

Chapter 1023

What did you just say? (8)

Human beings forget. Humans who have ingested the poison of time slowly forget everything. What they've learned, heard, even what they've experienced.

This is why humans can try again.

A human who has experienced bone-chilling failure can try again due to forgetfulness, and a human who has writhed in unbearable pain can move forward because of forgetfulness.

Perhaps the majority of the dazzling progress achieved by humanity might be a gift from 'forgetfulness.'

But in this moment, all the members of the Black Ghost came to a painful realization.

The fact that there are things in the world that must never be forgotten. Things that must be remembered at all costs, no matter the price they have to pay... They had forgotten.

Kwaaaaaaaah!

The incomprehensible black maelstrom seemed like it would suck in their very souls with their eyes locked on it.

«Uh... uh...»

Their breath was constricted. A thick, heavy energy pressed down on them, like the pressure of the deep sea.

Even the elite members of the Black Ghost Fortress, and even Mangeum Daebu, the sect's leader known as the First Sword of Four Evil Sects, were left speechless before the spectacle unfolding.

«Is this... Demonic Arts [마공(魔功) — magong]?»

The sensation of impending crisis made their bodies tremble. It wasn't simply because it was powerful. This was something different. The spectacle unfolding before their eyes seemed to entirely defy the path of martial arts as they had known it until now.

Just[정 — jong], Evil[사 — sa], and Outer[새외 — saewae as 塞外 in Five Palaces beyond the border]. It differs fundamentally from any know martial arts.

How should it be expressed? That martial art. No, even giving it the name «martial art» would be unjust to that bizarre, indescribable something.

Kyaahhh!

The roaring of the swirling demonic energy tearing through the air sounded like someone's agonizing scream.

The thick, billowing black smoke violently enveloped the surroundings like a storm. The wind uprooted trees and overturned the earth as it howled.

They had to crouch down to avoid being carried away by the wind, before even attempting to resist the force.

But at that moment, something incredibly strange happened that made them doubt their own eyes.

Among those who were unsure of what to do, the two people at the front began to be gradually drawn forward.

«What's happening!»

The martial artists felt the gravitational force [인력(引力)] pulling them forward.

The storm-like energy was clearly pushing them away, yet their bodies were being dragged forward more and more. The fate of those who hesitated for a moment in the face of this incomprehensible situation was exceptionally cruel.

«Eh, eh?»

The two at the forefront, who were forcibly pulled forward, were eventually drawn in at a speed like they had thrown themselves towards the enemy with all their might.

Up to that point, they had not understood what was happening. They saw it. The ferocious whirlwind of black demonic energy spinning fiercely as if welcoming them.

It resembled a dark abyss, like an ominous maw.

«Ee, euaaaaah!»

From those who sensed their fate, a desperate and indescribable scream erupted. The storm of black demonic energy soon engulfed their bodies entirely.

Kwagagagak!

It tore. It shredded. It split.

No words could do it justice. If one had to express it crudely, the phrase «torn apart» seemed the most appropriate.

The human body was too feeble to withstand such an immense energy. Bodies swept up by the storm quickly turned into a mere handful of blood. The crimson blood spiraled within the demonic energy's whirlwind, endlessly spouting upward. It seemed as though the entire sky had been stained red.

Hooddudeuk.

The scattered blood rained down upon the ground. It was as if a Blood Rain [피의 비](血雨) had fallen from the sky.

Those who witnessed this entire spectacle with their eyes wide open couldn't even catch their breath. They were simply drenched in the falling blood.

«What... happened?»

They couldn't comprehend what had just occurred.

Although they couldn't gather their full strength in haste, the martial artists assembled here were meticulously nurtured by the Black Ghost. They were considered elite among elites, rivaling any martial faction in the world.

Yet, they hadn't even been able to put up a fight and were reduced to a mere handful of blood in an instant. This was a sight that defied all reason and common sense.

However, there was no room for disbelief. The heat of the blood flowing down their faces made it impossible for everyone present to escape this reality.

«Stop it...!»

Sweeeesh!

At that moment, three jet black blade energies that had emerged from the black storm passed by, leaving behind the person who had tried to scream.

«...»

He, who couldn't even feel the sensation of being cut, lowered his head with a blank expression to look down at his own body.

Slash.

Long red lines began to be drawn vertically on his body.

«Th-that...»

Slasheek!

His body, split into four pieces, collapsed to the ground.

Thuds.

The dense, dull sound echoed several times. It was the sound of the broken body hitting the ground. The horror conveyed by that sound was unlike anything they had experienced before.

«Eh, eh...»

At that moment, another person floated into the air, only to be drawn into the storm of demonic energy.

«Ee, euaaaaah!»

