine. Easy men are no fun anyway. But how do you plan to extract Mok Gan's location from Ghost Blade when you find him?"

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un casually replied,

"Do you think he won't open his mouth?"

"I'm sorry, but he's different from Kang Yeom or the other highest-ranking executives. He'd rather die than submit to force. That's why he followed the Society Leader instead of Mok Gan, even at the risk of danger."

‘He followed the Society Leader?’

Come to think of it, there was a part of Mo Yak’s story that was particularly puzzling.

It was because he got the impression that Ghost Blade was acting according to the Society Leader’s will.

But if this was true, could there be a rift within Mok Gan’s inner circle?

While he was pondering this, Chunchu raised the corner of her mouth and said,

“Now that the Society Leader is dead, there’s only one person who can persuade him.”

“Are you saying that person is you?”

“That’s right.”

“How do you plan to persuade someone who would rather die than submit to force? Do you have some sort of secret method?”

“The best secret method. Because Ghost Blade and I are connected by blood.”

‘!?’