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Chapter 16: Ranking Dispute (1)

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When Woon Seong stepped out from the exit of the passageway, a bright and dazzling light poured into his vision.

Woon Seong frowned slightly at the sudden flash of light that invaded the corners of his cornea.

He slowly opened his squinted eyes over time and adjusted to the lighting of the room he had entered.

What he saw was that the senior instructor from his Third Hall with some individuals standing side by side of equal strength.

However, the number of senior instructors was four times higher than usual.

'Not only has my senior instructor arrived, but I think the other instructors are the senior instructors from the first, second and fourth halls.'

Woon Seong moved his gaze slowly.

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There was only one child who left the Trial of Life and Death closed door training before him.

The face attached to the boy who had completed the trial earlier than him was a new face he had not seen in the Third Hall he was a part of.

If he was a member of the same Hall as Woon Seong, he would have seen his face even if he was just a passerby, but that wasn't the case..

It's not that he didn't pay attention to his surroundings or the other children. Sure, Woon Seong was rather isolative, but he just didn't see the boy before.

'I see. This is what must have happened.'

Woon Seong, who understood what was going on, knew why the other senior instructors were gathered.

The number of children who would pass through this trial of life and death, would probably number to only about 100 children if they were being generous with the numbers.

Since the trial itself was meant to cull the ones that would not be of use to the cult, it was only natural the numbers of the survivors would be low.

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Hence, why there was no need to separate the children by different numbered halls anymore.

‘The entire population making up the Cave of Latent Demons has gathered here.’

As Woon Seong looked around, one of the instructors stepped forward and looked at him.

“Hmm.... What number is that one?”

He was Sang In-Hyo, the general manager of the Cave of Latent Demons.

With the appearance of Sang-hyo, Woon Seong turned his head and looked at him. Then he reflexively gulped and swallowed his saliva as he stared at Sang In-Hyo.

‘He... He’s a Peak Realm Martial Artist’

Woon Seong’s was barely above him in terms of strength when comparing his previous life’s strength to the current Sang In-Hyo. The amount of strength Woon Seong currently had was maybe enough to fend off his attacks at best.

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However, considering the circumstances, it was not worth finding out whether he could or not.

In any case, Sang In-Hyo was a Peak Realm martial artist who was on the verge of being a Transcendent Realm martial artist.

Of course there would be no need to worry about his strength with his previous life's body. Woon Seong might be wary of Sang In-Hyo at most back then.

According to the Realms of strength sorted out by the whole of Murim, Sang In-Hyo was at the threshold between Peak Realm and Transcendence, but Woon Seong was a full fledged Transcendent back then.

Right now however, Woon Seong felt he could exert the physical strength of a Peak Realm martial artist if he took off all his bracers.

But, there was no need to do that right now.

Did he notice that Woon Seong was measuring his strength? Sang In-Hyo grinned at Woon Seong.

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His grin was devilish and would make anybody and their mother, faint on the spot.

“He is No. 900.”

It was the senior instructor of the third hall that Woon Seong was a part of, that replied to Sang In-Hyo’s question.

Sang In-Hyo nodded at the words and slowly scratched his chin.

“Oh, how interesting. This is the one is he? The one that has piqued the interest of the other senior instructors and has been achieving great things, no?”

Woon Seong felt a curious gaze toward him.

As Woon Seong had just done earlier, Sang In-Hyo was now measuring the strength of Woon Seong.

Then he turned his head and compared the strength of Woon Seong to the child who had finished first.

Woon Seong was the second to arrive. However, the first child had his clothes in rags, whereas Woon Seong had not even a scratch on him.

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Blood was even trickling out from wounds here and there.

Sang In-Hyo, who confirmed the strength of Woon Seong, smiled and murmured once more.

“He must be a blessing for the Cult.”

It was then that another entrance to the cave they were in, began to vibrate and open.

The next person to walk out was Ah-Young, who also knew Woon Seong from the Third Hall.

She grew up to be an unrecognizable beauty, and her hair was a little messy, perhaps after a fierce battle or it was just her natural tomboyish nature.

“Oh, my?”

She recognized Woon Seong and waved her hand at him. Woon Seong saw this, snorted and looked away feigning ignorance.

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She was curious about Woon Seong before, but her interest had become even more riled up ever since Woon Seong had killed No. 185 and his 5 other lackeys with utter ease.

He, in her eyes, was a sleek and fit boy with long wavy blue hair and eyes that were cold like a serpent's.

She knew Woon Seong, but the first child she did not recognize, and one other child was just entering as well.

They didn't know it other than Sang In-Hyo, but these were the three children that had entered aside from Woon Seong, and had established themselves very early on in the Cave of Latent Demons.

Of course, there was one more person... Woon Seong, the dark horse of sorts.

No. 900 wasn't worth much in the beginning in the eyes of the instructors, but he started growing at a frightening pace with a higher learning curve than all the other 3 children, combined.

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In any case, all 4 of them at the same time flinched as they examined each other's strengths. They knew these other 3 people aside themselves, were the other elites from the Cave of Latent Demons.

Starting with them, more children passed through their own trials of life and death hall one-by-one. When the door finally closed, there were a total of 89 people.

"Hmmm, I think there's quite a lot. It seems you all were able to pass."

Sang In-Hyo quickly summed up the deaths of the children who had died.

He was addressing the children who went crazy and couldn't stand the solitude of the training and went crazy.

"Well, you did a good job anyway. You've now gained the titles of Demonic Captains by passing through this trial of life and death. Congratulations."

