

Chapter 1048

I must have been crazy too. (3)

Namung Dowi tightened the grip on his sword with all his might. He believed he had the potential to be of help. He recognized there was a difference, but he didn't consider the gap to be so big. So, while he might not play a major role, he was confident he could at least do his part.

But right now, he felt overwhelmed even trying to keep up with the others.

‘What’s going on?’

Many things seemed inexplicable.

«For goodness’ sake!»

Clank!

His sword got stuck in demonic cultist’s neck. Although the sword was infused with the pure energy of the Azure Sky Boundless Cultivation Technique [창궁무애심법(蒼穹無涯?法)], it barely penetrated an inch into the fragile human neck, not even reaching the bone.

«Kaaaargh!»

With the sword lodged in his throat, a cultist grimaced and thrust his claws toward Namung Dowi’s abdomen.

At that moment...

Paaaang!

A sword flew with incredible speed, slicing demonic cultist’s neck, his head was severed in a single stroke.

«Are you alright?»

Instead of answering, Namung Dowi bit his lip tightly.

‘Yoon Jong Dojang.’

He knew. Yoon Jong was strong.

Namung Dowi once thought that the group known as the Ogeom (Five swords) was overly renowned in comparison to their actual skills.

He was sure that the Ogeom were powerful, and it was nearly impossible to underestimate the one leading them, Chung Myung . However, he believed that the other members had gained their names primarily due to their association with Chung Myung’s fame, rather than their own skills.

Therefore, he might have thought that excluding Chung Myung, he was one step ahead of the other Five Swords.

However, watching their performance here made him realize that he had been completely mistaken in his judgment.

‘Is there really such a big difference?’

He knew that Chung Myung was strong. He knew that Baek Cheon was also strong.

But the way Yoon Jong, Jo Geol, and others were easily beheading demonic cultists left him utterly shook. Even if the skill levels were similar, he never expected the difference to be this pronounced.

‘Damn it.’

He began to wonder if he had been too stubborn. He had come here to be of assistance, not to protect his pride. Yet, in this place, he felt like nothing more than an amateur trying to hold onto their ankles. And if that wasn’t enough, they were now running even faster than before. With every cautious look that Yoon Jong and Jo Geol cast back, he felt his self-esteem shatter into pieces. All this concern and attention originated from a place of kindness, he knew it.

But in his heart, Namgung Dowi struggled to understand, regretting his foolish insistence on coming along.

The front was ablaze with crimson sword energy, forming an astonishing array of plum blossom petals, sweeping away demonic cultists blocking their path. No words were necessary, and no one questioned or doubted why they had to break through, where they were going, for there was a sign ahead.

The red sword energy leading the charge from the front guided them more powerfully than a thousand words could.

Namgung Dowi lowered his head slightly. He wished to move forward but knew he would only be a hindrance to them. It was better to...

«Namgung Dowi!»

Just then, the sharp voice of Chung Myung pierced his ears.

«Yes?»

«Come forward, you brat!»

Before his mind could process, his body responded to Chung Myung’s voice, instinctively moving ahead. He passed through the group in front of him, reaching Chung Myung’s side. The moment he arrived behind Chung Myung’s, he felt his strong grip on his shoulder, pulling him forward.

«Why is this foolish brat lagging behind? Move it, Namgung bastard!»

«Yes?»

«Move forward!»

Chung Myung pushed Namgung Dowi ahead.

«Lead the way, Namgung brat! Clear your mind and strike wildly when you see the enemy!»

«Dojang!»

“What are you doing?!”

Namgung Dowi watched demonic cultists rushing towards him, frozen, but it was a fleeting moment. Soon, a fierce light gleamed in Namgung Dowi’s eyes.

Without hesitation, he raised his sword.

«Haaaap!»

Tremendous amount of inner energy surged from his body. Simultaneously, his sword emitted an enormous amount of sword energy.

At the tip of his sword, a brilliant white light, representing Namgung Clan, shone. Namgung Dowi wielded his sword with all his strength, and the dazzling white sword energy shot forward like a projectile.

Kwaaaaaaang!

Demonic cultists rushing towards them were swept away in an explosion created by the sword energy.

Namgung Dowi tightened his grip on the sword.

‘That’s right!’

He couldn’t wield his sword with precision of the Five Swords of Hwasan or accurately target his enemies’ weaknesses like them. He could acknowledge that he was still lacking in those aspects. However, using immense inner strength to overwhelm the enemy was his, or rather, Namgung Clan’s forte.

‘This is my place!’

The king waits at the rear, but the Emperor [제왕 as in classical namgung technique — 제왕검형(帝王劍形) Emperor’s Sword Form] destroys the enemy at the forefront. There is only one place for someone with the name Namgung, and that is at the front!

«See it?»

By forcibly turning Namgung Dowi’s head, Chung Myung made him look in another direction.

In Namgung Dowi’s eyes, the crumbling outline of a pavilion was visible.

«There!»

Namgung Dowi nodded, feeling the gaze upon him.

«Just clear the way to there. We’ll take care of the rest. Don’t think about anything, just unleash everything you’ve got!»

«Yes!»

Namgung Dowi answered with a resounding voice and tightened his grip on his sword. There were no lengthy explanations — it was more of an order bordering on coercion. However, that alone was enough.

As soon as Chung Myung’s hand fell, Yu Iseol and Baek Cheon followed him to his left and right. Hye Yeon soared above Namgung Dowi’s head, extending his arms forward.

«Wooooooo!»

A brilliant light radiated from Hye Yeon, spreading out like waves in all directions.

