

Mayhem 461

Chapter 461 – Approaching Omens (3)

A dark hall.

The surroundings were in complete disarray.

Someone approached the figure in the shadows, who was barely containing their anger in front of the pulverized stone throne, and knelt on one knee in respect.

He was a man with long hair and prominent red lips, wearing a pristine white uniform.

The man could barely breathe due to the heavy aura filling the entire hall from his lord's anger.

Eventually, after steadying his breath, the man spoke with a tense expression.

"Lord Mok Gan. All measures have been taken as you instructed."

"..."

At these words, Mok Gan stared at the man for a moment before waving his hand.

As if by magic, the ominous aura heavily pressing down on the hall dissipated.

Finding it much easier to breathe, the long-haired man quietly let out a sigh of relief.

Then, he cautiously began to speak.

"However, there is one problem."

“What is it?”

“We’ve lost all our brothers in the Heaven and Earth Society. We need to retrieve and release what you personally sealed there, but to do so, we’d need to send in new brothers...”

At that moment, Mok Gan cut him off.

“Have you already forgotten?”

“Pardon?”

“We haven’t lost everything.”

At these words, the red-lipped man’s eyes widened.

Come to think of it, there was one card he had forgotten about.

The single card they had kept in reserve for emergencies, even after mobilizing all their other resources.

[From today on, Jung-sun, you too are a member of our family.]

[Yes, elder...]

[Ahem.]

[Yes, father.]

[Good.]

[But father... who is that behind you?]

Behind the elder—no, father's legs, I could see part of a face, or rather, just the eyes of a child peeking out.

The child was so pretty that it was clearly a girl.

Is this child to be my little sister?

I couldn't help but smile a little.

But then father forcefully pulled the girl out from behind him and said:

[This child is your older brother.]

'!?'

Older brother?

What does he mean?

No matter how I looked at it, it was clearly a girl.

I couldn't understand why he was calling this child my older brother.

And when father first came to find me, he had clearly said:

-You have excellent qualities. I'd like you to become our family's eldest son.

-M-Me, become your son, sir?

-Yes.

So, I was fortunate enough to be adopted into one of the most prestigious families in the association.

But why is he telling me to call this girl my older brother?

I thought the family had no male heirs, which is why they were accepting me?

As I was trying to understand, the girl who had been shyly hiding behind father reluctantly approached me under his pressure and held out her hand, saying:

[L-Let's get along from now on.]

I reluctantly took her hand and greeted her.

[Nice to meet you, older brother.]

Perhaps our relationship was already skewed from that moment.

Five years passed since then.

During this time, I learned many things.

Originally, I was destined to be accepted as the eldest son, as father had said.

However, due to the last wishes of the late Madam, that damned brat is playing the role of the older brother with that ridiculous appearance.

A mere girl has stolen my position.

But I couldn't express these complaints.

No matter how absurd this was, that girl truly carried the family's bloodline, while I, despite being brought in to continue the lineage, was merely an adopted son.

There was only one thing I could do.

Prove that I was far superior to this girl in terms of qualifications.

However,

[Excellent.]

The one receiving praise from father was not me, but that girl.

I thought, how great could a mere girl's qualifications be? But she was unbelievably outstanding.

Even though I had been accepted for my excellent qualities, this was a monster.

She was so clever that the saying "hear one, understand ten" wasn't an exaggeration—when taught one thing, she understood ten.

Because of this, at some point, father began to habitually say this while looking back and forth between me and the girl in the training ground:

[What a pity. Such a shame.]

Damn it.

What's a pity?

That the qualities of the adopted son they brought in are lower than this girl's?

Or is it regret that this girl with such outstanding qualities isn't a son?

Whatever it was, I was filled with rage.

But I never showed it.

I'm just an adopted son, so to survive here, I must never do anything to make myself disliked.

Two more years passed.

Despite my blood, sweat, and tears, the gap in our qualities still hadn't narrowed.

At this rate, there were even whispers that this girl might receive the title of the most outstanding Five Peaks within the association in just a few years.

'Damn it.'

I don't understand.

I train longer than that brat, even cutting back on sleep to circulate my qi, so why can't I catch up?

Could it be that father is paying more attention to her?

I knew he wasn't that kind of person, but I couldn't help but suspect it.

'Sigh.'

Could they really be planning to give the successor position to this girl who can't even continue the family line?

If that's the case, I might really want to kill her.

While I was anxious day by day, this girl wasn't.

Tak!

As I turned my head at the touch on my shoulder, a finger poked my cheek.

It was that wretched girl.

Annoyingly playful, she asked with a big grin:

[Got you again. Hahaha. What are you doing?]

[What... what would I be doing?]

[You were staring so intently at my room, I thought you might be angry with me or something.]

[A-Angry?]

[Am I wrong?]

[How could that be? I'm your right-hand man, aren't I? I'll support you in maintaining the family. So don't worry.]

[...]

At my words, the girl's expression became subtle.

Could it be that she doesn't trust me?

As I wondered this, the girl suddenly hugged me tightly and said with a smile:

[That's right. My little brother. Thank you.]

This hateful wench.

My little brother? ... Is she showing off just because she was born about 3 years earlier?

The more she does this, the more I hate this girl.

To the point where I really want to kill her.

A few days passed like this.

Suddenly, father called us.

With an unusually solemn face, father said:

[Both of you, go to the Corpse Blood Valley.]

[What?]

I was dumbfounded at these words.

Isn't the Corpse Blood Valley a place where only those from minor sects or those seeking fame go at the risk of their lives?

Why is he telling us to go to such a place?

[It's for the long-cherished wish of our association. The descendants of the other Five Kings have all agreed to participate, so you two should also take the lead and join.]

Damn it.

I thought that by becoming an adopted son of the family, I wouldn't have to go to the Corpse Blood Valley.

But now they're telling everyone to go there?

Isn't this too much?

But the girl calmly replied:

[I'll keep that in mind.]

And as soon as we left father's study, she turned to me with a bright smile and said:

[Don't worry, little brother. I'll protect you.]

Kwak!

At her words, I was once again filled with rage.

I could barely stand the thought of going there, and yet this girl acts nonchalant and even tries to encourage me?

Damn it. Who are you to make me feel so pathetic?

You really make me feel so small.

In the end, I was sent to the Corpse Blood Valley at the mere age of fifteen.

The first challenge was the iron ball competition.

[Huff huff... Brother...]

[Take it.]

[But isn't this what you found?]

[You go on ahead. I can find another one quickly.]

[Brother...]

Damn brat.

Does she think I can't even pass this kind of test, so she's giving me what she found?

How little must she think of me to do something like this?

I sincerely wished for this girl to die.

But in the end, not only did she find another iron ball as she said, but she also beat down everyone who came at her and even obtained a prize.

The second challenge was the flag battle.

I deliberately avoided being in the same team as her.

I didn't want to be with someone who made me feel so pathetic while calling me "little brother" and such.

While searching for flags, I was unexpectedly ambushed by a group from minor sects.

[If we get rid of you, passing the next test will be easy.]

I prided myself on being unbeatable among my peers, but I couldn't handle a combined attack from six people.

Each of them wasn't much individually, but why did I have to suffer like this at the hands of such people?

In the end, I fled to save my life while fighting them.

Then, while precariously using qinggong on a cliff, I fell into the ravine below.

Kurururu!

[Aaaaah!]

Is this better than dying at the hands of such people?

But I didn't die.

Splash!

Luckily, I fell into a pool of water and survived.

But something felt strange.

Although the cliff ravine was dark, I wasn't scared of such things, yet my whole body was trembling with goosebumps.

As I looked around, I was shocked.

'W-What is this?'

There were countless bones scattered about, and judging by the clothes they wore, they seemed to be from students who had entered the Corpse Blood Valley.

What on earth is this place?

Seized by an ominous feeling due to the countless bone fragments, I fearfully tried to quickly climb back up the cliff.

But I fell back down due to some unknown force.

And as I was being dragged by something,

‘Huh?’

That something was a strange person with a terribly burned face and no eyes.

Terrified, I tried my best to escape, but it was useless.

This strange person was a monster.

[It’s impressive that you survived, but unfortunately, you’ve seen this place, so I’ll have to kill you.]

Kwak!

[Kek kek.]

You’re going to kill me just for seeing this?

It feels unfair somehow.

If I had known I would die so meaninglessly like this, I should have just done what I wanted.

It’s so frustrating to die without accomplishing anything, always being cautious about being an adopted son.

If I had killed that girl when I had the chance, would it have been a little better?

Just then, a voice was heard from somewhere.

[Wait.]

[What? How?]

At the voice's command, the burned being loosened its grip on my throat.

Then I saw someone approaching.

Flinch!

Surprisingly, it was a being with an eye on its forehead.

This bizarre being looked at me with an evil smile and said:

[You, you have an interesting desire.]

'!?'

This was the turning point of my fate and my first encounter with Him.

Thanks to Him, I obtained everything I wanted.

Not only the position of the family's successor but also the title of one of the Five Tigers, the highest Five Peaks in the association.

It seemed like everything would continue to go as I wished.

I thought that as long as I followed Him, who protected me, everything would go according to plan.

However, now a crisis has come to that.

Although it was just an avatar, even with His intervention, everything has gone awry.

There are no more allies left in here.

It could be said to be the worst situation, as all of His subordinates who existed within the association have been killed off.

‘What should I do about this?’

As he said, I didn’t participate in the war under the pretext of closed-door training.

But because of that, I’ve become suspicious.

Even if my father understood, the Shadow Clan was demanding an investigation because I didn’t respond to the Society Leader’s summons.

I was pondering how to handle this situation.

Then my eyes caught sight of insects swarming under a tree.

Thinking “Could it be?”, I approached the spot, and the corners of my mouth twitched before curling up into a sinister smile.

As expected, he had made all the arrangements.

Around the hour of the Ox (1-3 AM) in the dark dawn.

A group was stealthily moving towards the location of the hidden vault near the Corpse Blood Valley.

There were about twenty masked individuals.

They were all experts, a small elite force whose footsteps were barely audible.

After the internal conflict of the Heaven and Earth Society, they were short on manpower, so the Corpse Blood Valley Master and the remaining forces had all entered the inner city, making it easy for this group to move.

Seuseuseuk!

The group reached the cliff peak in front of the hidden vault and stopped there.

The imposing bamboo-hatted figure at the lead spoke in a low voice to the person beside him.

“Are you sure that’s what he promised?”

“Didn’t you see His power yourself, father? he will protect us.”

“...I understand. Five of you stay here to guard, the rest follow me.”

Pat!

With a hand gesture, he took the lead and climbed the cliff.

Despite his imposing physique, he nimbly scaled the cliff and entered the hidden vault.

Once inside, he ordered ten people to guard the entrance and its vicinity, then climbed to the third floor of the vault.

He had been told that it would be in a small cave in the corner of the third floor.

They soon discovered a small cave marked with a red line.

“It’s there.”

They entered the small cave marked with a red line and began searching for ‘it’.

However, after searching for a while, they noticed something strange.

They were told it would be here, so why wasn’t it?

Puzzled, the imposing bamboo-hatted figure asked the person next to him:

“Wasn’t it supposed to be here?”

The bamboo-hatted person beside him also seemed confused, tilting his head as he replied:

“This can’t be right. he clearly said it would be here...”

-Why would it be there?

Flinch!

At that moment, they all turned their heads towards a voice coming from outside the small cave.

‘!?’

But there was nothing visible there.

The bamboo-hatted figure slightly lifted his hat, narrowing his eyes as he scanned the surroundings.

If someone were there, it would be impossible for them to deceive his sense of qi, being one of the Five Kings and Eight Stars of the association.

But something felt off.

‘What is this?’

There was clearly nothing visible, yet he sensed a strange energy stimulating his qi sense.

Unable to find the right words to describe it, he felt goosebumps rising – it was similar to ghostly energy.

Just then, the person next to the bamboo-hatted figure suddenly showed a bewildered expression.

“What’s wrong?”

Tak!

Despite his question, the person next to the bamboo-hatted figure even took a step back.

“Jung-sun!”

The bamboo-hatted figure called out the name of the person beside him and grabbed his shoulder.

Jung-sun then spoke with trembling eyes.

“...How are you here?”

‘You?’

What on earth is he talking about?

While the bamboo-hatted figure and others were puzzled, only Jung-sun’s eyes clearly saw someone’s figure.

That someone was a young girl with half of her hair turned white, her entire body wrapped in chains.

‘Gyu, Gyu So-ha?’

Chapter 462 – Karma (1)

It was invisible to everyone else’s eyes.

While the bamboo-hatted figure and others were puzzled, only Jung-sun’s eyes clearly saw someone’s figure.

That someone was a young girl with half of her hair turned white, her entire body wrapped in chains.

‘Gyu, Gyu So-ha?’

Gyu So-ha.

She is a spirit servant belonging to Mok Gyeong-un, who has reached Blue Spirit rank.

How did she, who always refers to herself as “this young master” or as a man, arrive here before them?

And why is she in the state of a vengeful spirit instead of possessing someone?

This was due to an instruction from Mok Gyeong-un.

Just a few hours earlier, around sunset.

Gyu So-ha, possessing the body of Seo Hye-in, the leader of the Four Peaks faction under Jang Neung-ak, the second disciple of the Society Leader, was leading a force of hundreds of experts and escorting Go Chan, who was possessed by Wi So-yeon, back to the society.

They would have arrived sooner, but their return was delayed due to several encounters with Secret Society’s trackers and having to avoid them.

However, they were now only a few hours away from arriving.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un’s thoughts were transmitted into her mind.

-Gyu So-ha. Where are you now?

-Master!

-Are you at the society?

-No. We had to take a detour because they were following us, so it took some time.

-I see. Then it would be difficult.

-Pardon?

-They are targeting the Assassin King of the Sea sealed in the hidden vault of the Corpse Blood Valley.
The wooden box...

-Master! We're not far now. We should arrive at the association in less than half a day. So I can retrieve the wooden box...

-No, this is urgent. Leave it to Ma-seung, you focus on your current mission.

-Master? Master!

No matter how much she called, Mok Gyeong-un didn't respond.

Gyu So-ha was feeling dejected when, coincidentally, as they approached the society, they found another force waiting for them.

It was none other than the force led by Lee Ji-yeom, the master of the Corpse Blood Valley.

[Oh?]

[Is that Seo Hye-in, leader of the Four Peaks faction? Our lord sent us. From now on, I will command the escort team.]

The meticulous Mok Gyeong-un had sent Lee Ji-yeom in advance as a precaution.

Thanks to their appearance, she thought it was fortunate and left things to Lee Ji-yeom, then separated from the body and returned first in her vengeful spirit state.

‘H-How?’

Gyu Jung-sun, one of the Five Tigers, the highest-ranked Five Peaks of the Heaven and Earth Society, and the grand leader of the Spear Demon Group.

He couldn’t hide his bewilderment at the sight of Gyu So-ha flickering before his eyes.

The memory from that time was still vivid, as if it had happened just yesterday.

He was rejoicing in his hidden talent awakening after being chosen by Him, when he heard someone’s voice calling for him from somewhere.

[Jung-sun! Jung-sun! Where are you? Answer if you’re alive!]

It was that girl’s voice.

Could she have come down to this ravine to look for him?

Just as he was starting to feel strange, His voice echoed in his ears.

