

Chapter 1059

Your words won't reach them. (4)

The land cried out in agony, and the sky shook in response.

In a series of successive shock waves, both demonic cultists and even disciples of Hwasan were thrown back. Considering the distance between the battlefield and them, it was an astonishing sight.

«Ch... Chung Myung...»

Baek Cheon's hand was trembling uncontrollably. No matter how skilled Chung Myung was, could anyone take such direct attack head on and survive? If not...

Before he could even fathom the dreaded conclusion, Baek Cheon's reason was thrown into disarray.

«Sasuk! Look there!»

At that moment, a voice reached Baek Cheon's ears, and he turned sharply.

Reaching out was Jo Geol. And at the end of his outstretched hand was... Chung Myung, who had half-sat with one hand gripping the ground.

“Ah...”

It was a feeling of strength draining from his entire body in an instant.

But this was not the time to be relieved.

“What kind of inner strength...”

Cold sweat poured from Baek Cheon's forehead like rain.

The factors usually discussed when assessing a martial artist's strength are generally two: how perfectly they have mastered their martial arts and how formidable their inner strength is.

According to Chung Myung's theory, factors like manipulation, tactics, and mental strength are added here, but fundamentally, these two are the measuring scales of a martial artist's strength.

It's not a good sign for either side to be significantly ahead to the point where it's clearly visible. The most important thing is the harmony between martial arts and inner strength. At least, that's what Baek Cheon had always believed.

But after witnessing this scene, he couldn't bring himself to say such words.

The destructive power emanating from the overwhelmingly immeasurable inner strength defied Baek Cheon's common sense about martial arts.

‘So, this is why...’

Demonic cultists knew it. How strong that Bishop was. What kind of inner strength he concealed.

That's why they could remain unshaken even in a situation where their own Bishop was being overwhelmingly pushed back.

«Sasuk...»

A trembling voice came from Tang Soso.

«Can we really win against that monster?»

Baek Cheon couldn't answer. He couldn't bring himself to utter the words of trust in Chung Myung. That would be nothing but blind devotion, not true faith.

Instead, Baek Cheon clenched his teeth and said,

«Listen well, Soso.»

«...»

«He must not be allowed to live, under any circumstances.»

«Sasuk.»

«If... if it ever comes to the point where not even Chung Myung, not even Jang Ilso can handle him... then everyone here must rush in and kill him at all cost.»

Indeed, those were ruthless words. However, upon reflection, they contained no trace of error. After all, when those two are defeated, those left here have no future. Bishop's followers won't let them go without a fight.

So, the value must be found at least in their deaths.

But...

'When will that moment come?'

Baek Cheon thought, clenching his fist tightly. Is it really the right choice to delay it? Are we burdening Chung Myung too much right now? Perhaps it would be better to join the fight immediately...

Just as Baek Cheon, out of his own impatience, unconsciously took a step forward, someone firmly grabbed the hem of his robe.

«Samae?»

Yu Iseol had a stern expression.

«Wait, Sahyeong.»

«...»

«Sajil is still fighting.»

Upon hearing that, Baek Cheon's gaze once again turned towards Chung Myung. Even from this distance, it was clear. The intense light emanating from Chung Myung's lowered eyes.

«...Alright.»

Baek Cheon eventually nodded heavily.

«But we can't wait for long. I have no intention of seeking revenge after his death.»

«I'll be the first to rush in then.»

Yu Iseol's voice was resolute. Baek Cheon nodded with great effort and stared at Chung Myung with bloodshot eyes.

«Chung Myung...»

Huff... huff...

Sweat mixed with blood ran down Chung Myung's chin. His entire body was in pain, as if it was about to collapse, and inexplicably heavy, as if all the remaining moisture in his body had been drained.

Chung Myung glanced down at his feet. His right foot was crushed halfway.

When demonic energy flew, he successfully threw his sword into the air and used the recoil to escape. But it was a matter of a sheet of paper's difference: his right foot was swept by the demonic storm.

'...Is it fortunate that it's the right one?'

For someone who used the superior sword, the left foot provided the weight for sword strikes. If the left foot was affected, the sword couldn't exert its full power. The right foot wasn't entirely unaffected, but at least it was better than the left.

But... what was most important was not the strength in the sword. Having one's foot injured meant a problem with mobility. He had lost one of the most significant weapons that allowed him to push Danjagang so far.

Why? Why did it end up like this?

Clank!

Placing his sword into the ground and struggling to get up, he said as if spitting it out to arrogantly approaching Danjagang.

«...Have you also mastered the Soul Absorbing Demonic Art [흡정마공(吸精魔功) — heubjeong magong]?

At those words, Danjagang's yes widened.

«It seems you're quite knowledgeable about the Religion.»

«...Looks like Demonic Cult completely lost it... Giving away the Soul Absorbing technique to a greenhorn like you.»

Chung Myung bit his lip.

It wasn't a mistake. He simply hadn't thought about it.

Today's Magyo was different from the past. In the past, they wouldn't have given this technique to a young Bishop like this novice.

Among the demonic arts, the Soul Absorbing Demonic Art was the most imperfect and dangerous, as it absorbed others' inner strength to increase the user's own inner strength, but it also drove the user's mind into chaos.

Those who fell into madness due to this arts didn't become devoted to the Church and Faith — they became true lunatics, turning into beasts that rampaged indiscriminately.

Even in a cult that pursued strength and fanaticism, such a technique was not easily permitted. However...

'I was stupid.'

He should have thought about it. The fact that today's Magyo was different from the past.

A hundred years ago, war was unending, and thus, there were people who couldn't handle the Soul Absorbing Arts, which absorbed inner strength of everything on the battlefield. But

in today's Demonic Cult, living together in small groups, there was only one target for the Soul Absorption.

