

Mayhem 451

Chapter 451 – Arrangement (4)

Mok Gyeong-un frowned as he watched the short sword spinning around as if alive.

At first glance, it appeared to be an ordinary dagger.

It didn't seem to be made of special metal like Ten Thousand Year Cold Iron, so how did it change the trajectory of a concentrated power strike?

Was it because of that white lightning-like phenomenon that occurred on the dagger for a split second?

As he was pondering this,

-Excellent. To think you'd make even Sodam Sword step in.

'!?'

What does this mean?

Not just making the sword be used, but saying the sword stepped in?

He's talking about the sword as if it were a mortal.

-Goooooooo!

At that moment, natural energy from all directions gathered into the iron sword of the demon-masked man.

Along with that, a counter-force occurred, and,

-Chaeaaaaang!

Mok Gyeong-un's form, which had been grasping the demon-masked man, was flung backwards.

The force was so strong that he was instantly pushed back nearly twenty jang, causing him to be thrown over the mountain peak to the cliff.

It was a precipice with nowhere to place his feet, but,

-Pat!

Mok Gyeong-un kicked the air with true energy, deploying the Void Stepping Technique[1].

Just as he was about to launch his body towards the demon mask again after kicking off the air,

-Kwang!

At that moment, he saw the demon-masked man stomp on the ground with true force and extend his iron sword towards him.

Along with this, a sword force like a spiral whirlwind emerged from the sword tip, enveloping Mok Gyeong-un with the momentum of a storm.

'This is?'

Mok Gyeong-un immediately recognized what he was deploying.

It was the True Chasing and Turning Sword, one of the Luminous Star Sword Art in Six Offices Commander Jin Ye-rin's repertoire.

However, this True Chasing and Turning Sword was different from what he knew before.

While Jin Ye-rin's True Chasing and Turning Sword was literally a technique that swept away the opponent with a rotating sword force in a spiral shape,

-Chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa chwak!

Inside this True Chasing and Turning Sword, another reverse spiral sword force was whirling.

Because of this, it had transformed into a nearly perfect sword technique with no weakness in the center of the whirlwind, which could be considered the only possible point of attack.

Moreover,

-Suk! Suk!

The short sword emitting white lightning had flown behind him, drawing trajectories to interfere with the paths Mok Gyeong-un might use to evade.

'A situation with no way out. What will you do?'

The demon-masked man closely observed Mok Gyeong-un.

It was at that very moment.

-Suk!

Mok Gyeong-un raised sword hilts in both his left and right hands simultaneously.

And as he extended his left hand towards the trajectory of the white lightning,

-Kwang!

At that moment, the demonic sword Plundering-killing Sword, which had burst through the mountain peak floor, clashed with the dagger trying to block Mok Gyeong-un's rear, drawing a black trajectory.

-Chae chae chae chae chaeng!

It was a magnificent sight as black and white lines filled the surroundings, competing in a complex manner.

However, the whirlwind of sword force was still approaching in front.

At that moment, as Mok Gyeong-un raised his right hand sword hilt,

-Woo woo woong!

Three giant formless swords appeared before his eyes.

In that state, as Mok Gyeong-un drew a circle with his sword hilt, the three formless swords that had appeared began to rotate rapidly like a windmill at regular intervals.

These rotating formless swords created a shield of wind pressure with their sharp sword force.

Seeing this, the demon-masked man chuckled.

-You should have known by now that formless swords are useless.

Along with this, the demon-masked man reached out his left hand towards the shield of formless swords Mok Gyeong-un had created.

He intended to disperse the sword energy.

But at that moment,

-Paaaaaaang!

The space at the center of the whirlwind created by the demon mask rippled, and then spread like waves, sucking in the whirlwind of sword force to its center.

-Paaaaaaang!

'The Void Suppression?'

It was one of the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques, the Void Suppression.

As the whirlwind of sword force rotating in reverse at the center, the very core of the whirlwind, disappeared, it reverted to the form of the original True Chasing and Turning Sword.

In that state, Mok Gyeong-un's form blurred and a black line was drawn towards the center.

-Chwak!

He was concentrating his power into a single point to penetrate the center.

Then,

-Suk!

The demon mask extended the index finger of his left hand.

At that instant, the space right in front of the demon mask spread out in a wave-like form, compressing the surrounding space.

-It's a pity. The strategy was good, but writing characters in front of this old man...

-Heumchit!

At that moment, the demon mask sensed sharp auras flying in from above and both sides.

The formless swords he had tried to use as a shield were now rotating like windmills and flying towards him from three directions.

He was in the middle of deploying the True Chasing and Turning Sword, so he couldn't move.

The demon mask's choice was,

-Wudeuk!

To withdraw his true energy and endure the overload on his physical body.

As he stopped deploying the True Chasing and Turning Sword, the demon-masked man immediately jumped upwards while gently drawing a circle with his sword.

At that moment,

-Pa chi chi chi chi chik!

Lightning struck from the clear sky and wrapped around the iron sword.

This was not just at the level of simple lightning energy.

‘Thunder Splitting Heavenly Concealed[2] Divine Path Luminous Star Sword Art Loach Form Sword[3]!’

From the lightning-wrapped sword, sword force enveloped in thunder power spread out in all directions like soft willow branches.

It undulated like waves and clashed with the formless swords rotating like windmills flying in from three directions.

-Chae chae chae chae chaeng! Pa cha cha cha cha chang!

As the rotating sword force of the formless swords collided with the sword force wrapped in thunder power, dazzling sparks flew in all directions, causing tremendous aftershocks as thunder power and wind pressure mixed in the surroundings.

-Pa chi chi chi chi chik! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwang!

It reached the point of splitting and scorching the mountain peak.

Fragments of the shattered mountain peak flew in all directions, and as the support disappeared, the violently colliding formless swords and the sword technique imbued with thunder power were neutralized.

-Tat!

The demon-masked man lightly leapt from the collapsing ground and moved his eyes to search for Mok Gyeong-un.

Although it seemed he had been sucked in midway by the Void Suppression, Mok Gyeong-un had escaped from it.

He was clearly targeting himself with ultra-high-speed movement.

-Seureuk! Seureuk!

‘Found him.’

Through the gaps in the demon mask, his eyes could see Mok Gyeong-un approaching, using the fragments of the collapsing peak as footholds to deploy his movement technique.

The way he flew in all directions, stepping on the fragments, was truly unpredictable.

‘His innate sense and adaptability are extraordinary.’

The demon mask inwardly clicked his tongue.

It was admirable how he responded without being affected at all by the terrain and adapting to it.

-It’s been a while since my fighting spirit has been roused like this.

He didn’t expect the fight to last this long.

There were constraints such as the artificial space and consciousness, and the original purpose was to test him and make a decision.

But as he continuously grew even during the fight, a competitive spirit gradually arose.

-Woo woo woong!

A resonating sound flowed from the iron sword the demon mask was holding.

At this, the demon mask smiled with his eyes and muttered.

-You feel the same, I see. Namcheon.

As the demon mask, with his fighting spirit properly aroused, firmly gripped the iron sword he called Namcheon and took a proper fighting stance, the dagger flew to his side and made a resonating sound.

-Woo woo woong! Woo woo woong!

It looked almost as if the dagger was chattering and speaking to him.

The demon mask frowned and then waved his hand as if understanding.

-Alright, alright. Enough.

Soon, his eyes caught sight of Mok Gyeong-un fiercely flying towards him,

-Cheolkang!

The demon-masked man, who had sheathed his sword, immediately extended both hands and made a gesture of waving them to the sides.

At that moment,

-Kwa reureureureuru!

The fragments of the shattered peak were pushed to the sides by an invisible force.

Moreover, the ground rose from the collapsed peak, creating a flat surface.

Despite this strange phenomenon, Mok Gyeong-un did not stop his momentum and tried to unleash his sword technique towards the demon mask.

It was a sword technique that concentrated killing intent and power into a single point.

As his senses became sharper, Mok Gyeong-un was bringing that sword closer and closer to its perfect form.

At that moment, as the demon mask reached out his hand towards Mok Gyeong-un,

-Pu shu shu shu shu shu!

Suddenly, a stream of water like a waterfall shot upwards from the ground.

As a result, Mok Gyeong-un had to break through the upward-flowing waterfall, getting his entire body wet, and when he emerged,

-Pak!

A strange sight unfolded.

'!?'

The surroundings had somehow changed into a green meadow, and in the center was a round table with teacups placed on it.

Moreover, the demon mask was sitting there, pouring warm tea into the cups.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un became even more wary.

The man before his eyes was not just strong, but within this space, he seemed almost omnipotent.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had stopped momentarily, spoke to him.

“What are you trying to do now?”

-Can't you tell by looking? I'm suggesting we have a cup of tea.

“Tea?”

-Yes. I've confirmed what level you've reached, so there's no reason to fight anymore.

“Confirmed?”

One of Mok Gyeong-un's eyebrows raised.

Is he saying he just tested himself?

As a strange sense of displeasure was about to rise,

-Do you feel bad about being tested?

As if seeing through that thought, the demon-masked man shrugged and spoke.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un let out a faint sigh and opened his mouth.

“Where exactly is this place?”

-I'll answer if you come and have a drink to catch your breath. Unlike me, who is a thought-form, you actually exist and must be quite tired.

‘Thought-form?’

Did he just say thought-form?

Mok Gyeong-un moved his eyes to survey the surroundings.

It certainly felt vivid, but was the feeling that nothing around could be properly sensed originating from this?

‘Mental image? No. It's more high-dimensional than that.’

-It's constructed to seem real, beyond the realm of returning to the origin. Mortal.

Mok Gyeong-un nodded as if agreeing with Cheong-ryeong's voice.

If it were a thought-form, it should literally occur as a mental image in one's mind, but this place was similar to actually existing.

Thus, it was deceiving all five senses.

It was probably like casting a wide-ranging suggestion, similar to the Suppress technique.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un turned his gaze towards the demon mask filling the teacups and spoke.

“Who are you?”

-You’re stubborn. I’m kindly offering you tea, you know.

-Jeobeok jeobeok!

Mok Gyeong-un approached the demon mask and continued speaking.

“A high-dimensional Luminous Star Sword Art surpassing Jin Ye-rin... The skill to freely utilize the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques, said to have been left by that person from Mushang Fortress, even better than me, and that demon mask identical to the one in the residual thoughts at Shaolin Temple.”

-Hoo.

“You... Are you Jin Ye-rin’s ancestor?”

This was the conclusion Mok Gyeong-un had reached from various clues.

Even if it didn’t make sense, this was the answer he had come to in his mind.

Then, the demon mask finally rested his chin on his interlocked hands and opened his mouth.

-The heavenly secrets are unexpectedly like fog and simple, only allowing one to read their general trends. So I wondered if an opportunity would arise to meet you like this, and it has come to pass.

“.....”

-Suk!

The man finally grasped the demon mask and continued speaking.

-I'm not sure how it's remembered now, but there was a time when I was treated as a villain and called the Blood Demon, and another time when I was called the Sword Immortal, the exemplar of a good person.

-Tak!

The demon mask was removed.

Along with this, his face was revealed.

He was a handsome man with pupils that strangely contained both blood-red and golden colors simultaneously.

-But as you said, I too am just myself. My name is Jin Woon-hwi. As you guessed, I am the ancestor of that child, Jin Ye-rin.

Chapter 452 – Arrangement (5)

But as you said, I too am just myself. My name is Jin Woon-hwi. As you guessed, I am the ancestor of that child, Jin Ye-rin.

A gleam appeared in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

Should it be called the weight that comes from years of experience?

Despite having a youthful face, he possessed an aura that seemed to encompass the entire gathering.

And although his eyes were clearly black, every time they reflected light, they shimmered with both blood-red and golden hues, which was truly mysterious.

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong spoke as if genuinely surprised.

-.....The world's.....greatest.....sword.

The world's greatest sword?

Mok Gyeong-un's eyebrow raised at Cheong-ryeong's words.

Could she possibly be referring to this person?

As he was wondering, Cheong-ryeong spoke in a trembling voice.

-Not many remember the great masters from the old martial arts world after the day of the great calamity. Even I have only heard of a few through oral tradition.

-.....And?

-Among them, there was one particularly outrageous story.

Outrageous?

-One who simultaneously held the notorious reputation of the Four Demonic Ways and the fame of a chivalrous hero...

The notorious reputation of the Four Demonic Ways and the fame of a chivalrous hero?

Come to think of it, this person had described himself like this:

[I'm not sure how it's remembered now, but there was a time when I was treated as a villain and called the Blood Demon, and another time when I was called the Sword Immortal, the exemplar of a good person.]

-And the one who beheaded the Jiao-Dragon Demon King.

'Jiao-Dragon Demon King?'

There are countless Imaemangyangs in the world.

Of course, encountering such beings in one's lifetime is extremely rare.

And among those rare occurrences, the being considered the most auspicious and the pinnacle of spiritual creatures in the long history of the Central Plains.

That was the Jiao-Dragon Demon King, or dragon.

'.....Was that real?'

Various Books of Yin-Yang in the Epitome of Various Schools, Initial Books of Strange Creatures in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, and more. Despite reading numerous esoteric texts, there were no accounts of actually seeing a dragon.

That's how fantastical this being called a dragon was, even among Imaemangyangs or spiritual creatures.

Yet this person had beheaded such a fantastical being?

Regardless of whether it was true or not, if he had such an incredible reputation, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call him a legendary figure.

At that moment, Jin Woon-hwi, the being who had removed the demon mask, suddenly chuckled and said,

-Ah, but let me correct that. To be precise, rather than the being itself, I'm a thought-form.

“A thought-form?”

-It might sound difficult, but what you're seeing of me is merely a thought-form. I planted a part of my soul soul in the world within the bamboo slips.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes narrowed at Jin Woon-hwi's words.

