

## Chapter 1271

A tiger inside a poisonous trap. (1)

The shattered fragments of the swords swept through the air with tremendous force, as if no one made of flesh and blood could escape unscathed.

But at that moment, Chung Myung pulled the sword towards his body and began to rotate it fiercely. Simultaneously, red petals of sword energy burst out from the tip of the sword, wrapping around Chung Myung's body like a waterfall.

The Twenty-Four Plum Blossom Sword Technique [이십사수매화검법(二十四手梅花劍法) — isibasau-maehwa-geombeob] — Plum Blossom Barrier [매화난벽(梅花難壁) — maehwa-nanbyeog]!

Filled with extremely aggressive attacks, the Twenty-Four Plum Blossom Sword Technique is closer to the swordsmanship of an evil sect rather than the just sect. Among the twenty-four stances, Plum Blossom Barrier is the only one with a strong defensive aspect. It enveloped Chung Myung's body in all directions, creating a brilliant wall of plum blossoms. With explosive force, the flying sword fragments collided with the Plum Blossom Barrier surrounding Chung Myung, only to be repelled like hitting an iron wall.

«Hah!»

Rarely, Chung Myung let out a shout of determination. As he did, the Plum Blossom Barrier swirling around his body exploded outward in all directions.

The already exploded sword fragments pierced through the bodies of Maninbang's warriors, who were already in disarray.

Despite having holes all over their bodies, these men who assaulted Chung Myung didn't utter a single groan. Just witnessing their resilience hinted that they were different from any opponents he had faced here before.

And then, the subsequent actions of Maninbang's warriors caused even Chung Myung's expression to harden.

With a loud thud, instead of retreating, they charged forward.

Thunk! Thunk! Thunk!

Their reckless charge knew no bounds. The sharp plum blossom sword energy mercilessly retaliated against this foolish charge, but the attackers didn't even blink. They simply used both hands to protect their heads and necks while accelerating forward.

It was as if they believed that as long as they protected their heads, they wouldn't face immediate death, even if pierced dozens of times by those crimson petals.

«Argh!»

Their first screams erupted from their mouths as they reached Chung Myung in an instant, spreading their arms wide as they attempted to engulf him.

It was a frenzy of madness that would leave anyone bewildered. Unfortunately for them, Chung Myung was not someone to be classified as «anyone.»

Chung Myung slightly leaned back and swung his sword horizontally. If they ignored defense and rushed forward, he'd exploit that vulnerability. His swordsmanship sacrificed finesse for speed and strength.

With a loud thud, the bodies of the charging men were split in half from the chest down. However, dealing with everyone attacking from all sides with a single blow was impossible. The remaining ones attacked Chung Myung without any signs of hesitation, wielding short daggers [소도(小刀)] that seemed to have appeared out of nowhere.

It was a desperate situation.

But in that moment, Chung Myung's eyes became even colder.

With a resounding thud, Chung Myung's Dark Plum Sword emitted a crescent-shaped sword energy in all directions. The crimson crescent-like energy sliced the bodies of the attackers into pieces in an instant.

However, the survivors showed no signs of backing down. One of them, who had reached Chung Myung, fiercely swung a poisoned dagger [독비(毒匕)] at him.

Even as their comrades fell one by one, and their own lives at stake, there was no hint of emotion in the eyes of the remaining members of the group.

It was not just coldness, but something closer to a lack of humanity.

Chung Myung gritted his teeth and swung his sword. The hand holding the poisoned dagger was severed at the wrist and flew into the air.

In that moment, Chung Myung's eyes widened.

‘Poison?’

The blood spurting from the severed wrist had a strange black hue. It was a typical symptom of someone poisoned by toxins.

Perhaps if Chung Myung were to come into contact with that blood, there would be a high chance of him being poisoned as well. If there were time to spare, he could easily dispose of the poison, but in the midst of such a fierce battle, there was no room for such luxury.

‘Well, as long as I don't get poisoned.’

The sound of Chung Myung's sword cutting through the air echoed as it surged towards the heart of the charging member of Maninbang.

With a powerful roar, Chung Myung's beloved Dark Plum Sword pierced through the hardened muscles of the assailant like cutting through paper, lodging itself deeply into their heart.

But in that moment, the man grabbed the sword lodged in his heart with his hand. It was an instinctive reaction rather than a deliberate intention. Chung Myung watched with eyes devoid of any sympathy. Just as he was about to sever the fingers grasping the sword, something unexpected happened.

Thud! Thud!

As the imminent threat of death loomed over the member of Maninbang, his abdomen swelled momentarily. Sensing something was about to happen, Chung Myung was about to unleash a strike, but before he could, the enemy's abdomen exploded in a violent blast, engulfing Chung Myung in its fury.

With a deafening roar, the unexpected explosion sent a massive cloud of dust into the air along the coast.

'What's happening?'

Even the renowned commander, Ho Gamyong, appeared bewildered by the situation. He turned his gaze towards the leader of the Blood Sword Squad, Goe Yang. It was the members of the Blood Sword Squad who were currently attacking Chung Myung. Only Goe Yang would know the reason behind their actions.

«We are finally up to something interesting.»

Goe Yang said sarcastically, seemingly pleased by the deep gash on Ho Gamyong's face.

«What have you done? Did you obtain the Golden Dragon's Secret Manual from the Tang clan?»