«... You snake-like bastards, now eating up your own disciples.»

If the target for the Soul Absorption had learned the same demonic arts, the side effects would have been minimized. Of course, that didn't mean complete freedom from the side effects of the technique, but they could have been minimized considerably.

Because of his own oversight Chung Myung had failed to realize that this Bishop possessed inner strength far exceeding anyone's imagination.

All expectations were based on one's own common sense and experience. That's why he didn't anticipate things that went beyond his common sense. What people opposing Chung Myung used to do, he was doing now against the Bishop.

«Magyo's lunatics seem to have grown stronger, haven't they? Still, they didn't touch fellow believers in the past. Why? Were you afraid they'd rot and decay the same way the Heavenly Demon bastard died?»

«...»

«Answer me. How did it feel to eat up your fellow disciples? When you were sucking the life force out of them, did you ever look at their faces properly?»

Danjagang narrowed his eyes.

'How did it feel?'

He doesn't know at all. He doesn't understand at all. He seems to have knowledge of the Religion, but he lacks any understanding of it.

'He will never know.'

Those who were dying in ecstasy, willingly giving their life force, believing they could be the fertilizer for when the Heavenly Demon descend. The reason he couldn't endure it...

Danjagang's gaze darkened.

«Pitiful central plainer...»

«...»

«What?»

«Beasts don't show weakness until the moment of death. They endure until they can't bear it any longer.»

«...»

«Otherwise, they get abandoned and become a target again. So why, even after whatever you've been through, don't you show a moment of weakness?»

Thud.

Chung Myung gritted his teeth.

«Enough with your nonsense.»

Chung Myung's voice sounded like the whimpering of someone pierced in the lungs.

After a few deep breaths, the real Chung Myung walked toward Danjagang, dragging his injured foot.

«This is why young idiots like you won't do.»

«...»

«Why, do you already think you've won?»

Chung Myung let out a chilling smile.

«Let me tell you one thing, you foolish kid. There's no such thing as victory or defeat on the battlefield. There's only one option: to kill or be killed.»

These minor injuries were nothing. Even though he received wounds several times worse than this, he fought and crawled to kill his opponent. There was no reason to whine about a twisted foot now.

But Danjagang simply looked at Chung Myung with calm eyes.

«We've been waiting for the arrival.»

«...»

«For all those long years, we have just waited... and waited. Holding on to that sliver of hope that one day, He would answer our devotion, we simply waited.»

Danjagang paused for a moment and gazed up at the sky.

«The waiting itself isn't what's challenging. What's truly challenging is the lives of those who are dying without even hearing a single word in response. That's the real weight.»

«Kuh...»

Chung Myung, who had been silently listening, suddenly twitched his shoulders.

Danjagang eyes momentarily darkened. He sensed that the laughter wasn't some kind of provocation by Chung Myung.

«What's so funny?»

He asked the question, but Chung Myung continued to laugh, unable to stop.

«Ah, sorry.»

Chung Myung's laughter finally subsided, revealing the bloodstained lips.

«It's like watching a person trying to fish up in the clouds.»

«What do you mean?»

«Everything you said is wrong.»

Chung Myung gripped his sword.

«You will never receive an answer.»

«...»

«Even if the Heavenly Demon descends. Words like yours won't reach him. At least not to him.»

Danjagang's face distorted.

Chung Myung threw Danjagang's words right back at him.

«Poor you.»

«You...»

«You're a foolish one who doesn't even know what you believe in, what you worship. Your god doesn't care about you. Your cries mean nothing to your god.»

Thud!

With the sound of a growl, Danjagang's face twisted like a demon's.

He knew. He didn't need to hear what that guy had to say. There was no reason for him to waver in the face of someone who didn't know anything about the Religion, about the Heavenly Demon, or anything else.

But the reason he couldn't control his anger right now was just one.

The words Chung Myung had just said were the last thing he wanted to hear.

Like a wounded rampaging dragon, the energy inside him began to boil uncontrollably.

«This... This! You filthy unbeliever...»

«That's right. In your eyes, I'm nothing more than an unbeliever, dirty and despicable. But you know, you should keep this in mind.»

Chung Myung laughed heartily.

«Whether you're an unbeliever you consider so filthy, or whether you put your life on the line to lick the feet of the Heavenly Demon, in his eyes there is no difference.»

«This...»

Danjagang's eyes burst with bloody flames.

«Enough! Enough of that nonsense! Enough!»

«What about now? I'm getting curious.»

Chung Myung's shoulders jumped as he laughed, he was even wiping off his tears.

«I wonder what kind of expression you'd have when you, a person who doesn't even know what the Heavenly Demon is, see the Heavenly Demon with your own eyes. You're just a miserable bastard who believes in a god without even knowing what that god is.»

«No-ooooooooo!»

Danjagang's anger triggered an explosion of demonic energy. It was akin a massive waterfall rushing towards the sky. Enveloped in uncontrollable rage, Danjagang's eyes rolled completely backward, as he started to rampage.

«I'll kill you! I'll kill you! I will utterly destroy that damned mouth! I will leave not a scrap of flesh behind, and I will not even spare your soul, which dares to insult the Church and blaspheme the Heavenly Demon!»

«If you're going to do it, then try it, you damn ba...!»

As Chung Myung shouted harshly and was about to charge forward, someone blocked his way.

It was Jang Ilso, in his tattered blood-soaked red robe.

«Sorry for interrupting your friendly chat, but you should take a break for now.»

«What...?»

«I'm tired of listening to that nonsense. I'll create a gap for just a moment, so don't miss it.»

Jang Ilso slightly smiled and clenched his fist. Then, with a loud crack of his rings, he exuded an immense murderous aura and charged directly towards the frenzied Danjagang.