He might think that Mok Gyeong-un wouldn't understand this well, but he had experienced something similar once before.

It was inside the Wall Contemplation Cave of Shaolin Temple.

The practitioner facing the stone wall.

He had thought that person was surely a being within residual thoughts, but that person had spoken to him.

[If you have gained enough, now return to where you should be.]

At that time, Mok Gyeong-un realized.

This was not just simple residual thoughts.

It had will.

Because of this, Mok Gyeong-un was actually even more surprised internally.

While the thought-form of the practitioner remaining in the Wall Contemplation Cave had merely shown something, this person before his eyes had even fought with him.

Nevertheless, Mok Gyeong-un hadn't seen the full power of this thought-form.

Unlike himself fighting with full power, he felt that his opponent was continually holding back.

Then how strong must the real person be, if not just a thought-form?

It was impossible to gauge.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been staring intently at Jin Woon-hwi, eventually sat down in the chair in front of the table he had prepared.

-Tak!

At this, Jin Woon-hwi pointed to the steaming tea and said,

-Have a cup.

"I don't need it."

-You're very wary.

"If it's a thought-form anyway, as you say, this is just an act to deceive the five senses."

At Mok Gyeong-un's firm words, Jin Woon-hwi shrugged and then took a sip of tea before speaking.

-Slurp. You're clever. The type who hears one and knows ten, I see.

"Refrain from unnecessary words. What's your purpose in drawing me here?"

-Purpose?

"Yes."

-What do you think it is?

"I'm the one who asked the question. Jin Woon-hwi."

-Hwik!

No sooner had Mok Gyeong-un's words ended than the dagger suddenly flew over and began circling around him.

As if trying to express that it was displeased.

At this, Jin Woon-hwi waved his hand and said,

-That's enough, Sodam. This person bears no ill will.

At Jin Woon-hwi's words, the dagger that had been circling Mok Gyeong-un returned to his side and floated in the air, emitting a sword cry.

-Woo woo woong!

Mok Gyeong-un was puzzled by this sight.

"That dagger, what exactly is it?"

At first, he had simply thought Jin Woon-hwi had a deep resonance with swords.

But increasingly, Mok Gyeong-un felt that this dagger seemed to have a self, or will.

It was quite different from being simply controlled by Sword Control with Energy or Void Grasping techniques.

Because there was no flow of true energy at all.

To Mok Gyeong-un's question, Jin Woon-hwi smiled gently and said,

-This friend's name is Sodam. An old companion.

"...It doesn't seem to be a simple dagger."

-There's nothing simple in this world, friend.

"When did we become friends?"

-Ah, that's right. I came to know of your existence fragmentarily through the heavenly secrets, but I don't know your name. Can you tell me? Surely you won't answer that you're just yourself to this question too?

At these words, Mok Gyeong-un let out a faint sigh and answered.

"Jeong... No. Call me Heavenly Demon."

-Heavenly Demon? That's quite a grand name.

"I have no intention of engaging in useless small talk with you, Jin Woon-hwi. Get to the point. Why did you draw me here?"

-Just when I was starting to like you, you're in a hurry.

"I'm not leisurely enough to waste time on a mere thought-form that's not even the real person."

Jin Woon-hwi's lips curled up at Mok Gyeong-un's blunt words.

-Yet you sat down here out of necessity, didn't you?

"....."

-I like your honesty. Actually, this meeting was to decide what to do with you.

"What?"

What is he talking about now?

A meeting to decide what to do with me?

As Mok Gyeong-un revealed his displeasure with a cold gaze, Jin Woon-hwi continued speaking with a still smiling face.

-Heavenly Demon. Even if you've lost everything and become a mere human, your essence as a Demon remains unchanged.

“...Demon?”

Looking at Mok Gyeong-un who questioned back, Jin Woon-hwi put down his teacup and spoke as if surprised.

-Haven’t you reflected on yourself yet?

“What are you trying to say?”

-...I see. This is truly unexpected. I thought you would have realized what your own existence is by now, at least. Is that not the case? Then have you reached this point with a human’s self-awareness?

As soon as those words ended, Mok Gyeong-un stood up abruptly.

Then, looking down at Jin Woon-hwi, he shouted.

“Whatever is inside me, those things cannot control me. I am just myself, and I live only by my own will!”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the corner of Jin Woon-hwi’s mouth twitched.

Then Jin Woon-hwi smiled.

Mok Gyeong-un snorted at his smile, whose meaning he couldn’t understand.

“Do my words sound amusing?”

-No, not at all. That’s exactly what I wanted to hear.

“What?”

-Unlike what I worried about, you've developed a firm sense of self, Heavenly Demon.

“What are you talking about?”

-Let's just say it's good news. If you had been swallowed up by the Demon inside you and lost your will, I was going to confine you here forever.

‘!?’

He was going to confine him?

As wariness began to rise, Jin Woon-hwi filled his teacup and said,

-The important thing is will. That's what I wanted to see. If it wasn't so, you would become a disaster unlike any other in the world.

“Disaster?”

-An additional disaster on top of the coming calamity would only bring about destruction. I couldn't stand by and watch that destruction, so I merely created an opportunity for it to be averted.

“Are you going to keep speaking in riddles?”

Mok Gyeong-un found it difficult to understand what he was saying.

What exactly is he trying to say?

As he was wondering, Jin Woon-hwi drew something in the air with his index finger.

Then the air became like paper, and his finger became a brush, beginning to inscribe words.

It was the formula for the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques.

-The Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques isn't just a condensation of enlightenment. It awakens the will of those who understand the formula.

"Will?"

-If your will and sense of self were weak, you would have been quickly devoured by the Demon inside. But as you can see, you've gained a will stronger than anyone else's. That is the greatest strength a human can possess.

"...It sounds as if you're saying that my learning the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques was all intentional."

-I won't deny that it wasn't unintentional.

"What?"

-However, even if I made arrangements, if you didn't have the connection to receive it, we wouldn't have met like this.

At Jin Woon-hwi's words, numerous events flashed through Mok Gyeong-un's mind.

The supreme secret manual called the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques came into his possession not by mere chance, but through the overlapping of numerous connections, as if by fate.

It was too coincidental to be dismissed as simple chance.

After being lost in thought for a moment, Mok Gyeong-un finally spoke.

“If you call it an arrangement for it to come into my possession, can you also call it an arrangement for it to fall into the hands of one who will cause harm to the world?”

It was a sharp question hitting the nail on the head.

‘That’s right.’

It wasn’t just Mok Gyeong-un and Cheong-ryeong who obtained the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques.

Mok Gan, the leader of the Secret Society, also learned it.

Cheong-ryeong inwardly thought that Jin Woon-hwi might be a bit flustered by Mok Gyeong-un’s pointed question.

However, Jin Woon-hwi showed no reaction.

Instead, he answered in a calm voice.

-Do you remember when I said the heavenly secrets are like a hazy fog?

“.....”

-The being I read in the heavenly secrets had two wills full of madness within one body. It’s a completely different existence from you, truly like chaos incarnate.

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed at these words.

Is he saying that he read through the heavenly secrets that two wills coexist within the Mok Gan, or Saman?

Then Jin Woon-hwi continued,

-If two strong wills coexist in one body and neither weakens, what do you think will happen?

To this question, Mok Gyeong-un answered.

“Are you trying to say that too many cooks spoil the broth?”

-At least, with constant conflict and chaos within, it could somewhat delay the coming calamity.

“Was the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques falling into his hands meant to cause discord between the two wills?”

-You’re clever indeed. To understand such a difficult concept at once. However, this too is just a temporary measure.

-Suk!

As Jin Woon-hwi stood up, the table and teacups suddenly disappeared.

In that state, Jin Woon-hwi put on the demon mask again and spoke in a meaningful voice.

-Even if it’s been delayed somewhat, that time will eventually come. It’s only a matter of time before the two wills steeped in madness completely assimilate with each other in chaos. The great calamity brought about by the being born when they become one will lead all living things in the Central Plains to destruction.

“...What are you trying to say?”

-I know you're not someone who pursues goodness or values chivalry. However, if you have even the slightest thing you hold dear, it's you who lives in the present world, not me who is merely a byproduct of the past, who can protect it from the coming destruction.

Chapter 453 – Arrangement (6)

I know you're not someone who pursues goodness or values chivalry. However, if you have even the slightest thing you hold dear, it's you who lives in the present world, not me who is merely a byproduct of the past, who can protect it from the coming destruction.

Jin Woon-hwi had read the heavenly secrets long ago.

And in those heavenly secrets, he realized that the only way to prevent the destruction brought about by absolute evil filled with madness was absolute demon, which could be considered even greater.

He might not know about the former "him," but the current him is different.

If he understands human life and knows the value of loved ones, he would know that harmony and coexistence, not destruction, are the only answer.

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un stared at him silently.

Then he finally opened his mouth.

"Protect from destruction..."

-That's the answer to why I drew you here. For the sake of those dear to you...

"I refuse."

-As expected, the right decisi... What?

Jin Woon-hwi's eyebrows raised beneath the mask.

He had guessed this wouldn't be an easy man to persuade, but he didn't expect an outright refusal.

At this, Jin Woon-hwi sighed and said,

-If you don't do it, the seeds of the Central Plains might dry up to the point where even saying "countless people" would be laughable. Are you saying you'll just watch this happen?

"I live only for revenge and to protect those close to me. If you want grand heroics, find someone else."

-.....

"Ah, right. You have a descendant too, don't you? You made arrangements for her as well, so why do you need to draw me in? If it's that urgent, use her."

-If that child could stop it alone, I would have done so long ago. Even without my arrangements, when that moment comes, many will move. What I hope is for you to play a crucial role in creating the trigger...

"No. I have no intention of moving according to the scenario you've set up."

-.....

Faced with Mok Gyeong-un's unyielding resolve, Jin Woon-hwi fell silent and looked at him.

Indeed, because his essence was that of a demon, he wasn't a vessel that could be easily moved.

However, this kind of response was also somewhat expected.

‘Everyone wants to go against what’s called fate. I was the same.’

Rather, seeing Mok Gyeong-un’s stubborn attitude reminded him of his own younger days.

In those days, he too acted according to his own heart rather than for the greater good.

Because of that, he experienced many things, being pushed and pulled in various directions.

As if reading his mind as he momentarily indulged in memories of the past, the dagger beside him made a resonating sound as if chattering.

-Woo woo woong!

‘Yes, you’re remembering the old days too, aren’t you, Sodam.’

Jin Woon-hwi chuckled and then opened his mouth.

-I understand. I respect your will as well.

“You’re giving up easily.”

-Rather than giving up, the affairs of the present world are, as you say, for you and those living in that era to handle. Come to think of it, I have no right to tell you what to do just because I’m worried about the future. However, remember that even if I don’t force you, there will come a time when this becomes your path.

“.....”

In truth, Mok Gyeong-un was inevitably bound to clash with the Secret Society and the Mok Gan.

It was for his and Cheong-ryeong's revenge.

From this perspective, as Jin Woon-hwi said, their paths might eventually converge.

However, he didn't want to be dragged along by someone else's intentions rather than their own, and he didn't want to attach grand, altruistic reasons like doing it for everyone's sake.

"If you're done talking, let me out of here."

There was no reason to stay here any longer.

Moreover, something had clearly exploded just before he was sucked into the bamboo slips.

He needed to hurry back.

Jin Woon-hwi shrugged and answered.

-Letting you out isn't difficult. But won't you regret leaving?

"What is there to regret?"

-This is literally an arrangement. It seems you haven't fully understood the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques yet.

"....."

-Still, it's impressive. Probably due to your innate essence, you've reached this level. For an average mind, it would be difficult to understand even after decades or centuries, but for you, it's been only about ten years or so, right?

“.....”

Ten years?

It had taken only about half a year, one-tenth of that time.

However, Mok Gyeong-un didn't respond to this.

Instead,

“So what do you want me to do?”

-The latter part of the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques is different.

“Different... how?”

-As one reaches higher realms, martial arts converge into one, like all streams flowing into the sea. It's like countless streams eventually reaching the ocean.

“.....”

-“The Form of Harmony[1] and the Form of the Five Elements[2] can only be accepted once one realizes the balance of all flows and the greatness of nature. However, since this is directly connected to the Way of Immortals[3], it cannot be mastered through ordinary enlightenment alone.”

“...So what are you trying to say?”

-I'll teach you some of the Way of Immortals so that you can fully master the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques.

"The Way of Immortals?"

-Yes. If you were your original self, Heavenly Demon, you would have been demon itself and unable to learn the Way of Immortals, but now it's different. Humans are beings with all possibilities. That's why they're like blank canvases, able to accept anything. You now have immeasurable value.

"....."

-Don't be wary, I'm not teaching you expecting anything in return. Even if you don't become a hero, if the calamity of destruction occurs, you'll inevitably have to face it. That being is not human but a transcendent Imaemangyang. With your current power alone, you might fall into despair.

"So you're saying you'll pass on the Way of Immortals and give me the remaining clues to the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques?"

-That's right. I think it's not a bad proposal for you either.

Mok Gyeong-un stared at Jin Woon-hwi with narrowed eyes at this proposal.

Then he shook his head.

"I refuse."

-...You refuse?

"Yes."

-Why, may I ask?

“Whether it was your intention or chance, it’s certain that I’ve escaped many crises and reached a higher realm because I learned the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques. I express my gratitude for that part.”

-Tak!

Mok Gyeong-un brought his hands together in a martial salute to Jin Woon-hwi.

Jin Woon-hwi was puzzled by this unexpected expression of gratitude.

However, Mok Gyeong-un, undeterred, lowered his hands and continued speaking.

“But I don’t want to rely on your help anymore, Jin Woon-hwi.”

-You don’t want to rely on my help... Then are you saying you’ll overcome future difficulties with your own power?

