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Chapter 11: The Divine Demonic Vault (2)

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The time spent inside the vault for the day, flowed effortlessly like water in a stream.

Woon Seong tried to read as many volumes of martial arts that were applicable to him within that small time frame of 24 hours.

And as a result, he was able to memorize a little more than thirty volumes of martial arts.

To even read 30 books, and somehow generalize their information was quite a feat, but Woon Seong took it a step further and ingrained the knowledge into his head.

It was something he could barely do even with his iron will.

Ordinary people could never memorize such vast amounts of intricate knowledge in their heads with only 24 hours.

Woon Seong was more or less the same.

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It wasn't normal to be able to completely memorize all those volumes of texts, but he couldn't exactly not remember the most important volumes of texts.

'But this is enough.'

Nevertheless, there was a smile hanging around the mouth of Woon Seong, who was stepping outside the Divine Demonic Vault.

This is because he had achieved all his goals he set on himself, when he first entered the Divine Demonic Vault.

'It's already enough if I can get the core information from each manual, not just focus on one manual the entire time there.'

He was the heir to the Spearmaster Sect, which originally had a wide knowledge of martial arts inside their library.

To be able to summarize the core points of each martial art manual of the thirty books he was able to read through in one of the biggest libraries across all of Murim was incredible for Woon Seong and his goals moving forwards.

'It's not bad.'

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No, that was an understatement.

'No, it's amazing.'

There was a slight smile on the mouth of Woon Seong.

There were two more things he earned, aside from the summaries of the 30 Martial Art texts he found.

The first was an in-depth understanding of a spear martial art he thought to have been lost a long time ago.

'In the end, it all came down to harmony like Master said.'

Woon Seong was able to find harmony within this special spear martial art he had found. As his master had once said, it was true that harmony was the most important thing for him to remember.

'The degree of how well I can utilize this martial art, depends on how well I can harmonize the internal qi flow required for it, with my own body's compatibility with it.'

On the contrary, most martial arts were known to trade such explosive power with incompatibility with the user's body. Especially so when they were demonic arts.

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But it was actually a misconception that almost every martial artist fell for.

The more outstanding the martial art, the more it actually requires that balance of harmony with the mind and body. And if found, the more powerful it actually becomes.

As a result of this, a lot of martial artists used martial arts they were incompatible with. This was best described as pearls on a swine's neck.

Although they were made to balance through their initial imbalance, not everyone could transcend their human limits to achieve such harmony with the martial art.

If one picked a martial art they did not have the knowledge to master it with, the body or the internal qi to match it, it was obvious they would struggle to bring the full ability of the martial art out.

'In the end, the goal to become stronger is almost a must if I want to bring the glory of this martial art out. And...'

Woon Seong raised his hand and slipped the book into his robe's sleeves, recalling his goal of vengeance and the strength required to achieve it.

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'I never thought I'd find this here.'

Not only did Woon Seong realize he would have to train harder to complete Heavenward Soul Earthen Body technique to achieve harmony and talent required for his goals, but he also realized the true glory of the new spear martial art he had once thought was lost.

It was the martial art he just slipped into his robe's sleeves.

Heavenly Spear Martial Arts : *The Six Seals of Destruction* (六結破天例)

Upon returning to his room within the Cave of Latent Demons after leaving the Divine Demonic Vault, Woon Seong put his hand back in his robes and went up to the dim candlelight within his small room.

The small booklet he had taken out of the Divine Demonic Vault came into view.

The dust from the cover of the book was wiped off by Woon Seong's delicate hands as he handled the booklet with care.

Woon Seong carefully read over the title of the martial art once more.

'The Six Seals of Destruction'

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Woon Seong had heard of it and its origins.

The creator of the martial art was someone that had once been a part of his very own Spearmaster Sect! However, that person had also joined the Demonic Cult, which led to a very unusual history regarding the Spearmaster Sect in Murim.

The story had been told to Woon Seong back when he was a child in his previous life, when he first became the disciple of the Spearmaster sect.

The history was indeed unusual, but what was for certain, was that this was indeed the lost and great martial art of that unique individual, who seemed to have walked a path with the same setting as Woon Seong currently.

'In the end, The Six Seals of Destruction was being kept hidden within the Divine Demonic Vault. I got lucky.'

Woon Seong smiled faintly, slightly shaking the dust off the back of his hand.

As he recalled this mysterious master's history, this martial art was known to be incredible. It was unbelievably strong, yet also was just as

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mysterious as its owner. That was the case for it being known as a lost martial art, all throughout Murim.

Woon Seong knew that in Murim, the knowledge about this legacy was rather misled. The Spearmaster sect was known as a sole apprenticeship sect. Meaning there was only one heir to the sect at a time. But, if this legacy had somehow gotten to the Cult of the Heavenly Demon, then how was the apprenticeship still strong until Woon Seong's generation?

'That's because some of the stories about the spearmaster sect that are known to the public are not true.'

For generations, the Spearmaster Sect produced only one disciple at a time. Therefore, it was treated as the common knowledge in Murim...

However, this was not technically true.

The Spearmaster Sect, if one looked hard enough, had no such law or rule to their apprenticeship stating it was only for one heir.

The reason for this was because mastery with the spear was known as one of the most respectful, and most difficult to learn, in terms of the martial arts associated with the weapon.

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If one also looked closely enough to the history of the Spearmaster Sect, one would realize there was indeed a generation where there was more than one apprentice to the sect.

This happened to be the case in the 5th generation of lineage for the Spearmaster Sect. The Master of the Spearmaster Sect at the time, accepted two different apprentices and taught them both equally.

However, the Title of the Spearmaster, could only be passed down to one of them, and the apprentice who was not able to inherit the title, traveled far and wide to pursue his martial arts further.

The apprentice who had decided to travel, traveled as far as the Cult of the Heavenly Demon, and had created his own martial art in this process. That martial art he created, was titled the Six Seals of Destruction (六結破天例).

'But I'd never heard that the martial art for the Six Seals of Destruction was actually formally recorded anywhere. There were only partial records of this martial art left behind in the Spearmaster Sect.'

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However, it was the apprentice of the Spearmaster Sect who had created the art. If that was the case, then why was the full art left behind here, in the Cult of the Heavenly Demon.

Although he had left and traveled all the way to the Cult of the Heavenly Demon, he did not forget his roots as a martial artist of the Spearmaster Sect.

‘But if that was really the case, then why is the record left here?’

There was something that seemed to be hidden from the public eye and the records of the Spearmaster Sect, seeing how the record was left here in full. If so, something must have happened between the unknown apprentice, the Spearmaster Sect, and the Cult of the Heavenly Demon.

Besides, that was not what mattered now to Woon Seong.

‘What matters, is that it’s now in my hands.’

Woon Seong clenched his grip tightly with his free hand that was not handling the book.

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The Six Seals of Destruction was made with both the Cult of the Heavenly Demon's practices, and the Spearmaster Sect's practices as well.

It was quite literally perfect for Woon Seong, who although might have different goals from that apprentice, also was treading the same path currently.

It was as if the Six Seals of Destruction dropped into his hands like it was fate.

For Woon Seong, this martial art would definitely play a pivotal role for him in his revenge against Jwa Do-Gyeul.

'That fucker, I'll kill him.'

As Woon Seong recalled the face of Jwa Do-Gyeul, a surging and violent anger popped up inside of his head. In all the times in the Cave of Latent Demons, the only time Woon Seong ever truly felt this rage was when he recalled that bastard's face.

Perhaps Woon Seong's emotions had been fluctuating since he was excited about the discovery of the Six Seals of Destruction.

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'Let's not get too excited.'

Bit by bit, Woon Seong recollected his breath.