The almost perfectly spread Bulgwang Bojo [불광보조(佛光普照) — Illuminating light of Buddha envelopes everything] pushed demonic cultists back. As space opened up, without missing the opportunity, Baek Cheon and Yu Iseol, as if they had planned it in advance, wielded their swords.

Plum Blossom, Plum Blossom, and Plum Blossom again!

In the midst of it all, the plum blossoms that had bloomed gradually swirled like a fantasy, the scene appeared as if the entire world was engulfed with fluttering plum blossoms.

«Young Leader!»

«Sohyeop!»

As if to urge them, the voices burst forth, and Namgung Dowi reflexively summoned his inner strength.

«Ooooooh!»

His sword descended vertically from above. In the world filled with golden buddhist light and abundant red plum blossoms, a pure white beam struck like a lightning.

Kwaaaaang!

It exploded, swept, and pushed forward. Namgung, Hwasan, and Shaolin, the three major factions dedicated to righteousness. Although they might not fully understand it now, one day, they will become the representatives of their respective factions, leading everyone together.

Namgung's «Pae — 覇(覇)» (Dominance), Hwasan's «Hwan — 幻(幻)» (Illusion), and Shaolin's «Jung — 重(重)» (Weight). The nature of their martial arts might differ, but their goals are not. Therefore, there is no reason why they cannot harmonize. In fact, isn't harmony possible precisely because they are different?

«We're coming!»

«Yes!»

Namgung Dowi gritted his teeth and increased the pace of his charge. Baek Cheon, Yu Iseol, and Hye Yeon quickly followed suit.

Emboldened by his confidence, Namgung Dowi charged ahead. Observing the rear, Chung Myung adjusted his breathing, then slightly lowered his sword and looked back.

Noticing that their group's rear, where Im Sobyong has retreated, was fending off the approaching cultists, Chung Myung suddenly showed slightly disgusted expression.

«No! Why am I the only one to...»

Before Im Sobyong could fully express his discontent, Chung Myung shifted his gaze from him and turned back to the front.

All of this unfolded under the watchful eyes of Jang Ilso.

‘Raising these brats feels like raising tiger cubs.’

From Jang Ilso's perspective, it would indeed be more convenient for Chung Myung to step up and resolve the matters himself.

Generally speaking, seeking help from others might be more convenient, but once the gap in strength becomes this significant, it can be more troublesome to entrust tasks to others than doing them themselves.

However, Hwasan Geomhyeop doesn't forget to nurture these youngsters, even in this dire situation.

«Hey, Sapa bastard.»

«Hmm?»

At that moment, Chung Myung's voice came out of nowhere, causing Jang Ilso to furrow his brow.

«Don't just roll your eyeballs around, do your job. You didn't come here just to watch the show, did you? Even if being audacious is Sapa's habit, you do know this is your home, right?»

A laugh burst out of Jang Ilso's lips. Is there anyone else in the world who can boldly speak like this in front of him?

“I was just about to start with all my might.”

With a burst of scorching blue flames erupting from his entire body, Jang Ilso launched forward.

Blue Flame Battleground Slaughter [창염투살(蒼炎鬪殺) — chang-yeomtusal] and Soul Serving Flame Power [단혼염강(斷魂炎剛) — danhon-yeomgang].

The bright blue flames, with tongues resembling those of a living creature, surged forward, engulfing demonic cultists.

Terrifying cries filled the air as the immense heat and flame as hard as steel left agonizing burning wounds.

In the blink of an eye, the injuries inflicted by these flames became painfully scorched as white smoke billowed from their burning bodies.

«Too bad. If they hadn't resisted so hard, they could have died gracefully.»

Jang Ilso ran forward, stomping on the head of a cultist, causing it to explode.

Moving forward swiftly, Jang Ilso inquired with a sly grin as he approached Chung Myung.

«It seems you found that Bishop?»

«Right away.»

«Quite useful, isn't he? More than you might have thought.»

Chuckling, Jang Ilso glanced at the partially collapsed pavilion.

«There?»

«Yes.»

«The Bishop... The Bishop...»

Jang Ilso's face revealed a fleeting smile tinged with an eerie sense of delight.

«Are there any guards protecting him?»

“Internal Law Enforcement [Jipbeopsaja — 집행사자]”

“Huh?”

«They call themselves law enforcers. They are the ones who serve directly under bishops and as their bodyguards. In the past, they were also known as Demonic Generals [마장(魔將) — majang].»

«You know quite a lot.»

Jang Ilso's eyes narrowed while he started thinking.

«Yeah, there's no time to waste. Once we deal with these nuisances, we need to kill this law enforcer and, finally, cut the Bishop's throat. That's why we came here in the first place, right?»

He understood that delaying could lead to unfavorable changes in the situation. More reinforcements could arrive, increasing the number of demonic cultists. The longer they waited, the more disadvantageous it became.

‘We need to go for the head.’

Isn't that why they took the risk to come here? Right now, they didn't have time to leisurely open the road from the outskirts.

‘The important thing is reaching where the Bishop is.’

Afterwards, he will swing that well-forged sword and cut off the bishop's head.

Nevertheless, Chung Myung's next words completely derailed his calculations.

«Wrong.»

«Hmm?»

Doubt flickered in Jang Ilso's pale eyes as he listened. Chung Myung's voice turned chillingly cold.

«It's not ‘we kill a law enforcer’.»

His gaze remained fixed ahead.

«It's ‘we kill law enforcers’.»

Jang Ilso's face stiffened momentarily. He felt it too, the overwhelming presence, exuding a terrifying aura, that was heading their way.

Chung Myung revealed his white teeth and let out a cold laugh.

«That's right. Those are the real ones.»

In an instant, beyond the fallen buildings, more than a dozen dark figures soared into the sky.