[Your chance has come.]

With that, the subtle emotion that had momentarily gripped Jung-sun disappeared, and his heart filled with murderous intent.

Seized by such intense killing intent, he secretly approached Gyu So-ha from behind and struck the back of her head with a sharp rock.

Puk!

[Ack!]

Gyu So-ha turned her head, gasping for breath.

She was looking at him with eyes filled with both shock and disappointment.

[Y-You... How...]

Don't look at me with those eyes.

This is all your fault.

Puk!

[Ack!]

Jung-sun brought the rock down on her face as she glared at him.

Seeing her suffer with her eyes sunken in, Jung-sun's mouth stretched into a wide grin.

Feeling her pain brought him such joy that he felt ecstatic.

[S-Stop.]

[You damn brat. What do you mean stop? Everything will be solved if you just die.]

[You... You...]

[Every time you acted superior, pretending to sympathize while having everything...]

[I... I... didn't...]

[You were just born before me, that's all.]

With those words, Jung-sun frantically brought the rock down on her face.

At first, she screamed in pain, but by the time her face was almost completely crushed, she could no longer make any sound.

Finally, the damn girl was dead.

Even after confirming that Gyu So-ha had breathed her last, he continued to strike her face, unable to quell his anger.

But now, what was happening?

Seumul seumul!

The figure flickering before his eyes now, with half-white hair and body wrapped in chains, was undoubtedly Gyu So-ha.

Although the whitened hair and chains looked bizarre, what bewildered Jung-sun more was seeing the dead girl flickering before his eyes.

'W-What on earth is this?'

This chilling, hair-raising ghostly energy that gave him goosebumps.

Could she have become a vengeful ghost after death?

As he unconsciously took a step back, his father, the Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin, grabbed his shoulder and asked:

"What's wrong?"

"Can't you see it?"

"See what? What are you talking about?"

"What?"

As he questioned back, even the family retainers beside them were showing reactions as if they couldn't understand what was happening.

"Young Master?"

"What on earth is wrong with you?"

Could it be that they can't see that thing in front of them?

That Gyu So-ha thing is glaring at him as if it's going to kill him, and they can't see it?

Then, his father, the Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin, pointed to where the ghostly energy was felt and asked:

“Do you mean over there? What exactly do you see?”

“T-That...”

Jung-sun couldn't bring himself to answer.

How could he say that Gyu So-ha, whom he had killed with his own hands, was visible right in front of him?

“Huu.”

Seemingly deciding this wouldn't do, the Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin approached where the ghostly energy was felt and aimed his personal weapon, the famous spear Han-wi, which he wore on his back.

Then, concentrating true qi at the spear tip and imbuing it with sword energy, he thrust it forward.

Puk!

At the moment he thrust the spear,

Seureuk!

Gyu So-ha leaped backward, avoiding the attack.

She had distanced herself because even a vengeful spirit in ethereal form could be somewhat harmed by the qi of an outstanding internal martial arts master.

However, because of this,

'She dodged?'

Jung-sun, who had been momentarily gripped by fear thinking it was a vengeful ghost, came to his senses.

Why would a dead vengeful ghost dodge an attack?

Could it be that this isn't what I think it is?

Seuk!

Jung-sun reached for the spear on his back.

Although he didn't know how it had appeared before him again, it was clear that it had appeared with malice towards him.

The fortunate thing was that no one else could see it.

'Whether it's a vengeful ghost or whatever, I need to deal with it.'

His father, the Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin, only knew that Gyu So-ha had died in an unfortunate accident during the Corpse Blood Valley test.

Thanks to that, he had naturally been able to become the young master.

He didn't know why such a thing had appeared now, but he couldn't let it become a unnecessary disturbance.

He had been momentarily shocked and confused, thinking the dead girl had appeared, but he was no longer his former self.

Now, he was one of the Five Tigers, the highest-ranked Five Peaks, and a supreme expert who had reached the pinnacle-stage of the transcendent realm, gazing beyond the wall.

Moreover, if he used the technique that he had passed down, he could exert even greater power.

Because of this, none of the Five Tigers could match him.

Judging by that youthful appearance, she doesn't seem any different from before, but are you trying to take revenge on me now?

'Hmph!'

If physical attacks work, I'll kill you again.

Just as Jung-sun was about to launch himself towards Gyu So-ha,

Gyu So-ha extended her palm towards him and muttered incomprehensible words.

-Ghost Intent Domain. Chain Immortal Prison.

Pat!

What's this?

At that moment,

Chwarurururururu! Papapapat!

Suddenly, chains began to burst out and surge up from the perfectly normal floor.

Jung-sun, who had been about to attack Gyu So-ha, was startled by the chains surging up from the floor and used a movement technique to avoid them.

Chwarurururu!

Nevertheless, the surging chains, as if alive, rushed towards him.

In response, Jung-sun unleashed a powerful spear technique to block the chains.

Chaechaechaechaechaeng!

Has this damn girl learned some kind of sorcery?

He couldn't understand what was happening.

As he continued to block the chains, Jung-sun, feeling a sense of crisis from the continuously advancing chains, hurriedly shouted:

"Father! Please help—!?"

At that moment, Jung-sun's pupils shook.

The figures of his father and the three retainers were nowhere to be seen.

As he wondered where they had disappeared to, he saw chains, incomparably more numerous than before, rushing towards him like hundreds of snakes swarming in.

'...Damn it.'

There were so many that he was at a loss for how to block them all.

However, Jung-sun's worry didn't last long.

This was because, while watching the oncoming chains, he became certain of one thing.

There was no way such a large quantity of chains could exist in the hidden vault of the Corpse Blood Valley.

Which meant this must surely be an illusion.

'You're trying to deceive my eyes, but do you think I'll fall for it so easily?'

Pakang!

Jung-sun fixed the shaft of his spear to the ground and closed his eyes.

Then he concentrated on his sense of qi.

'This is fake. Fake.'

It's merely deceiving his sight and other five senses.

If it's just an illusion, it absolutely cannot harm him.

Yes, absolutely...

Chwarururururu!

He felt numerous chains wrapping around his body.

At this, Jung-sun circulated his true qi throughout his body while repeating to himself:

‘It’s an illusion. It’s an illusion. It’s an illusion. If I concentrate...’

But then,

Kkwaaaak!

As hundreds of chains, not just one, wrapped around his body and tightened, he couldn’t help but scream in pain.

“Kuuuup!”

What on earth is this?

He had closed his eyes and tried to convince himself that nothing was there.

But the sensation of chains constricting his body felt too real.

Because of this, Jung-sun finally unleashed his anti-shock energy throughout his body, trying somehow to shake off the chains wrapping around him.

However,

Kkwaaaak!

“Kyak!”

The chains tightened even more strongly, making him feel like his body was about to burst.

He had definitely raised his power to the ten-star level, so how could mere illusory chains have an even stronger constricting force?

Then, a voice reached his ears.

-Does this look like an illusion to you?

“Huh?”

Surprised, Jung-sun tilted his head back and shouted:

“Y-You, what exactly are you? Why do you have that girl’s appearance...”

-That girl? Judging by your tone, I can tell how you thought of me.

“You...”

Jung-sun’s expression distorted.

This familiar intonation and way of speaking.

Even though more than 15 years had passed, it was impossible for it to be erased from his mind.

“...It can’t be. You’re dead.”

-Yet here I am in front of you.

With those words, Gyu So-ha made a gesture of slightly clenching her hand.

At that, the chains wrapping around Jung-sun tightened even more.

Kkwaaaaaak!

“Kek kek!”

The pressure was so strong that Jung-sun’s face trembled, and blood spurted from his mouth.

Despite his suffering appearance, Gyu So-ha showed no sign of satisfaction.

This was because she hadn’t yet bestowed upon him the proper pain.

-To be in such pain from just this much. How pathetic.

“Kek kek. You... you bitch! You’re... fake. Gyu... So-ha is... dead.”

Even in his pain, he tried his best not to make any verbal mistakes, thinking his father and the retainers might be watching.

But then,

-Yes, I died. So I’m here to let you taste the pain I experienced after death.

“What?”

-You coveted what I had, right? Then you should share the pain too.

Tak!

As Gyu So-ha snapped her fingers, everything around them darkened.

Then suddenly, the surroundings changed.

It had clearly been the hidden vault, but now it had transformed into the bottom of a cliff ravine.

The moment he saw this place, Jung-sun's pupils shook violently.

'This is...'

That place.

The bottom of the cliff ravine in the Corpse Blood Valley.

The place he called "solitude".

And also the place where he had killed Gyu So-ha.

What on earth is going on?

"You... What the hell did you do? How did you bring me to this place?"

Jung-sun's shout echoed all around.

"What? W-Where did you go?"

Gyu So-ha, who had been right beside him until just a moment ago, was nowhere to be seen.

Where on earth did she disappear to?

As he wondered about this,

Seumul seumul!

At that moment, something unbelievable happened.

Bizarre things with terrifying forms began to appear before his eyes from all directions.

These things, with not a single normal aspect to them, were literally vengeful spirits, vengeful ghosts.

Even though he had reached the transcendent realm, he couldn't help but feel a chill run down his spine at the sight of these terrible things swarming towards him.

Startled by the appearance of these approaching beings, he tried to undo the chains, but,

Kkwak!

"Kuuuu."

The chains constricting his body didn't budge an inch.

In the midst of this, unfortunately, as he struggled to move, he ended up falling backwards.

Kung!

Having fallen, he frantically tried to somehow undo the chains.

But by then, the vengeful spirits had reached where he was.

‘Huk!’

The vengeful spirits that had reached him began to frantically cling to him and burrow into his exposed parts.

Kwaduk! Kwajjik!

Ujeok ujeok!

“Kyaaaaa! Let go! Let goooo! Don’t bite! Uwaak!”

Jung-sun frantically turned his face and twisted his body, trying to shake them off.

But the more he did so,

-Let us eat you. Let us eat you.

-Die! Die!

-Why... should we be here.

-Save us! Give us your body.

-Just die already.

They clung to him even more frantically.

As they bit his face and burrowed into his flesh, more than the physical pain, extreme emotions of terror and despair flooded his mind, tormenting him.

“Kyaaaaa!”

The torment was so severe that he felt he might go mad.

Could he really die like this?

As he thought this, suddenly he saw Gyu So-ha watching him with a chilling smile on her face.

She was genuinely happy at his suffering.

‘You... You really are trying to take revenge on me? You... how dare you... how dare you do this to me?’

Reaching the extreme of agony and rage, he finally couldn’t hold back anymore and unleashed the secret technique he had been hiding.

It was a technique called the Exploding Acupoint Skill that he had taught him, which momentarily increased all his power exponentially at the cost of depleting his vital energy.

Pachachachachacha!

His power instantly surged to more than double, causing the mass of chains that hadn’t budged an inch to shatter into pieces.

Along with this, the vengeful spirits that had been biting and clinging to him were also flung away.

Pat!

Jung-sun then launched himself and grabbed Gyu So-ha.

He roughly grasped her neck with both hands and threw her to the ground.

Kek!

“You wench! How dare you try to take revenge on me!”

-Kek kek! Stop... Stop...

“Stop? Stop? Kuhahahahaha!”

Jung-sun burst into maniacal laughter as he watched Gyu So-ha suffering.

He had thought she was a vengeful spirit, but it seems that wasn't the case.

After all, a dead person wouldn't suffer from being choked.

Jung-sun tightened his grip on Gyu So-ha's neck even more, sneering with a face twisted by madness.

“I don't know how you survived with your face crushed, but So-ha, you're really stupid.”

-Kek kek! You! You!

Gyu So-ha's face gradually turned pale as she struggled for breath.

Watching her dying appearance, Jung-sun scoffed and said:

“Why, are you frustrated? You tried so hard to get revenge, but you couldn’t even do that properly, and now you’re about to die by my hands again.”

No sooner had those words left his mouth.

Gyu So-ha, who had been suffering with a dying face, suddenly smiled.

‘!?’

She’s smiling?

At that moment.

He felt something cold and sharp against his neck.

It was a spear blade.

‘This... This is...’

And it wasn’t just any spear blade, but Han-wi[1], the famous spear that was his father Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin’s personal weapon.

Startled, he tried to lift his head, but his father’s voice, filled with killing intent, shook his heart.

“Just now... Repeat what you said.”

Chapter 463 – Karma (2)

Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin and his three retainers, who had served him for a long time, frowned at the strange scene unfolding before their eyes.

This was because Gyu Jung-sun, the family's heir, was behaving strangely all by himself.

He seemed to be attacking someone invisible, then suddenly writhed in pain as if his body was being constricted by something.

He even coughed up blood.

As they tried to help him,

"Kek kek. You... you damn girl! You're... fake. Gyu... So-ha is... dead."

'!?'

They stopped at Jung-sun's unexpected words.

What on earth was he saying?

Why was this child suddenly mentioning the dead So-ha?

"Family Head! The Young Master is still..."

"Wait... Leave him be for a moment."

At the Family Head's order, they left Jung-sun alone for a while.

But what followed was even more outrageous.

Though they couldn't see anyone, Jung-sun seemed to be conversing with someone. Later, he unleashed a bizarre evil technique, then lunged at something invisible, making a strangling gesture, before uttering shocking words:

"You wench! How dare you try to take revenge on me!"

'Revenge?'

"Stop? Stop? Kuhahahahaha!"

A laugh filled with madness.

The Family Head was left speechless at this side of Jung-sun he had never seen before.

Jung-sun's face was the very embodiment of evil.

He had always shown a gentle demeanor, even maintaining his dignity after becoming the heir.

How had he hidden such a side?

As he wondered about this,

"I don't know how you survived with your face crushed, but So-ha, you're really stupid."

'!?'

At these words, the retainers were at a loss, shocked.

They had just heard something terrible that they shouldn't have known.

What on earth was going on?

The confused retainers looked at the Family Head, but,

Osik!

The Family Head's gaze towards Jung-sun was no longer that of a father looking at his child.

Unaware of this, Jung-sun continued to speak provocatively, completely disregarding his surroundings.

"Why, are you frustrated? You tried so hard to get revenge, but you couldn't even do that properly, and now you're about to die by my hands again."

Gyu Jong-sin could no longer just watch Jung-sun.

Gyu Jong-sin aimed his personal weapon, the famous spear Han-wi, at Jung-sun's neck and asked:

"Just now... Repeat what you said."

At these words, Jung-sun's expression, which had been revealing his madness without regard for anyone until just a moment ago, froze.

Jung-sun slowly raised his head, scanned his surroundings, and couldn't hide his bewilderment.

"F-Father. Something..."

“Did you kill So-ha?”

“...”

He should have denied it immediately, but meeting the eyes of his adoptive father Gyu Jong-sin, whose face was calm but eyes burned with anger, Jung-sun was momentarily at a loss for words.

Jung-sun was at a complete loss for how to navigate this situation.

He was supposed to secure ‘that’ under His orders and then escape from the Heaven and Earth Society, but he didn’t know how to explain this.

Time was running out, and even if he tried to persuade them, would it work?

After all, he had said those things.

After considering numerous options in a split second, Jung-sun finally spoke.

“Father... This is a trap.”

“A trap?”

“I don’t know what kind of trick this is, but I seem to have fallen under some sort of evil spell. That’s why I might have said things that could be misunderstood, but it’s absolutely not true. You know, don’t you? How much I cared for... my elder sister.”