“Yes.”

-Hmm.

Jin Woon-hwi stroked his chin as if troubled by Mok Gyeong-un’s decision.

Having read the heavenly secrets, he knew.

The calamity that would soon befall would bring about the worst situation that even the current Mok Gyeong-un could not possibly prevent.

At least, he might need to shed one more layer and reach the end of the natural order to be able to cope with the crisis.

-If that's your will, I can't stop you, but to rise one level higher from your current state, you either need to understand the principles of harmony and the five elements through the Way of Immortals, or directly absorb five-element energy as pure as natural energy.

"What is the Way of Immortals?"

-The Way of Immortals is...

"Isn't it the way of becoming an immortal?"

-It's not that simple, but broadly speaking, that's correct.

"Then my path is not the Way of Immortals."

-...Then what is your path? If you desire a higher realm, you'll have to walk a stable path.

"I realized while fighting with you, Jin Woon-hwi."

-You realized? What do you mean?

"That I don't need too many things."

-You don't need many things?

"I haven't been practicing martial arts for long, but I've learned that knowing many things doesn't necessarily mean becoming stronger."

'!?'

"A sharp sword that can cut anything and supreme power. I need nothing else besides these."

'!!!!'

Jin Woon-hwi's eyes, visible through the gaps of the demon mask, gleamed at Mok Gyeong-un's conclusion.

How could he arrive at such a thought?

It's quite surprising.

He himself had encountered numerous connections and through them gained enlightenment to reach higher realms.

That's why he believed everything was learning and harmony.

But Mok Gyeong-un was different.

Through this encounter, instead of accepting the arrangement and following the same path as him, he was choosing to walk a completely different, independent path.

-Supreme power... How can you reach that without understanding the principles of the five elements?

"Harmony is not my path. Infinite power is like the supreme. In the end, what matters is will."

-.....

Jin Woon-hwi was genuinely impressed by Mok Gyeong-un.

At that level of attainment, one would feel that the path ahead is daunting because they've climbed so high, and the wall would feel like despair and wailing.

That's why he tried to guide the way through his arrangement, but there was no need for that now.

This person truly didn't need a master.

A being who creates his own path.

A true great master.

At the same time.

More than half of the bamboo trees that formed the bamboo forest through the formation technique were broken and shattered, and the interior was almost completely devastated.

Six Offices Commander So Ye-rin, no, Jin Ye-rin, was breathing heavily, covered in wounds.

"Haa... Haa..."

-Pareureu!

Her hand holding the sword was trembling violently.

Beside her was a middle-aged man with a sunken forehead, Ghost Blade, who was in even worse condition than her.

Not only had one of his arms been cut off, but his left shin seemed to be broken as he staggered.

Moreover, he was bleeding heavily, apparently having been pierced through the abdomen.

“Kuleuk kuleuk...”

“Is this all you’ve got?”

A man with a fierce expression was looking at them as if they were pathetic.

There was a third eye on the man’s forehead, and Jin Ye-rin’s complexion was not good as she looked at it.

‘...He’s strong. Too strong.’

They had faced the man with the third eye together, but far from being evenly matched, they were actually being pushed back.

Jin Ye-rin bit her lip hard at this strength that even two peerless masters who had surpassed the wall of walls couldn’t handle.

-Kkwak!

‘If this continues, Cheol Su-ryeon’s sacrifice will have been in vain.’

The earlier situation flashed through Jin Ye-rin’s mind.

The being with the third eye suddenly appeared in the interior of the formation technique made of green meadow.

He was not the main body of the Secret Society's leader, the Mok Gan, but an avatar.

However, the avatar was not just one.

'!?'

Surprisingly, there were two avatars.

They had different faces and age ranges, but the atmosphere and pressure they exuded were identical.

[Where is he?]

[He should be here.]

The first target the avatars sought was Mok Gyeong-un.

Though she didn't know why they were looking for him, realizing it had something to do with the bamboo slips, she hid them in her bosom.

Then she fought against the two avatars of Mok Gan who exuded such an overwhelming aura.

She fought together with Cheol Su-ryeon, but she was shocked.

The two avatars of Mok Gan were truly monsters.

Even a peerless master like Cheol Su-ryeon was helplessly pushed back by their combined attack.

Then, when Jin Ye-rin was caught by one of them and her life was in danger, she managed to escape thanks to Wicked Granny Cheol Su-ryeon's quick thinking.

[Let her go. Then I'll tell you about the forbidden technique.]

[Don't think of deceiving me. I too am a master of techniques. Any clumsy trick will result in cutting off the last bloodline of the Jin family.]

[Cheol Su-ryeon, I'm fine, absolutely don't...]

-Kkwak!

[Keok!]

[Didn't I say I would talk! Take your hands off her immediately!]

[Speak. Then I'll keep my promise.]

In the end, Wicked Granny Cheol Su-ryeon spilled the method of the forbidden technique.

As she seemed to be properly revealing the technique, one of the avatars released his hand from her neck.

Then,

-Young miss.

Wicked Granny Cheol Su-ryeon sent her a sound transmission, urging her not to move at all.

She wondered why, but then,

-Kung! Kung!

Cheol Su-ryeon struck the ground repeatedly with her staff that had a ring attached.

Then, as space tore open, Jin Ye-rin's body was sucked into it.

[I-Cheol Su-ryeon!]

[This woman!]

As one of the avatars hurriedly tried to grab her as she was being sucked in, Cheol Su-ryeon launched her body to interfere with him.

Then she said goodbye to her with a bright smile.

-Please survive.

Along with this, through the tiny gap of the closing torn space, she could see Cheol Su-ryeon throwing her ringed staff towards the pillar in the center of the thatched house.

-Kwaaaang!

And with a thunderous sound, the bamboo trees forming the formation technique all broke at once.

Thanks to Cheol Su-ryeon's sacrifice, she thought she had escaped the crisis, but she had to face another despair as soon as she came out.

That was because there was one more avatar of Mok Gan.

The third avatar had cut off Ghost Blade's right arm and was gripping his neck, seemingly interrogating him about something.

She attacked to save him, and then they fought together, but this was the result.

Despite their combined attack, it was rather they who were injured.

"Haa... Haa..."

The strength in her hand holding the sword was gradually fading.

Having consumed eight-tenths of her innate true energy, it would become dangerous if she continued to fight.

-Jeobeok jeobeok!

Jin Ye-rin barely swallowed dry saliva as she watched Mok Gan's avatar approaching.

Even though it's not the main body, it's this strong, and Mok Gyeong-un not only faced such a monstrous avatar but even killed it?

What on earth should I do?

As she was watching the approaching avatar of Mok Gan in despair,

-Pareureu!

The bamboo slips in her bosom suddenly began to tremble.

'!?'

Chapter 454 – Supreme (1)

Pareureu!

The bamboo slips in Jin Ye-rin's bosom trembled violently.

What is this?

Why are the bamboo slips shaking on their own?

Puzzled, she took them out of her bosom, hoping against hope.

The rolled-up bamboo slips were shaking severely, as if trying to unfurl on their own.

It was at that very moment.

-Pak!

“Ah!”

Suddenly, the bamboo slips in her hand were forcibly snatched away by an invisible force.

It was the Ritual of Binding.

The one who took them was none other than Mok Gan's avatar with a fierce expression.

“No!”

Jin Ye-rin, panicked because Mok Gyeong-un had been sucked into those bamboo slips, launched her body to try and take them back, but she missed her chance due to a restraining hand.

The one who held her back was Ghost Blade.

Ghost Blade shook his head.

If she had launched her body to retrieve the bamboo slips, she would have suffered a fatal injury from Mok Gan's avatar.

-Pareureu!

Mok Gan, holding the trembling bamboo slips, opened his mouth.

“What is this?”

“.....”

Jin Ye-rin kept her mouth shut at his question.

She couldn't possibly answer that Mok Gyeong-un was inside.

But then,

-Wudeudeudeuk!

‘!!!!’

At that moment, Mok Gan's avatar grasped the bamboo slips that were trembling and trying to unfurl on their own, and crushed them.

Jin Ye-rin's pupils shook violently as she looked at the crushed bamboo slips in his grasp.

The trembling that had been so intense stopped completely the moment they were crushed.

'Ah....."

She had thought it might be a sign of Mok Gyeong-un's return.

No, the probability had been high.

But before that could happen, hope was shattered.

As if noticing her reaction, Mok Gan's avatar raised the corner of his mouth in a sinister smile and said,

"It must be disappointing to be blocked before you could even make a move."

"....."

"Judging by the energy I felt from the bamboo slips, was this given to you by that woman who sent you out from inside?"

"....."

"It seems it was quite a trump card. Huhuhu."

"....."

Jin Ye-rin, overwhelmed by despair, gave no answer.

-Jeobeok jeobeok!

Seeing her like this, Mok Gan's avatar slowly approached with a face that showed his interest had waned.

In truth, he could have ended it immediately, but Mok Gan was cautious.

That was because the woman before him was of the Jin family bloodline.

He had thought he had killed all the descendants who inherited the blood of the one called the world's greatest sword in the old martial arts world, who even slew a corrupted Jiao-Dragon Demon King.

Yet here, when he came to obtain the forbidden technique and kill Heavenly Demon, he discovered a surviving bloodline.

"This time, I'll eliminate that bloodline for sure."

"Haa... Haa..."

-Eudeuk!

Jin Ye-rin bit the back of her hand holding the sword.

It was to revive her senses by causing pain because strength wouldn't enter her hand.

Seeing this, Mok Gan's avatar snorted.

"Have you reached your limit just from this much?"

“...Shut up.”

“It seems I overreacted. I thought you might have a trump card prepared after hiding so well and revealing yourself, but was it just coincidence?”

Jin Ye-rin was truly angered by Mok Gan’s provocation.

However, losing her cool in this situation where she was pushed back even after a combined attack would be playing right into his hands.

So Jin Ye-rin responded in a calm voice.

“So that’s your true feelings.”

“What?”

“They say once bitten, twice shy. How afraid must you have been of our Jin family to be so wary?”

Mok Gan showed a disinterested reaction to her response.

He felt displeased but was trying hard not to show it.

Noticing this, Jin Ye-rin provoked him further.

“Well, if it had been the era when he who was called the world’s greatest was around, a vicious Imaemangyang like you who parasitizes others’ bodies wouldn’t have been able to run wild.”

“Parasite?”

“Do you think I don’t know that without another’s body, you’re nothing more than a mere eyeball?”

-Wudeuk!

No sooner had those words ended than the veins around the third eye on Mok Gan's forehead bulged prominently.

It seemed the provocation had worked.

"How dare a mere insect..."

It was at that very moment.

Ghost Blade, who had been constantly looking for an opportunity, launched his body.

He too had shared the third eye and body at one time, so he knew exactly what this being's weakness was.

Naturally, it was that eye on the forehead.

Despite his injured leg, Ghost Blade flew towards Mok Gan's blind spot with lightning-fast movement technique, trying to stab the eye with his sword energy.

However,

-Pat!

Before the sword energy could reach, Mok Gan's avatar lightly turned his head to avoid it and kicked Ghost Blade in the abdomen.

-Puk!

The moment his kick connected with the abdomen, Ghost Blade curved his leg and grabbed it.

-Pak!

'!?'

The real aim wasn't himself.

Jin Ye-rin, who had appeared behind Mok Gan's avatar with a form like the wind, tried to behead him in one stroke.

'He's dead!'

-Chwak!

-Chaeang!

But her sword didn't reach Mok Gan's avatar's neck.

Twisting his waist to the side, Mok Gan caught the incoming blade with his left hand.

Although the sword energy raised with innate true energy was much stronger than ordinary strong energy and even had the power to suppress a Imaemangyang's demonic power,

-Pa cha cha cha cha chang!

Mok Gan's avatar was truly a monster.

Despite being an avatar, with demonic power surpassing innate true energy, he instead broke her sword.

-Chaenggang!

And with that broken blade,

-Pat! Puk!

He threw it at Jin Ye-rin, piercing her left shoulder.

If she hadn't twisted her body at the last moment, it might have pierced her heart instead of her shoulder, leading to instant death.

But as her balance crumbled from the shoulder wound,

-Kkwak!

Mok Gan's avatar grabbed her neck.

To save Jin Ye-rin, Ghost Blade, who had been wrapping his one arm around Mok Gan's avatar's leg, tried to draw out all his remaining true energy to break the leg, but,

-Puk!

Mok Gan's avatar snorted and kicked Ghost Blade's face with his other foot.

With a sound like facial bones being crushed, Ghost Blade flew back with a death cry.

-Kung! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Ghost Blade flew through the bamboo trees and was buried in the ground.

With his face caved in and disfigured, Ghost Blade tried his hardest to stand up, but it was futile.

“Keueueu.”

His body, having reached its limit, no longer moved.

Mok Gan’s avatar, who had been watching Ghost Blade dispassionately, then lifted Jin Ye-rin by the neck and said,

“Now your struggles are over, last bloodline of the Jin family.”

“Keok keok!”

-Pak! Pak!

Jin Ye-rin flailed to shake off Mok Gan’s avatar’s hand, but having already consumed most of her innate true energy, she had no strength to break free.

Her struggling for breath was even pitiful to watch.

Mok Gan’s avatar seemed to be enjoying this, his mouth curled up to his earlobes.

‘It’s over.’

Although he had lost two of his precious few remaining avatars, he had safely obtained the forbidden technique to merge souls into one, and even dealt with the last bloodline of the Jin family like this, so it wasn’t a loss.

“Heueu.....”

Gradually, the strength left Jin Ye-rin’s body.

Satisfied with her pale face and limbs going limp, Mok Gan was about to twist her neck for a definitive finish.

But at that very moment.

-Kwa ji ji jik!

The sound of something tearing came from somewhere.