A Demonic Captain.

Woon Seong recalled just how many Demonic Captains there were in relationship to the entire Cult of the Heavenly Demon. If one looked

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throughout the entire Cult of the Heavenly Demon, there were only about 2,000 of them.

The young men and women from the Cave of Latent Demons, who now had just finished their closed door training, were officially part of those 2,000 Demonic Captains within the Cult.

It seemed this was just one of the reasons for the Cave of Latent Demons, Woon Seong thought.

Considering the Senior Instructors of the Cave of Latent Demons were Demonic Generals and Sang In-Hyo was a Great Demon, it was a great boon for the Cult of the Heavenly Demon.

“.....there seem to be a few who are good enough to even be called Demonic Generals, but you must all be tired from exiting your closed door training.”

Sang In-Hyo smiled widely as he looked at 4 children among the 89 there. They were the first four children to arrive from their closed door training. No. 17, No. 01, No. 109 and lastly.... No. 900.

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This was the Cave of Latent Demons, and it would be an amazing blessing if Sang In-Hyo was able to produce even a single Demonic General.

However, forget one. He had four of those individuals!

“For you, the teachers have personally given you a prize. So just for today, you can eat proper meals and enjoy yourself as much as you’d like.”

When he stomped his foot lightly, a sweet, greasy and aromatic smell began to start emanating in the air.

The trainees turned their heads toward the source of the smell in unison, and servants carrying multiple bright and beautiful dishes that were enough to even make the Emperor drool in satisfaction, were being brought out.

“Come on and enjoy yourselves, you will need the food and rest in order to be prepared for your last trial of life and death inside the cave tomorrow.”

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Sang In-Hyo turned his head and smiled as the food was finally placed in front of the children. He made a special emphasis on the fact that it was the final trial of life and death for them. But, Woon Seong picked up on the clause at the end that left more thoughts to be desired. 'Inside the cave that is... Hm.'

"We'll get out of the way, so enjoy yourself."

At the end of the speech, all the instructors, including Senior Instructors, left their seats, and the children looked at the food in front of them with puzzled eyes.

There were mountains of food

There weren't any dishes that were not fancy enough to not be called an absolute delicacy.

It was a beautiful scene of wonderful dishes and meats that the children had never known in their lives.

Especially so when they started their lives in the Cave of Latent Demons.

Aside from the basic nutritional supplements, they were trainees who had never eaten any dishes that could seriously fill their stomachs.

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As a result, natural hesitation arose within the children. But, there were four individuals who moved in between the hesitating 89 children,

The first one was No. 01.

He moved slowly, packed a huge amount of food onto a plate, and headed to a corner to eat by himself.

Next was No 109.

He approached quietly and went to the corner with some food while snarkily moving his eyes like a rabid animal, wary of anyone who tried to touch him or his food.

Next up was No. 17, Ah-Young.

She settled down on the table, kept her dignified appearance, and started to taste the various kinds of food.

And the last one among the four to move was, No. 900, Woon Seong.

After packing only a few different foods on the table, seemingly the same kind of small amount that the children had been receiving prior to this, Woon Seong took his small plate of food and returned to where he

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had been leaning against the wall and started to eat very slowly, savoring the small bits of food he received.

Soon, the puzzled and hesitant trainees noticed the situation and moved with excitement on their faces.

“Wow!”

“Let’s eat!”

* * *

Sang In-Hyo, who was walking outside, called in a senior instructor to his side. It was the senior instructor in charge of the Third Hall of Latent Demons.

“I’m sure now that I’ve seen it with my own eyes. No. 900 has changed. How can one possibly look at him and think he was the 900th in terms of talent?”

“I was surprised to see it, too.... I was even more shocked to see that he had grown so much in the last 4 years, I didn’t expect him to grow all the way to the level of a Demonic General.”

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Sang In-Hyo smiled at the words.

“No, he’s not just a Demonic General like the other three. That boy... he’s already above the level of No. 01, 17 and 109.”

At the words, the faces of the instructors who were listening to Sang In-Hyo, including the senior instructor in charge of the Third Hall, hardened.

Maybe that was why Sang In-Hyo asked the senior instructor in charge of No. 900’s growth for his thoughts.

“What? Are you saying he’s really stronger than *her*? No. 900 is stronger than No. 17?”

Sang In-Hyo replied with a shrug.

“Well yes, but one thing is for sure.”

Sang In-Hyo stopped walking and glanced back, saying so.

Among the children who were scooping the food with delight earlier, Sang In-Hyo quietly observed Woon Seong’s strength in more detail.

“That boy is a tiger among tigers.”

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No. 900.

He was someone Sang In-Hyo was sure would bring a great wave of change within the Cult.

* * *

The day of rest went by quickly.

The trainees enjoyed themselves when they were first given a break, but as the break ended, they couldn't erase their nervous expressions of what was next to come. This was because of the parting words that Sang In-Hyo had given them all.

'After a day's rest, there will still be the third and last trial of life and death within the Cave of Latent Demons.'

It was hard to imagine what it would be like, since the trials of life and death up till now, were all different.

Besides, they didn't get a proper rest, but only one day's worth.

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However, there were some people who had little change in their facial expressions. Among those groups of children were Woon Seong, No. 17, No. 01 and No. 109.

It was those who were confident in their abilities to make it through whatever was thrown their way.

They were also ones who ate moderately, checking their condition safely in preparation for the next trial ahead of time by not stuffing themselves.