“...Didn’t you say you didn’t know how your elder sister died?”

“What?”

“It was a matter of that child’s honor, and I didn’t tell you because I was worried you’d be shocked. So how do you know about it?”

Gyu Jong-sin was one of the Five Kings of the Heaven and Earth Society.

Because of this, he had turned the Corpse Blood Valley and the Primal Killing Pavilion upside down to find out how his daughter Gyu So-ha had died.

However, because she had been killed so horribly, he had kept silent about it to Jung-sun.

‘Damn it.’

Jung-sun realized in an instant.

No matter what he said, there was no way to explain this.

There was only one option left.

‘I need to escape.’

Fortunately, he was still in the state of using the Exploding Acupoint Skill that he had taught him, so at this moment, even the Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin wouldn’t be able to easily...

Puk!

At that moment, Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin’s famous spear Han-wi pierced through his neck.

Jung-sun’s eyes widened, his mouth gaped open, and then his head drooped.

Even though his power had more than doubled due to the Exploding Acupoint Skill, he was merely an expert who had reached the peak of the transcendent realm, while Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin was one of the Eight Stars called the highest experts in the martial world and had reached the realm of Transformation.

There was no way to escape from such a person when his neck was already targeted.

As Gyu Jong-sin glared at Jung-sun who had just breathed his last, a single tear fell from one of his eyes.

‘Ah, So-ha.’

Gyu Jong-sin’s heart ached terribly.

He was overwhelmed with sadness, remembering his only daughter who had died in agony, her face crushed by none other than her adopted brother.

As he shed tears,

Seureuk!

A strange thing happened before his eyes.

Right in front of him, the dead Gyu So-ha was looking at him with a loving expression.

“You... you...”

-Father.

His dead daughter called out to him.

If not for his wife's last wish, he would have wanted to raise her as his daughter.

He wanted to raise her more beautifully than anyone else.

But he couldn't.

He even sent her to the Corpse Blood Valley, which he didn't want to, leading to her death.

Guilt and longing simultaneously enveloped his heart.

"I'm... I'm sorry. I'm truly sorry. To you... As a father, I... I only did terrible things."

Gyu So-ha shook her head at him, who was choked with anguish.

Then she smiled brightly.

It was as if she was saying she was fine.

For a moment, Gyu Jong-sin's lips trembled, his eyes reddened, and with a flushed face, he reached out towards his daughter.

But at that moment, Gyu So-ha's body brightened, and then scattered like hundreds of fireflies flying away.

"So-ha! So-ha!"

Gyu Jong-sin waved his hands towards the scattering lights and then broke down in tears.

He had hoped she would resent him, but how could she leave with such a bright smile?

Ah, So-ha. So-ha. My one and only child.

‘Family Head.’

The three retainers looked with pity at the Family Head who was overcome with sorrow and weeping.

But then,

Pak!

Suddenly, the head of Jung-sun, who had just died, exploded.

‘!?’

The retainers couldn’t hide their bewilderment at this sight.

Although his neck had been pierced, it didn’t seem like the Family Head had specifically sent true qi to his head.

What on earth was happening?

In a dark hall.

Mok Gan, the leader of Secret Society, hidden in the shadows, shook his head as if disappointed.

The Heaven and Earth Society was the first place he had intended to unleash to inflict pain on him.

The Six Demons, the pinnacle of Imaemangyang and infinitely close to divine beasts, are each a disaster and calamity in themselves.

But it seemed things hadn't gone as planned.

"Lord Mok Gan?"

The man with long hair and red lips cautiously called out, sensing his discomfort.

Just moments ago, he had been anticipating that a catastrophe would soon unfold at the Heaven and Earth Society.

Something seemed to have gone wrong.

Then Mok Gan waved his hand and said:

"We'll give up on the Assassin King of the Sea."

"What?"

"It doesn't matter. The Restraining Badger was just the vanguard anyway. Now that even that has fallen into my hands, the tide has completely turned."

The red-lipped man knew well what Mok Gan meant.

How many years had Mok Gan spent trying to obtain that?

Although it had been sealed for a long time, it was once considered the strongest Imaemangyang, unrivaled in demonic power among the Six Demons and comparable to the monstrous monkey that had transcended the natural order.

Paaaaang!

Someone was flying through the air at an incredible speed.

The one using the Sky-Traversing Void Technique[1], cutting through the air so fast it was difficult to perceive with the naked eye, was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had already awakened to the Supreme Sword, was traveling at a speed that far surpassed the level of ordinary lightness skill.

Flinch!

As he flew so quickly, Mok Gyeong-un suddenly furrowed his brow.

This was because,

‘Just now, that was?’

This sensation was unmistakable.

One of the connections linked to him had been severed.

Mok Gyeong-un had felt a similar sensation when he lost the spirit servant Wi Maeng-cheon.

This was completely different from when Cheong-ryeong's connection was severed.

'Could it be?'

Had one of the spirit servants been annihilated?

But it was quite different from that sensation, as there was almost no backlash that usually came with a severed connection.

What could this be?

As he was wondering,

Someone's thoughts were transmitted into Mok Gyeong-un's mind.

-Master.

The voice belonged to none other than the spirit servant Ma-seung.

-Ma-seung.

-The wooden box has been safely retrieved, and as you said, they came for it.

-...So what happened?

-The remaining pawns have been dealt with. However.

-However?

-Gyu So-ha resolved her grudge in the process.

-...

The severed connection wasn't due to annihilation?

Then does it mean she attained enlightenment after resolving her grudge?

This was a situation he had never experienced before, even though he had spirit servants.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes took on a subtle look as he learned this.

Then, Cheong-ryeong's voice echoed in his ear.

-What's wrong?

-Pardon?

-What happened to make you have such an expression?

Cheong-ryeong had become able to read Mok Gyeong-un's state of mind to some extent even from subtle changes in his expression.

Mok Gyeong-un didn't answer her question.

This was because an unexpected new conflict had arisen in his mind.

The place he was heading to now was where Mok Gan's main body was located.

-Mortal?

‘...’

As expected, Secret Society’s target was the Six Demons, who could be considered the pinnacle of spirit beasts.

Fortunately, they had prevented the Assassin King of the Sea sealed in the main hall of the Heaven and Earth Society, which could be considered their base, from being unsealed, but if Jin Ye-rin’s information was correct, there were still three more.

However, these three Six Demons were scattered in the northern, southwestern, and eastern parts of the Central Plains, so it was practically impossible, beyond just being rushed, to stop them in time.

Therefore, the most ideal method Mok Gyeong-un could take was only one.

‘Strike the head.’

Mok Gan, the leader of Secret Society and the source of everything.

If he could just kill him, the mastermind and root cause, all of this might naturally be resolved.

Including his and Cheong-ryeong’s revenge.

But a new worry had arisen.

What if... What if Mok Gan’s main body dies and Cheong-ryeong’s deep grudge, accumulated over a hundred years, is resolved?

Would she also unexpectedly attain enlightenment like Gyu So-ha?

For Mok Gyeong-un, who had never considered this aspect before, his mind couldn't help but become complicated.

It might be better, even just in case, to first settle Cheong-ryeong into Wi So-yeon, who held her soul, so she could reincarnate, rather than targeting Mok Gan's main body first, as he had planned to do.

However,

Kwak!

Mok Gyeong-un's fist clenched.

If he didn't deal with Mok Gan now that he knew the location of his main body, it might lead to the catastrophic outcome that he desired.

He was about to reach the location where he was, and he needed to make a decision.

Should he prioritize reviving Cheong-ryeong? Or should he prioritize eliminating him first?

As he was conflicted like this,

Flinch!

'Oh no!'

Mok Gyeong-un's gaze suddenly turned downward.

At that moment, a blindingly intense light surged up from the ground, enveloping him without giving him a chance to avoid it.

Chapter 464 – The Beginning of a Calamity (1)

In a dark forest, a campfire burned.

Jin Ye-rin, who had been sitting in front of it eating jerky to stave off hunger, looked up at the night sky.

For some unknown reason, at some point the night sky had become cloudless, and a chilling, ominous wind was blowing.

She felt that all of this was not a good sign.

Tatak tatak!

After looking at the night sky, she lowered her head and gazed at the sparking campfire.

As she watched it, her mind drifted back to a few hours ago.

A few hours earlier.

At sunset, in the bamboo forest that had been reduced to ruins.

Mok Gyeong-un, looking at the clues Jin Ye-rin had engraved on the ground, spoke:

[It's impossible to stop everything he has prepared for so long.]

Puzzled by Mok Gyeong-un's unexpected conclusion, she asked:

[...Are you saying you're giving up?]

[No. I can't do that.]

[That's a relief. If you, Young Master Mok, said you were giving up, all the sacrifices so far would have been in vain.]

[...]

[Since we don't know where Mok Gan is, shouldn't our priority be to stop those beings called the Six Demons first?]

The six leaders considered the pinnacle even among the Imaemangyang.

They were called the Six Demons.

She thought they should prioritize stopping them, since each one was said to be a calamity and disaster in itself.

However, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head at her words.

[What? Then what do you plan to do?]

[It's impossible to stop all of them due to their locations.]

[Didn't you say you weren't giving up?]

[I'll strike at Mok Gan's main body.]

[What? But Mok Gan's main body...]

[I've figured out where his main body is through the connection of his thoughts.]

'!!!!'

Jin Ye-rin couldn't hide her surprise at these words.

She knew that Mok Gyeong-un was deeply versed in magic, but had he reached the point where he could even pinpoint someone's location through their thoughts?

Just then, someone interjected into their conversation.

[Incarnate. I'll go with you.]

It was none other than Chunchu, the highest-ranking member of Secret Society.

Her eyes, which had been endlessly weeping while embracing Ghost Blade, were now filled with extreme killing intent.

It was anger towards Mok Gan, who had ultimately killed her father.

[For my father's sake, I must cut off his head.]

[Are you saying you're defecting?]

Defection.

It literally meant changing from where one originally belonged.

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, she snorted and replied:

[If that's what you were hoping for, I'm sorry, but I have no desire to belong to anyone anymore. I'm sick of being manipulated by others. So let's just call it a temporary alliance.]

[Alliance. Do as you please.]

Mok Gyeong-un accepted this, seemingly unconcerned.

After all, she was closer to an Imaemangyang than a human, and not someone who would move according to his will.

It was appropriate to cooperate just for the purpose at hand.

[If you've found out where He... no, that bastard is, I'll go with you.]

[Together?]

[Why? Do you think I'll be a hindrance?]

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged.

Her power, as the highest-ranking member of Secret Society, was practically on par with the Seven Heavens, considered the pinnacle of the current martial world, and in some sense, she could exert even greater power because she wasn't human.

Then Jin Ye-rin also stepped forward and said:

[I'll help too.]

Mok Gan, the one who had caused a great calamity, destroyed Musang Castle, and even driven her only father to his death.

And his organization, Secret Society.

She, too, could never forgive them.

But then,

[No. You won't be coming with us.]

[What did you say?]

[Exactly what I said.]

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Jin Ye-rin argued, unable to understand:

[...You say it's okay for this woman, but why not me?]

[I never said it was okay.]

[What?]

[You're free to follow, but I'm heading to where Mok Gan's main body is right now. If we don't hurry, we'll miss him.]

[If that's the case, we could ride that giant bird you command...]

[The beast Heumwon will take them back to the Heaven and Earth Society.]

[...]

The place Mok Gyeong-un pointed to was where his subordinates who had come with them were.

Seop Chun and Mong Mu-yak were both seriously injured and in poor condition.

Even though each of his followers who had come with him had reached the peak of the transcendent realm or even the Transformation realm, Mok Gyeong-un had concluded that they would be more of a hindrance in the upcoming battle, which could truly be the final confrontation.

They also knew this, so they didn't insist on following their lord at the risk of their lives, not wanting to hold Mok Gyeong-un back any further.

Looking at them, she bit her lip hard before speaking.

[I understand what you're saying, Young Master. But when even one more hand could be helpful, how can you...]

[Let me be clear. Jin Ye-rin, with your skills, you won't be of help.]

[...]

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, as cutting as a sword, she was momentarily at a loss for words.

She had reached the Profound realm beyond the wall, the same realm as the Seven Heavens who could be considered the pinnacle of the current martial world.

To say that someone like her wouldn't be of help?

It was an assessment that hurt her pride terribly, but she couldn't say anything.

This was because the memory of her being unable to even face Mok Gan's avatar and hindering her allies several times struck at her core.

Hadn't she even lost Cheol Su-ryeon because of this?

Kwak!

As she clenched her fist so tightly that her nails dug into her palm and drew blood, Mok Gyeong-un spoke coldly:

[I understand your desire for revenge, but you would only be a hindrance. If you truly want to be of help, go to the Evil Alliance in the north and prepare for the crisis that will come from the north of Shanxi Province.]

The north of Shanxi Province, Datong.

That was where there might be a clue about one of the Six Demons.

Tatak tatak!

As she recalled the events from a few hours ago while staring at the campfire, she bit her lip hard, still feeling frustrated.

She wanted to take revenge with her own hands, but she had to leave it to others.

Was she really that weak?

“Haah.”

No. To be precise, the enemy was too strong.

If she didn’t admit this, it would be nothing more than self-consolation.

All she could do was sigh.

She took out the secret manual from her bosom.

天遁 星明劍法

[Heavenly Concealed Luminous Star Sword Art]

If she had discovered and learned this earlier, would things have been different?

It was a secret manual left by her ancestors as a contingency.

It seemed to be a manual with power beyond the current Luminous Star Sword Art, but it was impossible to master it in a short time.

‘In the end, all I can do is prepare with the Evil Alliance.’

She felt self-loathing at the reality that she couldn’t lend her strength.

But she couldn’t just be disheartened by this.

Even if Mok Gyeong-un succeeded in killing Mok Gan's main body, the leader of Secret Society, there was no guarantee that another great calamity wouldn't occur, and it was also hard to rashly guarantee success.

Therefore, it was right to make even a little preparation.

She turned the pages to study the secret manual.

But then,

Hwaryuk! Tatatatata!

At that moment, the campfire flames suddenly flared up, sparks flying in all directions before the fire rapidly died down.

Her eyes shook at this sudden, strange omen.

‘What's this?’

It was a kind of sixth sense.

In the dying flames, she could only think of one person.

‘Young Master Mok?’

It happened so suddenly, without any chance to avoid it.

As Mok Gyeong-un was flying at an incredible speed, a beam of light with tremendous brightness surged up from the ground and enveloped him.

Paaaaaaaaa!

Unable to open his eyes properly due to the blinding light, Mok Gyeong-un tried to secure his vision by opening his eye power.

Seuseuseuseu!

As his eye power opened, the dazzling light faded and he gradually began to see what was in front of him.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un sensed a familiar energy in this blinding beam of light enveloping him.

This was,

‘That thing from back then?’

The feeling of the entire space becoming dull, as if submerged in a heavy liquid.

As if time itself had stopped, his entire body was moving very slowly.

This was undoubtedly the same technique that Mok Gan’s avatar, who had taken Na Yul-ryang’s body in the Heaven and Earth Society, had used.

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes sharpened.

Had he prepared this in advance, anticipating his arrival?

Just then, a voice was heard.