What on earth is this sound?

As Mok Gan’s avatar turned his head towards the source of the sound in puzzlement,

‘!?’

It was none other than the floor where the bamboo slips he had crushed had fallen.

Mok Gan’s avatar frowned.

That was because with the third eye on his forehead, he could see space tearing open centered on where the broken bamboo slips had fallen.

‘What is this?’

It was at that moment.

-Heumchit!

Suddenly, a black line brushed past the air.

'This is?'

Recognizing it as a strike with concentrated power the moment he saw it, Mok Gan's avatar hurriedly tried to remove his hand grasping Jin Ye-rin's neck, but,

-Chwak!

'!?'

His wrist had already been cut off.

And Jin Ye-rin, who had been right in front of him, was no longer visible.

At this, the eye on his forehead moved rapidly.

As it moved, it fixed on someone about thirty paces away.

There, a handsome young man with black hair flying was holding Jin Ye-rin.

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

"Kuleuk kuleuk!"

As Mok Gyeong-un removed the severed hand from her neck, Jin Ye-rin, whose breathing had returned, coughed frantically.

As she coughed, Jin Ye-rin couldn't hide her surprise.

She had thought there was no way for Mok Gyeong-un to return because the bamboo slips had been destroyed.

But how did this happen?

As she wondered, Mok Gyeong-un put her down and said,

"Stay here."

"Kuleuk kuleuk... M-Mok Young Master....."

"I'll take care of this quickly."

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un turned and approached Mok Gan's avatar.

Seeing this, Mok Gan's avatar snorted as if in disbelief.

"Take care of this quickly?"

-Seureureureuk!

Mok Gan's avatar raised his rapidly regenerating left hand that had been cut off and said,

"Do you think the same luck will repeat as last time? Back then, it was a new body, so it couldn't properly handle even a few tenths of my power, but now it's different."

-Seureuk!

No sooner had those words ended than Mok Gan's avatar's form blurred and disappeared.

Along with this, he instantly reached in front of Mok Gyeong-un and tried to thrust his sword hilt towards his brow at high speed, but,

-Chwak!

Before he could, a sharp sensation brushed past his wrist.

His pupils saw a red line appear on the arm holding his sword hilt, splitting open.

'!?'

-Pat!

Mok Gan's avatar hurriedly widened the distance between himself and Mok Gyeong-un.

The eyes that had been full of composure until just moments ago were now filled with bewilderment.

'...What on earth?'

What just happened?

He couldn't even properly see the bastard swing his sword.

Even though he was carefully watching the movement with his third eye to avoid being caught off guard.

‘Something... has changed.’

It was different from when he faced him in the Heaven and Earth Society.

As he hesitated to move rashly due to a strange wariness, Mok Gyeong-un approached and said,

“Are you afraid? Why are you keeping your distance?”

At that question, Mok Gan’s avatar’s expression twisted fiercely for a moment.

Chapter 455 – Supreme (2)

“Are you afraid? Why are you keeping your distance?”

-Wudeuk!

For a moment, Mok Gan’s expression twisted fiercely.

Even though they were avatars, not all of them had the same tendencies.

Although they shared consciousness through the third eye, they were inevitably influenced by the personality and tendencies of their original bodies.

This avatar with the fierce expression was a body Mok Gan had obtained about forty years ago.

Comprehending the Sword of Crying Death, In-seop.

Though he was quickly forgotten by the martial arts world due to his short active period and southern barbarian origins, he was one of the top five peerless masters in the entire martial arts world at that time.

This peerless master, who had no equal in the southern barbarian lands and surrounding areas, was extremely proud and arrogant.

"You're getting cocky because your power has increased."

-Gooooo!

As Mok Gan revealed his aura, the broken bamboo trees shook with tremendous wind pressure.

'...To think it was this much.'

Jin Ye-rin's complexion darkened at his overwhelming aura.

She had guessed he was holding back, but to think he had controlled his power to this extent?

This was already beyond the wall of walls.

-Pat!

Though his severed arm hadn't fully regenerated, Mok Gan stretched out his hand where the skin hadn't even formed yet.

"I'll show you how different it is from back then."

-Woo woo woong!

As Mok Gan stretched out his hand, with a sound of air tearing, sharp sword energy and true energy gathered, forming an utterly transparent formless sword.

‘Invisible Sword!’

Jin Ye-rin’s pupils shook.

It was the realm of the Invisible Sword, the stage of forming a sword with true energy that could be called the Sword Extreme.

Mok Gan, who could maximize the potential abilities of a body when he dominated it, was capable of this.

However, when he had just taken over the body of Na Yul-ryang, the eldest disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society’s leader, he couldn’t exert his power properly because the body hadn’t yet blossomed compared to its talent.

But this current body was different.

He had used it for a full forty years, completely assimilating with it and blossoming all of its potential.

-Suk!

Mok Gan took a stabbing stance with the sword, pulling it towards Mok Gyeong-un.

Then, tremendous energy began to concentrate on the entire Invisible Sword.

It looked as if he was gathering power into a single point.

-Kururururu!

Even the ground was shaking and trembling.

This sharp energy spreading out was focusing on Mok Gyeong-un like aiming at a target.

‘No. This is...’

There’s no way Mok Gyeong-un couldn’t have read the omen of death emanating from the sword stance, so why was he standing still like that?

Surely he wasn’t planning to receive that sword technique head-on?

Even though his power had increased incomparably from before, this was too dangerous.

Feeling an extreme sense of foreboding, Jin Ye-rin hurriedly shouted.

“Young Master Mok, you mustn’t receive it head-o...”

Before her words could finish,

‘Heaven Vein Sword Technique. Invisible Sword Technique Second Form: Sword Fang Eruption[1]!’

-Paaaaaaang!

With a sound that seemed to pierce the eardrums, sharp sword energy amplified with explosive power and enveloped the entire space.

It was like a giant the size of a great mountain thrusting a sword.

The sword technique of the Invisible Sword, imbued with immeasurable power, attempted to destroy everything in sight.

‘Foolish bastard.’

For a split second, the corner of Mok Gan’s mouth rose.

To think he’d try to receive this head-on just because his power had increased.

Unlike you, I’ve spent long years researching countless martial arts and even created sword techniques suitable for the Invisible Sword.

Unless it’s a sword technique with equal power, this can’t be faced head-on...

-Chwaaaaaaaaaaaak!

‘!!!!!!’

Suddenly, Mok Gan’s expression froze.

The sword technique of the Invisible Sword Technique Second Form: Sword Fang Eruption, which was extending with the force to destroy everything in sight, was split in half.

The sight was like a massive waterfall being cleaved.

And between the split halves, Mok Gyeong-un could be seen drawing his sword upwards.

‘He... cut it.’

He wasn’t the only one surprised by this sight.

Jin Ye-rin was so shocked that she staggered and ended up sitting down hard.

She had thought that he hadn't even raised a Invisible Sword, and that even though it was an avatar, it couldn't match Mok Gan whose power had reached its peak.

But in that instant, that moment,

-Ossak!

She got goosebumps from the transcendent power she felt from Mok Gyeong-un.

It was only for a moment, but Mok Gyeong-un's power completely overwhelmed Mok Gan.

What on earth was that just now?

As she was wondering,

-Slash!

Mok Gyeong-un, who had cut Mok Gan's Invisible Sword technique with a single strike, began walking towards him.

It was just one step, but the strange pressure that came with it was overwhelming.

At this, Mok Gan, who had been momentarily bewildered by his technique being broken, seemed to regain his senses and hurriedly tried to deploy another sword technique with his Invisible Sword.

'Heaven Vein Sword Technique. Invisible Sword Technique Fourth Form: Sword Wave Annihilation!'

-Chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa!

As Mok Gan swung his sword, numerous sword afterimages appeared, all raising a tyrannical force like waves trying to sweep away Mok Gyeong-un.

Then,

-Chwak!

This time, Mok Gyeong-un swung his sword down towards the wave of sword force.

Along with this, the wave made of black afterimages split, and once again the Invisible Sword technique was broken as if it were nothing.

At this sight, the focus of the eye on Mok Gan's forehead shook.

That third eye could read the flow of energy, and the moment Mok Gyeong-un swung his sword, the surroundings were dyed completely black with power.

'...How can this be possible?'

He had fought with Mok Gyeong-un before, albeit as a different avatar.

Until just recently, he hadn't even matched the power of a new body.

But just now, his power surged to the point of covering everything around.

It was to the extent of surpassing even this body.

-Jeobeok jeobeok!

Looking at the approaching Mok Gyeong-un, Mok Gan opened his mouth.

"You... Don't tell me you've consumed the essence of a spiritual beast?"

"Essence?"

"There's no way your power could surge like this in such a short time otherwise. Yes, that must be it. You've been consuming the essence of spiritual beasts to regain your strength!"

There are three books called the Three Strange Books.

One of them, the True Scripture of the Immortal White, states that there are spiritual beasts born from the gathering of nature's energy.

Even in the Book of Rites, one of the Five Classics of Confucianism, four of these Five Spirits are mentioned: the unicorn, phoenix, qilin, and dragon turtle.

Since ancient times, the existence of these Four Spirits has been considered an auspicious sign in the Central Plains.

However, the Five Spirits mentioned in the True Scripture of the Immortal White are somewhat different.

While the Four Spirits are beings of fantasy, these Five Spirits are said to actually exist.

They are the Great Peng, the Imogi, the Flaming Qilin, the Wind White Tiger[2], and the Dragon Turtle[3], said to be beings born from the gathering of the five elements' energy, like nature itself.

The True Scripture of the Immortal White describes important things here, stating that if one consumes the blood or essence of these Five Spirits born from the gathering of nature's energy, they can obtain enough primordial energy for longevity or even immortality, more than enough to use for a lifetime.

‘Spiritual beast... essence...’

Though he hadn’t seen the True Scripture of the Immortal White, Mok Gyeong-un also knew something about the Five Spirits.

He had heard about the Dragon Turtle and Flaming Qilin from Blood Saint Dam Baek-ha and Jin Ye-rin, and even Jin Woon-hwi’s thought-form in the bamboo slips had briefly mentioned these Five Spirits.

Hadn’t he said it was an opportunity to directly accept the essence of the five elements?

But Mok Gyeong-un wasn’t interested in these spiritual beasts.

His interest was only one thing.

“You can have that stuff.”

“What?”

“That’s not what’s important.”

-Pat!

Mok Gyeong-un’s form instantly reached in front of Mok Gan.

Mok Gan, who hadn’t lowered his guard, hurriedly tried to behead Mok Gyeong-un who had appeared with his Invisible Sword, but,

-Chaeaaang!

‘!?’

His Invisible Sword was deflected.

‘The Invisible Sword?’

He deflected it with just a sword, not even another Invisible Sword or even a special sword?

-Pat!

Mok Gan launched his body backwards to avoid the demonic sword Evil Commandment Sword aiming for his neck, and drew his left hand’s sword hilt downwards.

-Woo woo woong!

Then, a large Invisible Sword appeared in the air, trying to crush Mok Gyeong-un like a mace.

However,

-Chaeaaaaang!

Mok Gyeong-un struck it down as he moved forward.

No, it wasn’t just struck down.

The giant Invisible Sword that clashed with Mok Gyeong-un’s sword was scattering and breaking apart.

The pupil of Mok Gan’s third eye shook and blood vessels bulged.

Only then could Mok Gan understand.

‘The moment he swings his sword, his power surges to the extreme. This... This isn’t his energy.’

Mok Gan’s eyes became incredulous.

If he had consumed the essence of all Five Spirits, the energy of the five elements would be in balance, allowing him to connect with nature and draw in that energy.

But if that were the case, he would have noticed it already.

But this bastard hadn’t consumed the essence of spiritual beasts or anything like that.

‘How... How can this be...’

“Still not enough.”

-Goooooooo!

-Heumchit!

The moment Mok Gyeong-un took a stance to swing his sword towards him, the sharpness flowing from the sword was being honed to the extreme.

‘Kuk!’

Mok Gan hurriedly blocked the sword flying towards him.

-Chaeaang!

It didn't end there.

-Chaeaang! Chaeang! Chaeang!

Mok Gan blocked Mok Gyeong-un's successive sword strikes with all his might.

But with each block, his internal organs boiled from the overwhelming power.

Even if he wanted to counterattack, just blocking was overwhelming.

-Chaeaang!

“Keheok!”

The moment he clashed with Mok Gyeong-un's next sword strike, his palm was torn open and blood spurted from his mouth as his form was pushed back relentlessly.

-Chwareureureureureu!

He tried to deflect the incoming sword force with the Pear Blossom Grafting technique, but he couldn't.

It was stirring up his insides so wildly that there was no way to expel it without circulating his energy.

The gaze of Mok Gan's third eye sharpened as he looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

‘The main body... Only the main body can deal with this bastard.’

The forbidden technique was in place, and he had sent three avatars to make sure, but due to unexpected variables, he had lost two avatars ridiculously.

So he was weighing whether to fight him or withdraw since he had achieved his primary objective, but remembering their fight at the Heaven and Earth Society, he thought he could subdue him if he went all out with a fully assimilated avatar.

But that was a miscalculation.

The current bastard couldn't be beaten without the main body.

“Kuleuk kuleuk...”

Mok Gan, wiping away the flowing blood, looked around.

He saw Jin Ye-rin looking at him with surprised eyes and Ghost Blade barely clinging to life.

Now that it had come to this, there was only one thing for him to do.

It was to kill everyone here with a mutual destruction technique and at least inflict some injury on the bastard.

-Goooooooo!

Blood vessels bulged in the eye on Mok Gan's forehead as energy surged.

He intended to amplify his demonic power and true energy to cause an explosion all at once.

Mok Gan glared at Mok Gyeong-un and said,

“This is the en...”

-Seureureureuk!