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Woon Seong among them, even started to meditate and check his internal qi's condition.

Inside his dantian, he could feel the forces of qi from the Tempered True Blossom surging and writhing with unparalleled strength when compared to before the closed door training.

'I don't know what kind of Trial it will be, but I hope I can get through it with the iron bracers on, if possible.'

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His strength was something he didn't want to show off to the limits if possible. It was always beneficial to hide one's true strength until it truly mattered.

If there was an unavoidable situation, Woon Seong would only display his full strength if his life was in actual danger or there would be no other witnesses.

'Once I know what the trial is, I can decide then.'

Woon Seong circulated the internal qi within his dantian calmly as he cracked his eyes open to a slit.

Then, he examined the strength of the other 2 individuals who had arrived first with him that he wasn't familiar with.

'No. 01 and No. 109.'

They were said to be the top trainees within their respective halls of Latent Demons.

As he had heard the children talking amongst each other about the strongest individuals in their respective halls, Woon Seong could

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certainly confirm the rumors of them being strong were not exaggerated at all.

However, that was not to say that the three of them had similar levels of strength.

“No. 01 is just a half-step above No. 109 in terms of strength.”

Woon Seong determined he could defeat No. 109 with all of his bracers on.

He would likely be able to win confidently with his bracers on, as long as his strength was well balanced and his techniques were utilized properly

But the other two were a bit different. No. 01 and No. 17.

Woon Seong wasn't sure if he could defeat No. 01 or No. 17 without taking his bracers off.

He would definitely be able to deal with them if he took off his bracers, but he was unsure of the results if he kept them on.

Woon Seong thought so and clicked his tongue.

‘I'm not strong enough yet.’

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It was just an excuse to not be able to defeat them with his bracers on. If he couldn't do that much, then he wasn't strong enough to get his revenge now or in the near future.

However, it wasn't that he lacked effort. He just lacked time right now to train properly and surpass them.

At least that was what Woon Seong thought as he recalled the teachings of his master. 'Do not blame yourself for lack of effort in your training. As long as you commit yourself to your training diligently, you will always be able to seek the results you wish for.' Woon Seong felt a sadness creep up in his mind as a tear rolled down his cheek. However, it was quickly replaced with a fearsome and murderous intent that viciously erupted within his mind as he quickly recalled his goal of killing all those who sinned against his master. 'They will pay with their blood.' Woon Seong's eyes emitted a fierce glow as the sun slowly crept upon the Cave of Latent Demons. It was time to start the third Trial of Life and Death.

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Chapter 17: Ranking Dispute (2)

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In the middle of the area, Sang In-hyo stood with a smile of unknown meaning.

“This is where the third Trial of Life and Death will be held.”

It seemed that the third Trial would be held in a vacant lot, void of any life-threatening things. The trainees murmured at this realization.

“Only the strong stand at the end. The strong stand alone and the weak perish. This is true in any part of Murim, but especially so in our Cult.”

His voice was small, but it reached the ears of all the children. Woon Seong once again shook his head due to the skill of this General Director.

“The strong are treated appropriately. If so, aren’t you all curious? Who is the strongest of you?”

The children looked at each other. Their skills had been accumulated through the closed door training. Now, they had become quite proud of

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their abilities. Each of them came and went with eyes that showed they thought they were the best.

Sang In-hyo nodded at their behavior, as if he were satisfied. "That is what we find out in this third Trial. We call it the 'Strife of Life and Death'."

A fight between life and death.

"Life and death. Make the opponent surrender through your strength, dead or alive! If they don't surrender, you can kill! But keep one thing in mind. There is only a living person and a dead man walking, a winner and a loser on this stage!"

Sang In-hyo's words made their hearts beat. Some of them could not contain themselves and shouted.

"Oh, I have not told you." Sang In-hyo added, slowly descending the platform. "To the one who survives until the end, we will make you a weapon of Flame Patterned Black Iron. If you desire it, do not lose." He smiled.

Soon after, the Trial began.

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The process was very simple. The instructor would call two children forward to fight. The winners and losers would then be split and fight again in their respective groups. It would repeat until there was the final winner left.

The martial arts of the trainees who climbed upon the state continued to burst forth. All were trainees who had survived the Cave of Latent Demons. There wasn't a single one who had half-baked skills. The trainees were all no nonsense, because the winner among them would have honor.

Even in such an atmosphere, Woon-seong thought differently. Who cared about this shallow honor? The last person standing could receive the prize. He moistened his lips with a swipe of his tongue. He would be lying if he said he had no ambition.

Black iron had a value similar to a lump of gold. It was natural that greed would arise. In addition, this was no ordinary black iron but the flame-patterned sort. This type had flame patterns and when melted, made a beautiful weapon that was stronger than ordinary ones.

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Even if it wasn't for the weapon, Woon-seong planned to defeat them all. Pride from his previous life would not allow him to lose.

“Number 63 and Number 900!”

Woon-seong's name was soon called and he went up to the stage.

The moment you stepped onto the stage, the duel began. Strictly speaking, this duel had already begun.

Woon Seong slowly moved forward, looking at the face of Number 63. He did not recognize the other, so perhaps the other was not from the 3rd Hall.

Number 63 smiled after hearing the ranking of Woon-seong and believed that his opponent was akin to a free win. This was because their number represented their ranking in talent and strength – 900 was essentially dead last. Of course, this ranking was not absolute: people could go beyond their supposed level, but who was monstrous enough to overcome natural talent?

