

Chapter 1047

I must have been crazy too. (2)

Great Wind Pavilion [대풍루(大風樓) — daepungnu].

Once splendid enough to match the words ‘magnificent and brilliant,’ the central pavilion of Hangzhou was now partially in ruins, revealing a menacing skeleton.

Only a week ago, it was bustling with laughter of entertainers, the sounds of music, and the voices of revelers. But now, it was filled with a solemn silence.

Yet, on the highest floor of the pavilion that had not yet crumbled, a man sat by the window. Gurgle.

A translucent liquid, softly glowing with a reddish hue, was poured into a cup. The fragrance of the wine wafted gently in all directions.

Thud.

Danjagang lowered the bottle and stared silently at the white cup filled with liquor. After a while, he reached out and lifted the cup.

The wine flowed into his mouth as he closed his eyes, savoring the faint aroma. The sensation of the liquid passing through his throat was vivid. Danjagang gently placed the cup back down.

Sigh...

Soon, a sigh escaped his lips. Was it because he didn’t like the wine? No, quite the opposite. The scent of the wine wasn’t just on the tip of his nose but enveloped his entire body. Those who had tasted this wine would come to realize that it was not merely for drinking and getting drunk — it was for savoring the true taste and aroma of wine.

Indeed, for those who had tasted this wine.

Danjagang slowly looked up at the sky. Beyond the partially collapsed ceiling, a faint crescent moon was visible.

‘There was never a chance for them.’

The fact that there was no opportunity left Danjagang feeling disheartened. What truly frustrated him wasn’t the fact that believers couldn’t enjoy this type of wine. It was the knowledge that they didn’t even know such wine existed, living their lives without ever realizing it.

Few people feel regret for something that doesn’t exist. Regret often comes after something has been lost. The believers, who didn’t even know what they were missing, were denied the freedom to mourn it.

Even at this moment, countless believers considered cheap, low-quality spirits as the only kind of alcohol. They longed for that subpar liquor, desiring it.

What would they think if they could taste this wine here? When they saw the wall lined with numerous high-quality liquors and the feast of flavors, what would go through their minds?

«Haha...»

Perhaps, they might resent the non-believers in the central plains, who have been nonchalantly enjoying all the things they couldn't.

“Hahahaha...”

Who knows, they might even hold the leaders of the faith accountable for keeping them in the dark.

«Haha... Hahah...»

And perhaps...

Danjagang, who had paused for a moment, slowly raised his head. Intrusive, unholy thoughts kept creeping into his mind.

Absentmindedly he refilled his cup. He then downed the entire drink. Danjagang repeated this act several times, looking outside with an empty gaze. When he first arrived here, this city dazzled with people and lights. But now, only darkness and death remained, just like the world they were living in.

Finally... yes, now, those who used to live here and the believers had achieved equality.

But...

If sharing misery is equality, what did that leave for the believers? A sense of comfort knowing more people were suffering? Or the base pleasure of dragging those living the high life down to their level?

«Hahah...»

It's simply ludicrous.

Perhaps the world will soon become just like this place. The magnificent lights will vanish, fertile land will be drenched in blood, and the streets once filled with laughter will be inundated with death and silence.

And what will remain is simply...

«The Second Coming of The Heavenly Demon...»

Danjagang closed his eyes.

Yes, what remains is not just the followers of the doctrine but the doctrine itself. When the Heavenly Demon returns, all demons in the world will bow down to him.

«The Second Coming of The Heavenly Demon. Ten Thousand Demons Pay Homage.»

It's their prophecy, their everything. The sole truth they must uphold.

But Danjagang wanted to ask. He felt a painful, unanswered question that he had never dared to ask before, but now it couldn't be ignored.

“The Heavenly Demon, please...”

Had his faith wavered? No, it hadn't. Despite feeling the sharp contradictions, his faith in the Heavenly Demon remained unshaken. It was precisely because of this that he couldn't help but ask this one question.

«How can this lowly person dare to question the Heavenly Demon ...»

The Second Coming of The Heavenly Demon. Ten Thousand Demons Pay Homage.

The Second Coming of The Heavenly Demon. Ten Thousand Demons Pay Homage.

«This impure world will be cleansed as the Heavenly Demon desires. And soon, a glorious Demon realm will emerge.»

This was his triumph[성전(盛典)] and also his holy war[성전(聖戰)].

But he wanted to know.

What comes after achieving all of that? What comes after welcoming the Heavenly Demon back, purifying the world, and opening the gates of the demonic realm? What kind of life would believers have to lead then?

No one speaks of what comes after. No one discusses the world beyond. No one is curious because they have no right to think about what comes next. They haven't even fulfilled the first decree sent by the Heavenly Demon.

Danjagang leaned back in his chair, his head hanging low. A sense of futility filled his eyes.

«...What is it, The Heavenly Demon? What is it...»

What have we endured this long for, and what must we fight for? Even if all of this is for the glory of the Heavenly Demon alone, we would gladly walk that path with a smile. But why does your mercy not extend to us in the slightest?

«Haha...»

It's all just ludicrous. Simply ludicrous.