At that moment, Mok Gan felt the world tilting sideways.

‘!?’

What on earth is happening?

Then he realized.

At some point, his neck had been cut and his head was falling off.

-Kung!

His head hit the ground and rolled, and as it did, he saw a sharp sword energy cutting through the air in an endless trajectory.

-Chwaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

It was neither sword energy, nor sword force, nor an Invisible Sword.

It was as if immeasurable power was imbued in the sword force, almost like...

-Kkwak!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un grabbed his rolling head by the hair and lifted it.

Then, raising the corner of his mouth, he said,

“Thank you. Thanks to you, I’ve been able to approach the Supreme Sword[4].”

Chapter 456 – Supreme (3)

Jin Ye-rin was genuinely amazed.

Mok Gyeong-un’s sword just now possessed truly immeasurable supreme power.

She had thought that the Invisible Sword, called the Sword Extreme, was the pinnacle of swordsmanship.

But to think there was something beyond even that.

‘…He’s truly a genius.’

She had to acknowledge Mok Gyeong-un’s martial talent.

Although she had been told she inherited tremendous talent from her father, it was nothing compared to Mok Gyeong-un’s martial genius.

Was there any point in comparing herself, who hadn’t yet mastered the martial arts inherited from her ancestors, to Mok Gyeong-un, who constantly surpassed his own limits to reach new realms?

‘It’s shameful.’

She had only thought about reviving her family and revenge, but faced with Mok Gyeong-un’s endless progress, she felt ashamed of her own attitude towards martial arts for the first time.

Perhaps it was even more so because someone who had once been far inferior to her had now reached a place she couldn't touch.

On the other hand,

‘Still not enough.’

Mok Gyeong-un wasn't satisfied with this.

He had succeeded in raising supreme power in his sword, but he felt something was still lacking.

Though he didn't know what it was, he still had to keep filling it.

And,

-Shuuuuu!

Heat haze rose from his entire body.

The supreme sword caused even more physical strain than the sword that exerted power into a single point.

Moreover, it required strong will, so the mental consumption was also tremendous.

At the moment he manifested the desired form of the sword, his body was so drained that it reached a state of exhaustion, so it wasn't yet at a level where he could use it freely.

The corner of Mok Gyeong-un's mouth rose.

‘It's endless.’

Is this the charm of martial arts?

Even when he had reached the Life and Death Realm and completed the Invisible Sword, the Sword Extreme, he had thought that was the end of swordsmanship, but it wasn't at all.

This proved it.

There is no end to martial arts.

-Chureureureureu!

At that moment, blood vessels writhed at Mok Gan's severed neck, trying to regenerate.

Seeing this, a gleam appeared in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

If it was trying to recover even with the entire body blown away, this wasn't just ordinary regeneration, but close to immortality, wasn't it?

‘Hmm.’

Looking at this, Mok Gyeong-un thought.

Come to think of it, among the enemies he had faced so far, there were those with such excellent regenerative abilities.

The annoying thing about such people was that they tended to act differently from normal people because they believed in their regenerative abilities.

And unlike ordinary enemies, regeneration changed the nature of the battle itself.

Variables could occur at any time.

‘…Is it impossible to exert supreme power that even surpasses regeneration?’

But power is literally just power.

Regenerative ability was literally just an ability, not the object itself.

This concept wasn’t something that could be dealt with by power alone.

However, while ordinary people would have stopped here, Mok Gyeong-un’s thoughts were reaching higher.

‘Is there no way to make the sword force, sword energy sharper to the point where even regeneration is impossible?’

Mok Gyeong-un’s thoughts didn’t last long.

The reason was that Mok Gan’s body was really trying to regenerate.

-Chureureureureu!

Blood vessels were connecting, bones were growing, and muscles were forming.

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue at the marvelous regenerative ability.

But fortunately, he knew what this person’s weakness was because he had fought him once before.

-Chwak!

As Mok Gyeong-un drew his sword hilt, the regenerating part was cut off.

“Keok!”

After cutting this, Mok Gyeong-un reached for the eye on his forehead.

As he did so, Mok Gan opened his mouth.

“You... Really... Have you... truly... lost... your core... and become... human?”

‘!?’

At those words, Mok Gyeong-un’s hand, which was reaching for the eyeball, paused for a moment.

Staring intently at the eyeball on the forehead, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Did you hear that from Ghost Blade?”

“.....”

Mok Gan didn’t deny it.

The first thing he did when he came to the bamboo forest was to subdue Ghost Blade.

Having confirmed that another kindred who had worked with him for a long time had perished, he realized that the bastard was no longer his limb.

That's why he tried to dig out what the guy had found out.

But the guy's lips were tight.

Rather, he tried to confuse him.

[Haa... Haa... The Incarnate... can no longer... be your enemy.]

[Can't be my enemy?]

[Having lost... the core... he chose the path of regression himself.]

[Regression?]

[I saw it clearly with my own eyes. he is no longer the Incarnate that threatens you, but now just an ordinary human. So no more...]

-Kkwak!

[Keok.]

[I don't know why I can't feel the core, but you're still hiding something.]

[Keok... Keok...]

[Do you think a mere ordinary human could stand against me? You'll have to tell me everything you're hiding.]

[Keok... You... I have nothing... to say to the likes of you!]

[What?]

[Get... Get away... from Him.]

[.....]

Mok Gan was inwardly surprised at Ghost Blade's words.

It was surprising enough that his will hadn't perished even after more than a hundred years had passed, let alone that he had even eliminated his kindred in the end, but to think his loyalty towards his master was still alive?

How could a mere human possess such strong will?

Feeling both wonder and interest here, Mok Gan tried to completely delve into his mind, but at that moment, Jin Ye-rin came out of the formation technique, leading to the current situation.

Mok Gan glared at Mok Gyeong-un and opened his mouth.

“Why... Why did you become human?”

“.....”

Mok Gyeong-un gave no answer to Mok Gan's question.

He too had learned the truth through Ghost Blade, and even now, this fact was still hard to accept.

Therefore, Mok Gyeong-un discarded complicated thoughts.

Whatever his past might have been, he decided to focus on himself now.

“Kuk... Kukukukuk...”

At that moment, Mok Gan suddenly burst into laughter.

It was an utterly bitter, maniacal laughter.

After laughing for a while, his eyes were filled with madness.

He seemed like a different person.

“To become human... Human... Kukuk. I really hate it. I really hate you. No, I loathe you. To think that a being expelled from the clan would become human, even regressing voluntarily. I can see your despicable intentions.”

“Intentions? Say what you want. I...”

“You can’t gain anything. If I can’t obtain it, neither can you.”

“...Nonsense.”

“I’ll give you true despair. I’ll show you pain beyond what I’ve experienced.”

Mok Gyeong-un, seemingly deciding there was no need to listen further to Mok Gan’s words that sounded like curses, reached for the eye on his forehead.

It was to make contact with the eyeball and find out where his main body was.

-Puk!

Since the bastard might self-destruct again, this time he quickly plucked out the eyeball to prevent him from controlling energy,

-Chwa chwa chwa chwak!

He cut off all the visible capillaries in the eyeball.

Looking at how energy flowed through each of those capillaries, they seemed to play a role similar to meridians or energy circulation paths.

So Mok Gyeong-un held the eye and closed his eyes.

Since one of the avatars had died, he should be able to narrow down the dispersed candidates.

But,

‘!!!!!!’

At that moment, in Mok Gyeong-un's mind, there was a dark hall with a stone throne shrouded in shadows, and a being sitting on that throne was visible.

Though the face wasn't visible due to the deep shadows, the third eye on the forehead was clear due to its unique radiance.

Could this be the main body?

The mental focus wasn't dispersed to where the avatars were, but immediately pinpointed this location?

As he was wondering, Mok Gan sitting on the stone throne opened his mouth.

-The time has come.

‘What?’

-It's not that you found me, but that I revealed myself.

‘.....’

What's his intention?

Even when they clashed at the Heaven and Earth Society, he had talked about avatars and made the tracking disperse to the locations of other avatars to prevent his own location from being detected.

But this time, he didn't try to self-destruct the avatar's eye and willingly showed his location.

Here, Mok Gyeong-un couldn't help but be suspicious.

Then, Mok Gan on the stone throne said,

-I'll give you one last chance. If you willingly offer your soul and spirit souls, I'll mercifully grant you a peaceful death.

Mok Gyeong-un snorted at this proposal.

Then he sent his intention.

-Your thoughts differ from mine.

-Our thoughts differ?

-I'm going to torment you thoroughly until you beg to die.

-Kwadeuk!

No sooner had those words ended than the armrest of the stone throne crumbled, and the gleam of the third eye visible between the shadows was tinged with killing intent.

The entire hall gradually shook with tremendous power.

Mok Gan spoke threateningly in a seething voice.

-You're passing up the opportunity to the very end.

To him, Mok Gyeong-un smirked and replied in an arrogant voice.

-The right to give opportunities belongs to the strong. This doesn't apply to you.

-Kwang!

As those words ended, the stone throne shattered to pieces and Mok Gan rose from his seat,

-Seureureureuk!

Regardless, Mok Gyeong-un paid no heed to this and stopped the mental tracking.

He had roughly figured out where the bastard was, so further conversation was meaningless.

As the mental image was breaking off, he heard the bastard's mad cry, but it was none of his concern.

-Kwajik!

Mok Gyeong-un also burst the eye of Mok Gan's avatar he was holding in his hand.

As the eye burst, the ominous energy flowing from it was also cut off.

Then Cheong-ryeong asked in an expectant voice.

-Did you find him?

-Yes.

-Where! Where is he?

-If I tell you, are you going to go alone again?

-.....

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

At this, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said in a disappointed tone.

-I didn't think it would be true, but it seems it is. If that's the case, I don't think I can tell you. We promised to go together...

-No promise is needed.

-What?

-Even without that, I'll go with you. Whether it's the end or whatever, I'll be with you till the very end. Is that enough now?

-.....

Mok Gyeong-un gave no answer to Cheong-ryeong's words.

Then, sensing Jin Ye-rin approaching, he turned his head with an expressionless face as if nothing had happened.

Seeing this, Jin Ye-rin tilted her head slightly.

She was sure he had been smiling just now.

Chapter 457 – Supreme (4)

In the inner formation, the green meadow had long since disappeared.

The place was nothing but ruins.

“Haa... Haa...”

Wicked Granny Cheol Su-ryeon exhaled roughly, glaring at the two avatars of Mok Gan opposing her.

Those damnable things, each having consumed either the blood or essence of a spirit beast, had cultivation levels equal to or greater than her own.

If she were facing just one, she might have had a chance, but dealing with two opponents of similar strength was overwhelming.

“Cough! Cough!”

Her internal injuries must be severe, as blood came up with each cough.

Cheol Su-ryeon looked at the black blood on her palm with a bitter smile.

‘Is this karma too?’

She never thought the evil deeds she had committed would easily disappear just because she practiced cultivation.

But now, her only desire was to shed all her burdens and go to His side, yet this happened when she was so close to the end.

‘…Maybe it’s punishment.’

Perhaps she never had the right from the beginning.

Maybe fate was punishing her because she didn’t deserve to go to that place, said to be like a paradise, just like Him and them.

Still, there was one thing she felt she had done right.

She had saved His only remaining bloodline in the mortal world.

At least it was a comfort that she had done something for Him before departing.

Grrrr!

Cheol Su-ryeon gathered the remaining true qi in both hands to create a faint Formless Claw.

After all, she had once been called a great villain, so she intended to take them both down with her, even if it meant mutual destruction.

But then, the avatars of Mok Gan spoke.

“Give up.”

“You can’t defeat us.”

“I don’t know what you did, but open the door to exit the formation.”

“This is the last verbal warning.”

Cheol Su-ryeon snorted at their words and replied.

“You want to get out of here?”

“It’s the only way to save your life.”

“Oh really? But what can I do? This space he created for me is a bit of a shame, but it seems this should become your grave.”

“You’re making a decision you’ll regret.”

“It doesn’t matter. Let’s start by cutting off your limbs.”

Wooong!

With that, the two avatars of Mok Gan also raised their Invisible Swords and approached.

It seems they didn't have high hopes from the beginning either.

Meanwhile, one wall completely collapsed, and the pillar supporting the formation was destroyed. The painting of the Peach Blossom Spring hanging on the crumbling thatched wall began to shake violently.

Bang! Kwakwakwabang!

As the three supreme experts clashed, the surroundings were once again engulfed in the aftermath.

Tremendous wind pressure and sword energy slashed in all directions, erasing even the last traces of the meadow.

However, this didn't seem like it would last long.

Unlike them, whose true qi was overflowing as if they had consumed spirit essence, Cheol Su-ryeon was almost at her limit.

The reason she was barely holding on was that she was consuming her spirit origin true qi.

Knowing this, they pushed even harder.

Chachachachacha!

Cheol Su-ryeon's expression darkened as she was pushed back.

She had intended to take them down with her, but the coordinated attacks of these avatars, who shared thoughts, were too meticulous to find an opening.

As she was pushed back relentlessly, numerous sword wounds appeared on her body.

Chwachwachwachwachwach!

‘Ah...’

It seems she won’t be able to take them both down after all.

If that’s the case, there’s no choice.

A strong killing intent flashed in her eyes.

It would be difficult, but if she sacrificed her flesh to take the bones, she could at least take one of them down.

Flinch!

Noticing her tremendous killing intent, they exchanged glances and immediately moved to cut off both her arms before she could do anything.

Grind!

Cheol Su-ryeon gritted her teeth.

Enduring the pain of her arms being cut off, she bit the neck of the left avatar, intending to tear off its head.

Just as their Invisible Swords were about to rush towards her arms...

At that very moment.

Chwak!

Suddenly, with a bloody radiance, a burst of blood demon qi exploded, severing the arm of one of the avatars wielding a Invisible Sword.