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Number 63 had not met someone that could show skills far beyond their rank. Currently, there were 800 ranks between himself and his opponent. He believed it would be an easy victory.

“Why don’t you surrender now and I’ll let you live!”

Maybe it was supposed to be a provocation, but it showed that he had not judged Woon-seong’s level very well.

The trainees of the 3rd Hall, who remembered Woon Seong’s face, swallowed their saliva. This was a guy who started as Number 900 and showed overwhelming accomplishment by beating almost the entirety of the 3rd Hall. Number 63 was looking for death.

“Did you hear me? I said you could live if you surrender now.”

“You seem to overestimate yourself.”

The moment the other was shaking his head at his words, Woon-seong darted out. Frenzied movements spilled out from his body.

Number 63 was startled and lifted his sword. Sparks formed as their weapons met!

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Number 63 was immediately pushed backwards and Woon Seong chased him again, wielding his spear. The other was hit on his thighs and shoulders in a row. At this point, his body had twisted.

With a spear to the other's neck, Woon Seong asked, "I ask the opposite. Will you let me win or will you choose the punishment?"

At the mention of punishment, Woon Seong wrapped himself in 'intimidation qi'. Number 63 murmured his answer with his limbs trembling like the branches of an aspen tree.

"Hah, I surrender."

Woon-seong had his first victory just like that.

These duels continued. Some won, some lost. Even in such circumstances, there were a few who continued with overwhelming, continuous victories.

Number 1 used twin blades and defeated the others with pure strength. Number 109 used a quicksword, moving faster than anyone else, causing his opponents to fall down before they could even surrender. Next was Woon-seong. He knocked down his opponents without using

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an qi. His ability was so great that he did not even need to reveal his martial arts properly in order to defeat the others.

Woon Seong also noticed Ah-Young's strength.

Previously, Woon Seong had only been using basic martial arts. With how neat his movements were, even if his opponent did not surrender and were killed, he did not have a drop of blood on his sword or staining his clothes.

After watching the matches, he was now confident in winning Number 1 and 109 without removing the bracers. However, unless he took them off, he could not guarantee winning against A-young. The eyes staring at her gradually hardened.

The duels continued. In the process, more than ten children died. The Cave of Latent Demons, which had begun with 1,000 people, now had fewer than 80 left.

Finally, there were only four trainees qualified to remain on the platform.

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Woon Seong identified the faces of the other survivors and confirmed his previous predictions as correct. Number 1, Number 109, Ah-young, and himself.

Only two more fights would determine the final winner.

“Number 1, Number 900. Come forward!”

Woon Seong went up the state with a cool face when he heard this call. His opponent could not hide his hostility. Number 1 pointed one of his blades at his opponent, feeling humiliated to see a Woon Seong who was still nonchalant.

Woon-seong laughed in response. His opponent’s answer to that was even worse than before. Number 1 released a totally different energy that he had when he dealt with his other opponents.

“There was no one in 1st Hall who looked down on me. That remains the same here!”

Again, Woon Seong laughed. He twirled his spear, round and round. In his body, a turbulent stream of qi began to circulate.

“You have no idea how vast Murim is.”

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In response to the provocation, Woon Seong moved casually. As he approached, his opponent was also preparing to move, but Woon-seong's movements were getting faster as his body became a storm.

Gwan Tae-ryang blocked his first strike and swung back. As their weapons collided, sparks emanated from all sides and the clashing of metal could be heard.

Ta-ta-ta.

As they exchanged blows, balance seemed to be maintained. Spear, blade, spear, blade. They rotated their bodies and manipulated their qi.

"Someone like you is nothing special in the martial society. If you don't want to be looked down on, go train yourself more."

Woon-seong suddenly started to move faster. His eyes were dark and as his spear moved faster, the body of Gwan Tae-ryung flew out.

'The Art of Six Seals and Destruction'

'The Moon of Death and the Dark Night'

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The moon died, only the dark night was filled with Heaven.

Chapter 18: Ranking Duels (3)

Chapter 18: Ranking Duels (3)

Chapter 18 Translated by : FluffyKHZ* * *Boom!

“Cough!”

The spectators impatiently waited as Woon-seong’s opponent flew to the other side of the platform, smashing into the floor. But they waited in vain. Previously ranked Number 1 for talent, Gwan Tae-ryang, had fainted and could not stand up.

Woon-seong looked at the instructor who was in charge of the duel.

Sang In-hyo, who had been watching from a distance muttered, “‘The Art of Six Seals and Destruction’...” Even though it was not originally a demonic art, it became one and even surpassed many others of its kind. He had never imagined its successor would come from the Cave of Latent Demons.

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Maybe he will become the rear wave of the Yangtze River and sweep through the Cult. [1] Somehow, Sang In-hyo felt his heart beating in his chest.

It wasn't difficult. Either way, Woon-seong had made sure that he would be in the finals. *Well, I think he would barely make it as a Demon General.*

Honestly, Woon-seong felt that he was lucky to have met Number 1 at this time. He was quite glad that he wouldn't have to fight seriously twice in a row.

"Next, Number 17, Number 109. Come up!"

Meanwhile, the second match had started.

Among them, the winner would fight against Woon-seong in the finals.

Woon-seong returned to his seat and watched the two carefully. If either side was hiding their real strengths, it would not be easy to beat them.

Despite the current exchange of twenty seconds, no one had gained the advantage. Sword met sword and created little sparks. Countless skills were shown as each tried to drag the other down, causing tatters to appear on their clothes.