A desperate scream erupted. Anyone who saw the ferocious storm of demonic energy approaching so closely seemed about to vomit blood from screaming in horror.

However, at that very moment, the storm of demonic energy that seemed ready to swallow his body vanished as if it had been a lie.

He had narrowly escaped immediate death, but he couldn't rejoice. It was because a man was standing there, where the demonic energy that had obscured his vision had disappeared.

Whoosh!

Danjagang grabbed the man's face that he had drawn into his grasp. He began to slowly tighten his grip.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh!

And then, he began to squeeze his hand. His fingers pierced the man's face, leaving behind five distinct holes.

«Ku... Huk... Keu...»

Grimacing in agony, the man caught in Danjagang's hand desperately scratched and clawed at the hand that held his face.

«Keu... Ruk... Keurureuk...»

The fear that his head might explode at any moment made him go insane. He groaned continuously, clawing at Danjagang's arm as if possessed by a relentless evil.

The sight of a warrior, someone who had mastered martial arts, an elite of the Black Ghost Fortress, desperately trying to claw at Danjagang's arm with his nails, left those who watched feeling a greater sense of despair.

«...To such insignificant beings.»

Danjagang, with face distorted in disgust, exerted a sudden burst of strength in the hand holding the man's head.

Crack!

Finally the head shattered into pieces and burst in all directions. The headless body fell to the ground like a rotten bale of straw and crumbled.

With each beat of the still-pumping heart red blood spurted from the lifeless body's neck. It stained Danjagang's crimson robe even darker each time.

Thud!

Trampling on the convulsing body, Danjagang slowly approached the Black Ghost warriors. Watching all of this unfold, even the complexion of the head of the Black Ghost Fortress, Mangeum Daebu, lost its color.

His calm heart, which never wavered, was now out of control and was making discordant sounds.

'What is that? That monster?'

They were the elites of the Black Ghost, created through immense time and immense effort. But that creature was trampling them as if they were insects underfoot.

'How can someone like that...'

Everything tends to be exaggerated. Humans always add three coins of lies to what they see. Thus, the stories told through word of mouth become more exaggerated and distorted by the accumulated falsehoods, transforming into entirely different tales over time.

So, they thought the stories about Demonic Cult that dyed Central Plains with blood a hundred years ago were subject to this rule.

Mangeum Daebu and the hundred elites of the Black Ghost Fortress, if they encountered a handful of insignificant enemies, believed they could deal with them at any time. Even if the worst situation unfolded, they believed that they had sufficient room to retreat and plan for the future, even if they suffered some losses.

However, now he was facing that.

The legend, now seemingly so distant and tainted with an unbearable stench of blood, poured out of the past. The odor of that death was so vivid that it was impossible to deny.

Step by step, as Danjagang approached, the elite warriors of the Black Ghost unconsciously raised their voices in a cry of desperation.

«Stop him!»

«There's only one opponent!»

«Surround and deal with him!»

Mangeum Daebu remained frozen in place.

He was the one who calculated and understood everything in the world. However, the specter of the past that had manifested in front of him defied any logic. He couldn't figure out what to do in this situation.

Amidst the confusion, the elite warriors instinctively began to move. They poured out all the power they had.

This could be called courage. But courage that recklessly exceeds one's limits is nothing but foolishness.

With a war cry, the Black Ghost's warriors charged towards the Bishop.

«Krrraaaah!»

Jet black blades of demonic energy erupted from Bishop's fingerprints, tearing limbs of those who approached him into hundreds of pieces.

«Ah!»

Flesh and blood poured down like rain.

Strangely, fear didn't cross their minds. The sensation of unfamiliarity outweighed fear. The death that Bishop portrayed was so different from the death they had known.

Thud. Thud.

Death painted the earth a vivid crimson color. The Bishop walked upon it, indifferent.

And at that moment, the stoic head of the Black Ghost Fortress finally spoke.

“Are you... the... Heavenly Demon of this era?»

Thud.

The moment those words fell, the endless steps of the Bishop stopped for the first time. His consistently indifferent face distorted in a strange eerie way.

«What did you say?»

«Are you... the Heavenly Demon?»

«Haha...»

An empty laughter erupted from Danjagang's mouth.

«Hahaha.»

«...»

«Hahahahahahahahat!»

His laughter grew louder, reaching a maniacal pitch.

Everyone looked at him blankly.

With tears streaming down his face, the Bishop suddenly stopped laughing and glared at the Mangeum Daebu with a changed expression.

«How dare... a wretched insect utter that sacred name from with it's filthy mouth?»

«...»

«You...»

Thunk.

Danjagang, ominously gritted his teeth and shouted with a demonic face.

«You will die feeling the most excruciating pain in this world!»

And with a menacing determination, he charged straight at the Mangeum Daebu.