‘What is this?’

But that wasn’t the end.

The being that cut off the avatar’s arm grabbed the back of its head, smashed its face into the ground, and dragged it forward, grinding its face.

Kwaaaang! Kwakwakwakwakwakwang!

“Who?”

As the other avatar was startled and tried to respond...

Shwaaaa!

‘What?’

A whirlwind of frost engulfed the avatar’s entire body, and an immense cold qi arose, causing the arm holding the Invisible Sword to freeze at an incredible speed.

Feeling the sensation in its arm disappear in an instant, Mok Gan's avatar hurriedly cut off its freezing arm like a lizard shedding its tail.

Pat!

And as it spread its body...

“Where do you think you’re going?”

Shiver!

It suddenly felt someone behind it.

Cold sweat dripped down the forehead of Mok Gan's avatar as it sensed the tremendous cold qi and power from behind.

What the hell is this?

When did such monstrous beings appear?

While caught in confusion, Cheol Su-ryeon looked at those who had instantly reversed the situation with reddened eyes.

A peerlessly beautiful woman with blood-red hair fluttering, exuding an arrogant and sharp aura, shook off the brain matter that had been ground into paste from her hand and spoke.

“Even the great Wicked Granny is finished. Getting caught up by such lowlifes when told not to kill.”

Agreeing with her mocking words, a woman with silver hair and a mysterious aura responded with a radiant smile.

“I know, right? This is why she can’t compete with us and sister for the top spot in the rankings.”

Jjeojeojeojeojeok!

As she lightly waved one hand, a blizzard was about to sweep through the surroundings.

While their appearance was welcome, what brought tears to her eyes was the being who appeared next, backlit by dazzling sunlight.

From the moment he appeared, strange things began to happen.

Parurururu!

The swords held by Mok Gan’s avatars began to tremble and move on their own, without any flow of true qi.

The reason Jin Ye-rin called for Mok Gyeong-un was none other than because of Ghost Blade.

After Mok Gyeong-un defeated Mok Gan’s avatar and the situation calmed down, she had checked on him out of concern, as he was the most severely injured.

As feared, Ghost Blade’s condition was truly the worst.

His right arm was severed, his abdomen and shoulder were pierced through with severe bleeding, and of course, his internal injuries were also severe, with his internal organs filled with blood.

It was remarkable that he was even alive.

Ghost Blade, who could have died at any moment, didn't try to circulate his qi to increase his chances of survival, but instead sought out Mok Gyeong-un.

It seemed he wanted to say something with his last bit of strength rather than hope for survival.

As they were approaching him with Mok Gyeong-un, it happened.

“Stop.”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Jin Ye-rin instinctively halted her steps, and then...

Papapapapak!

Stone swords, sharpened like thorns, shot up from the ground where they were about to walk.

If they had taken one more step, the swords would have pierced right through their feet.

Realizing there was an enemy who could completely conceal their energy, Jin Ye-rin hurriedly sent sword energy towards the ground with a sword technique.

Chwachwachwachwachwach!

The sword energy she sent burrowed into the ground, but there was no response.

However,

Bang!

As Mok Gyeong-un stomped on the ground with true step...

Kwadududuk! Kung! Kung! Kung!

The stone swords blocking their path shattered, and the sound of something bursting from the ground echoed.

Then, something erupted from the ground.

That something was none other than...

“Kuuu.”

It was Destruction Emperor, one of the first-tier members of Secret Society, spitting out black blood.

Though he had been severely injured and seemingly dead inside the formation, he had not missed the moment when Mok Gan’s avatars broke through the formation and escaped outside.

After getting out, Destruction Emperor had been recovering his demonic power and energy underground.

Then, when Mok Gan’s avatar was defeated, he attempted to attack from underground to somehow interfere with Mok Gyeong-un.

However, Mok Gyeong-un’s power had already increased beyond what it was before.

Unable to withstand the vibrations that shook the entire underground with a single true step, Destruction Emperor ultimately had to surface.

Pak!

Though in agony and coughing blood, Destruction Emperor, who had sprung up from behind Ghost Blade, grabbed his neck and shouted.

Kkwak!

“Don’t move! If you come closer, I’ll twist his neck.”

“Which do you think will be faster? That, or my sword?”

“Huh? Such overconfiden—”

Puk!

‘!?’

In that instant, a sword mark appeared on the Destruction Emperor’s forehead, and blood and brain matter burst from the back of his head.

Destruction Emperor staggered and was about to fall backward.

Seeing this, Jin Ye-rin couldn’t help but stick out her tongue in amazement.

‘When... did he do that?’

Even though she was right beside him, she hadn’t seen Mok Gyeong-un’s sword.

It was truly the essence of swift swordsmanship.

It seemed he had now entered a realm that she could no longer even hope to glimpse.

A speed so fast that even the act of swinging the sword couldn't be perceived...

Indeed, unless it was a monster like Imaemangyang, could anyone in the current martial arts world face Mok Gyeong-un?

Seureuk!

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un's form suddenly appeared behind Destruction Emperor, whose head had been pierced and was falling.

He should already be dead, so why did he move his body so quickly?

As she wondered this, Mok Gyeong-un...

Kwajik!

...stomped on Destruction Emperor's face, crushing it completely.

Jin Ye-rin frowned and said,

“He’s dead. Why are you doing that?”

“He’s not dead.”

“What?”

She was about to ask what he meant when a strange sight caught her eye.

Destruction Emperor's body was trying to move even though his face had been caved in and crushed, and the crushed flesh was rising up, regenerating at an incredible speed.

Seeing this, she realized.

‘Could it be?’

Had he consumed the blood or essence of a spirit beast?

As she thought this, Mok Gyeong-un grabbed Destruction Emperor's head rather than his face, which was trying to regenerate.

And then,

Shuuuuu!

He unleashed the Ritual of Binding.

“Kuuu.”

Destruction Emperor's body convulsed violently.

Those who have consumed the essence or blood of spirit beasts overflow with natural earth energy, giving them vitality incomparable to ordinary people.

Therefore, the only way was to make them exhaust this vitality.

One method for this was absorption.

Although energy was now meaningless to him since he had learned to handle Supreme Sword, Mok Gyeong-un sucked in the demonic power and natural earth energy inside the creature.

Shuuuuu!

The demonic power could be used to help Cheong-ryeong recover.

But as he absorbed the natural earth energy inside the creature, unlike with Kang Yeom, this time he felt the energy of the earth, that is, earth qi.

Along with this, he saw a being in his mind's eye.

‘Ah!’

Surprisingly, it was a massive white serpent with dazzlingly white scales.

Chapter 458 – Supreme (5)

‘This is...’

In his mind's eye, he saw a massive white serpent with smooth, snow-white scales.

It bore a resemblance to the dragons of legend and fantasy.

Its appearance was so majestic that it nearly took his breath away.

However, if there was one difference between this serpent and a dragon, it was that its horns were shorter than expected.

Compared to its enormous body, the horns seemed to be just barely growing.

As he was pondering this, he saw a figure wearing a bamboo hat approaching the white serpent.

This person was holding a sword that seemed to have been burned black, and the moment the serpent saw the sword, it roared as if having a seizure.

Kwooooooooooo!

The tremendous roar created shockwaves that sent the bamboo-hatted figure flying backward.

However, the figure quickly regained their footing and once again launched towards the serpent, initiating a battle between them.

Every time the serpent moved its body, it caused earthquakes and landslides, as if it were a natural disaster.

Kwang-kwakwakwakwang!

The fight between the serpent and the bamboo-hatted figure was devastating the surroundings.

However, their battle didn't last very long.

This was because the blackened sword held by the bamboo-hatted figure managed to cut through the serpent's scales.

Kwaaaaaaaaaaaa!

As the large scales were cut away and the sword pierced its body, the serpent writhed in agony.

Not missing this moment, the bamboo-hatted figure leapt onto the serpent's head where its horns were and drove down a qi strike that created massive shockwaves.

Paaaaaaaang!

Hit by the qi strike, the serpent staggered and fell.

Kuuuung!

Its body was so long and massive that when it fell, the surrounding area shook.

After the serpent collapsed, the bamboo-hatted figure climbed down from its head and began examining the area below its chest, touching it gently.

As they did so, someone approached.

It was Destruction Emperor, one of the first-tier members of Secret Society.

As Destruction Emperor approached, the bamboo-hatted figure shook their head and spoke with a tone of disappointment.

[I had my doubts, but the spirit origin hasn't properly formed yet.]

[Even though it's this large?]

To this question, the bamboo-hatted figure held up the blackened sword and said:

[It's the leader and considered the most auspicious of the five spirit beasts. When this serpent fully matures, it will become a dragon and then transcend the natural order.]

[Natural order? What do you mean?]

[For humans, you can think of it as similar to the concept of ascending to immortality.]

[Ascending to immortality!]

Destruction Emperor couldn't hide his surprise at these words.

Then, looking puzzled, he asked:

[So, does that mean that before this serpent was born, the original serpent had already become a dragon and ascended?]

[It could have. But it didn't.]

[What do you mean it didn't?]

[Do you know what happens when a spirit beast becomes corrupted?]

[...What happens?]

[Unlike the Imaemangyang born from yin energy, spirit beasts are born from the condensation of natural earth energy, so they can be considered the essence of immortality itself. However, if they become corrupted, they lean towards the opposite nature – that of demons or evil.]

[So you're saying the predecessor of this serpent became corrupted?]

To this question, the bamboo-hatted figure chuckled and replied:

[That's right. It became thoroughly corrupted. It even tried to exterminate the human race.]

[Huh...]

[Even if the Human-Demon War isn't recorded in official histories, it's not such ancient past for you lot. But you, being born into the imperial family, seem to know nothing about it.]

[How could I? When I was young, that damned imperial father of mine erased all records related to the martial arts world. But come to think of it, that sword... Didn't you say it was made from dragon scales? Don't tell me that dragon was...]

[Yes. It's from the scales of the dead dragon.]

At these words from the bamboo-hatted figure, a flash of greed appeared in Destruction Emperor's eyes as he looked at the sword.

Noticing this, the bamboo-hatted figure put the sword into a special scabbard and said:

[Don't even think about it. If it's not compatible, you'll only be possessed by its demonic nature.]

At these words, Destruction Emperor clicked his tongue in disappointment.

Then, approaching the fallen serpent and touching its horns, Destruction Emperor asked:

[So what are you going to do? Didn't you promise to give me the serpent's spirit origin? If it's still a young serpent...]

[We'll have to make do with this. Well, even this much should be more than enough for your pursuit of immortality.]

Puk!

As soon as those words were spoken, the bamboo-hatted figure thrust their arm into the serpent's chest.

As they were about to extract the spirit origin from inside,

Kwooooooooooo!

At that moment, the serpent's eyes snapped open and it let out a roar.

With that, Destruction Emperor and the bamboo-hatted figure, who were nearby, were sent flying backward.

As they were thrown back, the roaring serpent burrowed into the ground and disappeared.

Destruction Emperor, who had hit the wall, ran towards the hole the serpent had dug as soon as he regained his senses.

[Damn it!]

How could it have awakened in such a short moment?

As he stood there in shock, the bamboo-hatted figure called out to him.

[It's fine.]

[What do you mean it's fine? Do you know how many people we mobilized just to find that one serpent...]

[This is enough.]

[What do you mean this is enou— Ah!]

Destruction Emperor's eyes widened as he turned his head.

It was because he saw what appeared to be a fragment of the spirit origin in the bamboo-hatted figure's hand.

The bamboo-hatted figure pointed to a large piece of the serpent's scale that had fallen to the ground and said:

[We got what we needed.]

[But letting it escape...]

[Too much of a good thing, human. If you really need it, aim for when the serpent has fully matured. After all, spirit beasts don't stray far from where they were born.]

At this advice from the bamboo-hatted figure, Destruction Emperor looked at the hole in the ground with regret.

As their figures gradually blurred, Mok Gyeong-un emerged from his vision.

The vision had lasted only a moment, and when he came back to his senses, he could see Destruction Emperor, who had become emaciated like a skeleton.

“Kuuu... I... I...”

Shuuuuuu!

Destruction Emperor tried to say something as he was dying, but eventually his head dropped.

Mok Gyeong-un stomped on Destruction Emperor's head once more.

Kwajik!

There was no response from the crushed head.

Due to the Ritual of Binding absorbing all the energy of the serpent's spirit origin, his body could no longer regenerate.

After confirming that he was completely dead, Mok Gyeong-un hurriedly approached Ghost Blade.

He checked his pulse.

Jin Ye-rin, who had approached after Destruction Emperor died, asked:

“Is he alright?”

Mok Gyeong-un shook his head in response.

If there had been even a little vital energy left, Mok Gyeong-un would have tried to infuse some of the absorbed spirit origin energy or use magic to heal his wounds.

However, all of this was only possible if there was at least a little vital energy remaining.

He had already exhausted all his energy fighting Mok Gan's avatar and was now in a state just before drawing his last breath.

‘...’

It didn't matter if he died.

But there were still things Mok Gyeong-un needed to hear, so he tried to infuse some of the absorbed spirit origin energy to extend his life a little, even though it was like pouring water into a broken pot.

Then,

“Don’t... Don’t waste... your effort...”

“Accept the energy. There’s still more I need to hear.”

“Chun... Chunchu... Cough, cough.”

Ghost Blade, gasping for breath, desperately searched for his daughter.

Aware that his life was ending soon, he seemed to want to see his flesh and blood one last time.

The old Mok Gyeong-un wouldn’t have cared at all about this.

However, having deepened his connection with Cheong-ryeong and come to understand emotion, he asked Jin Ye-rin:

“Can you bring someone named Chunchu from outside the bamboo grove?”

“Chunchu?”

“It’s his daughter.”

“Ah... Alright.”