A scarlet aura of killing intent swirled around in Woon Seong's eyes before disappearing altogether.

He didn't forget.

He was just waiting to build his strength and bide his time accordingly.

His revenge would happen. He would make sure of it no matter what, even if it took him countless years to achieve it.

'Master...'

As an orphan, Woon Seong's master was not just a man who taught him martial arts, but a father who had helped him rediscover what it meant to be human. He had brought Woon Seong up, who was nothing but a measly orphan, practically on death's door, to someone who could appreciate his own life.

'To do so, I will use what I can, and I will take what I can.'

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Even if that means using the power from the Cult of the Heavenly Demon!

Woon Seong clenched his fist.

Woodduck-

The sound of Woon Seong's teeth grinding rang out in the room along with his knuckles popping in frustration.

He would wait patiently.

Until he could build enough strength to pursue his revenge whole-heartedly.

He was incredibly likely to die if he went out as he was now, trying to recklessly pursue his revenge on Jwa Do-Gyeul.

He had to focus on what he could do right now.

Woon Seong thought as such, and then admired the Six Seals of Destruction with a murderous glint in his eye.

However, there was also a look of utmost concentration as well.

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Inside the stone chamber, only ragged and fierce breaths from Woon Seong could be heard.

\* \* \*

After the trip to the Divine Demonic Vault, the schedule of the Cave of Latent Demons continued without much change.

The only difference was that one's personal time to practice had increased.

The instructors would have normally made the children move according to the tight training schedule before dinner.

However, after leaving the Divine Demonic Vault, Woon Seong and the other children were given free time after finishing training before lunchtime.

Of course, it was a given time to learn the martial arts that they each took out of the Divine Demonic Vault.

Woon Seong made the best use of his time to learn the art of the Six Seals of the Destruction.

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The qi flow required for the martial art was needed to be trained, along with the technique itself for his body.

‘The martial art is so strange in nature, it’s not easy to grasp at all.’

It was incredibly difficult to master the Six Seals of Destruction. Even for Woon Seong, who had knowledge of the Spearmaster Sect’s original values and martial arts, this new technique was incredibly difficult, odd... and extremely dangerous.

The martial art could not even be pulled off in earnest if one did not have the correct body frame and firmness in their bone structure. Otherwise the user’s body would be torn to shreds if they tried to complete their mastery of the martial art impatiently.

“Even so, the Six Seals of Destruction is a well-made martial art.’

As many generations of martial arts had been passed down since the creation of the martial art, Woon Seong could tell just how amazing it was to create such a dangerous and powerful martial art back then.

However, the analysis for finding the roots between the Spearmaster Sect and the Cult of the Heavenly Demon, was incredibly hard to divide.

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'It's like trying to split a tree down the middle and expecting to find two main roots.'

This was the case for the martial art Woon Seong was learning that was passed down through texts from opposing cultures and practices.

'However, that's exactly why I can master the art itself.'

Line by line, Woon Seong analyzed the text and scripture from the booklet.

Of course, it was also important to learn the art with his body as well.

The difference between learning by simply reading and learning with the body was huge.

*Whirl-*

The spear in the hands of the Woon Seong moved.

The movement was unbelievably impressive, with the iron speartip twirling in a half crescent, hanging from his hands and feet.

'This is the origin.'

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The Spearmaster Sect's main martial art unfolded in the hands of Woon Seong with his spear. The Divine Spear of the Ending Night (霸道 流水)

The name of the spear art handed down in reverence to the spear of god, which erases all things, even the night, was the martial art his teacher had passed down to Woon Seong.

It was stable and soft compared to the flow from the Six Seals of Destruction and was the martial art his master had developed by himself....

*The spear flows like water.*

*The stream and current of the stable water flow, traps the opponent in a sea of endless spear strikes.*

*The opponent who gets trapped by such spear arts, will be lost and drowning in the endless barrage of spears, unable to do anything...*

The reason it was such a strong martial art, was because of the breath by breath nature of the art, and the stability within the structure of movements.

'Next is Six Seals of Destruction.'

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The iron spear, which was swirling all over the place performing the Divine Spear of Endless Night, disappeared.

Soon after, a series of heavy blows were swung. The spear parted heavily in the air.

*Boom-*

It contained the power to smash even rocks in one go.

The air shook and cracked every time the spear in the hands of Woon Seong moved.

In other words, if the Divine Spear of Endless Night was water, the Six Seals of Destruction was fire. The Six Seals of destruction flowed out like a lava that cracked through the molten earth and ravaged all living things to oblivion.

The movement of the spear was so destructive and powerful that Woon Seong's body that he had been training rigorously, still couldn't come out unscathed after practicing it.

'This is a dilemma.'

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The softness and consistent flow of the Divine Spear of Endless Night, and the extreme firepower from the Six Seals of Destruction.

In other words, if Woon Seong was able to somehow combine these two, he would be able to complete a new martial art that had never been seen before.

But to do this, it would be much harder than creating the cultivation method he created already in the Tempered True Blossom technique. This was like directly mixing oil and water together.

Therefore, if he could combine the two somehow, he would create a dastardly new technique that would be unparalleled to any spear martial art in existence.

It's not like it hadn't been attempted before. But none were able or capable to even try finding an ounce of success in combining two polar opposite techniques like this before.

'But it's still worth trying.'

The pursuit of extreme stability, and extreme destruction.

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The two spear martial arts depicting these two natures that Woon Seong had, were already enough to be called treasures in all of Murim in terms of their profoundness.

However, if he could mix these two martial arts, which were already so high-level, that were able to be treasured as a Clan's secret martial art, he would create a martial art only to be known in legends.

In addition, the generational difference between the two martial arts to master them on their own, was not much of a problem for Woon Seong as it would be for others.

'What I have to pay attention to, is the mastery of both martial arts first, and creating a foundation to build upon. If I can create this martial art successfully, those orthodox hypocrites will truly die by my hand!'

In terms of mastery between the two martial arts, Woon Seong could most likely master them both with his old body at that very moment. However, the current body of No. 900 was not used to such movements quite yet.

If it doesn't work, I can always use other martial art techniques to cover up the flaws if I can't mix the two of them perfectly.

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'Let's do it.'

Woon Seong was not only excited for his revenge, but to learn and create new martial arts was any true martial artist's greed. Especially when Woon Seong held all the keys to power within his own knowledge, he was bound to be ready. 'First we master these two separately, then... we create an entirely new martial art!'

## Chapter 12: Discord (1)

Chapter 12: Discord (1)

Water naturally flowed in rivers or streams, there was always a current and a direction in which it flowed.

The flow of time was no different.

It had been three years for Woon Seong and the other children within the Cave of Latent Demons.

The once-children, were now reaching the adolescent years of their lives. The boys had started to grow more masculine and their muscles started to become more defined. The same could be said for the girls for their muscles, and natural body curves were becoming more accentuated.

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But the children within the Cave of Latent Demons, were unlike any other children their age within all of Murim.

Although hidden from the surface, they all were emitting fierce and predatory auras underneath their appearances.

They had miniscule amounts of it growing when they all passed the first Trial of Life and Death, but not only did it grow to a substantial amount unlike before, the children were also able to completely contain these fierce auras and hide them.

Almost all of the children were able to hide their fearsome auras and would be considered premium talents within all of Murim when compared to other kids their age.

It wasn't just the children's bodies and mastery over their internal circuitry that had changed.

Over the past three years, the children had started to align with other children that shared similar goals to their own and created several groups.

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It was like watching the very basis of Murim unfold as these children created their own tiny factions within this Cave of Latent Demons based on each other's interests and goals.

It was natural that wherever these groups and factions within Murim were formed, there were certain gains and losses to working as a group.