“You arrived earlier than expected. Incarnate.”

Time was flowing so slowly that Mok Gyeong-un couldn't turn his eyeballs, but he could guess who the owner of this voice was.

‘Mok Gan?’

But something felt off.

The manner of speaking was certainly similar, but it wasn't the same voice he had heard when following his thoughts.

As he was wondering about this, someone flew in front of Mok Gyeong-un's eyes with their hands behind their back.

‘!?’

When he saw that face, Mok Gyeong-un's pupils slowly contracted.

This was because it was an old man whose face was so covered in wrinkles that only his black pupils were visible, with no whites showing.

Of course, even so, the atmosphere was far from ordinary.

The third eye on his forehead staring directly at Mok Gyeong-un, and the smile tinged with madness, along with the tremendous aura flowing from him, were all extraordinary.

‘...An avatar.’

Mok Gyeong-un felt a chill inside.

It was clearly powerful, but this wasn't the main body in front of him.

So this was the reason why the location of the main body had been revealed so easily?

This was a prepared trap.

The old man, presumed to be Mok Gan's avatar, opened his mouth.

“How do you find the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique?”

‘Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique[1]?’

This revealed something.

Did this mean that the technique used to trap him in the Heaven and Earth Society back then wasn't complete?

Seuk!

Meanwhile, he was approaching closer.

Mok Gyeong-un, thinking that escaping should take priority over understanding the nature of the technique, tried to summon his Supreme strength.

However, the energy wouldn't gather easily.

As if he had anticipated this, Mok Gan's avatar sneered and said:

"I prepared this especially for you. It will be completely different from last time."

The completed Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique.

This was an ancient forbidden technique that required sacrificing the lives of beings possessing a thousand yin energies and a thousand yang energies.

Mok Gan had once used this technique to seal The Restraining Badger, one of the Six Demons, the Assassin King of the Sea.

It required many sacrifices and was tricky as both yin and yang energies needed to be at their peak, but it was the only technique that could completely trap Incarnate, so he had been waiting for this moment.

"Huhuhu. Then, shall we retrieve what's mine from you?"

Mok Gan's avatar slowly reached out his hand towards Mok Gyeong-un.

He seemed to have already noticed that the wooden doll in Mok Gyeong-un's chest contained Cheong-ryeong.

Seuk!

But at that very moment.

A fierce light flickered in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes as he glared at Mok Gan's avatar.

Then,

Wookshin!

“Kek!”

At that instant, Mok Gan’s avatar spat out black blood and clutched at his heart.

He was so shocked that he glared at Mok Gyeong-un with trembling eyes.

‘...This bastard, could it be?’

Chapter 465 – The Beginning of a Calamity (2)

The Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique, an ancient forbidden technique.

This was a technique that required sacrificing the lives of beings possessing a thousand yin energies and a thousand yang energies, along with thousands of intricate formations.

Not only was the preparation process for this technique so demanding, but it was also a method that fundamentally put the practitioner’s life on the line, which is why it had long since disappeared.

Mok Gan had once easily sealed The Restraining Badger, one of the Six Demons, the Assassin King of the Sea, using this technique.

Although it required many sacrifices, the terrifying aspect of this technique was that once someone was trapped, they absolutely could not escape without a complex unsealing technique.

This would be true even for Incarnate.

After all, this technique was created to trap non-human beings.

However, something completely unexpected happened.

Wookshin!

The moment he met the sharp light in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes, Mok Gan's avatar felt a pain as if his heart was being stabbed by a knife.

The eyes of Mok Gan's avatar shook wildly.

Once trapped in the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique, he should have been in a state where he absolutely could not move.

But in that state, there was only one thing that could inflict a wound on his heart as if stabbing it with a sword.

‘...Impossible. The Sword of the Mind?’

The Sword of the Mind.

It's also called the Sword Intent.

They say that in the realm of swordsmanship, the highest state is the Invisible Sword, where even true qi becomes a sword.

However, as always, there is a higher level above the highest.

It was said that if one reached a state of harmony with nature beyond the boundary of life and death, human will would transcend its limits, and one could wield a sword with thought alone.

‘It can't be... No matter... No matter how much his rate of growth transcended human limits, this bastard hadn't crossed beyond the realm of life and death. The Supreme Sword is just...!’

Suddenly, the eyes of Mok Gan's avatar widened.

This bastard wasn't following the path of immortals or harmonizing with nature, but had created his own path.

That was the Supreme Sword and the path of will.

Gulp!

His mouth went dry, and he swallowed hard.

He's truly a monstrous bastard.

Did he master the Supreme Sword, which maximizes one's own capabilities through will alone, and then even approach the Sword of the Mind by surpassing that limit?

But then, the pain of his heart being stabbed struck again.

Wookshin! Wookshin!

Pat!

Feeling that this wouldn't do, Mok Gan's avatar distanced himself from Mok Gyeong-un.

As he increased the distance, the throbbing pain in his heart subsided, and he could feel the wounded area regenerating.

Because of this, he realized one thing.

‘It’s not yet perfect.’

If it were truly the legendary Sword Intent, the sword energy that had penetrated his heart would have gone beyond intense pain to make his mind hazy, and the sword energy would have spread throughout his entire body, making it impossible to move.

However, now it only resulted in pain.

Of course, the pain was not insignificant, which is why he had to retreat.

‘Damn it.’

Mok Gan’s avatar was dumbfounded.

When he couldn’t move his body, this bastard had stepped into a realm beyond his current limits.

How could such a person exist?

Even he, who had changed bodies countless times and made the martial arts of numerous great masters his own, hadn’t been able to approach...

Wookshin!

“Kuk!”

Feeling a piercing pain in his chest, Mok Gan’s avatar distanced himself even further.

It was infuriating that even an incomplete Sword of the Mind could cause such a troublesome situation.

The goal was to retrieve Ryu So-wol's soul after sealing him with the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique.

And he had intended to make him feel unparalleled pain, but at this rate, it was difficult to even approach him.

He had managed to trap him, but now he was in a situation where he couldn't do anything.

‘What should I do?’

If it were ordinary pain, he could forcibly endure it and approach.

But the pain caused by the Sword of the Mind couldn't be endured even with such willpower, so he had no choice but to keep his distance.

In fact, he could have pushed himself since this was just an avatar.

However, he was reluctant to do so recklessly because if that bastard truly surpassed expectations and even completed the Sword of the Mind in this process, it would create an even more troublesome situation.

“You continue to block my path until the end...”

Flinch!

At that moment, the gaze of Mok Gan's avatar, who had been speaking, turned away from Mok Gyeong-un to somewhere else.

It was outside the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique.

Outside, Cheong-ryeong, who he had thought would be inside Mok Gyeong-un's bosom, was in her manifested form, extending her index finger towards the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique.

It seemed she had used the Void Suppression from the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques.

Even though it was a technique from the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques, called the supreme secret manual, the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique was an ancient forbidden technique that cut off space itself, so the Void Suppression didn't work.

However, thanks to using the Void Suppression, he realized that she was outside, not in here.

Siiik!

The corners of Mok Gan's avatar's mouth stretched into a grin.

He had thought that monstrous bastard would become a variable and hinder his retrieval of the hun, but to think such luck would occur here.

Seuk!

Mok Gan moved his body towards where Cheong-ryeong was.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un visualized stabbing Mok Gan's avatar with a sword using his strong will to stop him.

However, once the distance was increased, it no longer affected Mok Gan.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un mentally shouted to Cheong-ryeong.

‘Cheong-ryeong!’

Telling her to run away and leave him behind.

But because the connection as a spirit servant had been severed, Mok Gyeong-un's thoughts couldn't be transmitted to her.

‘Mortal.’

Cheong-ryeong was also anxious, watching Mok Gyeong-un like this.

In the split second when the beam of light enveloped him, Mok Gyeong-un had thrown the wooden doll, allowing her to escape from it.

However, in this unfortunate situation where he himself couldn't escape, her only thought was to somehow rescue Mok Gyeong-un.

So she had used the Void Suppression, but it didn't work.

‘What should I do?’

She had thought that if she could affect the space, she might be able to create a crack in this enormous formation, but if even this didn't work, how could she save the mortal?

As she was thinking this, she saw the three-eyed old man, presumed to be Mok Gan's avatar, approaching where she was.

Euddeuk!

Cheong-ryeong glared at him as he approached, raising a vengeful thought filled with killing intent.

The surroundings began to turn blood-red.

However, as she hadn't fully recovered her spirit power yet, she couldn't unleash her Ghost Intent Domain.

Mok Gan's avatar spoke to her in this state:

“So-wol. Give up now. Once trapped in the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique, he can never escape.”

-Release the mortal immediately.

“You surely know that such a demand won't work?”

-Just how far will your madness go?

“You know. If you return to my side, I won't cause you any more pain. Ah, of course, that one is a separate matter.”

Mok Gan's avatar sneered, pointing his thumb at Mok Gyeong-un.

Cheong-ryeong glared at him and said:

-You can never have me.

“No, soon I will.”

Tak!

With those words, Mok Gan's avatar lightly flicked his finger.

Uuuung!

Then, in the direction he had flicked his finger, something like an illusion began to appear.

Cheong-ryeong's expression hardened as she saw something reflected in the illusion.

This was because in the illusion, she could see countless, almost tens of thousands of people, moving in formation.

Among them, numerous flags could be seen:

Wudang Sect, Beggar's Sect, Huashan Sect, Emei Sect, Zhongnan Sect, Kongtong Sect, Diancang Sect, Qingcheng Sect, Murong Family, Zhuge Family, Huangfu Family, Jinzhou Yan Family.

In addition, flags of hundreds of small and medium-sized sects could be seen.

And at the very front, large flags were fluttering:

Righteous Alliance.

These were the Righteous Alliance, a coalition of orthodox martial arts sects.

‘This... What on earth?’

What on earth is this?

Why are so many martial artists of the Righteous Alliance moving in such formation?

As she was puzzled by this, Mok Gan's avatar laughed and said:

“Did you think I had only been working on the Heaven and Earth Society for all this time?”

-You...

“The human heart is less sturdy than you might think. It only takes a little manipulation for them to fall to desire or be consumed by madness in an instant.”

-What are you trying to do?

“They are currently marching south.”

-South?

“To defeat the new Heaven and Earth Society led by the Heavenly Demon who will harm the martial arts world and to uphold justice.”

‘!?’

At these words, Cheong-ryeong spoke as if dumbfounded:

-Harm to the martial arts world? What on earth have you schemed?

“There's no need to scheme. Rather, he brought this upon himself. Not only did he single-handedly subdue the One Hundred and Eight Arhat Formation of Shaolin and force the Sichuan Tang Clan into seclusion, but he even took control of the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary Manor led by one of the Seven Heavens. Unless they're fools, do you think the Righteous Alliance would just stand by and watch? Ah, of course, since these fools go on about justice and righteousness, I merely provided a little catalyst.”

Kwak!

Cheong-ryeong couldn't contain her anger at his words.

Indeed, it was hard to see him as Bi-yong-heon anymore.

While his madness towards her had continued for a long time, even for him, who had been the head of Heaven Vein, the Heaven and Earth Society was the foundation and a long-held dream.

The fact that he was trying to destroy such a place through the dark side showed that he had completely strayed from the being she once knew.

-...All that's left in you is madness and destruction.

At her words, Mok Gan's avatar spoke as if he didn't care at all:

“Didn't I tell you? All of this is your own doing.”

-Your own doing... You really have gone mad.

“It doesn't matter how you see it. Soon, we'll return to how things were before.”

Mok Gan's avatar, no, Mok Gan was already certain of everything.

This probably wasn't all he had prepared.

Moving the Righteous Alliance was to shake up the newly fortified Heaven and Earth Society after all his subordinates had disappeared.

If in that state, the true catastrophe he intended were to unfold...

‘!!!!’

Cheong-ryeong’s eyes shook.

She now understood his true intentions.

-...Your main body is also heading towards the Heaven and Earth Society, isn’t it?

At her words, Mok Gan’s avatar raised the corner of his mouth sinisterly, as if to say she was correct.

Seeing this, she felt as if her non-existent heart was pounding.

Kwak!

Cheong-ryeong bit her lip hard.

This madman was not only prepared to obtain her but also to thoroughly ravage the world.

Seuk!

Cheong-ryeong turned her gaze to look into Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

‘Mortal...’

In the frozen space, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes were still alive.

That’s why even he, despite setting such an enormous trap, couldn’t do anything about this guy.

Cheong-ryeong looked at Mok Gyeong-un and said in her heart:

‘...I’ll trust you.’

Pat!

Believing that they shared the same intention, as soon as Cheong-ryeong steeled her resolve in her heart, she launched her body in the opposite direction.

The direction she was heading was southeast, where the Heaven and Earth Society was located.

Watching her, Mok Gan sneered:

“Do you think I’ll let you escape?”

Seuk!

Although most of his energy was tied to the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique, to the point where the practitioner had to put his own life on the line, and even he couldn’t escape from inside, he could still do this much.

Seuk!

Mok Gan grasped a sword intent and extended it towards Cheong-ryeong.

Uuuung!

At that moment, an incredibly transparent formless sword appeared in the air and rushed towards her at tremendous speed.

Keuk!

Cheong-ryeong twisted her body and swung her pipe.

Then, a mist of blood appeared in the air, creating a whirlwind that tried to block the incoming formless sword like a shield.

However,

Puk!

As Cheong-ryeong's spirit power had not yet fully recovered, her strength was not complete.

The formless sword instantly pierced through the blood whirlwind and reached within six jang of Cheong-ryeong.

‘Got her.’

Mok Gan smiled with satisfaction.

But at that very moment,

Kwakwakwakwang!

Several explosions occurred in the air, and something blocked the formless sword.

The power of the explosions was so strong that even the formless sword couldn't easily penetrate it, and meanwhile, Cheong-ryeong was gradually moving further away.

‘Oh no!’

Then, through the explosions, someone with half-white hair fluttering appeared.

Seeing this, Mok Gan's eyes filled with rage.

That someone was none other than Chunchu, the highest-ranking member of Secret Society.

“How dare you!”

“Yeah, I dare to interfere with you, you fucking parasite-eyed bastard.”

Chapter 466 – The Beginning of a Calamity (3)

“Yeah, I dare to interfere with you, you fucking parasite-eyed bastard.”

“Huh?”

Mok Gan's expression turned cold at the coarse curse that came out of Chunchu's mouth, the former First-rank of the Secret Society.

Whether it was a avatar or not, this mere subordinate who usually couldn't even look him in the face dared to insult and interfere with him at such a crucial moment.

Swish!

Mok Gan raised his left hand.

As if they had been waiting nearby, bizarre winged Imaemangnyang revealed themselves.

Groooooar!

Just by the flowing demonic energy alone, these were at least Demonic-level Imaemangnyang.

As expected of the place where Mok Gan's real body had been, there was a considerable number of flying Imaemangnyang.

There were nearly dozens of them waiting.

It seemed he had left them behind, anticipating they might come by air.

Mok Gan sneered and said:

“Foolish one. I'll make you pay the price for betrayal.”

“Don't make me laugh. You're the one who betrayed me. Why did you take my father away from me?”

Whoosh!

As Chunchu spread both hands wide, dozens of fireballs formed as hot air spread around her.