Jin Ye-rin nodded and immediately flew towards the outside of the bamboo grove.

For now, there weren't many people's energies felt outside the bamboo grove anymore.

Although there had been concerns since Mok Gan's avatar had directly descended, it seemed that the subordinates outside hadn't been touched.

Perhaps worried about the forbidden technique falling into his hands, they had entered the bamboo grove directly.

Meanwhile, Ghost Blade waved his hand with unfocused eyes.

-He's already at his limit.

As Cheong-ryeong said, judging by the faded color of his eyes, it seemed he would soon breathe his last.

Feeling urgent, Mok Gyeong-un was about to ask something, but Ghost Blade spoke first.

“I... I won't ask you... to save... Young Master... Bi-yong-heon...”

“What are you talking about? More importantly, grandfather...”

Mok Gyeong-un tried to hear what he wanted from him, but Ghost Blade continued what he was saying, ignoring that.

“He... He... with his remaining self... left the truth of the past... Cough, cough. To the current Society Leader... Bi Jung-seon... Society Leader... did his best... to correct... everything... that was twisted...”

“I'm not interested in that...”

Pak!

Ghost Blade tightly grasped Mok Gyeong-un's hand.

And with tears of blood, he spoke with difficulty:

“They... They... were only... deceived... by his... schemes... Please... Please... free them... from him...”

Even though he could barely breathe, Ghost Blade was using all his strength.

To convey his wishes.

Sensing that his end was near, Mok Gyeong-un infused spirit origin energy into Ghost Blade's hand and said:

“The secret of Moon Vein that can persuade Incarnate. Just tell me what that means. Cut out all the unnecessary talk and hurry!”

Shuuuuuu!

As he infused the energy, it was leaking out.

It was like pouring water into a broken pot.

Mok Gyeong-un tightly grasped Ghost Blade's weakening hand and urged:

“Ghost Blade!”

“Ryu... So-wol and you... You are... fated...”

His voice trailed off with a wheezing sound.

Realizing this wouldn't work, Mok Gyeong-un began forming hand seals to perform a spell.

Pak! Pak! Pak!

‘Reverse Eight Divine Generals Technique’

It was a type of magic that uses the Eight Human Talismans to control spirits.

He was intentionally trying to turn him into a vengeful spirit before his soul completely scattered to heaven and earth.

It was at that moment.

“Noooooooo!”

Someone came running with a heart-wrenching cry.

It was Chunchu, one of the first-tier members of Secret Society.

Her body covered in blood, she ran over and pushed aside Mok Gyeong-un, who was forming the hand seals for the Reverse Eight Divine Generals Technique, and embraced Ghost Blade.

Chunchu, with tears streaming down her face, cried out:

“No. Please... Please... Ah...”

Seuk!

Ghost Blade placed his hand on Chunchu's back.

Her tear-filled eyes trembled.

“Please...”

For a full hundred years, not once... not once had she properly called him, so how could he leave like this?

Chunchu tightly embraced Ghost Blade and said with a choked voice:

“Fa... ther.”

As her voice rang in his ears, a faint smile appeared on Ghost Blade's face, which had been growing cold and stiff.

And with that, he rested his head on Chunchu's shoulder.

Chunchu held back her breath and sobbed in that position.

Seuk!

Watching them, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been gathering magical power, lowered his hands that were forming the seals.

-Why... Why did you stop?

To Cheong-ryeong's question, Mok Gyeong-un replied with a soft exhale:

-Because he can't become a vengeful spirit now.

Chapter 459 – Approaching Omens (1)

The Reverse Eight Divine Generals Technique.

It's a type of magic that uses the Eight Human Talismans to control spirits.

If used well, this technique can artificially create a vengeful spirit through sorcery before the soul completely scatters to heaven and earth.

However, there's a major prerequisite for this to work.

It requires instilling a strong grudge before death.

There was a good chance it could have worked.

Ghost Blade had the conditions to become a vengeful spirit due to his strong loyalty and anger towards Mok Gan, but at the last moment, his daughter Chunchu's words instantly dissolved all of that.

This was evident from his peaceful expression as he breathed his last.

“Why... did you stop?”

To Cheong-ryeong's question, Mok Gyeong-un replied with a soft exhale:

“Because he can't become a vengeful spirit now.”

‘…You’ve changed a lot, mortal.’

Cheong-ryeong felt strange at Mok Gyeong-un’s answer.

He used to be someone who couldn’t feel any emotion other than anger, even more so than herself, a vengeful spirit.

But now he was somewhat responsive to others’ emotions.

The old him would have cut Chunchu’s throat to draw out Ghost Blade’s anger for his own purposes.

However, now he let him go.

The emotionless one was gradually becoming more human.

However,

[“The secret of Moon Vein that can persuade Incarnate. Just tell me what that means. Cut out all the unnecessary talk and hurry!”]

[“Ryu… So-wol and you… You are… fated…”]

What on earth did this mean?

Those last words left by Ghost Blade kept swirling in her mind.

Having been with Mok Gyeong-un for a long time, she had shared most of his experiences.

Because of this, unlike her feelings for Mok Gyeong-un, her doubts about his origins were growing.

The unknown being inside him, as well as the Incarnate mentioned in Fire Faith Order's prophecy.

And,

[“You... Have you really... lost your core... and become... human?”]

[“Did you hear that from Ghost Blade?”]

[“Becoming human... Human... Kekek. I really hate it. I really hate you. No, I loathe you. A being expelled from its clan, degrading itself to become human. I can see your detestable intentions.”]

What did Mok Gan mean by those words?

He spoke as if Mok Gyeong-un had been a non-human entity that became human.

Her thoughts were becoming increasingly complex.

At first, she thought it was just a coincidence.

But at some point, she realized that Mok Gyeong-un's path and her own were becoming increasingly intertwined.

What was going on?

Although she kept denying it, saying it couldn't possibly be true, someone kept coming to mind.

She was aware that he, too, was no ordinary being.

But due to death, she had become a vengeful spirit without knowing anything about him.

[“Ryu... So-wol and you... You are... fated...”]

Could it be that what Ghost Blade tried to say at the end was...

Just then,

“Young Master Mok.”

Jin Ye-rin called out to Mok Gyeong-un, who had been staring at the dead Ghost Blade and the sobbing Chunchu holding him, in a small voice.

As he turned his head, he saw that her face was flushed red.

Judging by her moist eyes, it seemed she had shed tears watching this father and daughter.

She, too, having lost her father, felt sympathy for their shared pain.

“Ahem. In the end, did you hear nothing from him?”

Jin Ye-rin asked in a whisper, clearing her throat as if choked up.

Mok Gyeong-un shook his head at her question.

He hadn't been able to hear the few things he really wanted to ask about.

At Mok Gyeong-un's response, Jin Ye-rin spoke in a troubled voice.

“The outcome isn’t good. Even though we prevented the Forbidden Technique from falling into their hands by defeating Mok Gan’s avatar, we still don’t know where his main body is...”

“What did you just say?”

“Pardon?”

“Before mentioning his main body.”

“I said we prevented the Forbidden Technique from falling into their hands.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un furrowed his brow and then asked:

“Did the Wicked Granny have the Forbidden Technique memorized in addition to the secret book she gave me?”

“…That’s right.”

Because she had been captured by them, the Wicked Granny revealed the Forbidden Technique to save her from them.

And she ultimately sacrificed herself for her.

Seeming to be overcome with emotion again, Jin Ye-rin spoke with reddened eyes:

“But one avatar here was killed by you, and the other two avatars were trapped when Cheol Su-ryeon destroyed the formation, so ultimately, Mok Gan’s main body...”

“No. They share consciousness.”

“What?”

Tuk tuk!

Mok Gyeong-un tapped his head with his finger as he replied.

“They share memories with the avatars. As a result, the Forbidden Technique has fallen into the hands of Mok Gan’s main body.”

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue as he said this.

But it was hard to blame anyone for this.

If he hadn’t been dragged into the bamboo scroll of the Eight Trigrams, he might not have reached the level of Extreme Sword and the Supreme Sword until now, which could have been dangerous.

In the end, it was a case of gaining one thing and losing another.

The only fortunate thing was that all the enemy had obtained was the spell formula of the Forbidden Technique.

‘Thankfully, Cheong-ryeong and Wi So-yeon are on our side.’

If even one of them had been in the enemy’s hands, it would have been troublesome, but since he had also retrieved Wi So-yeon, who held Cheong-ryeong’s soul, there shouldn’t be any problems with the Forbidden Technique.

Unaware of this, Jin Ye-rin spoke in bewilderment:

“Then we have no time to waste.”

“No, but still...”

“Didn’t you see what I sent through Dam Baek-ha?”

“Dam Baek-ha?”

“Ah, I see you didn’t. If the Forbidden Technique has fallen into the hands of Mok Gan, the leader of Secret Society, they will bring about a day of catastrophe incomparable to last time.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un asked with curiosity:

“What does the Forbidden Technique have to do with the catastrophe?”

The reason Mok Gan wanted to obtain the Forbidden Technique was because of Bi-yong-heon of Heaven Vein, the will of the body he occupied.

Wasn’t he forcibly holding onto Cheong-ryeong’s soul, preventing her from properly reincarnating, out of an endless madness to have her in his possession?

As if to answer his doubts, Jin Ye-rin drew a picture on the ground with sharp energy.

Seuk seuk seuk!

What she drew was a map of the entire Central Plains.

Wondering why she was drawing this, he saw her mark five spots around the edges of the Central Plains map.

One in the north, one each in the northeast and northwest, and one each in the southeast and southwest.

Finally, she inscribed what looked like a spell formula between these points.

‘!?’

The moment he saw it, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes lit up with recognition.

‘This is...’

He had seen this spell formula before, though he wasn’t sure exactly where.

During the second test at the Corpse Blood Valley of the Heaven and Earth Society, he had faced a berserk Imaemangyang beast called Gal-jeo while trying to capture a flag.

Afterwards, he had also discovered a spell to make Imaemangyang go berserk in the magic books and research notes possessed by another Three-Eyes, Jo Tae-cheong, and it was almost identical to this.

However, there was one problem with this spell: it excessively increased the yin energy in the atmosphere to amplify their killing nature, resulting in an unimaginably large consumption of magical power.

And once all the magical power was exhausted, the berserk state would end.

‘To perform a spell on such an enormous scale would require an unimaginable amount of magical power. Is it realistically possible to secure enough magical power to perform this?’

The scale of the spell was far too large.

A spell that could cover the entire Central Plains was beyond imagination.

At this scale, it might only be possible if numerous magical tools imbued with magical power and thousands, no, tens of thousands of diviners exhausted all their magical power and vital energy.

As he thought this, he noticed Jin Ye-rin making special markings at a few places between the completed spell formation.

One was not far from the Sichuan Tang Clan, and another was pointing exactly at the Heaven and Earth Society.

What could these be indicating?

Mok Gyeong-un asked:

“What are those?”

“I’m not sure. It was written that the Forbidden Technique is needed at these four points.”

“The Forbidden Technique is needed here?”

The Heaven and Earth Society was where Wi So-yeon was, so that made sense.

But he had no idea what the other three places were.

There was no apparent pattern, and they were scattered in different locations.

“Is that all?”

“Ah! Come to think of it, below the places where it said the Forbidden Technique was needed, it was written ‘Six Demons’.”

‘!!!!’

At these words, one of Mok Gyeong-un's eyebrows shot up.

Cheong-ryeong spoke to him in a meaningful voice:

“Mortal... Don't you remember what happened at the Heaven and Earth Society? The Assassin King of the Sea, one of the Six Demons, is there.”

Among the monsters known as Imaemangyang, there exists a hierarchy.

This hierarchy is divided into Ferocious Beasts, Strange Beasts, Wicked Beasts, Demonic Beasts, and Spirit Beasts.

Among these, the highest rank is called Spirit Beast, and among them, there are six Spirit Beasts that are infinitely close to being Divine Beasts.

The Imaemangyang refer to these as the Six Demons or the Six Demon Kings.

Each of these Six Demons was considered a disaster in itself.

And sealed in the hidden vault of the Corpse Blood Valley at the Heaven and Earth Society was one of these Six Demons, the Assassin King of the Sea, The Restraining Badger.

At the same time.

A cliff so steep that looking down made one feel as if gazing into an endless abyss.

Not far from the cliff, outside a wall, countless corpses of Imaemangyang overflowed, and among them stood a muscular young man, covered in green and black blood, struggling to stay on his feet.

“Haa... Haa...”

The young man was Yoo Moo-jin, a member of the Yoo clan guarding this place.

The Imaemangyang, who had momentarily paused out of fear at the sight of him catching his breath in exhaustion, were now slowly approaching again.

‘…There are so many.’

Together with his father, Yoo Moo-jeok, they had killed nearly a thousand, no, several thousand of them.

Despite killing so many, an uncountable number of Imaemangyang were still endlessly pouring in, to the point where even he, who rarely tired, was struggling.

Just then, a tremendous roar came from behind.

Kwaaang! Kwaaang!

With each roar, the earth shook as if an earthquake had struck.

Yoo Moo-jin’s face grew worried as he glanced back.

His father, who had been holding back the Imaemangyang rushing towards the entrance of the formation, had hurriedly headed towards the source of that being’s roar coming from behind.

‘It’s too fast.’

It hadn’t been long since his father had subdued that being, yet it had awakened again.

The frequency was now becoming worrisome.

Normally, it wouldn’t be a concern, but his father was also quite exhausted from fighting this enormous number of Imaemangyang alongside him.

Kwaaaang!

Kwoooooo!

Just then, along with the thunderous sound, the roar of that being reached all the way here.

At this, the Imaemangyang who had been stationary suddenly let out roars as if inspired by that being’s tremendous cry, and charged forward like soldiers with raised morale.

Kwoooo!

Kekekekeke!