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Both the other trainees and the instructors held their breaths. It was clear that Demonic General-level fights proved that they were skilled.

Ah-young was going to win. It was only Sang In-hyo, the instructors, and Woon-seong who believed this for sure.

Number 109 had conviction that he would be the winner and eventually became impatient, leaving openings. On the other hand, Ah-young remained steady and did not reveal her high-level martial arts. In addition, there was a crucial difference in their breathing. While Number 109's was rough, Ah-young's was steady.

It will probably take another dozen seconds.

Woon-seong calmly assessed the situation, and his judgement proved to be correct. After three more seconds, Ah-young finally showed her strength.

Hut! That's 'The Dark Flower Red Heart'!

Ah-young had shown it for just a moment, but Woon-seong had clearly seen it. The unique energy of the 'Dark Flower Red Heart' was revealed in that short moment!

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As soon as he saw it, Woon-seong was able to know Ah-young's full name.

That's why you didn't tell me your last name! Chun Ah-young.

Why hadn't she said her last name before? 'Chun' was the most noble surname, only one person in the Demonic Sect had it!

'The First Connection of the Cult of the Heavenly Demon', the direct descendent of the Cult Leader, Chun Hwi!

Woon-seong looked surprised and looked around at the instructors. They nodded, as if it was natural. It seemed that they already knew that Cheon Ah-young had the bloodline of the Heavenly Demon.

The divine art of the Heavenly Demon was inside the Cave of Latent Demons.

Woon-seong's eyes were deeper than ever as his fighting spirit surged.

Meanwhile, Ah-young had overwhelmed Number 109. It had taken about ten seconds, like Woon-seong had guessed.

How awesome.

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Woon-seong put a hand to his chest, his heart was pounding hard for a win. He felt the desire to compete instead of fear.

The duel between him and Ah-young was passionate. They struck like lightning over and over, sparks flying everywhere.

This was not a confrontation between those who were Demonic General-level in name, but one between those who had truly entered that stage.

Woon-seong gripped his spear tight and wielded it. Ah-young's sword seemed to melt into the air, blocking his spear.

Boom!

With this collision, they were simultaneously pushed back.

They crossed weapons again quickly. Woon-seong could feel his spear trembling.

So this is the heritage of the Heavenly Demon.

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She was strong enough without using divine arts, but if possible, he wanted to see the strength of the 'Dark Flower Red Heart'. There was the question of whether she could still use it though.

'The Dark Flower Red Heart' is the 'First Connection of the Cult of the Heavenly Demon'. But Chun A-young's body does not have enough qi to use it.

It seemed that Ah-young could only use it for a short period of time. Woon-seong stepped back against the storm of attacks, before advancing with increased vigor. A few sword winds blocked in front of him like a folding screen, which Woon-seong countered with his qi. The waves of energy caused by their fight shook the platform.

However, Chun Ah-young still had not used the 'Dark Flower Red Heart' yet.

I guess you want me to show my sincerity...?

Woon-seong rolled his feet and pushed Ah-young before slowly gathering his energy. Though it was not enough of a crisis to use his 'intimidation qi', he was willing to show some of his tricks.

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'Erase from the stars to the sun!'

Woon-seong drew his energy into his arms and prepared to strike.

"Oh, I can't beat him. I surrender!" Chun Ah-young actually shook her hands and stepped back.

Woon-seong faltered at her words, his eyebrows twitching with annoyance. This was a good chance for him to compete with her and he did not want to miss it.

Ah-young shrugged her shoulders when asked by Woon-seong. "My physical condition is not very good, I have internal injuries."

"Internal injuries?"

She shook her head and closed her eyes, as if she refused to speak anymore.

Woon-seong smelled the faint smell of blood as she spoke. Blood was flowing from the corner of her mouth. It was likely caused by a backfire in her earlier fight, when she had forcefully used the 'Dark Flower Red Heart'. It was possible that her qi had been sealed to conceal her true strength, either by herself or by someone else.

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Anyways, fighting against Ah-young would not have let him confirm the true strength of the divine martial art. Winning as it was and taking the black iron weapon was enough for the current Woon-seong.

“I see.”

He dissolved the energy that he had raised to the maximum and pulled back his spear.

As Woon-seong accepted her surrender, Ah-young laughed. “You owe me one.”

Woon-seong scoffed at her reply, “That’s ridiculous.” He wiped his mouth with his sleeve, warning her to do the same and to watch her injuries.

Ah-young, listening to him, descended from the platform and continued to laugh. “You’re something special Number 900.”

He did not dignify that with a reply.

At the end, the Senior Instructor shouted loudly. “The winner of the ‘Strife of Life and Death’, champion of the Latent Cave of Demons is Number 900!”

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“Congratulations.”

“I was lucky.”

Sang In-hyo’s mouth twitched as he watched Woon-seong answer his congratulatory remarks. His eyes turned to the latter’s wrists and ankles, where his bracers remained intact.

“Luck huh...It could be.”

Woon-seong felt the eyes of the General Director, but did not make any comments.

“Number 900. When the Cave started, you were one of the weakest. So be proud of yourself. In the history of the Cave of Latent Demons, no champion started from the 900s. The highest was maybe the 200s.”

Woon-seong accepted these words of Sang In-hyo, who continued to talk as if he did not care about the other’s response.