Seeing her like this, Mok Gan clicked his tongue.

Having been a top executive of Secret Society, she should know well the group's strength and how terrifying he was. Was she really willing to risk her life just because she lost her father?

Clicking his tongue, Mok Gan soon pointed his raised left hand towards Chunchu.

As if on cue, the Imaemangnyang began firing demonic energy bullets at Chunchu, opening their mouths.

Papapapapapang!

Chunchu also launched fireballs condensed with explosive demonic energy she had created.

As the demonic energy bullets and fireballs collided, explosions that seemed to shake the surroundings erupted one after another.

Kwakwakwakwakwakwang!

‘Now!’

In that instant, Mok Gan stretched out his right hand with all his internal energy gathered.

Then the formless sword that had been stopped by the explosions finally pierced through them and flew towards Cheong-ryeong.

Since she was trapped in the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique, he would have no choice but to lose her if she got any further away.

If not now, the chance would...

Puk!

‘!?’

At that moment, Mok Gan’s expression contorted horribly.

He had thought Chunchu wouldn’t be able to intervene while blocking the Imaemangnyang, but she had flown into the trajectory and blocked the formless sword with her own body.

‘This wench, she really...!’

Was she determined to oppose him even at the cost of her life?

Of course, Mok Gan’s assumption was correct.

After stopping the formless sword that had pierced her abdomen with her body, Chunchu glanced back while grasping it with her left hand full of demonic energy.

Cheong-ryeong was gradually getting smaller and farther away.

‘Go.’

You must go there first.

That way, things won’t flow as this damned eye parasite bastard wants.

“Cough, cough.”

Although she had rapid regeneration befitting a top executive, even she couldn’t overcome the power of the formless sword, which could be called the sword’s extreme, as she coughed up blood from internal injuries.

However, her will was still intense, and the heat of her anger was burning even more fiercely.

Swish!

Kwakwakwakwakwang!

As Chunchu stretched out her hand, the halted explosions resumed, blocking the approaching Imaemangnyang.

What she had to do here was clear.

‘Even if this becomes my grave...’

She would take them all to the afterlife.

As if sensing her determination, Cheong-ryeong, who was flying away, clenched her fist tightly.

Chunchu had probably resolved herself to die.

This was likely the only path of revenge for her.

To prevent her sacrifice from being in vain, she had to arrive before Mok Gan’s real body could reach Heaven and Earth Society somehow.

‘Mortal...’

Strangely, her mind was filled with worry for Mok Gyeong-un rather than hatred.

She tried to shake it off.

She believed that if it was Mok Gyeong-un, he would surely escape the trap that bastard had prepared and come to where she was.

She drew forth even more spiritual energy and pressed forward.

Sichuan Province.

A valley that had become almost ruins after Jin Sik's barrier collapsed.

It was a horrific scene of carnage, with the corpses and blood of Imaemangnyang strewn everywhere.

At the bottom of a rock wall, a single hand was sticking out from between the shattered rocks piled up.

The hand that had been motionless as if dead began to tremble.

Then,

Shuuuuuu!

The hand turned red-hot and steam flowed out.

At that very moment,

Kwang!

The piled-up rocks shattered into pieces and flew up, revealing someone covered in wounds all over their body.

It was Yoo Moo-jin, a member of the Yoo clan.

“Haa... Haa...”

Even in a normal state, being buried under so many rocks would have been enough to cause death by crushing. But having sustained injuries on top of that, even for Yoo Moo-jin with the supreme physique of the Yoo clan, it seemed difficult as his breathing was labored.

As Yoo Moo-jin caught his breath and surveyed his surroundings, his expression grew even worse.

“Father?”

He was concerned for his father’s safety.

Pat!

Yoo Moo-jin flew his body towards the valley.

‘Damn it.’

While fighting the incoming enemies, he had a moment of crisis due to a sharp pain in his heart.

However, the pain disappeared midway and he regained consciousness to face the Imaemangnyang again. But then he encountered the worst situation he had been dreading.

Kwakwakwakwakwakwang!

A being so immense that even calling it gigantic seemed laughable, crawling up while destroying Mugan Valley, known as the deepest valley in the Central Plains.

The moment he saw this, Yoo Moo-jin experienced the emotion of fear for the first time in his life.

He knew of this being, but its actual form was beyond imagination.

Grooooooooooar!

Kwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

And the moment it revealed half its body and let out a roar, he was blown away by the shockwave that destroyed everything around and lost consciousness.

“Father! Father!”

Yoo Moo-jin shouted as he ran through the ruined cliffs.

He had never once imagined his father being defeated or killed by something.

But that being had already transcended the realm of imagination.

How could the ancestor have managed to seal such a tremendous monster in Mugan Valley?

As he thoroughly searched the surroundings, Yoo Moo-jin's eyes reddened.

Could it be that he couldn't even find the body?

Thud!

After searching for a long time without finding anything, Yoo Moo-jin finally fell to his knees on the ground, tears flowing.

Did Father really pass away without leaving even a single trace?

How could that strong father...

Flinch!

At that moment, Yoo Moo-jin's ears perked up.

The Yoo clan, born with innate supreme physiques, recover their strength and heal both internal and external injuries quickly even without special breathing techniques as time passes.

Although this had slowed down due to the injury to his heart, his physical abilities had somewhat recovered in the process of searching for his father.

As a result, his exceptional five senses also came back to life, and

-Huu... Huu...

A faint sound of breathing coming from somewhere.

It was not far away.

‘It wasn’t there before?’

Yoo Moo-jin got up and headed towards where the sound was coming from.

It was towards the cliff edge.

Since he had to follow the sound of breathing, Yoo Moo-jin jumped off the cliff without hesitation and discovered a hole in the cliff face about thirty jang down.

Pak!

Yoo Moo-jin hurled his body into the hole.

Judging by its shape, it didn’t seem to be a natural hole in the cliff, but rather one that had been artificially created.

In the dark hole, his eyes caught sight of someone’s figure.

It was his father, Yoo Moo-jeok, barely breathing with his right leg crushed and one arm torn off.

“Father!”

Yoo Moo-jin rushed to his father and examined his condition.

He was still breathing, but his father had used up all his strength, and even his muscles had contracted significantly.

“Father? Father?”

At Yoo Moo-jin’s call, Yoo Moo-jeok, unable to even open his eyes properly, spoke with difficulty.

“Must... stop... Must stop... Keureu.”

“Father!”

Yoo Moo-jin shook his unconscious father, then bit his lip hard before slinging his father over his shoulder and coming out of the hole.

Then he clung to the cliff with one hand.

‘I have to go. To that place.’

The only place that could save his father, who was barely clinging to life, was there.

He had to go there and inform them that the seal of the Great Strength King had been broken.

The main hall of Heaven and Earth Society headquarters.

Gathered there were the key figures in the victory of the internal war and the top executives under Mok Gyeong-un.

To the immediate left of the central throne, the leader's seat, were the external recruits led by Ou Cheon-mu, the master of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary and one of the Seven Heavens, along with Sword Demon Ji-oe, and Fire Faith Order Priestess. To the right were members of the Eight Stars, including Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang and Poison King Baek Saha of the Five Kings, Bright Blade King Son Yun, Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon, Defense Guardian Go Yeon-byeok, and Corpse Blood Valley Master Lee Ji-yeom.

Among the key figures, there were also those who were equivalent to or belonged to the highest ranks, such as Eight Poison Snake Staff Guyang Sa-oh, Masked Ma Ra-hyeon, excommunicated Monk Ja Geum-jeong, Seop Chun, and Mong Mu-yak, but they were not present as they were continuing their missions. Shadow Spear King Gyu Jong-sin, one of the Eight Stars and Five Kings, was also absent as he was still under investigation for alleged collusion with the enemy faction, Secret Society.

‘Hmm. Now that we’re gathered like this, there doesn’t seem to be a major drop in our fighting power.’

This was the assessment of Poison King Baek Saha as he casually surveyed the faces of the gathered top executives with his arms crossed.

There had been considerable losses in terms of manpower due to the hidden forces of Secret Society and the internal war with Na Yul-ryang's faction.

Numerically speaking, about one-third of the entire force had been sacrificed.

However, the conclusion was that this was not the case in terms of actual fighting power.

‘The significant increase in masters who have crossed the wall into the Transformation Realm is a big factor.’

There were external figures like Sword Demon Ji-oe, Eight Poison Snake Staff Guyang Sa-oh, Masked Ma Ra-hyeon, and the renegade monk Ja Geum-jeong who was comparable to the Transformation Realm. Additionally, he and the Corpse Blood Valley Master had crossed the wall this time.

The number of supreme masters at the level of the Eight Stars had increased by six.

Moreover, fortunately, there was no loss of the two existing Five Kings belonging to the Eight Stars.

‘And the biggest factor is...’

Baek Saha’s gaze turned to Ou Cheon-mu, the master of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary.

The fact that Ou Cheon-mu, called the pinnacle of the current martial arts world and one of the Seven Heavens, had joined was tremendously significant.

While the Righteous Alliance and Evil Alliance each had only one person with the title of Seven Heavens, the newly formed Heaven and Earth Society had two individuals with that title.

Moreover, one of them had even surpassed the wall of walls, the Profound Realm, and reached the Life and Death Realm, making him arguably the closest to being the strongest under heaven.

‘Keuheuheuhe. This old one’s choice was correct. As a result, this old one’s disciple will remain the hegemon of the new era.’

Perhaps feeling satisfied for no reason, the corners of Baek Saha’s mouth slightly turned upward.

Just then, someone opened their mouth.

It was Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang.

“Now that the aftermath of the internal war seems to have been sorted out to some extent, important matters remain to be discussed.”

“Important matters? Are there matters to discuss when Mok Gyeong-un Gongja, who is to become the Society Leader, hasn’t even been inaugurated yet?”

To Defense Guardian Go Yeonbaek's question, it was not Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang but Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon who answered.

"Huhuhu. That Society Leader is one of the important matters."

"Society Leader? What do you mean by that?"

"Although it took the form of an internal war because it happened within Heaven and Earth Society, this recent war was strictly a process of creating a new organization."

"Do you mean...?"

"Even small units have names, so an organization befitting one of the three major forces should have a suitable name, don't you think?"

"Ah..."

At these words, most of the top executives nodded in agreement.

Those gathered under Mok Gyeong-un were not following a new successor who would become the leader of Heaven and Earth Society.

Therefore, a new name for the organization was needed to reflect this.

"But couldn't such an important matter wait until Lord Mok Gyeong-un returns?"

To Corpse Blood Valley Master Lee Ji-yeom's opinion, Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang replied.

"Well, the final decision will of course be up to our lord, but wouldn't it be better to have some framework in place before he returns to make it easier for him to decide?"

“This old one agrees. Hohoho.”

Poison King Baek Saha concurred.

At this, Lee Ji-yeom also nodded in agreement.

Then Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon spoke.

“Is there anyone who would like to propose a name befitting this new organization?”

At these words, Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang spoke as if he had been waiting.

“If we’re going to name the organization, let’s go with a strong name.”

“Do you have something in mind?”

“How about something like Hegemon Society that would make those Righteous Alliance and Evil Alliance bastards tremble just hearing it?”

“Hmm. Not bad.”

Bright Blade King Son Yun, whose injuries had not yet healed, agreed while stroking his chin.

He too had a tendency to prefer strong things.

However, Corpse Blood Valley Master Lee Ji-yeom disagreed with this, tilting his head as he spoke.

“The title of Hegemon isn’t bad, but is there a need to go back to using ‘Society’?”

“Why, is there a problem with that?”

“The title ‘Society’ might seem like we’re not forgetting that our predecessor was Heaven and Earth Society.”

At these words from Lee Ji-yeom, Sword Demon Ji-oe spoke for the first time.

“Even to me, an outsider, that argument seems to have merit. Is there really a need to use the title ‘Association’ that the defeated used?”

“Huhuhu. Then does the Sword Demon have any thoughts from an outsider’s perspective?”

To Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon’s question, Sword Demon Ji-oe replied with a grin.

“Wouldn’t the word ‘Alliance’ sound better?”

At these words, even Ou Cheon-mu, the master of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, nodded as if he didn’t think it was a bad idea.

As they were from the neutral faction, they preferred something that felt solid yet rounded.

“Alliance...”

“Hmm.”

On the other hand, the top executives from Heaven and Earth Society didn’t seem too pleased with the word ‘Alliance’.

In the current martial arts world, organizations that use the title 'Alliance' include the Righteous Alliance and Evil Alliance.

Originally, Heaven and Earth Society was an organization formed by those who wanted to worship only martial prowess, neither righteous nor evil.

Was there really a need to follow the same path as the other two forces?

Just then, someone spoke up.

“How about ‘Cult’[1]?”

Everyone’s gaze turned to the owner of that voice.

The one who suggested this was none other than Holy Fire Priestess of Fire Faith Order.

At her suggestion, Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang was the first to snort and say:

“Cult? What a preposterous idea. We may have seated you at this top executive meeting, but this is strictly a martial arts organization.”

“I agree with Brother Ho’s words.”

Bright Blade King Son Yun also showed his displeasure.

Despite their intimidating demeanor, Holy Fire Priestess showed some tension but soon spoke again.

“This isn’t because I’m from Fire Faith Order.”

“Then what do you mean?”

“Young Master Mok is an avatar of fire.”

“An avatar of fire?”

“I mean he’s a being who should be revered as a god. He will lead the foolish people of the Central Plains...”

“Enough!”

Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang cut off her words.

Then he clicked his tongue and said:

“I told you this is a martial arts organization. You’d do well to abandon any thoughts of coloring it with Fire Faith Order’s hues using your measly three-inch tongue.”

“I’m not trying to color it with Fire Faith Order’s hues. I just...”

“Holy Fire Priestess’s opinion isn’t entirely without merit.”

At that moment, Shadow Master Hwan Ya-seon intervened.

At this, the top executives from Heaven and Earth Society frowned as they looked at him.

Despite their gazes, Hwan Ya-seon calmly continued speaking.

“ ‘Society’ or ‘Alliance’ clearly have limitations.”

“What do you mean by limitations? Shadow Master.”

“Although we won the war, it’s undeniable that over eighty percent of our forces are from Heaven and Earth Society.”

“So what? Is there a problem with that?”

“The top executives here decided to follow Young Master Mok, or rather our lord, of their own volition, but not everyone is like that. A considerable number fought in this war without knowing anything, simply following their respective leaders, the executives.”

“Hmm.”

At these words, Ho Tae-gang couldn’t deny it this time.

In fact, the organization’s headquarters was still in turmoil in many ways and not completely united.

This was because many of them felt the recent war lacked justification and viewed it as an internal conflict within the organization.

So among the members who had respected the leader of Heaven and Earth Society, there were some who harbored resentment or dissatisfaction.

“But that doesn’t sufficiently justify using the title ‘Cult’.”

“It could. Because unlike ‘Alliance’ or ‘Society’ which emphasize the meaning of gathering itself, ‘Sect’ requires absolute faith in the leader, just like a country that serves an emperor.”

“...Faith?”

“To change and absorb all the systems and power that the Society has built over a long time in a short period, absolute trust in the leader is necessary. In that respect, nothing is better than ‘Cult’.”

“Hmm...”

At Shadow Master Hwan Ya-seon’s opinion, everyone showed signs of contemplation.