Kakakakaka!

Faced with the oncoming Imaemangyang whose spirits had been revived, Yoo Moo-jin turned the dial on the Force Suppressing Bracelet on his right arm.

Kiririririk!

Shuuuuu!

As he turned it completely, white steam emerged from Yoo Moo-jin's entire body, which began to turn black.

Though exhausted, if he couldn't stop these creatures, the place his clan had been guarding would be exposed.

Yoo Moo-jin clenched his fist, about to swing it.

But then,

Wook!

“Kuk.”

Had he pushed himself too hard?

A terrible pain surged through his heart, which hadn't fully healed, causing Yoo Moo-jin to clutch his chest and stagger.

Not missing this moment, the higher-ranked Diabolic Beasts and Demonic Beasts among the Imaemangyang simultaneously attacked Yoo Moo-jin.

Kwoooooo!

Kaaaaaaa!

‘Damn it!’

Yoo Moo-jin swung his fist towards them, barely enduring the pain in his heart.

As Yoo Moo-jin swung his fist, an tremendous wind pressure arose, enveloping the charging Wicked Beasts and Demonic Beasts simultaneously.

Kwakwakwakwang!

Just when it seemed he had repelled them, one Demonic Beast burst through the dust and debris, grabbed Yoo Moo-jin, and frantically charged towards the mountain wall.

Kwarurururu!

“Kuuuuk!”

Yoo Moo-jin, smashed into the mountain wall, continued to be pushed back even as he collided with it.

Meanwhile, a black silhouette darted towards the entrance of the formation that had been left open as Yoo Moo-jin was pushed back.

“Huu... Huu...”

Yoo Moo-jeok, drenched in sweat, held a pointed wooden pillar inscribed with red sutras as he caught his breath, looking down at the abyss-like cliff below.

Kurururururu!

‘This is bad.’

Whether due to lack of strength, the blue light visible at the bottom of the cliff wasn't weakening, but growing stronger.

At this rate, the worst-case scenario might really unfold.

Kwak!

“Huu.”

As he took a deep breath, Yoo Moo-jeok's body began to glow black, and steam-like substance started to rise from his entire body.

Having gathered his strength, Yoo Moo-jeok threw the wooden pillar inscribed with red sutras towards the bottom of the cliff.

Paaaaang!

The wooden pillar pierced through layers of air.

Strong ripples formed wherever it passed.

But before it could become a mere speck,

Kwooooooooo!

The blue light flickered strongly, a roar echoed out, and in response, a gale-like wind pressure surged up from the cliff along with shockwaves.

With this, the wooden pillar disintegrated before it could even reach its target.

Passsss!

‘Oh no!’

Yoo Moo-jeok’s expression hardened.

At this rate, the seal on this being might really break.

Just then,

“It seems that even the Yoo clan, being human after all, can’t stand against sheer numbers. There’s no winning against quantity, it seems.”

Flinch!

Yoo Moo-jeok quickly turned his head at the voice from behind.

About ten paces in front of him stood a figure wearing a bamboo hat, hands behind their back.

Even though he was exhausted from depleting his physical strength, how could someone approach this close without him noticing?

This was surprising, but suddenly his son Yoo Moo-jin flashed through his mind.

‘Moo-jin.’

Could it be that the boy had fallen?

Sreung!

As he stood there in shock, the bamboo-hatted figure drew the sword at their waist and approached with a sneer.

“You’ve worked hard all this time, so shall we now release the Great Strength King?”

Chapter 460 – Approaching Omens (2)

Great Yan Temple[1] of the Esoteric Buddhism[2] [known for] true words[3], in Datong[4], northern Shanxi Province.

Behind the temple stood a large, towering peak, surrounded by over a hundred Vajra warriors of the Esoteric Buddhism chanting sutras while holding vajras.

The solemn chanting echoed throughout the mountainside, bringing peace to the minds and bodies of those who heard it. However, the Vajra warriors chanting looked unwell.

Their complexions were poor, with dark circles under their eyes, all looking extremely fatigued as if they hadn’t slept for a long time.

“Om somani somani hum harihanna harihanna hum harihanna banaya hum anaya hok baam bara hum batak.”

Nevertheless, they chanted the sutra without rest.

In the midst of this, one Vajra warrior broke out in a cold sweat, and then,

“Puh!”

Black blood spurted from his mouth like a fountain.

The blood gushed out in such quantities that it seemed he might die from excessive bleeding just from what came out of his mouth.

Alarmed, the nearby Vajra warriors were about to stop chanting, when,

“Kal!”

An old monk standing behind them, holding a rosary, let out a shout.

The Vajra warriors hesitated for a moment, then sat back down and resumed chanting the sutra.

“Om somani somani hum harihanna harihanna hum harihanna banaya hum anaya hok baam bara hum batak.”

Meanwhile, the old monk hurriedly ran to the monk who was spewing blood.

“Kek kek kek!”

The condition of the Vajra warrior who kept vomiting blood was truly at its worst.

As if all the fluids in his body were draining out, he was rapidly becoming emaciated, and black blood vessels were rising to the surface of his exposed skin, making him look hideous.

The old monk sat behind the Vajra warrior, placed a vajra against him, and summoned the power of the Buddha’s way.

“Kuuuuu.”

The Vajra warrior convulsed as if in agony.

Despite this, the old monk didn't stop and continued to push in the power of the Buddha's way.

At that moment,

Hwaaaa!

A black, ominous haze rose from the mouth of the Vajra warrior who had been spewing blood.

Then,

Dududuk!

The Vajra warrior grabbed his own neck and twisted it backwards.

Kung!

The old monk's expression darkened at the sight of the Vajra warrior falling with his neck broken.

Even the power of the Buddha's way, accumulated over many years, couldn't overcome the evil energy that had penetrated the Vajra warrior.

But this wasn't the end.

“Kek... Kek...”

Pusuk!

Once again, another Vajra warrior lifted his head and spewed black blood from his mouth.

The old monk was about to get up and run to the Vajra warrior, when,

Pusuk!

Pusuk!

Pusuk!

All around, Vajra warriors lifted their heads and spewed black blood.

The old monk's expression hardened at the sight of them.

The bodies of the convulsing Vajra warriors were wasting away at an alarming rate.

When just one Vajra warrior had been spewing blood, everyone had endured at the old monk's shout, but now with over ten of them spewing blood,

“Hiek!”

“R-Run away!”

“We're all going to die!”

Some of the Vajra warriors who had gone into convulsions cried out, pale-faced, and frantically tried to escape.

“Stop!”

Even the old monk's shout couldn't stop them.

The grotesque deaths of the Vajra warriors had caused a rift, and nearly half of them, unable to contain their fear, threw away their vajras and fled.

“This can’t be! If we stop here, everything will have been for nothing.”

The old monk shouted, infusing his voice with true qi, then walked in front of the Vajra warriors surrounding the peak, clasped his hands together, and loudly chanted the Demon-Subduing True Words.

“Om somani somani hum harihanna harihanna hum harihanna banaya hum anaya hok baam bara hum batak.”

As the old monk chanted, a golden light of Buddhist power flowed from his body.

The profound Buddhist energy seemed to calm the other Vajra warriors who had been trying to flee in fear. They sat back down in their places and followed the old monk in chanting the Demon-Subduing True Words.

It seemed as though the chanting was stabilizing again.

Just then,

“Kek!”

The old monk who had been chanting grabbed his own throat.

Then, as if in agony, he fell to his knees and began to convulse violently, his face turning red.

“Master!”

Two Vajra warriors from the front row rushed to support him.

However, the old monk, writhing in pain, pushed them away.

As the Vajra warriors tried to grab him again,

“Kweeeek!”

The old monk vomited, but it wasn’t black blood – it was strangely shaped worms.

“W-What on earth?”

The Vajra warriors, shocked at the sight of the bizarre worms, stepped back, at a loss for what to do.

What kind of ominous sign was this?

Was this evil so potent that even an old monk who had accumulated decades of Buddhist practice couldn’t withstand it?

As soon as the Vajra warriors’ chanting stopped,

“Kek!”

Pusuk! Pusuk! Pusuk!

Once again, Vajra warriors all around began lifting their heads and spewing black blood like fountains.

The fear and terror that had momentarily subsided gripped the crowd again in an instant.

“I-I don’t want to die!”

“Uwaaaaaa!!!”

Screaming, Vajra warriors tried to flee from all directions.

However, unlike those who had escaped earlier, the Vajra warriors who stood up from their seats couldn’t lift their feet from the ground, as if their legs were held in place.

“W-What is this...”

“I can’t lift my feet.”

“Hiek!”

As they struggled to lift their feet, something even more terrifying happened.

Kwaduk!

Those trying to lift their feet had their legs torn off.

“Kyaaaa!”

“M-My legs!”

The Vajra warriors whose legs had been torn off fell to the ground, screaming in agony.

But then, their bodies began to stick to the ground, as if being absorbed.

“Urk!”

“M-My body...”

As they were absorbed, their skin tore and they began to be sucked into the ground.

The sight was truly horrific.

Skin and muscles twisted, bones broke – it was almost unbearable to watch.

The Vajra warriors near the old monk who had vomited the bizarre worms dropped their vajras and trembled in fear at this horrific scene.

Seumul seumul!

Before their eyes, they saw the enormous amount of blood shed by the Vajra warriors moving on its own, flowing up towards the peak.

The large quantity of blood that had flowed up was absorbed into the peak.

Kurururu!

The peak began to shake violently as if hit by an earthquake, and cracks started to form.

The eyes of the old monk, who had been suffering while vomiting worms, widened as if they would tear.

This was because his eyes met the chilling gaze visible through the widening cracks.

“Keuggggg.”

Paaang!

With that, the old monk's body suddenly swelled up and then burst.

And he wasn't the only one.

The same happened to the two Vajra warriors trembling in fear nearby.

Their bodies also swelled up and then burst.

Seureureureuk!

The blood that flowed from their bodies also mixed with the flowing blood and was absorbed into the peak.

Jeobeok jeobeok!

Amidst this tragic scene, a figure walked through the blood.

This figure wearing a bamboo hat was forming a hand seal with one hand, and in the other, held a gruesome ritual tool made of interwoven skulls.

The bamboo-hatted figure, appearing with this ritual tool, spoke while looking at the enormous being inside the crumbling peak.

“The time has come to spread those white wings again. White Phoenix Demon King[5].”

In a cave beneath a deep cliff in Pan'an, Zhejiang Province.

Entering the cave, one would find a large cavern studded with countless luminous pearls, like stars in the night sky.

And beneath this cavern, numerous formations were densely engraved.

In the center of the formations, there existed something enormous.

This massive being, occupying nearly half of the huge cavern that was almost a hundred jang in size, had a golden mane, a tiger-like head, and a tail that seemed to be woven from hundreds of blades.

Krurururu.

Its appearance was exactly like that of a lion.

Horrifyingly, the entire body of this enormous lion was pierced by hundreds of hooks, and the chains connecting these hooks were densely embedded in the cavern walls.

Upon closer inspection, one could see that red letters, appearing to be spells, were engraved on the chains as well.

These were,

Kurururu!

If the giant lion tried to move even a little,

Uuuung!

The hooks and chains engraved with red letters would simultaneously pull, threatening to tear apart the lion's limbs, no, its entire body.

The pain was so intense that this enormous lion couldn't move an inch.

One peculiar thing about this lion was that it had no eyes.

Rather than being naturally eyeless, it seemed they had been forcibly removed, leaving sunken holes.

Kung kung?

At some point, this giant lion began to sniff and flare its nostrils, then tried to raise its crouched body, enduring even the hooks constricting it, with intense hostility.

As the lion tried to raise its body,

Kurururururu!

The entire cavern began to shake and tremble.

It felt as if it might collapse at any moment, but as soon as the formations densely engraved on the floor activated, the vibrations were absorbed and disappeared.

At this moment, someone wearing a bamboo hat walked towards the lion, hands behind their back.

The lion's face twitched, and then,

Kwoooooo!

It let out a tremendous roar that seemed like it could burst eardrums.

The roar caused a storm-like gale to sweep through the cavern, but the bamboo-hatted figure, seemingly unconcerned, approached right up to the lion's nose.

Then, stopping in front of it, the bamboo-hatted figure spoke.

“Will you follow me if I give you new eyes? Or will you follow me if I give you another chance for revenge? Lion-Grasping King[6].”

The Imperial Palace in Kaifeng, Henan Province.

In one of the most splendid quarters of a noble consort in the inner palace.

Jjeojeok!

The delicate white hand holding a teacup cracked and shattered.

“Your Highness!”

As the shattered teacup pieces fell, the pretty court lady beside her exclaimed in surprise and hurriedly helped the noble consort shake off the remaining pieces in her hand.

Then, looking outside, she called out loudly.

“Is anyone there? Quickly...”

Seuk!

However, the court lady had to stop at a raised hand gesture.

The court lady spoke in a troubled voice.

“Noble Consort, we must call for a physician immediately. Your hand must have been cut by the sharp...”

Her eyes widened.

This was because the noble consort’s hand, which she had assumed would surely be cut, was perfectly fine.

Even she had been slightly cut while brushing off the pieces from the consort’s hand just moments ago. What could this mean?

As she wondered, she saw the corners of the noble consort’s mouth turn up.

The court lady couldn’t help but let out a gasp at the sight of the smile from Noble Consort Ho, the most beautiful woman in the imperial palace, worthy of being called a beauty that could topple a nation.

“Ah!”

Regardless, Noble Consort Ho stood up.

Deolkeong deolkeong!

She then approached the shaking window and opened it.

The night sky, without a single cloud, was perfectly clear, but the cold wind blowing strongly like a whirlwind was strangely ominous.

As she stretched out her hand to feel this wind with her fingertips, Noble Consort Ho muttered.

“The stench of blood will soon fill the world.”