Such a nature was not an exception to the groups of children within the Cave of Latent Demons.

Despite the children pursuing their own goals and interests along with others, they did not slack off in their training at all. However, they did spend their free time together chatting and what not amongst themselves.

Their training time was dedicated mostly in the time they had with the instructors, and didn't extend much outside of that time-wise for their training.

However, there were also individual children and groups that showed superb work ethic when it came to practicing their martial arts.

As a result, their proficiency and mastery over their respective martial arts became more and more refined.

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In addition to growing older, these children were also given more autonomy within their free time within the Cave of Latent Demons

The instructors before this period, had only been there to set up the foundation of which these children would survive and grow upon. After which, they let the children have more freedom to do what they wanted and grow stronger on their own.

'It might not have been just that though. Maybe the instructors wanted to create a divide amongst ourselves and the groups were exactly for that.'

Woon Seong had other thoughts about the intention of letting the children have more free time, as he thought the creation of the groups was to let the children find allies for their own ideals when they joined the Cult formally. And unlike those children, Woon Seong rather, did not join any group and remained diligent in every second of each passing day, with his training.

The individuals who were not in groups, were either children who were too weak to join any, or who had no interest in relying upon others and pursued their own individual strength.

Woon Seong's case was the latter.

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He was so powerful that he didn't feel the need to mix and mingle with the other children.

Not only that, it just felt a little peculiar and odd for himself to interact with kids who were 15 years younger than himself when it came to his total years of life in both bodies.

Naturally most children knew that Woon Seong was incredibly powerful and no longer looked down upon him for his number as No. 900. They knew he was a monster, but also naturally took offense to his ignorance to their groups as brooding arrogance.

"Is that No. 900? Tsk- What a jerk." (T/N : the following are all different children talking amongst themselves in a group.)

"Well, there's a time I need to pay back for him humiliating me."

"Pft, training by himself. Who does he think he is pretending to be all noble?"

"Yeah, plus my skills aren't what they used to be."

"Even so, just in case, if I had one or two people to move with me, I'd turn him into a mess."

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Furthermore, Woon Seong obviously had been attacked out of purposes of revenge by groups of these children. But, Woon Seong crushed them all without an ounce of mercy.

Amongst the other children who lived alone without being a part of a group, Woon Seong had a particularly notorious reputation because of that.

Eventually after this time of three years... an incident had broken out.

\* \* \*

It was around evening that the incident broke out.

It also happened to be on the day when the instructors called all of the children in the cave to gather, unlike the usual.

'What's going on?'

Woon Seong wondered, and moved to the place where the instructors ordered the call.

Over the most recent year of the past 3 years that had gone by, there had been little to no contact with the instructors, let alone an order to gather.

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Only during the morning training and handing out for meals throughout the day, could the instructors be seen or talked to by the children.

In the process, any changes to the schedule or routines were normally discussed then one-on-one with the instructors, and then later passed on between the children's groups.

That was the children's normal routine.

But this time, the instructors ordered a meeting. It meant they were going to be delivering some important news.

Woon Seong thought about what it could be, several times as he headed towards the hall, but he couldn't figure out exactly what was going on.

There were some guesses, but this was the Cave of Latent Demons.

This was not a place that could be predicted so easily,

Plus, there was no point in thinking too much about it, since he would find out everything he needed to know once he got there.

'There's no point in thinking about it.'

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As Woon Seong went to the hall, the children who came first gathered and were chattering and talking amongst themselves.

But when Woon Seong arrived, the groups of children parted to let a path through for him to walk.

They were children who knew their own limits and didn't want to start a meaningless fight right then and there to piss off Woon Seong somehow.

Of course, there were some kids who stared at him from afar with eyes full of malicious intent.

'Hah, seems you haven't given up on your revenge yet.'

The one Woon Seong was thinking of, was No. 185 who was glaring at him from afar.

'What a whiny little bitch.'

If anything Woon Seong was irritated No. 185 didn't just come and attack him already. However, he knew that No. 185 stood no chance and that No. 185 knew that as well.

'Sure, you're being cautious. But that doesn't make you smart.'

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Come to think of it, No. 185 had displayed the same type of behavior in the past as he was now, clearly overestimating his own power and underestimating his opponents.

If No. 185 hadn't tried to attack Woon Seong just because he was numbered No. 900 in the past, none of this would have happened.

'He's as fat and big as a bear, yet he's got the traits of a fox. At this rate, he's got the traits to be leading of these stupid groups by now.'

It's not like Woon Seong actually cared for No. 185, but No. 185 continuously annoyed Woon Seong with his glares and cunning nature.

Woon Seong then did recall that No. 185 actually did happen to be a leader of one of the groups of children within the Cave of Latent Demons.

In their own way, these groups did have some leaders of sorts, being the ringleaders of their respective group of children.

It would make sense to Woon Seong since typically leaders of factions, clans and sects needed not only martial prowess, but cunning and wit.

'But compared to those, No. 185 is like a complete child.'

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Real and proper leaders knew when revealing their anger would only result in terrible results. Thus they would hide their anger until it was the right moment to strike. However, No. 185 was an idiot in that sense, as he openly displayed his bitterness to Woon Seong.

Not only that, but Woon Seong could tell that No. 185's martial arts were far from being even subpar in his eyes.

Since that was his evaluation of No. 185, it only made sense that Woon Seong did not like to spend his time and energy even being in the same space as No. 185.

It was so natural that Woon Seong didn't even spare him a glance, despite No. 185's open resentment.

Of course, the face of No. 185, when he saw this, was distorted. Woon Seong went his own way without paying attention to his face, which was visible without seeing it.

However, Woon Seong's look of indifference soon disappeared.

"Hello?"

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Like Woon Seong, who was not a part of any group, Ah-Young, No. 17 did not join any group and was standing in front of him.

“What do you want?”

Ever since that first visit to Woon Seong’s living quarters three years back, Ah-Young would periodically come and annoy him and see what he was doing.

Therefore, Woon Seong had no choice but to feel uncomfortable around Ah-Young. “I just said hello to you because I saw you. Don’t look at me like that.”

Woon Seong snorted and turned his head away at Ah-Young’s words.

Ah-Young was about to tease Woon Seong for his tsundere attitude but didn’t have the chance.

This was because the Instructors came into view first and let out a shout throughout the hall.

“Quiet!”

*Boom-*

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The senior instructor's stomp shook the floor heavily.

The internal qi of the instructor, was channeled from his dantian and into his foot, resonating and shaking the floor violently, as Woon Seong's eyes widened.

In fact, over the past three years, Woon Seong naturally had the chance to check and evaluate the skills of the instructors in more detail.

There was even an incident where some of the children felt fed up with the instructors' domineering tone and tried to raise a fuss out of them, and attacked them.

However, the moment that incident happened, the insolent and rebellious children had their necks cut off without a moment's delay in front of the instructors' frightening skill.

There was also the accompaniment of the qi around the instructors' feet to vibrate and be felt through each and every child's body.

'If they can channel their internal qi briefly into their actions, then that means at the very least, they're first-rate martial artists.'

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It was ridiculous and showed just how much power the cult had, to have first-rate martial artists as mere instructors for children.

It just went to say how rigorous and extreme the talent of the children were, if they were to be supervised by such high-level martial artists.

Through these small experiences over the years, it made Woon Seong realize just how frightening and powerful the Cult of the Heavenly Demon was.

'The Cult of the Heavenly Demon truly does not lack in comparison to the entirety of the Murim Alliance in terms of manpower and strength... If I can somehow utilize the power of this Cult, it will be incredibly useful in my revenge!'

It wasn't just the leaders of the factions who had murdered and conspired against his Master and himself. It was also their direct disciples of the multiple factions.