It was a direction they had never considered before, but it wasn’t completely without precedent.

After all, there was the Blood Cult in the past martial arts world.

Just then, Sword Demon Ji Oe snickered and said:

“If we need to make the leader an absolute being, why not just use the leader’s title or name? How about Mok Gyeong-un Cult or even Heavenly Demon Cult?”

In fact, this was a joke from Sword Demon Ji Oe to lighten the mood.

However, no one laughed at his words.

‘!?’

Instead, everyone seemed to be seriously considering his suggestion, carefully mouthing “Heavenly Demon Cult”.

What’s this? Are they really taking this seriously?

As he was puzzled, that’s when it happened.

-Tatatata!

Someone hurriedly entered the main hall.

Judging by the attire, it seemed to be a messenger from the Shadow Clan's Intelligence Division.

As soon as the messenger entered, he knelt on one knee, clasped his hands in a salute, and reported in an urgent voice:

“Urgent report! The entire force of the Righteous Alliance is rapidly advancing south towards our headquarters!”

‘!!!!!!!’

Chapter 467 – The Beginning of a Calamity (4)

“Urgent report! The entire force of the Righteous Alliance is rapidly advancing south towards our headquarters!”

‘!!!!!!!’

Taken completely by surprise by this sudden report, Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon stood up with a furrowed brow and asked:

“Did you say the entire force of the Righteous Alliance is advancing south towards here?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Judging by your attire, you're from the southern Hubei branch. When did you first receive this news?”

“Well... that...”

Bang!

Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang slammed his hand on the armrest and raised his voice.

“Can’t you speak properly?”

“We... we found out as they were preparing to cross the Yangtze River.”

‘!?’

The main hall fell into an icy silence at the messenger’s report.

There were two reasons for their reaction.

First, learning about it as they were preparing to cross the Yangtze meant that either the Righteous Alliance had moved so swiftly that none of the branches noticed them coming down from Henan through northern Hubei, or all the branches had already been taken out. Second, although the messenger had hurried, some time had passed since he left, which meant the enemy had likely already crossed the Yangtze and reached Hunan.

If so, it wouldn’t be long before the Righteous Alliance forces reached their headquarters.

Assuming they hurried, it was entirely possible within two weeks.

“Of all times...”

“It seems information has leaked out.”

The main hall was in an uproar.

It hadn't been long since they'd fought a war and were still sorting out internal matters, yet for the Righteous Alliance to advance south with all their forces like this meant information had undoubtedly leaked.

Sword Demon Ji-oe clicked his tongue and muttered:

“We'll be fighting a real battle in a short time, something that hasn't happened in decades.”

“Ahem. Lord Ji-oe.”

Ou Cheon-mu, the master of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary and one of the Seven Heavens, lightly rebuked him.

Beyond being an external recruit, this was now their problem too.

A war against the Righteous Alliance's forces was absolutely not something to be taken lightly.

“The Righteous Alliance... This could severely damage morale.”

Poison King Baek Saha expressed this concern.

They were about to engage in all-out war with the Righteous Alliance forces so soon after fighting their own war.

Even the top executives were taking this seriously, so the morale of the regular warriors would likely plummet.

Thud!

Bright Blade King Son Yun lightly tapped the floor with the sword cane he was leaning on and spoke.

“We don’t have the luxury of staying silent. If the messenger’s report is true, we need to organize our forces and move out before they reach our headquarters.”

“That’s right. If we resort to a defensive battle, the damage will be uncontrollable.”

Defense Guardian Go Yeon-byeok also agreed with this.

Even if they had systems in place for a defensive battle, there were many non-combatants from the clan inside.

If these people got caught up in it, not only would there be casualties, but they might even be taken hostage.

Therefore, defending the headquarters should be the last resort.

At that moment, Ou Cheon-mu, the master of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, looked at everyone and said:

“If we’re going to fight this war anyway, let’s boost our morale. If the top executives here show low morale, it will affect those below us.”

“Master Ou’s words are correct. This was a war we’d have to fight eventually anyway. Since we’re fighting it, let’s try to change the game properly this time.”

Poison King Baek Saha, who was actually of a similar age despite looking different due to his body transformation, agreed and supported his words.

Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang said to Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon:

“Lord Hwan, please send a messenger to our lord urging him to return. Although his mission is important, we cannot be without our leader in an all-out war against the Righteous Alliance.”

“Huhuhu. Understood. I’ll do that.”

“Well then! Let’s start the strategy meeting...”

Before he could finish his sentence,

Another person dressed as a messenger rushed into the main hall.

Ho Tae-gang clicked his tongue and asked:

“What is it now?”

“Urgent report. The Evil Alliance is also advancing south with all their forces, divided into an advance and rear guard.”

‘!!!!!!’

The expressions of the executives, who had been trying to raise morale until just moments ago, immediately hardened.

This was true even for Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang, who had been leading the atmosphere.

What on earth was this news?

The Evil Alliance? Aren’t they located even further north than the Righteous Alliance?

“The Evil Alliance is advancing south? Is this information certain?”

Corpse Blood Valley Master Lee Ji-yeom asked in a serious voice.

This was because among the three major forces in the current martial arts world, the Righteous Alliance was undoubtedly the strongest.

For this reason, Heaven and Earth Society had been maintaining friendly relations with the Evil Alliance, if only for the sake of balance.

Why on earth would they be advancing south?

“Could they have mistaken this for an opportunity to attack the empty Righteous Alliance headquarters?”

To this, the messenger replied:

“No. It’s reported that the First Alliance Lord of the Evil Alliance, the Unruly Evil Hegemon Emperor Hang Sim, has already led an advance force of 8,000 cavalry past the Righteous Alliance headquarters and reached northern Hubei.”

The First Alliance Lord of the Evil Alliance, Unruly Evil Hegemon Emperor Hang Sim[1].

He was called the Hegemon of the North and was one of the Seven Heavens, the pinnacle of the current martial arts world.

“Given that no sects under the Righteous Alliance tried to stop them as they advanced south, it seems clear...”

Though he didn’t finish his sentence, the same thought crossed the minds of all the top executives simultaneously.

‘An alliance between the righteous and the demonic!’

This was something that had never happened since the great war between the righteous and demonic factions in the past.

Two days later.

Six Offices Commander Jin Ye-rin, who had been heading towards the Evil Alliance headquarters, also couldn't hide her bewilderment when she heard this news after stopping by a Evil Alliance branch with a branch leader from the Nine Blood Cult.

“The First Alliance Lord of the Evil Alliance led the advance guard south?”

“That's correct.”

“Haah... What on earth is going on?”

She had been planning to try to prevent Secret Society from awakening the Six Demons in Datong, north of Shanxi Province, with the help of the Evil Alliance.

But this news was like a bolt from the blue.

To the bewildered Jin Ye-rin, the branch leader said:

“We're not entirely sure either since it happened so suddenly, but we hear that a wooden box with the seal of Heaven and Earth Society arrived at the headquarters containing the heads of five hundred branch leaders and members from various branches in Heaven and Earth Society's territory. That seems to have triggered it, but we're also confused about why they suddenly allied with the Righteous Alliance...”

“They allied with the Righteous Alliance?”

“That’s right.”

Jin Ye-rin’s expression turned serious at the branch leader’s answer.

There had been no sign of this at all when she had received help from the Evil Alliance.

For this to happen so suddenly...

‘Secret Society...’

-Grind!

They must have plotted something.

Although she had been distanced from the martial arts world while serving as an Imperial Guard, she knew that the Evil Alliance and Heaven and Earth Society had quite friendly relations.

For them to become enemies, and to form an alliance with the Righteous Alliance, who had been their mortal enemies since the great war between the righteous and demonic factions, was hard to understand.

‘What should I do about this?’

She couldn’t help but be troubled.

Things had gone awry.

This meant that getting help from the Evil Alliance to stop the Six Demons was now out of the question.

Then, suddenly remembering the mention of an advance guard, she asked:

“Did the Second Alliance Lord... Did he also participate in this war?”

The Second Alliance Lord Golden Indestructible Body[2] Hae Yeok-won and the Fifth Alliance Lord Asura Slaughter Blade[3] Yoo Gyeong were from the Nine Blood Cult.

They were also reliable allies for her, the only survivor of the Jin family.

Although they were Alliance Lords of the Evil Alliance, they had heard about Secret Society from her, so they couldn't have been without doubts about this.

To her question, the branch leader replied:

“I heard that the Second Alliance Lord strongly opposed this war, but according to the final decision of the Alliance Lords' meeting, I believe he's leading the rear guard.”

With the wooden box containing the heads of Evil Alliance branch leaders and members, there was no choice but to yield to the justification for war.

But what was important to Jin Ye-rin wasn't that.

Her eyes sparkled as she asked:

“Where is the rear guard now?”

The backyard of Harmonious Immortal Pavilion.

Woooong!

A cloud of smoke rose, forming a circle, and someone leapt out from within it.

That someone was none other than Yeo Su-rin, a diviner of Harmonious Immortal Pavilion.

As soon as Yeo Su-rin emerged from the smoky portal, about a dozen diviners rushed out to the backyard with talismans and ritual tools, apparently having sensed her spell power.

“Sister Yeo?”

One of them, a diviner with a handsome face, recognized her with furrowed brows.

“Senior brother!”

Yeo Su-rin’s eyes welled up with tears of joy as she tried to hug him.

But the diviner called senior brother firmly rejected this, leaning away from her.

At this, she spoke with a sulky face:

“Isn’t that too much after not seeing each other for so long?”

“Men and women should keep their distance. Why are you trying to cling to me like this? More importantly, why are you only coming now? Didn’t you receive the message Master sent?”

“Message? I didn’t receive anything. I was actually coming to ask Master for help, but did something happen?”

To her question, the diviner called senior brother clicked his tongue and replied:

“So you didn’t know how serious the situation has become.”

“What do you mean the situation has become serious?”

“The seal at Great Yan Temple has been broken.”

“What?”

Yeo Su-rin’s eyes widened.

Great Yan Temple of the Esoteric Buddhist sect in Datong, northern Shanxi Province.

They were monks who cultivated Buddhist law, but as members of the esoteric sect, they were also skilled in sorcery.

The abbot of Great Yan Temple, Great Master Gakwon, was one of the Six Direction Gods who had inherited spiritual power and sorcery from previous generations, and had long guarded the being sealed in Great Yan Temple.

Only the Six Direction Gods, called the pinnacle of diviners, knew about that being.

“Has the White Great Peng Demon King been released?”

“Yes.”

“That’s impossible. I heard that seal was made by over a thousand Moon-level and higher diviners pouring all their spell power into it. And until now, at Great Yan Temple, they’ve been chanting the Demon Subduing Sutra...”

“And yet that seal has been broken.”

Yeo Su-rin's expression turned serious.

'I feared it might be true, but Lord Mok's concerns are really coming to pass.'

She had come here to consult with her master, the Red Eyebrow Old Immortal, for this very reason.

If Secret Society was trying to move the Six Demons, the leaders of the Imaemangnyang, this was no longer just a matter for the martial arts world.

It was the worst calamity for the Central Plains, requiring all diviners to take action.

It seemed her master's absence was likely due to this as well.

"Then did Master go to the meeting of the Sixty-Four Diviner Sects to discuss this?"

To her question, the diviner called senior brother shook his head and replied:

"No, that's not it."

"No? Why not? The release of one of the Six Demons, the kings of Imaemangnyang, is nothing short of a catastrophe..."

"Along with that, the worst situation has occurred."

"What could be worse than that?"

"Seventy percent of the diviners from the Sixty-Four Diviner Sects suddenly vanished as if they had evaporated."

“What?”

She couldn't hide her shock.

Seventy percent of the diviners from the Sixty-Four Diviner Sects would amount to tens of thousands of diviners disappearing.

What on earth is going on?

As she wondered, the diviner called senior brother was about to place his hand on her shoulder but hesitated, barely touching it with his fingertips as he spoke:

“It seems Master is currently investigating that. For now, since most of the diviners active outside have all disappeared, Master has ordered all diviners of our pavilion not to leave Harmonious Immortal Pavilion. That's why we sent you a message to return. Anyway, it's fortunate that you've come back like this. For the time being, don't leave Harmonious Immortal Pavilion and stay inside here...”

“No, I can't!”

“What? What do you mean you can't?”

“If that's true, then I especially can't stay here.”

“What on earth are you saying? Master called for you to return and ordered not to leave the Pavilion. Are you saying you're going to disobey?”

“Senior brother.”

Grab!

Yeo Su-rin suddenly grasped his hand.

The face and ears of the diviner called senior brother instantly turned red.

To him, she spoke pleadingly:

“I need Master’s great ritual tool from the Divine Origin Hall!”

“What?”

Chapter 468 – The Great Battle (1)

Lacking immunity to women, he was easily embarrassed, his face turning bright red at the slightest touch.

However, at the mention of the great ritual tool from Yeo Su-rin’s mouth, his flushed face instantly cooled.

“No. That’s absolutely not allowed.”

“Aww, Senior Brother.”

“You’ve already been punished for sneaking into the Divine Origin Hall and damaging Master’s ritual tool before, yet you dare say such things again?”

“That was when I was still inexperienced. Now...”

“Even now, Master would have forbidden entry to the Divine Origin Hall.”

“That’s why I need your help, Senior Brother.”

“Aren’t you being too brazen?”

Yeo Su-rin’s senior brother was dumbfounded.

Master had originally forbidden even leaving Harmonious Immortal Pavilion, let alone touching Master’s great ritual tool. If he found out about this, it would be grounds for immediate expulsion.

“This time it’s absolutely not allowed. With the White Great Peng Demon King’s seal broken and diviners disappearing, ominous events are unfolding. If you try to do something so foolish, I’ll have no choice but to lock you in the facing-wall room...”

“What if it’s not just one of the Six Demons being released?”

“What? What do you mean...”

“Exactly what I said. What I’m trying to do may be disobeying Master’s orders, but it’s definitely not a foolish act.”

Her suddenly serious tone made her senior brother furrow his brow and ask:

“What do you mean it’s not just one of the Six Demons being released?”

“Exactly that. You don’t know what mission I’ve been on, do you, Senior Brother?”

“It’s a rule of our pavilion that missions from Master must be kept secret from other disciples. Surely you’re not thinking of breaking that rule?”

“Does it look like I can keep following rules in this situation?”

“Well...”

As her senior brother looked troubled, she touched her forehead and said:

“You remember the heavenly signs Master read? That the Three Eyes would bring chaos to the world?”

“...Are you saying the current events are related to that?”

To his question, Yeo Su-rin replied in a meaningful tone:

“That’s right. If we don’t act now because of Master’s orders, there could be even more sacrifices than what’s happening now.”

“Sacrifices...”

“If we stand by and do nothing, countless people in the Central Plains could die.”

“...”

“That’s why I desperately need your help, Senior Brother.”

“Haah.”

At her words, her senior brother sighed, his troubled expression deepening as he struggled with what to do.

Three days later.

The complexion of Mok Gan's avatar, in the form of an old man, had become quite haggard.

Though he was enduring thanks to the overflowing original energy from absorbing the blood of spirit beasts, the ancient forbidden technique Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique required the practitioner's sacrifice, slowly becoming overwhelming.

At most, this avatar would only last a few more days before its lifespan ran out.