«The Golden Dragon's Secret Manual?»

Upon hearing his words, Goe Yang let out a light sneer.

«I don't see why something like that would be necessary. As long as the outcome is the same.»

Ho Gamyong was left speechless.

«It's not complicated. We simply split open the belly of the man and inserted the explosive projectiles inside. We also strategically placed poisoned needles around them.»

«Wait... You put explosive projectiles inside people's abdomens? And with poisoned needles too?»

«Yes.»

Ho Gamyong stared at Goe Yang, seemingly at a loss for words. Even for a member of Sapa like Ho Gamyong, who was willing to employ any means as long as it yielded the desired results, this act crossed a line.

«And you expect them to survive?»

«Don't be foolish, commander. Even if the explosives don't detonate, they'll surely die. If the poison inside the belly was weak enough for them to survive, then we wouldn't have used it in the first place.»

“...”

«Anyway, he is not the kind of person you can scratch with using conventional means. If they can inflict even a single scratch on this giant with their lives, it's a glorious death, isn't it?»

Ho Gamyong turned his head without responding.

'How ruthless.'

As appalling as their actions were, there was no denying their efficiency. Even if that weren't the case, Ho Gamyong had nothing to say. Each Dan [Squad] of Maninbang operated independently. While orders could be given to the Dan, how they trained and utilized their members fell solely within the jurisdiction of the Danju.

«Have you captured him?»

«As if. Like I said, it's a monster. They might all look the same to your feeble eyes, but that one is in a league of its own.»

“...”

«At best, it's just one or two holes. Or maybe it's just a scratch.»

Goe Yang stared at the gradually settling dust cloud with indifferent eyes.

«But that's enough. Those scratches accumulate, eventually creating a fatal wound, slowly tightening the noose. Until then is enough.»

Ho Gamyong's gaze also turned towards the dust cloud.

Soon, the dust cleared, revealing the figure of one person.

Hwasan Geomhyeop Chung Myung.

He appeared unharmed, but Ho Gamyong observed him closely. Small holes dotted his robes, with the fabric around them stained darker.

Chung Myung glanced down at his body. Blood seeped from the pierced holes. Fortunately, the needle hadn't penetrated completely, avoiding a disaster of bursting inside.

However, whether that was truly fortunate remained questionable.

If you look at it the other way around, it means that poisoned needles are embedded in the body.

He spat out the blood pooling in his mouth, mingled with a dark hue indicating the spreading poison.

«Quite something, isn't it?»

Unexpected. Chung Myung had experienced countless battlefields, with the most prevalent being with Demonic Cult, those drenched in their fanaticism beyond reason.

Yet even they hadn't attacked in this manner. If they were beasts tainted by fanaticism, these bastards felt more like emotionless hunters.

«This is how it should be...»

Chung Myung's lips twisted.

His teeth, soaked in dark blood, revealed a chilling sight.

«This is how Maninbang should be.»

Their leader was Jang Ilso. He wouldn't raise his subordinates in any ordinary way.

Chung Myung turned his body. The observation ends here. Further delay would truly become dangerous.

With a powerful kick, he dashed towards the coastline, drawing a black line. The group that had occupied the coastline seemed to have been waiting, blocking Chung Myung's path.

They were dressed in red and wielded swords.

Different from those he had faced before from.

Sensing this, Chung Myung lowered his stance. As they rushed forward, their swords swung in a lightning-fast onslaught. Chung Myung calmly parried instead of disregarding them.

Clang!

As their swords clashed, the sword of the Blood Sword Squad member bent flexibly, wrapping around Chung Myung's Dark Plum Sword.

'Flexible sword [연검(軟劍) or soft sword]?'

No, impossible! No matter how much force is exerted, a flexible sword couldn't withstand Chung Myung's Dark Plum Sword.

Just then, the sword entwining Chung Myung's blade twisted, revealing fangs like a snake, darting towards Chung Myung's face. It seemed to elongate like the segmented bones of a skinless snake.

Cheongmyeong widened his eyes.

'Snake sword [사복검(蛇腹劍) or whip sword]!'

A weapon with interconnected segments along its length, made to extend and contract using a wire!

Despite Chung Myung pulling his sword, the Snake Sword entwining the Dark Plum Sword relentlessly held on, refusing to release it. The action of gripping and pulling was combined with thrusting simultaneously.

It was an eerie and bizarre maneuver possible only with such an abnormal weapon.

Whaaa!

In that moment, Chung Myung's left hand scattered into the air.

It's a strange expression, but quite literal. Chung Myung's hand seemed to blur, creating numerous shadows between the sword and his face, resembling petals being scattered like plum blossoms.

One of the peak techniques, Plum Blossom Scattering Hand [매화산수(梅花散手) maehwa-sansu]!

Clang!

The shadows blossoming in the air deflected the incoming sword strikes. However, the problem was that there wasn't just one sword.

Chwaaaag!

Successive Snake Swords coiled around Chung Myung's Dark Plum Sword.

Soon, the tautly pulled swords firmly immobilized Chung Myung's sword, as if vowing never to release it!

Meanwhile, other members of the Blood Sword Squad surged forward, thrusting their swords. Their blades extended and twisted in grotesque ways, resembling a swarm of venomous snakes converging on a stag, assaulting Chung Myung from all directions.