“But despite that fact, you setting a new record can only mean two things.” Sang In-hyo paused to watch Woon-seong, whose eyes were clear. “You either have something that we don’t know, or your wisdom surpasses your potential. Which one do you think it is?”

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Woon-seong shook his head. "I am not sure."

Did he like Woon-seong's answer? Sang In-hyo did not show it on his face. Instead, he put his hand inside his sleeves and removed a lump of black iron.

"If you have the image of the weapon you desire, tell it to the senior instructor. Since you use the spear, we will forge the shape you want with this iron."

When he finished talking, he put the black iron back into his sleeves. It would only come into the hands of Woon-seong once it was a complete weapon.

"You may go back."

Sang In-hyo sent Woon-seong back and slowly looked around. Each survivor made eye contact.

"Everyone has worked hard. Only a fraction of you survived, but I'm glad that only the real ones had survived." But what came out of his mouth next shocked the children. "But did you know? The Cave of Latent Demons still has six months left."

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The Cave of Latent Demons had a total of ten years. It had only been a little over nine at this point.

At this, the trainees groaned but were silenced just as quick.

“For the rest of this time, you will face the last trial of the Cave of Latent Demons. And this final trial ...” Sang In-hyo laughed viciously.

Just like he said, the training was not over yet.

[1] 长江后浪推前浪, literally translating to ‘the rear waves of the Yangtze River drive on those before’; an idiom that means the new is constantly replacing the old <https://www.patreon.com/moonchildkhz>

Chapter 19: Sandstorm of Death (1)

Chapter 19: Sandstorm of Death (1)

Chapter 19 Translated by : FluffyKHZ* * *The wind that came from somewhere swept the boy roughly. The sand fluttered through this wind.

Hmph.

The boy used his qi to shake off the sand, causing the wind to shake gently. He then started moving again. Every time he walked, he could feel

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the hot energy from beneath his feet. In this heat, Woon-seong lifted his head up and looked at the Heavens.

The rising sun looked strangely large and bright.

The endlessly wide Great Desert, as it was called, stretched out before the boy.

Looking at the desert, the boy brought out the water bottle and lightly drained the water. Not much was needed. As long as a small amount of moisture was sent throughout the body his thirst could be gone with just a sip of water.

The boy's thoughts floated to just a month ago.

The Third Trial had been the final test to the Cave of Latent Demons, but not the training of the Cave of Latent Demons.

In keeping with 'real world training', the trainees were released out into the world to perform some missions. This allowed them to gain hands-on experience and at the same time make contributions to the Cult of the Heavenly Demon. The contributions made at this time were also considered as important achievements and would help determine

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the final ranking and status of the trainees after returning to the Cult half a year later.

One of the places where Woon-seong was sent was the Great Desert. It would have been nicer if he had been dispatched somewhere else, but unfortunately the only options were the North Sea or the Great Desert.

Not like he had a choice to begin with.

Along with Woon-seong, about forty other trainees were sent to the Great Desert. About half of the trainees were sent to barracks or command posts with missions on them. The trainees had to resolve the missions listed for them in order and report their achievements at these posts.

There were two types of missions to be completed. There were individual and group missions, among which the individual missions were given with varying difficulty according to the achievements within the Cave of Latent Demons.

Of course, Woon-seong's arms carried a command that he had received before leaving the Cult of the Heavenly Demon.

You were really preparing for war.

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Like his own, the missions of many other trainees were also to subjugate nearby factions. This was literally the Cult cleaning up the region.

Arranging to settle the elements that threatened the back of the line before charging forward was the basis of great military strategy. Of course, this was not set in stone, but the probability was high.

Woon-seong continued to move and forgot about the idea of war, that was beyond the current him. Instead, he thought about the mission stated in the order. Personal and group missions, he had to first finish his personal one. A full month was given for the trainees to gather and then resolve the group mission, so all individual missions had to be finished within a month.

My mission is to subjugate the Sandstorm of Death.

Called the Sandstorm of Death, they were a band of thieves that had grown rapidly in power recently. Due to their agile movements through the use of horses, a number of branches of the Cult settled in the Great Desert were having annoying experiences.

Of course, this was not an easy mission. An average trainee of the Cave of Latent Demons could never do this alone. However, Woon-seong was

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a Demonic General-class trainee as well as the first rank in the entire Cave. If not him, then who? The higher ups, as well as himself, had determined the he alone was enough.

If you use 'intimidation qi', it will not be difficult.

Woon-seong walked through the sand, then put his hand into his sleeve and grabbed a slate. This was a symbol from the Cult of the Heavenly Demon that guaranteed his status as a Demonic General. It had been handed to him as he left the Cave.

You must first find a branch of the Demonic Cult.

In order to identify the location of the Sandstorm of Death, he first had to find a branch to provide him information.

"If you want to get help from the branch, remember these places now: Urumqi, Turpan, Korla, Lop Nor, Kashgur..." That was what the Senior Instructor had said before the trainees left the Cult. Among these places, Lop Nor was not far away.

Lop Nor it is then.

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Lop Nor had one of the largest lakes in the Xinjiang area, which was mostly composed of desert. Because of this, there were big and small cities formed around the lake. Among them, Qi Ke Xuan was the largest city formed. It had all kinds of things, although it may not be comparable to other larger cities.

Of course, the reason why Woon-seong was going was a place called Han's Bookstore. This store was a traditional place in Qi Ke Xuan and had run for five generations. At present, a man who had reached his sixties named Han No was operating as the master. After living here for a long time, Han No had become acquainted with the neighbors. Thanks to that, he had easy access to rumors and information nearby. As a result, there were more visitors in this bookstore who asked for directions or for simple information than those who wanted to buy a book.