Those factions were the core strength of the Murim Alliance, and almost no known power could directly oppose them.

Dealing with them would be no different than declaring war on the entirety of Murim itself, all by himself.

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Therefore, it was only natural Woon Seong felt that if he had the power of the Cult, which was the only known individual power to rival such a large and frightening force of power, he could achieve his goals.

As Woon Seong had these thoughts at the display of power from the instructors, he clenched his fists tightly.

At that moment, the lead instructor opened his mouth carefully.

“Good job, everyone.”

The surprised expressions and wariness of the children became present from those words onwards.

\* \* \*

“.....”

After the senior instructor’s words, there was silence in the hall. The senior instructor’s words complicated the children’s minds.

Woon Seong also slowly mumbled at the senior instructor’s words.

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'He said the Trials of Life and Death were only beginning? That we will be doing closed door training and that the past 3 years was only the beginning'

The words 'Trial of Life and Death only beginning in earnest as of right now' were enough to make all the children in the hall become incredibly vigilant.

They remembered the first time they had ever faced death with their own two eyes against the Grey Wolves in the first Trial of Life and Death, 3 years ago.

At that time, over half of the children in the Cave of Latent Demons had died back then. The notion that they were going to start closed door training, wasn't exactly something they were sure they should be thrilled about.

As long as the name remained as 'the Trials of Life and Death', there was no way they would remain calm in their minds.

'I don't know what it is, but there's no way what comes in the future will be easy.'

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Woon Seong was no exception when it came to being wary at the words like the other children.

However, for every trial and tribulation, Woon Seong knew there would be equal opportunity to grow a step stronger with equal risk.

The other children could be seen with the same stiff expressions as Woon Seong and Ah-Young, as they started to prepare themselves mentally for the oncoming strife.

Once again, as the children recollected their thoughts, the lead instructor spoke up.

“If you need anything, just let myself or the other instructors know before you go into your personal closed-door training sessions. If it’s a simple request, We will prepare it for you. You don’t have to worry about food or water since you will be prepared and fed well with grains and water daily.... And starting from today onwards, you may take off your iron bracers that you have been required to wear the past 3 years.”

At the words of being able to take off their bracers, the children buzzed with excitement.

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The weight of the iron bracers was no longer heavy for Woon Seong, but it was thrilling for the other children to hear.

Woon Seong had trained harder than anyone else in the Cave of Latent Demons, so the iron bracers just felt as if they were just another extension of his own body.

This did not mean that there is no difference between wearing them and taking them off.

‘You’ll be much stronger as you lighten up the weights on your body.’

Some of the other children were already showing signs of excitement.

The senior instructor smiled genuinely at the sight of some of the other children showing their visible excitement about taking their bracers off.

“Five days from now, we will enter the first series of this Trial of Life and Death for closed-door training. Remember that if you need anything, make sure to ask us before you leave. Now, you can have dinner and talk amongst yourselves. Dismissed!”

“Yes Sir!”

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The children shouted loudly, repeating the words of the senior instructor, and Woon Seong stood in front of the senior instructor, not going back with the other children to dinner.

“Hm, what’s going on No. 900?”

As soon as the order to dismiss the children was ordered, only a few children had stayed but none had come to request anything, and the instructor’s eyebrows wriggled at the sight of No. 900, Woon Seong, who was in front of him.

“I have something to request.”

The senior instructor looked a little surprised at the words.

He had given the children five days to decide if they needed anything before they underwent their closed door training, but Woon Seong, No. 900 had already decided on what to request.

Depending on what each child requested, if they did at all, their path of training would be influenced for the next few years based on this request.

“It’s a matter of careful consideration, isn’t it?”

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“I’ve thought it through enough.”

Nevertheless, there was only one such case for Woon Seong who already knew what he had been wanting.

‘You’ve only been thinking about training for this entire time, haven’t you?’

The senior instructor smiled faintly as he thought about Woon Seong who was standing in front of him.

‘He’s been a completely different person ever since he consumed that poison a few years back.’

The instructor continued his thoughts, as he could see that the achievements were increasing day by day for No. 900.

If anything, it would be nigh impossible for the instructors to not notice the incredible growth displayed by Woon Seong.

‘I’m sure he’s not even first-rate yet... is he?’

The instructor swept his eyes over Woon Seong, as he tried to inspect the level of strength within Woon Seong’s internal qi.

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However, the instructor couldn't get a proper gauge on Woon Seong's true strength and it was a great surprise for the instructor to notice this, as Woon Seong rarely interacted with the other children and even less with the instructors.

"Are you ready for my request?"

The words caught the senior instructor's eye.

"What can I get you?"

"I need four different iron braces, and I need each of them to weigh 20 kilograms. I would like to have them measured if possible, as accurately as you can get them, as well as an iron spear."

The senior instructor felt perplexed at the unusual request.

He had just offered the children to take off their bracers, and yet here was No. 900 asking for more, and at almost 3 times the weight than the weight he was currently wearing!

"It must be heavy."

The total weight on Woon Seong's body would be around 90 kilograms if he added the spear on top of the bracers' weight.

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It was about the weight of adding a healthy adult male onto his body.

It was definitely not something any other children had requested in years prior in the history of the Cave of latent Demons.

“That’s all I need.”

“Okay, that’s definitely possible. Wait until the end of 5 days before you start your training and I will have them prepared for you.”

Woon Seong lowered his head and bowed to the instructor to give his thanks as he turned around and headed back towards his room.

The senior instructor gazed at the back of Woon Seong with interested eyes.

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Chapter 13: Discord (2)

Chapter 13: Discord (2)

“Chet- don’t you think 900’s such a douchebag?”

“Yeah, don’t you think so too Captain?”

No. 185 nodded modestly at the words of the children who were a part of his group that he was the ringleader of.

Strictly speaking, No. 185 was still amongst the top children in the 3rd hall in the Cave of Latent Demons, where he, Woon Seong, and Ah-Young were part of.

In addition, there were only five children who followed him, but they were quite talented as well within the 3rd hall.

However, the thing that brought these children together in the most part, was the fact they were absolutely manhandled and punished by Woon Seong in the beginning of the Cave for their impertinence against him.

They were those who had believed in their skills and thought that he was weak. However, reality was cruel and they were crushed by Woon Seong

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in the past. This resulted in their pride being wounded, and the topic of No. 900, Woon Seong, a sore spot for them.

“Captain, why don’t we attack him at least once?”

“Us?”

One of the children continued to ask No. 185 his thoughts, and nodded excitedly when the others displayed interest in his idea.

“I’ve been feeling much stronger ever since we took off the iron bracers. I’m sure it’s the same for you all too. Of course, I think with even just the five of us we could take him on. What do you think, Captain?”

The teen flirted the idea to No. 185.

No. 185 looked at each of the children one by one, examining their gazes as they nodded fervently.

No. 185 also felt like he was much stronger ever since he had taken off the iron bracers.

As they had taken off their iron bracers, their confidences also seemed to have increased excessively.

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“But won’t No. 900 also take his iron bracers off too?”

One of the children shook his head and pointed at No. 900 who was walking back to his room, with his chin.

“No, look, he’s still wearing his bracers.”

When No. 185 turned his head, He saw Woon Seong walking away from Koo Baek-Ho, the senior instructor, with his bracers still on.

He didn’t know the reason, but Woon Seong still had his bracers on.

“I think even with just the five of us, even if the captain doesn’t want to join on in and dirty his hands personally, if we jump him, we can beat him up thoroughly without him even having the chance to take his bracers off.”

The mere thought of Woon Seong sprawled out on the floor made him feel excited.

However, No. 185 couldn’t get rid of the lingering anxiety he felt from the words Woon Seong had left him with last time. ‘There won’t be a next time.’