Of course, even then, the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique wouldn't be dispelled.

A complete true seal couldn't be broken by external or internal forces unless the dispelling technique was activated.

What a tenacious bunch they were.

Mok Gan's avatar clicked his tongue, glaring at Mok Gyeong-un, who remained trapped in the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique.

He had been constantly trying to take his life with his gaze, but each time Mok Gyeong-un countered with his mind sword, causing even more damage to himself.

'How can he maintain such mental strength after regressing to a human?'

It had been nearly nine days, yet his spirit remained intact.

Originally, this technique was meant to trap beings like spirit beasts or immortals who tried to defy the natural order, rather than humans.

Thus, ordinary humans would typically go mad after just a few days, unable to endure the stagnant time.

Yet this guy's eyes were still alive, and even in this situation, he was struggling to break free.

‘But it’s useless.’

The mind sword is exactly what it sounds like – a sword of the mind.

It only worked on living beings, so it couldn’t do anything against the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique that bound the entire space.

‘Huhuhu. You will die here. In the agony of having everything precious taken away from you.’

Kwakwakwakwakwang!

Just then, the sound of explosions reached even inside the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique.

Mok Gan frowned.

“Ha...”

That woman was unbelievably persistent.

Despite her slowed recovery due to the wound from the formless sword, she had fought tirelessly day and night for nine days to stop them.

In the end, she had managed to prevent them from capturing Ryu So-wol’s hun.

Mok Gan clicked his tongue.

‘To actually hold off dozens of Demonic-level Beast or higher Imaemangnyang while injured.’

Was her obsession with revenge this intense?

But it seemed that even that was coming to an end now.

There were four Imaemangnyang left.

All of them were Demonic Beasts.

For her, exhausted and having depleted most of her demon power, this was the limit.

He could tell just by looking at her pale face.

“Haa... Haa...”

As Mok Gan judged, Chunchu was beyond exhausted, hanging on by sheer obsession for revenge alone.

With that last attack, she had taken out three Imaemangnyang, but now she truly had no strength left.

Without energy, her body was gradually falling downwards.

Noticing her condition, the remaining four Demon Beasts simultaneously opened their mouths and fired demonic energy bullets.

Papapapang!

Looking at the approaching demonic energy bullets, she stretched out her trembling hand and muttered softly.

“Father... I’ll see you soon.”

With that, her body was engulfed by the demonic energy bullets.

Kwakwakwakwang!

Around the same time.

Mok Gyeong-un's confidants, returning to Heaven and Earth Society headquarters on Heumwon, were being chased by an Imaemangnyang in the form of an insect even larger than Heumwon.

"Persistent bastard."

The excommunicated monk Ja Geum-jeong tried to drive away the Imaemangnyang using his vajra and ritual tools, but the cunning creature skillfully avoided them while attacking Heumwon.

As a result, Heumwon's wings and body were covered in wounds.

Weeeeeeing!

Chwachwachwach!

"Haa... Haa... Damn bug bastards."

Seop Chun swung his poison sect weapon, the Mad Dance Sword, ceaselessly cutting down the flying insects.

Not just him, but the others were also dealing with the numerous poisonous insects sent by the Imaemangnyang.

Even the injured Mong Mu-yak fought hard but lost consciousness after being stung by a poisonous insect.

If Eight Poison Snake Staff Guyang Sa-oh, the expert in poisons, hadn't been there, he might have lost his life.

“Just hold on a bit longer.”

Papapapapak!

Guyang So protected Mong Mu-yak while striking down the incoming poisonous insects with his staff.

Papapat!

Even Ma Ra-hyeon, who had initially been splitting himself into two or three bodies to climb onto Heumwon’s back and deal with the insects, was now breathing heavily, seemingly exhausted.

“Huu... Huu... Seop Chun!”

“Speak!”

“Can you see the headquarters?”

At Ma Ra-hyeon’s shout, Seop Chun looked down below the carriage and let out a sigh.

Originally, since they had been flying, they should have been close to the headquarters by now, but it seemed they had gone in a different direction while being chased by that giant insect-like Imaemangnyang.

What was visible below was a river.

“Damn it. Where the hell are we?”

It was impossible to determine their location.

At this rate, it seemed they might die before reaching the headquarters.

Just then, the carriage tilted suddenly, lurching to the side.

“Whoa?”

As the startled Seop Chun grasped the carriage, he saw the Heumwon’s massive feathers falling in droves before his eyes.

“What, what’s going on?”

Looking up, he saw that the feathers on one of Heumwon’s wings were falling out, revealing wounds.

‘Why?’

That area had been healed by Chunchu, the First-rank of Secret Society.

She had cut her wrist, poured blood on the wounded area, and chanted what seemed like a spell, causing the pierced wound to close and feathers to regrow.

But now, he couldn’t understand what was happening.

Why were the feathers suddenly...

At that very moment,

Kiiiiiiiiiii!

The Heumwon tried to delay the fall by flapping with one wing, but the insect-form Imaemangnyang, seizing this opportunity, swooped in and attacked, causing them to plummet downwards.

Shuuuuuuuu!

“Aaaaargh!”

“Grab onto something tight!”

“Below! There’s a river below! Jump to match it!”

Was it a stroke of luck?

The place they were falling towards happened to be a river.

Splash! Chwaaaaa!

As the massive Heumwon fell into the river, the water surged, creating waves as high as a tsunami.

Mok Gyeong-un’s confidants, who had fallen into the water, began to surface one by one.

“Puah!”

“Gasp, gasp. Dammit. I almost went to Buddha’s side.”

“Mu-yak? Is Mu-yak alright?”

Guyang So, who had surfaced, held the unconscious Mong Mu-yak by the nape of his neck, keeping his face above water while struggling to kick his legs.

Splash splash!

Paat!

Just then, Ma Ra-hyeon emerged from the water, taking off his broken mask and grabbing Mong Mu-yak, saying:

“I’ll take care of Mu-yak.”

“Haa... Haa... Thank you.”

Guyang So, already struggling with his old body and injuries, expressed his gratitude.

Meanwhile, they weren't sure if the Heumwon was alright.

It had sunk deep into the river and wasn't resurfacing.

As getting out of the middle of the river seemed to be the most urgent matter, they all started swimming without hesitation.

But then,

Wooaaaang!

The sound of flapping wings reached their ears, and the river water around them began to churn violently like a storm, with winds so strong it was hard to keep their eyes open.

“Ha...”

Seop Chun was dumbstruck as he saw the insect-form Imaemangnyang appear above them.

The others felt the same way.

They no longer had the strength to face this creature.

Is this how it ends?

At that moment,

Krrrrrrumboom!

Thunder and lightning struck from the clear sky, and dark clouds suddenly began to gather all around.

Everyone was bewildered by this sudden change.

Chwaaaaa!

Then they heard the sound of water parting, and the currents became more violent.

The giant insect-form Imaemangnyang, which had been flapping its wings as if about to pounce on them, suddenly turned its gaze elsewhere.

A massive ship was approaching.

Countless vengeful spirits stood on the deck, and even clung to the sides of the ship.

“Huh?”

The renegade monk Ja Geum-jeong’s face lit up as he saw someone standing majestically at the bow of the ship with their hands behind their back.

It was the vengeful spirit Ha Yoon, who had helped them cross the flooding river during the heavy rain before.

The vengeful spirit Ha Yoon shouted loudly at the giant insect-form Imaemangnyang:

You bastard! Will you not back away from my friends!

Four days later, around noon.

In front of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains, a range filled with countless peaks, a vast crowd could be seen approaching in formation.

At the front of the line, a banner bearing the name “Righteous Alliance” fluttered.

“Finally... They’ve come.”

Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang, who had been watching from the highest peak, raised his axe.

The warriors behind him made hand signals, and in response, the Society’s warriors waiting on each mountain peak simultaneously raised their flags.

Among the black flags with red emblems, large characters could be seen:

(Heavenly Demon)

As the numerous flags were suddenly raised over the mountain peaks, the advancing Righteous Alliance’s procession came to a halt all at once.

Chapter 469 – The Great Battle (2)

The major sects and families symbolizing the Righteous Alliance, along with the medium and small sects.

Combined, they formed a massive force of forty-six thousand.

The greatest strength of the righteous faction, which advocated for the righteous path, lay in their cooperation.

They prided themselves on being unmatched by the demonic faction in their ability to gather and unite, knowing that even small forces could become strong when combined and concentrated.

“Let’s use this opportunity to completely uproot those demonic bastards.”

“Waaaaaahh!!!!”

With a force even greater than the last great war between the righteous and demonic factions gathered, their morale was sky-high.

If the Namgoong family, Hebei Peng family, and even the Sichuan Tang clan, who couldn’t participate due to unforeseen circumstances, had joined, it would have reached an unprecedented fifty thousand, the greatest force in history.

However, this alone was enough to be called the strongest among the three major powers.

“Disgustingly numerous.”

Bright Blade King Son Yun, standing on one of the peaks of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains, clicked his tongue.

Due to the losses suffered during the internal war with Secret Society and Na Yul-ryang’s elder faction within Heaven and Earth Society, their current force was less than half of the enemy’s numbers.

Their current strength was twenty-one thousand.

“It would have been difficult if we had met them on the plains, for sure. Huhuhu.”

Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon also clicked his tongue at the enemy’s numerical superiority.

If they had clashed on the plains, their troops' morale would have plummeted in the face of a force more than twice their size.

Thump thump!

Defense Guardian Go Yeonbaek, standing next to Ya-seon, pounded his fists together and said:

“We may be outnumbered, but nearly half of their forces are just rabble. The quality and skill of our warriors are far superior.”

“Huhuhu. That's right.”

This was their strength, different from the Righteous Alliance.

Having trained their warriors through life-threatening practices like the Corpse Blood Valley, their practical combat experience actually surpassed the enemy's.

The so-called gentlemen or chivalrous heroes of the righteous faction were somewhat lacking in real combat experience.

Even when they trained, they stopped at sparring, so their ability to kill others was inferior compared to the demonic faction or Heaven and Earth Society.

“Still, we must remain vigilant. Those numbers can make up for such deficiencies.”

However, a twofold difference could provide an overwhelming sense of pressure, making it dangerous to rashly engage in an all-out battle.

That's why they decided to utilize their geographical position.

Swish!

Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang raised his axe.

As if on cue, black and red flags rose over all the mountain peaks at the entrance of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains, starting from the peak where he stood.

(Heavenly Demon)

Cha cha cha cha cha chak!

The advancing Righteous Alliance forces stopped in their tracks at the sight of the flags covering the peaks of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

The Righteous Alliance forces, which had been overflowing with morale just moments ago, suddenly fell silent.

This was because anyone would be rendered speechless at the sight of those flags filling the mountain peaks.

“What on earth is that?”

“Why are there so many flags?”

“Could there be more of them than us?”

The flags were overwhelmingly numerous, and their position on such high ground made it seem as if there were hundreds of thousands of troops before them.

Jung Myeong Sa-tae, an elder of the Hengshan Sect, furrowed his brow as he saw the characters (Heavenly Demon) written on the flags.

‘Amitabha. Was the Danmok Clan head’s words true?’

[The most crucial part of this matter is the information that the seventh heaven is about to start an internal war within Heaven and Earth Society.]

They had hurriedly gathered and marched south to not miss this crucial moment.

If an internal war broke out within Heaven and Earth Society, they could take advantage of the situation.

It was an opportunity to deal with both Heaven and Earth Society, one of the three major powers, and Heavenly Demon simultaneously.

Drip!

Cold sweat trickled down Jung Myeong Sa-tae's forehead.

Truly a terrifying person.

They had intended to come down before the internal war ended, but had he already swallowed up such a massive force?

‘This is unprecedented in the history of the Central Plains martial arts world.’

The initial trigger was the danger posed by this person called Heavenly Demon.

It took less than a month for him to rise as a new member of the Seven Heavens.

He toppled Shaolin's One Hundred and Eight Arhat Formation in one step, sealed off the Sichuan Tang family single-handedly, and even subjugated the Spiritual Sword Sanctuary Sect, considered the strongest among the neutral factions.

Due to this shockingly rapid progress, the Righteous Alliance, for the first time since the great war between the righteous and demonic factions—no, since its establishment—became wary of a single individual.

‘Impossible.’

Moyong Hak, the eldest son of the Moyong Clan and another person who had directly witnessed him, also turned pale at the sight of the Heavenly Demon flags covering the peaks of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

It was too fast, even for being fast.

How could this be possible so soon after the internal war broke out?

As they were stunned like this,

“Listen, everyone!”

Just then, a voice filled with such profound true energy that it drew admiration resounded throughout the area.

The gazes of all the Righteous Alliance warriors, who had been overwhelmed by the flags on the mountain peaks, turned to the front.

There stood Jeong Hyeon-mun, the leader of the Righteous Alliance, holding the famous sword Il-hwi.

Jeong Hyeon-mun rose into the air as if walking up invisible stairs, so that everyone could see him.

“Ooooh!”

“It’s the Void Step!”

Everyone couldn’t help but marvel at his appearance.

As their gazes focused on him, Righteous Alliance Leader Jeong Hyeon-mun spoke again.

“Chivalrous heroes of the righteous path.”

His voice echoed like thunder.

It was loud enough to be heard even on the peaks of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

Even the top executives under Mok Gyeong-un couldn't help but feel tense, inwardly amazed by Jeong Hyeon-mun's voice.

Jeong Hyeon-mun was one of the three considered to be the strongest among the Seven Heavens, the pinnacle of the current martial arts world.

Jeong Hyeon-mun continued speaking loudly, as if for everyone to hear:

“There's no need to be fooled by the empty show of force before us. They have not yet recovered from the damage of their internal war. This is just a desperate attempt to deceive our eyes because they fear us who uphold justice.”

“.....”

“Chivalrous heroes of the righteous path. I, your Alliance Leader, will lead from the front. I will be the first to bleed and take arrows, so awaken your fighting spirit. Ignite your will to fight. Let's show them that justice will prevail!”

As soon as his words ended,

Waaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh!!!!!!

When the forty-six thousand warriors shouted in unison, the heavens and earth shook.

As their morale was revived, the expressions of the former Heaven and Earth Society warriors hiding on the mountain peaks hardened.

‘Hmm.’

Poison King Baek Saha shook his head as he observed this.

It wasn’t good.

If Mok Gyeong-un, their leader, had been here at this moment, he could have raised morale, but his absence was significant.

‘We need to raise our fighting spirit here too, but Master Ou isn’t suitable for this.’

Ou Cheon-mu, the master of Spiritual Sword Sanctuary, was also one of the Seven Heavens.

However, as an externally recruited figure, he was unsuitable for raising the morale of their troops through oration.

Ou Cheon-mu knew this, which is why he didn’t rashly step forward despite being in a similar position to Jeong Hyeon-mun.

To raise their morale, they needed at least someone who...

“What are you all so afraid of!”

Just then, a sharp voice rang out from somewhere among the mountain peaks.

‘Huh?’

What's this? Who is it?

At this, the gazes of all the executives, including Poison King Baek Saha, and all the former Heaven and Earth Society warriors turned towards where the shout had come from.

In the middle of the mountain peaks,

In a position invisible to the Righteous Alliance, stood a peerlessly beautiful woman. She was none other than Wi So-yeon, one of the three disciples of the late Heaven and Earth Society leader.