Woon-seong who had entered Qi Ke Xuan was headed to this place. Of course, he was not going there to obtain information concerning the branch of the Cult in the area. Even if he wanted that information, it would have been impossible. No, he was visiting because the bookstore was the branch of the Demonic Cult itself.

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The location of this branch was simply for gathering information and as a deterrent; it had no real combat effectiveness. It was also for this reason that the Demonic Cult had not properly solved the problem of the Sandstorm of Death, a group of mere bandits.

Of course, there is a another reason why it hasn't been done until now.

The Sandstorm of Death wasn't a size that needed to be paid attention to. It was only in these few years that it had increased in size. In less than five years, the group had grown to a scale large enough to call it a medium-sized organized group and not a horde. If the Cult was preparing for a war, it would make sense for the Sandstorm of Death to be removed, though it was not a great threat.

Even though...the branch of the Demonic Sect is disguised as a bookstore.

Woon-seong went inside with a light smile on his face as he saw the sign saying 'Han's Bookstore'. The smell peculiar to old books was strong and there were a few other guests.

Things are visible. All of them have not learned martial arts and are ordinary guests who have nothing to do with the Demonic Cult.

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Beyond that, the Cult of the Heavenly Demon was seen in the presence of the manager, who did not even reach the Demonic Captain level.

However, it was better to be safe, so Han No was sent to be the branch manager of this place.

Woon-seong passed by the long shelves of books and approached the manager.

“I’m here to get the book I ordered?”

At the words of the boy, the man, whose eyes did not see well, looked him up and down.

“Do you know the title of the book?”

“‘The Dirty and Treacherous Stories’.”

On the surface, this was a book of ghost stories. The eyes of the man trembled at the title though.

“Interesting. I don’t think that’s something that came in recently. Can you tell me when you ordered it?”

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Woon-seong tapped his chin lightly at the question, his actions telling the man what he needed to know. If they did not speak or act properly, it was impossible for him to get inside the branch and receive information.

Haha, it's a good thing I listened well to the Senior Instructor.

"I cannot remember exactly when I ordered it, but it seems to be about a year ago."

"One year. Then the book will be in the back warehouse..." The man glanced back. The warehouse could be seen through a half-open door, it was filled with books. "Will you come in with me and look for it?"

The boy nodded his head and the manager rose from his seat and entered the warehouse. Woon-seong followed him in.

"May I see your slate?"

Once he entered the warehouse and closed the door, Han No's behavior changed. He was a branch manager of the Demonic Cult, but he did not have that high of a status. He could not treat a man on a mission outside like a mere guest, death would come if he made a mistake.

"Here."

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Woon-seong showed his slate and as soon as Han No confirmed his identity at the Demonic General level, he shuddered.

“I have confirmed it.” Immediately afterwards, Han No became even more polite. “What information would you like?”

“The Sandstorm of Death.”

“You’re talking about those devils.” He took out a small booklet from the corner and handed it over. “Here it is.”

“Song Mong Zone?” Woon-seong accepted the book and checked the cover. The information did not seem to be about the Sandstorm of Death. “The story is an ordinary Murim hero’s journey. Can you not write down confidential information...?”

Woon-seong nodded to himself before the other could answer, realizing the answer to his question was obvious; it made sense to hide it.

“Then, how can I check the contents?”

“You can get the information you want if you take out the last chapter and burn it.”

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Woon-seong soon left the bookstore and went to the outskirts of the town, then burned a bunch of leaves and firewood together. The shadow of the fire was reflected in his eyes. The flames swayed back and forth and the sparks sprang up towards the sky. He was reminded of complex thoughts.

If I leave Xinjiang and go to Zhongyuan, I can meet them.

He could see the face of the enemy. Since his body had changed, his enemies would not recognize him and he could deal with them.

Aren't I wasting time here?

Wasn't it better to go right now and aim his spear at the necks of his enemies? Woon-seong sure felt that way. But he shook his head.

No, I am not wasting my time here.

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Chapter 20: Sandstorm of Death (2)

Chapter 20: Sandstorm of Death (2)

On that last day, dozens of the Murim had come to seize the lives of Woon-seong and his master. If you added up the number of men who were part of the siege, it would actually exceed 500. Revenge against all of them was unreasonable by the power that Woon-seong currently held. Even if he regained his former power, even if he reached the same level as his master, he would fail.

That's why I will use the Cult of the Heavenly Demon.

The Cult would be better than an individual. In fact, half of Murim was already the Cult's enemy, so there was nothing wrong with using them.

Let's not be in a hurry. Don't rush this.

It was enough even if he had to take a long time. As long as he could spear through their hearts in the end, it was enough.

The first step is to strengthen my power in the Cult of the Heavenly Demon.

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Woon-seong opened his eyes and brought out the book. He opened it to the last chapter and brought it near the burning fire before his eyes. As the heat of the flame reached the last sheet of paper, translucent letters began to appear on the page. The information which had been written with a special dye appeared.

How the Sandstorm of Death had grown in the last five years. Who the officials and important people were. Their movements and strongholds. The Cult had a very detailed record of their observations.

His eyes shrank as they scanned the paper. An unbelievable name was discovered. The current leader of the Sandstorm of Death, who joined five years ago, was believed to be the 'Sword of Men', Mae Hong-sung, one of the Three Swords of Qingcheng.