So he took a peek at his minions expressions one more time.

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All five of his minions had great skills. Would it be enough to take out No. 900 with his bracers still on?

No. 185 shook his head and smiled insidiously.

'Let's test it with them as the bait.'

The bait was enough.

These five in front of him, were eager and practically drooling to go out and try their chances at revenge.

"Okay, I'm out of this. But, you guys have your own way with him."

At the words of No. 185, the other five stood up immediately, all with eager looks on their faces.

They all looked at No. 185 and shared the same insidious smile with him.

*Whisper- Whisper-*

"Hey!"

Woon Seong raised his head instead of eating the rice in his bowl, at the voice calling out at him.

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At the entrance to the stone chamber assigned to him, five shadows were cast at the entrance.

Five children... no, teenagers at this point, stood there emitting a murderous blood lust, holding their weapons tightly and emitting their qi whole-heartedly.

Woon Seong knew their faces. They were among the lackeys of No. 185 whom Woon Seong knew had a bitter resentment towards him.

Their hairs on the back of their arms were standing up. The murderous air was clearly eminent, even if they didn't say anything.

'They must have seen the chance ever since the iron bracers were taken off for everybody else. But where's No. 185?'

It seemed not taking off his bracers was beneficial for him other than for training. Now, it seemed like No. 185's goons and him were going to take their chances and give Woon Seong a justification to get rid of them finally.

Woon Seong slowly raised himself in a creepy manner and grabbed his spear that was alongside him.

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“What’s going on here?”, he asked.

“What do you think?”

He already knew, but Woon Seong was asking them to confirm if they really wanted to rush to their deaths so early.

Their appearances were ones of starved animals, craving for meat.

“I’m pretty sure I made it clear last time. That would be your last time to try something against me. There won’t be a second chance this time to beg for mercy.”

The teens took a step back reactively away from Woon Seong as they flinched from the dark aura covered in Woon Seong’s murderous intent.

This was not because of his power. They already knew he was powerful, but they couldn’t gauge his power accurately. It was mainly because they remembered the bitter experiences each of them individually had experienced from Woon Seong.

However, they soon regained their wits as they felt confident in their newfound power! Not only that, but there were 5 of them here!

“Damn it, what the hell? Let’s get him!”

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They had resolved themselves earlier to not give Woon Seong a chance to take off his bracers, and here they were spacing out. Woon Seong still didn't take off his bracers, so now was their chance!

In accordance with their overall physiques increasing in mobility from the absence of the bracers, their movements were unlike anything from before.

However... they were not the only ones who improved.

*Whoosh-*

Suddenly a blur past them.

At the same time of them turning their heads wondering what it was, they saw Woon Seong behind them with his spear lodged through the chest of the teen that attacked from the middle.

Blood burst out from the wound and spurted out everywhere, dripping on Woon Seong's face.

"Uk- uck!"

The teen with the spear lodged in his chest, collapsed coughing out blood, desperately trying to cling onto his life that was already forfeit.

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He started to crawl on the floor to escape frantically.

But...

“I said... there would never be a second chance.”

The teen paled and frantically tried to speed up, but Woon Seong’s spear didn’t give him a chance to see another second of life.

Woon Seong didn’t give them even a second to collect their thoughts to realize what was happening to them.

The other four quickly realized what was happening, and bared their teeth, but to no avail.

‘You don’t deserve to be forgiven any further.’

They deserved death in fact, with their past transgressions against him. But, Woon Seong felt that they were still young and could turn over a new leaf.

Yet, they didn’t heed his warnings and were foolish enough to come once more. Only to have their lives reaped by him.

\* \* \*

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“Oh, my God.”

Listening to the screams of his minions, No. 185 didn't feel any sadness or worry, but rather a nauseating feeling came up.

He instinctively knew that the screams he heard were only his minions, and not a single sound that resembled No. 900's voice.

It was hard for him to tell. Was Woon Seong wearing his bracers or not? If he was not, then hopefully it made sense.

But if it wasn't...

'If I take off my bracers, would I be able to take on the 5 of them?'

He didn't know.

He couldn't guarantee a victory.

At the end of his thoughts, No. 185 pulled out his jian from its sheath and held it behind his back.

'I can't go for it yet.'

The difference between them had hardly narrowed, if at all. Woon Seong was leagues above him right now, and it was futile to try and strike.

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The eyes of No. 185 sank naturally as Woon Seong emerged from his resting chamber and walked down the steps of the corridor. No. 185 panicked inwardly and tried not to show it.

He wondered if his expression of anxiety had been revealed to Woon Seong as Woon Seong approached No. 185 slowly.

No, No. 900 was not an idiot.

He probably knew that the people who had just attacked him, were No. 185's lackeys.

'But I thought he'd at least be a little injured.'

But it didn't matter. The bait was set and No. 900 should be only at half-strength with his internal qi. Right?

'Yeah, I just have to wrap it all up neatly.'

Yet in front of him, No. 185 thought he was staring at a monster.

'Why are you staring at me, motherfucker.'

Anxious, No. 185 slowly took off his iron bracers stealthily.

*click- ka-click-*

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The iron bracers came off as No. 185 undid their bindings. Removing them, he felt much lighter than before. He was already looking forward to how he would fare.

He didn't know just when he had gotten accustomed to the bracers, but right now it felt as if he had feathers for arms and legs.

He felt confident that if things went awry, he could at least escape safely.

At that moment however, Woon Seong stepped within range of No. 185.

"What's going on No. 900?"

No. 185 feigned ignorance to see if he could catch Woon Seong off guard.

But Woon Seong, who stepped in front of No. 185 just smirked devilishly and then laughed.

"I'm sure I warned you very well last time. There won't be any second chances."

At Woon Seong's words, No. 185 bitterly shook his shoulders in memory of the words Woon Seong had left behind before.

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'Ugh.'

But No. 185 forced himself to hide his anxiety.

Then he shouted.

"What did I do?"

"Do you think I came here without knowing what you did?"

Woon Seong grinned as his canines revealed a sharp glare.

Was it an illusion?

No. 185's eyes widened a bit in shock and worry. No. 900's eyes seemed to be gleaming with a gold ferocity!

It was the worst outcome possible.

No. 900 knew who was behind the attack and even knew he was directly plotting it.

As he moved his eyes shakily, No. 185 looked at the iron spear in Woon Seong's hand.

'Can I do it?'

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Would he be able to overcome his fears and worries embedded in his head of Woon Seong's martial prowess?

There was blood dripping from the edge of the speartip. It was the blood of his 5 minions that had gone in earlier...

No. 185 who didn't feel his will shake just yet, had it broken and shattered to pieces as he saw the blood on the spear. He felt the looming presence of death emanating from Woon Seong.

'I can't die like this yet! Let's focus on warding off his attacks first!'

"ARGH!"

No. 185 jumped back and brought the Jian forward as he swept up the sand from the floor into the air.

The sand that he had swept up with his momentum of swinging his powerful jian forwards, was flung at Woon Seong's eyes.

But...

*woosh-*

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Woon Seong's body fluidly bent and avoided the sand with ease, as his center of gravity wasn't shaken in the slightest. Then, the speartip from Woon Seong curved and bent as it exploded forth with a surge of might.

*Bang-*

No. 185 immediately leapt up and saw the damage left in the spear's wake. The rocky floor was crushed and No. 185 cursed as he saw that Woon Seong's strength was too much for him, even with his bracers still on!

"Damn it!"

As soon as No. 185 landed, he shot forwards at Woon Seong swinging his fist!

*Kagang-*

The wrist of Woon Seong shook, and the spear bent like a snake as it dodged the trajectory of No. 185's fist cleanly.