“Miss Wi So-yeon?”

“Why is the young miss suddenly...?”

Everyone was stirred up by her appearance.

Regardless, Wi So-yeon pointed at the Righteous Alliance and shouted:

“Why do you think they've gathered here like this? It's because they fear our master, no, our lord Heavenly Demon!”

“.....”

“Despite all their talk about justice, they're nothing but hypocrites who come in mobs. Why are you afraid of such lowlifes? Are we so weak that we'd be pushed back by these cowards who fear our lord and us?”

At her words, the top executives, including Poison King Baek Saha, couldn't help but laugh in disbelief.

Although they knew she was Mok Gyeong-un's helper despite being a disciple of the former Heaven and Earth Society leader, no one had expected her to step forward like this at this moment.

But then, something unexpected happened.

The warriors whose spirits had been dampened by Alliance Leader Jeong Hyeon-mun's rousing speech suddenly stood up and shouted:

"Who says we're weak?"

"That's right! Why should we fear these mob-like bastards who can't win with skill alone?"

"Yeah! We're not afraid of such lowlives at all!"

"Hey, I, Bima Commander Eui-chan, will be the first to smash their heads. Those who are afraid can follow behind me."

"Puhahahahat! What's the weakest commander doing taking the lead! I, the Crushing Commander, will take the lead."

"Nonsense! I'll be at the front, beheading those bastards!"

As shouts full of fighting spirit erupted here and there, the expressions of the warriors began to change.

Their morale and will to fight were rising.

And at some point, it reached a crescendo and burst out all at once.

"Waaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh!!!!"

“Let’s sweep away the enemy!!!!”

The cheers, echoing even more due to the mountain peaks, shook the heavens and earth more than when they had shaken the plains.

As the allied forces’ fighting spirit and morale reached their peak, the corners of the mouths of Mok Gyeong-un’s top executives turned upward.

An unexpected situation had unfolded.

Originally, raising morale was the job of the leader who commanded the forces, the commander. But Wi So-yeon had unintentionally accomplished this.

Thud!

“Huh?”

In fact, Wi So-yeon, or rather Go Chan, Mok Gyeong-un’s spirit servant possessing her body, was so dumbfounded by the rapidly rising morale of their allies that he fell on his backside.

He had stepped forward in frustration because no one was trying to raise morale when they needed to hold out until their lord arrived, but things had unexpectedly gone well.

‘Whoa. I... Did I have talent in this area too?’

Should he have entered the military and become a general instead of being destined to be an assassin in his past life?

Meanwhile, on the Righteous Alliance side.

“What’s going on?”

“Did their morale suddenly rise?”

“Why isn’t their spirit dying down?”

This rise in morale was clearly transmitted to the Righteous Alliance camp as well.

As a result, the morale and fighting spirit on both sides were evenly matched, with neither side faltering.

Jeong Hyeon-mun’s eyes, floating in the air and looking towards the Ten Thousand Great Mountains, narrowed sharply.

‘...She didn’t have such leadership skills before.’

That voice was clearly Wi So-yeon’s.

Did she, who only had a soul left, have such an aspect?

Alliance Leader Jeong Hyeon-mun soon snorted.

It didn’t matter anyway.

Whether their morale rose or not, the original purpose was one.

‘To kill and be killed.’

His face, with his back to the Righteous Alliance forces, was twisted with madness and killing intent.

However, no one could see this expression of his.

Swish!

Alliance Leader Jeong Hyeon-mun raised his hand, stretched it forward, and shouted loudly:

“Front ranks, advance!”

Waaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh!!!!

As soon as those words fell, the Righteous Alliance warriors holding shields in the front line charged forward towards the Ten Thousand Great Mountains with a roar.

Facing the oncoming large-scale force of forty-six thousand, thousands of warriors hiding on the mountain peaks simultaneously drew their bows, aiming arrows to meet the enemies.

The great battle had finally begun.

At that moment, far away, someone was watching the clash between these two forces with their hands behind their back.

That someone soon slightly raised the corners of their mouth and gave an order.

“Bring her to my side.”

“As you command!”

Papapapapapat!

As soon as those words fell, dozens of shadowy figures flew towards the direction of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

Chapter 470 – The Great Battle (3)

As the Righteous Alliance warriors with shields advanced in formation, Corpse Blood Valley Master Lee Ji-yeom, watching them, spoke in a low voice to Go Chan, who was possessing the body of Wi So-yeon, the youngest disciple of the late Heaven and Earth Society leader:

“You did well to raise our troops’ morale, but it was reckless.”

“But...”

“Go back inside.”

Lee Ji-yeom pointed to a place with a large boulder.

Go Chan, who was about to make an excuse, nodded and walked towards it.

He then slipped into a hole beside the boulder.

Lee Ji-yeom approached and pushed the large boulder to cover the hole.

Rumble rumble!

“Whew.”

After erasing the marks left by the dragged boulder with his foot, Lee Ji-yeom sighed and shook his head.

Under Mok Gyeong-un’s orders, he was the only one who knew the importance of Wi So-yeon’s existence.

That’s why, in a counterintuitive move, he had brought her to the battlefield instead of the Heaven and Earth Society headquarters to protect her.

The hole she entered was one of many hidden ambush points and safe houses scattered throughout the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

It was a reverse strategy, banking on the idea that the darkest place is under the lamplight, but thanks to her blatant appearance, the enemy had now pinpointed her location.

‘This will be difficult.’

String!

Lee Ji-yeom, shaking his head, drew his sword and prepared to meet the enemy.

Meanwhile, Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang, on the highest peak of the front line, swung his axe to signal.

The archers holding bows concentrated their true energy on their fingertips pulling the bowstrings.

Thud thud thud thud thud thud!

Thousands of Righteous Alliance shield warriors were rapidly approaching.

Even in wars between martial artists, the battle resembled that between armies until it came to direct close-quarter combat.

Those holding high ground or defending would keep the enemy in check with arrows, stones, and spears.

‘Not yet?’

The flag bearers relaying Ho Tae-gang’s signals watched his axe with tense eyes.

The enemy was approaching, but there was still no signal to shoot arrows.

Wheeeeeee!

Ho Tae-gang focused on the incoming wind.

Despite the arrows imbued with true energy flying much further than those shot by ordinary archers, they were waiting because of the wind direction.

The wind was still blowing towards them, so shooting arrows now wouldn't be very effective.

Thus, they had to wait until the enemy was within proper range.

Thud thud thud thud thud!

The Righteous Alliance shield warriors had approached to about four hundred paces.

The strong wind began to subside gradually.

‘Now!’

At that moment, Ho Tae-gang thrust his axe forward.

With that, flags fluttered, and as if they had been waiting, the archers simultaneously fired arrows towards the Righteous Alliance shield warriors.

Chwachwachwachwachwachwach!

As thousands of arrows imbued with true energy flew at incredible speed, the advancing Righteous Alliance warriors stopped.

“Shields up!”

Cha cha cha cha cha chak!

At the commander's shout, they formed ranks of five, raising their shields and lowering their stance.

They then infused true energy into their shields.

Hwangbo Seong, the head of the Hwangbo Clan commanding the shield warriors, grinned.

‘These specially made shields won't be easily pierced even by arrows imbued with true energy. Go ahead and shoot all you want.’

The purpose of the shield warriors at the front was one:

To quickly deplete the enemy's arrows.

“Don't let your guard down and grit your teeth!”

Thousands of arrows rained down like a downpour, striking their iron shields.

Pu pu pu pu pu pu puk!

‘This isn't as bad as I thought... Huh!?’

But the sound of arrows hitting the iron shields was strange.

Since the arrowheads were also made of iron, they should have made a clanging sound when hitting, but this sounded more like leather or cloth hitting.

Pu pu pu pu pu pu puk!

Though feeling something was off, they couldn't lower their shields as arrows continued to rain down.

Right at that moment,

Shuuuuuu!

Something like smoke began to rise from around them.

Sensing something amiss, Hwangbo Seong, the head of the Hwangbo Clan, looked at the arrowheads fallen on the ground.

‘!?’

But their tips weren’t sharp iron.

They were actually bundles of leather or cloth, and smoke was rising from them.

‘Could it be?’

Just then, the warriors holding shields began coughing here and there.

“Cough cough!”

“Hack. Ca-can’t breathe...”

Some were even seen clutching their throats as if choking.

Seeing this, Hwangbo Seong shouted in alarm:

“It’s poison mist! Poison mist! Retreat!”

The rising smoke was none other than poison mist.

Blood was now flowing from the mouths of those who had been coughing, and many were collapsing with their faces turning blue.

“Cover your noses and mouths with cloth and hold your breath!”

Hwangbo Seong shouted this while covering his own nose and mouth with cloth, using his true energy to block the poison trying to enter through his skin.

However, the poison seemed stronger than expected, as his skin stung severely.

Thud thud thud thud thud!

The shield warriors who had been advancing in formation were now in disarray, retreating to the rear as they succumbed to the poison mist.

Those in the rear ranks managed to escape relatively unscathed as they were less exposed to the poison mist, but not those at the front.

Thud! Thud! Thump!

“Hack hack!”

“Urrrgh.”

More than half were already dying from poison.

“Damn it!”

Hwangbo Seong of the Hwangbo Clan, also retreating and creating distance, shouted towards the Ten Thousand Great Mountains, unable to contain his anger:

“You cowardly demonic heretics! How dare you use poison!”

In martial artists' duels or wars, the use of poison was implicitly forbidden.

This was not because of the effectiveness of poison, but because it was seen as a weapon specialized only for killing, giving an impression of cowardice rather than honorable combat between martial artists.

Therefore, the Righteous Alliance side naturally assumed they wouldn't use poison.

However,

“What's cowardly about killing each other in war? It's childishly hypocritical to say that pushing with numbers when you can't win with strength is fine, but poison isn't.”

“Hahahahahahaha!”

At Axe-Destroying King Ho Tae-gang's mocking shout, laughter erupted from all over the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

‘Damn it!’

Hwangbo Seong became even more enraged at the sound of laughter.

Poison King Baek Saha raised the corners of his mouth as he watched less than half of the thousands retreat.

“Hohoho. They've tied their own noose.”

Shadow Clan Master Ya-seon nodded in agreement with his words.

“If they wanted to counter poison, they should have brought the Sichuan Tang family by any means necessary, sealed doors or not. Such foolish people. Hohohohoho.”

The Sichuan Tang family was the only group in the righteous faction that dealt with poisons.

However, they had been sealed off after being defeated by Mok Gyeong-un.

Thus, the Righteous Alliance had to wage war without the Sichuan Tang clan.

The righteous faction, which valued principles, was tripped up by their strict adherence to established rules.

“Th-th-those bastards actually used poison. Tsk.”

Hong Won-seok, the leader of Beggar’s Sect, clicked his tongue as he watched their allies retreating.

Other Righteous Alliance executives also couldn’t contain their anger as they watched the shield warriors retreating from the very start.

Grind!

“So it’s come to this.”

They hadn’t expected the absence of Thousand Poison Hand Tang In-hae, one of the Eight Stars, and the Sichuan Tang clan to have such a huge impact.

But only now, as the war unfolded, could they realize:

The fact that poison can only be countered with poison.

“In this situation, we’ll have to abandon any attrition strategy of depleting their arrows and quickly close in for close-quarter combat.”

“That’s right. If we engage in close combat, they won’t be able to use poison due to the risk to their own troops.”

Jin Sok-ja, the head of the Qingcheng Sect, expressed agreement with Gu Cheol-ja, the head of the Huashan Sect.

While most of the Righteous Alliance executives agreed with their opinion, Jung Myeong Sa-tae of the Hengshan Sect expressed concern.

“Amitabha. Even if we cover our noses and mouths with cloth and hold our breath until we get close, our troops will suffer heavy casualties. How do you plan to address this?”

“We have no choice, Sa-tae. We can’t just stand by out of fear of poison casualties.”

“But...”

At that moment, Danmok In-ho, the head of the Danmok Clan, stepped forward and spoke:

“As it happens, our Danmok Clan has prepared some poison-repelling beads. How about using those?”

“Poison-repelling beads, you say?”

Poison-repelling beads.

These were beads with detoxifying properties.

They could be used as medicine, and due to their strong detoxifying properties, if used to start a fire, they could also have the effect of pushing back and blocking things like poison mist.

“Oh! How many do you have?”

“About a hundred.”

“You have a hundred of those precious things?”

“Yes.”

“But is it alright to use them like this?”

“If it’s for the justice of the martial arts world, how can we worry about their value?”

“Excellent! Excellent! Thanks to the foresight of the Danmok Clan head, we can reduce our casualties!”

The Righteous Alliance executives showed relief at the large number of poison-repelling beads.

Watching this, Righteous Alliance Leader Jeong Hyeon-mun, his mouth twitching, turned his gaze towards the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

‘Hmm.’

He had them prepared just in case, since the Sichuan Tang clan had been sealed off, but he didn’t expect them to use poison so soon.

Even though they weren’t on the righteous path, he thought that Heaven and Earth Society, also aspiring to martial arts, wouldn’t use poison from the start unless completely cornered.

But seeing them use it without hesitation, it seemed they had been greatly influenced by someone.

Was it him after all?

Just as he was thinking that they had taken the initiative at the start of the battle,

Thud thud thud thud!

The ground began to shake.

Murmur murmur!

As the trembling gradually increased, the stirring Righteous Alliance warriors all turned their gazes backward.

There, they saw numerous cavalry units filling the plains in a straight line.

‘What’s this?’

‘Could it be... already?’

The expressions of the former Heaven and Earth Society warriors, who had been cheering at the retreating Righteous Alliance front line, began to harden.

The number of rapidly advancing cavalry alone seemed to reach nearly ten thousand, and the flag fluttering at the front read:

(Evil Alliance)

Inside the ancient forbidden technique Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique.

Mok Gyeong-un's face, trapped in extremely slowly flowing time and unable to move, was becoming more haggard than at first.

Even though time flowed slowly, his mind didn't slow down accordingly.

However, Mok Gyeong-un's eyes were still alive.

The single-minded thought that he had to escape from here somehow was keeping his spirit intact.

But this was not easy.

The completed Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique was literally close to perfection, making it impossible to find even the slightest gap.

So even if he tried to break it with intense will, he couldn't do anything to this space itself with his mind sword.

‘Is it impossible to cut without the capacity of nothingness?’

Within the Supreme Void Sealing Reversal Technique space, time barely flowed, making it impossible to even gather the capacity of nothingness.

Without this capacity to support him, there was a limit to manifesting sharpness with will alone.

‘What should I do?’

Mok Gyeong-un was becoming increasingly anxious.

As time passed, he grew more worried about Cheong-ryeong's safety.

Knowing this feeling of his, Mok Gan maintained a manic smile while looking at him, even though his avatar was facing near death.

‘.....’

Is it really going to end up as he wants?

Will I be trapped here, unable to do anything?

Am I going to lose Cheong-ryeong like this?

These repeated questions to himself.

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes gradually became clouded with deep darkness.

Ordinary people tend to become mentally weak when they fall into anxiety.

However, this anxiety awakened a deep darkness that had been deeply dormant in Mok Gyeong-un.

Whoosh!

Before he knew it, black flames flickered in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.