Three Swords of Qingcheng!

Woon-seong smiled brightly at the name of an enemy he had found in an unexpected place, revealing his fangs. His face was darker than ever before.

The 'Sword of Blue Clouds and Red Sunset'. This swordsmanship, named for the style like the sun and clouds, is considered to be one of the most

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difficult styles to learn alongside the Shaolin's 'Three Swords of Dharma', the Wu Tang Clan's 'Wise Sword of Taiji', the Nangong's 'Sword Form of the Emperor', and Mount Hua's 'Divine Sword of Purple Sunset'. If it could be passed on to one person in each generation, it was considered a good result.

The current successor of the Qingcheng's Martial Division was Qingcheng's Great Elder, the First Apprentice, Song Chi-hak. Ever since he was a child, he was chosen as the 'Sword of Heaven' of the Three Swords of Qingcheng and learned everything they had. When he became a Great Elder, he raised a new line of the Three Swords of Qingcheng. His disciples were the current 'Sword of Heaven', 'Sword of Earth', and 'Sword of Men'.

Woon-seong climbed up a rocky hill. The Murim knew the Qingcheng as people who would lead the new generation, but he also knew their dirty truth. Their duality had been shown to him very clearly in his past life. With one of them here to meet his spear, Woon-seong was naturally joyful.

But why is there one of the Three Swords of Qingcheng here?

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Woon-seong stopped at the top of the hill. Strictly speaking, this area was out of the Qingcheng Sect's reach. To be more precise, the area was so remote that it was unnecessary to send one of the Three Swords of Qingcheng.

The boy tapped his chin. It was five years ago that the 'Sword of Men' Mae Hong-sung had joined the Sandstorm of Death, and five years ago, the Sandstorm of Death suddenly grew in strength.

Woon-seong shook his head quietly. There were no coincidences in Murim. You had to think like that in order to live. If something seemed like a coincidence, it was better to think and move carefully. Only that way could you survive longer in the world of Murim.

Woon-seong bit his lip. There was definitely something going on under the surface, he just wasn't sure what.

Then I can just catch him and ask him.

A run-down temple was located on the rocky hill he had been climbing. This is where the bandits were staying. Woon-seong grabbed his spear from where it was strapped loosely to his back. Within a few steps, he could see the entrance. A decaying wooden door barely blocked the wind

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at the entrance. Beyond that, the boy could feel the presence of some members of the Sandstorm of Death. However, he could not feel that of the Sword of Men.

Woon-seong moved smoothly. He killed the lookout, flew inside like the wind, and slid up to the pillar that supported the roof.

“Hahahahaha. Bring more alcohol!”

“Are there no women? Do we have any women?”

The men were drinking alcohol, with their plundered belongings piled up inside. Woon-seong’s eyes glanced over them. Perhaps the Sword of Men was away, but that wouldn’t give him the chance to escape his fate at the hands of the boy. Either way, they would all be killed.

Save one for interrogation, kill everyone else.

Woon-seong closed his eyes for a moment. Once he opened them, they were gold, like that of a tiger’s at night. He then dropped his body to the floor below, with no consideration of his surroundings. The bastards of the Sandstorm of Death faced a disaster they had never seen before, the disaster called Hyuk Woon-seong.

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It was a complete one-sided slaughter. The boy moved like a ghost and avoided their swords. His body was like a shadow that faded away and their swords would pass through his body. Shortly afterwards, he would melt back into existence and sweep them away with his spear. He had activated his murky 'intimidation qi', stimulating and grabbing at the bodies of the bandits, who shook and dropped like flies. Waist, chest, thighs, shoulders – these bandits were sliced all over the body and fell. There was not a single one of them that could avoid Woon-seong's attacks.

But some of them had not yet fallen completely and continued to scream, "What a monster!"

They're pretty strong for ordinary bandits.

In addition, Woon-seong believed some of them could use inner strength and practiced Taoist qi. Take, for example, the guy charging at him now. However, the guy flew backwards faster than he had run over, and was smashed into the wall of the temple. The walls of the ruined building collapsed into rubble from the impact.

Woon-seong stared at the fallen men before him with a weird gaze.

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“Who did you learn martial arts from?” He already had a good guess, but asking was for the sake of certainty.

When asked, the man on the ground shook his head, groaning.

Woon-seong spared him no mercy and slashed his chest apart. He then moved towards another one.

“I ask again, who taught you?”

At this moment, Woon-seong was a king of terror even though he was not using his ‘intimidation qi’. The bandit in question trembled with a white face.

“Well, it was Master Chuk.”

The name of the one he was looking for was Mae Hong-sung, not a Master Chuk. However, it was not possible to rule out the possibility of an alias.

“Does this Master Chuk have a thin chin, bushy beard, and thick eyebrows?”

Would this description be correct?

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The man was trembling. “How the hell do you...? Who are you? Are you from the government?!”

Woon-seong grinned. “Then let me continue to ask you. Mae Hong-sung, no your Master Chuk, where is ...?”

Originally he was trying to find out more, but he stopped talking. There was no need to continue asking. With his spear pointed to the closed the door, Woon-seong watched as it opened and a man entered.

“What the hell is going on?!”

Woon-seong turned his head to see the man’s face and welcomed him with a greeting, “It’s been a long time, Master Chuk.”

The man was a bit older than he remembered, but it was obvious. He glanced at the enemy that he had been reunited with after ten years. The Sword of Men, Mae Hong-sung.

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