*Pupuk-*

Woon Seong's spearhead penetrated his chest cleanly.

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“Huh...Huh?”

No. 185’s body stopped and he tilted his head down to look at the unbelievable result.

The speed. It was too much for him, and Woon Seong was still wearing his bracers...

Woon Seong gripped the outstretched spear and pulled back with ease.

Blood poured out of No. 185’s chest like a waterfall, yet made no sound.

Then his body started to tilt backwards and fall, as his vision blurred.

The ceiling of the cave was the thing No. 185 had seen in his short-lived life.

“Tch, shouldn’t have kept his resentment attached to him...”

Woon Seong turned his head as he bitterly cursed the fact that No. 185, who was talented, refused to let go of his terrible nature and schemes.

The dark aura from Woon Seong’s intimidation qi, withdrew itself from the surroundings and disappeared altogether.

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Woon Seong glared at the body of No. 185 one last time, before turning back around once more and leaving.

\* \* \*

A little while later.

*Srrrrrrrr-*

A dark figure crept up onto the scene of the dead No. 185 where Woon Seong had just been.

The dark figure revealed itself. It was No. 17, Ah-Young

She alternated her gaze between the dark corridor where Woon Seong had just left from, and the dead body of No. 185.

Then she murmured without realizing it.

“What exactly is he doing?”

It was the moment when her rather pure and innocent interest in the development of Woon Seong, had evolved into something much further than mere interest.

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## Chapter 14: Closed Door Training

Chapter 14: Closed Door Training

Five days went by quickly.

Before entering the training, each of the children asked the instructors for what they needed, and the instructors provided them with the supplies they had requested as long as they were within reason.

Woon Seong was also given the items he had requested from the senior instructor.

Four iron bracers and a new iron spear weighing a total of around 90 kilos.

Just thinking about the odd request Woon Seong had given the instructor, it seemed the instructor had given Woon Seong an additional set of bracers a bit heavier in case he got used to the ones he requested as well.

And the spear.

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'It's definitely heavy.'

Woon Seong frowned as he moved his body that was heavier than before.

If he circulated his internal qi at all times of the day, he would be able to move freely like before.

But otherwise, the movement was a little bit unnatural and difficult. Not only that, but it was ridiculous to be able to circulate his internal qi at all times of the day, so it would be a good challenge to overcome.

'When I get used to it, I can be much stronger.'

He was already amongst the top talents within the cave and his body's talent had started to change in accordance with his body, due to the Heavenward Soul Earthen Body technique.

Even if he was already looking at the results the training would bring about after the next few years of training, he would already be amongst the top of the children right now as they finished in four years. He was that far ahead.

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'First, I need to build up my mastery with the Six Seals of Destruction and my other techniques.'

He was ready to combine the techniques or at least start on combining the Divine Spear of the Ending Night and the Six Seals of Destruction.

By the end of the closed door training at the very least, if not completely, he would hopefully be almost finished with combining the two, he thought.

Then, he might be able to even finish his body's talent cultivation with the Heavenward Soul Earthen Body, which was almost finished with cultivating the talent of his soul.

'And on the day I'm done with all my training, I'll try and go for Body Modification!'

Woon Seong clenched his fist tightly.

This was a fact that Woon Seong had learned in his previous life, but every time a martial artist moved up within the Major Realms, they would undergo a certain process if they had an unparalleled cultivation technique.

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And the techniques that Woon Seong were cultivating, in particular the Heavenward Soul Earthen Body, was not just a technique that changed his body a bit and developed his muscles.

It was a miraculous technique that was built to enhance everything about the practitioner cultivating the technique. However, in order to achieve such a perfect state of a body and achieve harmony properly, they had to shed the shell of their previous body through Body Modification!

The Heavenward Soul Earthen Body technique, instead of becoming more familiar to Woon Seong, became more and more mysterious as he practiced it.

It was clear that it was no ordinary high-tier technique... No, it was far beyond the scope of humans.

He only read it through the several books within the library in the Spearmaster Sect, and did not imagine a Buddhist Scripture like this, would be so mysterious in origin and extent of abilities.

'There's a clear multitude of changes happening inside my body even at this very moment. It's not something that's so simple like I had thought...'

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Reflecting on the fact that this was something gained from his previous life, and the slightly bitter emotions that were aroused uncontrollably when thinking about the past, Woon Seong forced himself to stop thinking about it and move forward with his steps.

The closed door training area was in an area that was separated by two cliffs. There were small caves that were called rooms that were about 5 pyeong wide that went up the sides of these cliffs.

It was an area that was usually guarded by instructors and could not even be seen up until now.

'It's a much steeper slope than I thought.'

In addition, the caved rooms were not naturally shaped.

The rooms where the children had been living in were made of the basic framework of natural erosion, but this was purely an artificial cave made by human hands.

'They dug deeper inside the natural cave to enlarge the training space.'

Woon Seong looked inside one of the caves, moving his head around.

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The current area he was in was assigned to the children of the 3rd Hall, purely for the closed door training within the Cave of Latent Demons.(T/N : There are 4 groups/ halls of children and they're each separated from each other, so Woon Seong hasn't met children from the other halls. Just clarifying this.)

That meant there were a few more steep cliffs and training areas like this, throughout the Cave of Latent Demons.

'I can't believe they've artificially made such a training area of such size.'

Indeed, there was a bit of exclamation that it was only a part of the several training areas within the Cave of Latent Demons.

In the meantime, the senior instructor who was walking earlier suddenly stopped walking.

It was after the long walk that was accompanied by silence, into the cave.

"From now on, you're going to have your closed door training session here for the next 4 years."

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As soon as the senior instructor stomped his foot, the flames on the torches in the hands of the other instructors lit up.

The torches were lined up from all sides, and the interior of the cave became clearly visible.

“Wow!”

There was a burst of admiration and wonder from the children.

It was a huge space, much larger than even Woon Seong had thought. It was extremely deep and large... almost frightening if one thought of it as a jail.

The small little rooms that were wedged into the sides of the cliffs became visible.

The number of rooms was about 200, matching the rough amount of kids in the 3rd hall that were alive.

“Those are the entrances to your rooms for the closed door training. Inside, there is a space that is not insufficient for any kind of training you may need, along with drinking water and funnels for rice grains to be delivered daily. So don’t worry and go inside.”

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It was easy to become lonely.

It was damp, and moist.

That combined with the darkness.

Dark areas, where one could not see past one's fingers and were combined with silence in a confined space, were enough to make the most courageous of humans break their wills.

It was highly likely that even some of the children might go crazy within this time away from everybody else.

That was why this trial was part of the titled trials of 'life and death'.

Could one survive in such conditions of utter silence, unfavorable living conditions, and complete darkness? That was their challenge.

Inside his room, Woon Seong slowly closed its eyes.

He started to circulate his internal qi, and focus it around his eyes. By doing this, he would be able to see just fine.

But, he knew he would not be able to do that all day long.

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If he did, he would be exhausted without any chance to properly train his body.

'I'm getting used to the darkness.'

It was in the dark with nothing in sight anyway, but the senses of Woon Seong picked up on a bowl of rice grains in the corner and a bamboo shoot for water.

The senses of Woon Seong stretched out and expanded within the darkness, as he got a grasp of his surroundings.

He could hear the wind blowing in and out of a tiny crack between the rocks.

He then slowly opened his eyes.

The extended sensations and comprehension of his surroundings passed to his brain, as he started to memorize the dimensions of his room, to minimize his effort needed to circulate his internal qi in his eyes. On top of that, he wasn't sure, but he was starting to make out his surroundings naturally with his eyes.

*Intimidation Qi (暗順應).*

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It wasn't clear, but his intimidation qi, helped him gather the grasp on his surroundings easier.(T/N : Another difference from the webtoon, as the translators in the webtoon thought he was using his heavenward soul, earthbound technique to sense his surroundings, but the hanja here says otherwise.)

Woon Seong opened his eyes and looked at the water flowing through the bamboo chute.

Next to it was a small wooden handle, which was the size of an arm.

It is a structure that could not be opened from inside the room, the wooden handle for one to crank the machinery behind the wall, to gather water to drink.

'How interesting, they used machinery to draw the water in.'

There was a wooden gate on the other side of the cave that Woon Seong suddenly picked up with his senses.It was locked from the outside, and he was unsure of what it's purpose was for. But, like all things in the Cave of Latent Demons, they would be revealed at a later date.

'I shouldn't try to mess around with that.'

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Woon Seong took a sip of water and put it in his mouth.

He had to spend four years here. Woon Seong clenched his fist tightly and grabbed the spear.

'I can do it.'

Woon Seong immediately began his training.

The training regimen for Woon Seong was simple. At night, he spent less time sleeping and cultivated his Heavenward Soul Earthen Body technique, and at dawn, he focused on improving his internal qi reserves with the Tempered True Blossom cultivation technique.

During the day, he used the time to learn the martial arts that he had deemed useful from his past life and then afterwards at noon, practiced the Six Seals of Destruction and Divine Spear of the Ending Night.

It was a great boon for him to be able to reduce his sleep while being able to practice and rest at the same time with the Heavenward Soul Earthen Body technique.

Day by day, progress started to accumulate...

And four years passed.

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\* \* \*

*Sisst-*

The dark space was filled with an even darker and compressed energy.

The dark energy was fluctuating as if it were smooth as water, winding around the entire room like a snake.

*Gsh- Gsh- Gsh-*

In the meantime, Woon-Seong was breathing slowly. Breathing in and out very slowly.....

The dark energy contracted and expanded in accordance to match the breath of Woon Seong.

The intimidation qi, had been assimilated thoroughly into Woon Seong's very body and breathing habits. His proficiency with the technique was incomparable to before.

How long had it been?

For the first time, the breathing of the seated Woon Seong, which was breathing and exhaling in a rhythmic flow regularly, changed.

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*Sigh, Sigh-*

Breathing in slowly, very slowly and with depth.

He was changing the breathing technique to the pattern required for a different martial art.

His breath went deep into his lungs. And the internal qi responded to him.

The wide-spread internal qi gathered around Woon Seong.

The gathering qi gathered atop the head of Woon Seong and started to knead itself into a sphere.

A small sphere rose above Woon Seong's head.

And finally!

When Woon Seong stopped breathing, the qi scattered with a sizzling sound.

Soon after that, Woon Seong opened his eyes.

*Paat-*

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At the moment, a bright gold light flashed in the eyes of Woon Seong. His eyes had turned fierce. The figure was like the eyes of a cold hearted assassin in front of his target.

However, after a while, the eyes of Woon Seong soon returned to their original form, and the gold sheen in his irises, dissipated.

Woon Seong slowly rose from his seat, circulating the deep reserves of internal qi that had expanded leaps and bounds, within his dantian.

“Is it today?”

As the cultivation of the Heavenward Soul Earthen Body had grown, Woon Seong had been able to naturally expand his senses without the use of internal qi. It felt strange as he looked back on the time he had spent in this room the past 4 years.

Yet everything was so clear when he closed his eyes.

Through his senses, he saw the numerous markings he had made, scratching the wall the number of days that had passed.

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As if it were corresponding to Woon Seong's finalizing thoughts, the mysterious wooden gate that had not moved since he had entered the cave, moved subtly.

'Is this the end of the life and death trials, or will there be more?'

Perhaps there was more since it hadn't quite been a full 10 years.

Woon Seong gripped the spear in his hand tightly.

The four iron bracers and iron spear in his hands, could be felt throughout his body with much ease.

Despite the weight becoming more than adding another body in terms of weight onto his body, Woon Seong's movements were completely smooth.

The senses of Woon Seong that had expanded past the darkness of the cave and towards the wooden gate.

'It's not bad. I guess it's time to go'

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## Chapter 15: Closed Door Training (2)

Chapter 15: Closed Door Training (2)

Over the course of four years, Woon Seong had completely changed into a young man.

Everything was developed except for his pale skin from the absence of sunlight for over 4 years.

His jawline was firm cut, and the bridge of his nose was rather high.

His long blue hair swayed easefully through the light breeze in the cave.

His body and muscles looked as if he had been sculpted out of clay.

Even though his muscles and body were well-defined, he did look swelled up or even remotely close to it. He was sleek, compact, and fit to even the finest fiber of muscle.

It was the most suitable body possible, adjusted to the nature of spear martial arts, which emphasized flow, harmony and flexibility.

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On top of that, his body was now strong enough to not be injured internally or externally, when it came to unfolding the Six Seals of Destruction or Divine Spear of the Ending Night.

Thanks to the body modification that Woon Seong had achieved, it was a body that was in a pristine state.

‘But the only thing that’s disappointing is that I failed to combine the two martial arts into one.’

After four years of effort, Woon Seong realized just how short-sighted he was in thinking that combining two incredible martial art techniques would be as easy as combining the two cultivation methods he had combined before.

Considering that the one who developed the Six Seals of Destruction, the Unrecorded Heavenly Demon, had taken his entire lifetime to perfect just that martial art alone. And the fact it had taken his master his entire life to perfect the Divine Spear of the Ending Night... it might as well just take as long for Woon Seong to combine the two into one.

“But the good thing is that it wasn’t completely uneventful.’

He had caught the thread.

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It was truly smaller than a needle, and was incredibly difficult to grasp, but Woon Seong had found the thread that would tie the two together.

‘And if I can find the end of that thread completely.....’

With a faint smile hanging around the corners of his mouth, Woon Seong cut his hair with the speartip in his hands.

The hair that he hadn’t cared about for four years, had grown down to his waist.

Woon Seong cut it to his shoulders.

*Sagak-Sagak-Sagak-*

After Woon Seong cut his hair, he scratched his unkempt beard and shaved it off roughly with the blade.

*Shik-shik-*

When Woon Seong finished cutting his beard, he felt the vibrations in the cave slightly as he looked at the wooden gate open in his room.

‘Perfect.’

The door to meet with the other teens was opening now.

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A dark passage ran all the way through the exit. The passageways narrowed and widened, went down and continued steep slopes at seemingly random.

Through the passage, Woon Seong was walking through them without batting an eyelid at what might be a difficult path to traverse for others.

Nevertheless, his speed was very fast running through the several obstacles in complete darkness. It was hard to say that it was a speed that could be produced simply because his eyes had become adapted to the darkness.

'I think I know now.'

Even without having to expand his reach of eyesight with his internal qi like before, Woon Seong's body was utterly perfected and optimized due to the effects of the Heavenward Soul Earthen Body, that whenever he concentrated his mind and heightened his senses, they were much vaster than before.

How much time had passed as he wandered through the passage?

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Woon Seong was traveling through the passage relatively with ease when suddenly, a chink in his senses was briefly revealed and he reacted swiftly.

Woon Seong quickly pivoted his foot into the ground, revolving the spear over and across his back in a full swing.

*Whik-!*

The speartip collided and deflected a small dagger that had been flung out of the darkness.

Woon Seong could feel a warmth being emitted from the blade that had been heated and shot out at him.

Then he realized what it was when a terrible smell was picked up from the blade as well. It was poison.

Woon Seong shifted his gaze back to where the dagger had originally come from and narrowed his eyes.

'It wasn't an ordinary passage either.'

It seemed that there was hidden machinery and traps strewn about.

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He could lose his life at any moment that he let his guard down.

This was just the passage and rite of way for the cult to measure if the teens had properly trained in the 4 years.

Woon Seong understood then. That even these exit was not meant to be taken lightly.

Sure enough, as Woon Seong moved along, more traps and machinery shot out hidden weapons and often revealed hidden pitfalls.

The range of traps varied from poisoned hidden weapons, trap doors, pitfalls, a hail of arrows, spinning blades and much more.

Of course, it was not a problem for Woon Seong.

Woon Seong's speed was faster than the trap's activation speed, most of the time. And if it wasn't something he could outspeed, he could block or parry with his spear with ease.

There eventually came a trap that Woon Seong had not encountered yet.

'Swamp of the Poisonous Demon.'

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Woon Seong looked calmly at the black swamp in front of him. It was a heavy water filled to the brim with countless poisons that even leaves could not float without being melted on the touch.

It was made to look like a dark area of water, but it was the complete opposite.

As soon as one's skin touched it, they would start to sink while having their body corrode down from the skin, all the way to the bone.

The depth of the swamp was unknown, but Woon Seong had no intention of finding out.

It was natural that one had to either cross the swamp by either emitting enormous amounts of qi around their body, which needed one to at least be a Peak Realm martial artist to accomplish. Or, they had to be able to traverse it another way.

Woon Seong looked around the swamp.

The distance to the opposite side of the swamp was just over ten paces or so.

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Considering the training that the Cave of Latent Demons had been arduous thus far, it seemed they obviously needed the children to be able to jump that far in order to cross.

'They would have to be able to at least become First-Rate in order to strengthen their limbs individually with qi.'

Woon Seong looked at the iron bracers on his arms and legs.

A weight of 90 kilograms in total.

A ten pace distance, and he wouldn't strengthen himself with qi either. He needed to be at least this much, he thought.

'Can I do it?'

He could easily cross with using his qi. But, he also wanted to not only wear bracers while doing it, but not even circulate his internal qi to his limbs.

'But.. what if I can't?'

The hesitation was short.

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There was one reason. If he hesitated and ended up falling short, then he would never be able to get revenge. He had to be this strong at this age in order to slay the Murim Alliance hypocrites.

Not only that, but he needed to believe in his strength. It was the one of the core traits to becoming a martial artist.

'Let's do it.'

Woon Seong stepped back and blinked slowly.

Then, he gripped his right hand on the shaft of the spear and shot forward.

He decided to use a basic footwork that required no qi. It was the Gale walk!

Woon Seong's figure became a gale of wind that was light but firm.

*Whoosh-*

The gale flew through the air and stopped on the other side of the swamp. Woon Seong slowly stopped rotating his body and his hair swayed.

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He took a leap of ten paces successfully without using his internal qi, or taking off his bracers.

'I succeeded.'

If it was only half a step shorter, he would have utterly failed and met his end.

But he had succeeded. Woon Seong felt the sensation of accomplishment as he calmed his shaking hands.

However, he soon dulled his sense of pride and content down as he knew there was still a long way to go in terms of fully exiting the passage.

'I can feel better only once I fully complete the Trial.'

Woon Seong continued to move.

As Woon Seong was passing by, closer to the exit, he came down a narrow pathway once more and noticed the cracks in the wall which normally meant a trap was located there.

But...

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'Hmm?'

Picking up his senses, Woon Seong felt something amiss as he expanded his range with the Heavenward Soul Earthen Body.

It was not a machine or trap like he had been encountering up until now.

There was breathing. And the breathing of a human being at that.

Woon Seong slowly gripped his spear tightly and raised his guard, albeit giving off the appearance that he was defenseless.

Then he was sure once he felt the killing intent.

In that crack between the walls.

'I see, there's someone I need to kill in order to pass further.'

*Sisst-*

Sure enough, as soon as Woon Seong entered the range of the other person, he heard movement.

It was a movement with little-to-no sound

'The Cult truly is heartless.'

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Woon Seong pretended he didn't notice the movement to draw out the attacker.

He could hear, feel and smell the opponent that was trying to stay hidden.

However, Woon Seong feigned ignorance and kept moving as he came to a small room. There were three other entrances leading to the room and one exit. However, the exit was blocked off with a giant stone.

Woon Seong slowly approached the stone door.

Even then, the unidentified person was looking for an opening to attack Woon Seong.

He didn't seem to notice that Woon Seong had picked up on his presence long ago.

Woon Seong ignored him and walked up to the stone gate and read the writing engraved on the stone.

Woon Seong raised an eyebrow as he read what the writing said.

'Only one may leave.'

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3 entrances, and only 1 person to leave.

Woon Seong then understood that the assailant was probably another child who had killed the other one who came through.

Technically speaking this kind of mentality training was the harsh and extreme opposite to the Orthodox methods, but the Demonic Cult was a pseudo religion and not one to pursue anything other than strength.

It was at that moment that the other teen attempted to attack.

*Whoosh-*

The assailant thought that Woon Seong was utterly defenseless, leaving his back completely exposed.

The sword in his hand danced and drew a line towards the back of Woon Seong.

*Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!*

Suddenly the spear blurred in Woon Seong's hand, and Woon Seong could be heard clicking his tongue.

That was all it took.

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“I could already sense you long before I entered this space, did you really think you were fooling anyone.”

*Kkagang-*

The sword in the assailant’s hands flew backwards as the strength from the iron spear in Woon Seong’s hands was heavy.

The sparks of the collision slightly revealed the other teenager’s facial expression.

It revealed utter shock and embarrassment.

Quickly trying to reel his sword back in, the teen tried to gain distance.

*Whik-*

However, Woon Seong was a step faster.

Woon Seong’s arms moved smoothly like a dancer’s, and a torrent of internal qi sprung forth from his dantian as he swung the spear in the shape of a cyclone, creating a suction force.

The sword in the hands of the other teen started to get pulled forward and the teen’s eyes started to shake.

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Woon Seong brought the cyclone to a halt and the sword was flung back as it collided with the centripetal force of the spear.

The expression of the other boy wasn't good.

But, Woon Seong showed no gaps of mercy.

*Boo-Woong-*

The spear cut through the darkness and drew several lines in the air, marking all over the body of the boy.

*Boom-*

The sword was flung back and stuck into the ground with a loud boom, as the other boy quickly pulled out a blade and backed off, eyeing Woon Seong carefully.

"Are you not going to come?"

Woon Seong took a step forward.

The boy reflexively flinched back and made the mistake of showing an opening to Woon Seong.

"Then I'll go ahead."

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Woon Seong started to circulate his internal qi rapidly and the tempered true blossom's stored qi started to show it's brilliance within his body.

It gushed into the internal pathways of Woon Seong's body covering every millimeter of depth as Woon Seong's muscle fibers stretched and contracted.

Woon Seong swiftly moved and outstretched his arm with the spear in tow.

Six Seals of Destruction : *First Seal (星雨) Raining Stars of Extinction*

The First Seal of Destruction unfolded as several images of bright lights enveloped Woon Seong's speartip.

The spear started to move faster and faster as several stabs flew towards the other boy. The light enveloping the speartip exploded and the boy tried to hurriedly defend.

Caang-The boy felt a slight sense of relief that he was able to make contact with one of the spears for a brief second, but then realized how foolish he was. Several spears appeared next to him, as his feet started to lift from the ground from the full exploding force of the stab he thought he blocked.

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And finally, when his eye fully adapted to the light, Woon Seong was able to see the imagery of what layed beyond the door.

Woon Seong smiled faintly at the sight.

'I passed.'

The second trial of life and death, it wasn't as difficult as he thought.

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