Taptaptap.

Then, from the direction of the stairs leading to the lower floor, slightly hurried footsteps could be heard.

Danjagang acknowledged the visitor without turning his head.

«Bishop.»

Jeogil, who had come up the stairs, immediately bowed to the ground before Danjagang.

«Outside, unbelievers' forces have invaded the outskirts, and a battle is underway.»

As he reported, he swallowed a dry lump in his throat.

«Their numbers exceeds five hundred.»

Danjagang didn't show much of a reaction. If it had been any other day, just the knowledge of the presence of these dirty unbelievers would have made him tremble with anger.

«Five hundred...»

He muttered in a subdued voice.

«Is my neck the target?»

«As blasphemous as it is, that seems likely.»

«I see.»

Danjagang's gaze shifted beyond the window. Although the distance from the outskirts of Hangzhou to this place was considerable, the fact that they had approached without him noticing meant his mind was distracted.

«My neck...»

His eyes, as he gazed at the moon, were filled with bitter emptiness. Under normal circumstances, upon hearing this news, he would have rushed out to condemn them. But now, for some reason, he didn't feel like doing so.

«What should we do?»

Jeogil immediately responded to the question.

“Currently, the ordinary followers who were patrolling the outskirts are engaged in battle with them. Devout demonic warriors [마군(魔軍) magun] from the diocese are on their way to condemn them, so there may be no need for Bishop to personally intervene.”

“Is that so...”

Danjagang grasped the bottle of liquor once more and began pouring gleaming liquid into the glass.

Gurgle.

The red-tinged liquor filled the glass to the brim. Jeogil's face had stiffened due to Danjagang's lack of response, even though he had just reported on those opposing the faith. But at that very moment...

«Dare...»

The world began to tremble. The ominous force emanating from Danjagang shook not only the air but the very pavilion they were in.

Overwhelmed by the force, Jeogil quickly lowered his head to the floor.

«Bishop, please, cease your wrath...»

«Jeogil.»

«Yes, Bishop.»

A sinister voice came from Danjagang's mouth.

«They dare to oppose the Heavenly Demon. Chew their flesh, grind their bones, and make them understand what they must pay for their disbelief. Let this wicked world know clearly what the price of unfaithfulness is.»

«Second Coming Of The Heavenly Demon!»

Thud!

Jeogil struck his head against the floor, then cautiously rose and flew down the stairs like the wind.

As his presence moved farther, Danjagang's gaze darkened.

«Amitabha Buddha!»

A resonant Buddhist chant reverberated, and a golden radiance spread before them.

Kuwoouuuung!

A heavy shockwave erupted. The charging cultists couldn't withstand the power and were thrown back. However, they quickly got up, their backs barely touching the ground, and with cries of rage, they charged once more.

«Kuk!»

It was the first time a suppressed groan escaped from Hye Yeon's lips.

«Keep charging!»

As Chung Myung's voice urged them, there was no time to stop and think.

Chung Myung lead the elite forces of Hwasan.

Jang Ilso, with Ho Gamyong following him.

When Chung Myung and Jang Ilso first announced they would leave the battlefield to the Black Ghosts and enter Hangzhou, many didn't understand why they had made such a choice.

But now, everyone understood the meaning behind their intentions.

'Damn it!'

Baek Cheon gritted his teeth. The charge of demonic cultists seemed endless. What they had faced on the outskirts of Hangzhou was only a small fraction, and they were nothing more than simple scouts.

As they ventured further inside, demonic cultists emitting denser demonic energy awaited them, making it difficult to breathe due to their overwhelming demonic aura.

Thwack!

Baek Cheon, forcefully thrusting the ground, unfurled his sword at the cultists charging at the front.

The surging crimson sword energy created dozens of afterimages, mercilessly cleaving through the their bodies.

“Kaaargh!”

Demonic cultists with holes in their bodies screamed in agony. Yet, in the midst of this, long, overgrown fingernails swung relentlessly.

“Ugh!”

Just as the attack was about to reach Baek Cheon, Jo Geol, supporting him from the back, tried to jump in and block it.

Paaaang!

With a deafening sound of explosion, a golden meteor-like object destroyed the heads of the cultists who had been in front of Baek Cheon.

“Be careful, my dear.”

A friendly voice rang out resolutely. Baek Cheon turned his head, his face contorted.

“Jang Ilso!”

“Getting too excited is not a good thing. Don't waste your strength in advance. You still have a lot to do.”

“Tsk!”

Baek Cheon clenched his lips tightly. The fact that he had to rely on Jang Ilso filled him with shame.

At that moment...

Paaaang!

Chung Myung's flying sword swiftly decapitated a cultist who had charged at Jang Ilso.

«Don't slack off, you idiot!»

«... Well, you're rather kind.»

Jang Ilso smiled crookedly. In the midst of this, Chung Myung scanned the surroundings rapidly.

'Where is he?'

Predicting the actions of the Bishop is impossible. They are all so different from one another. Therefore, searching for him in this vast land of Hangzhou is a ridiculous task.

However, it's not necessary.

Amidst this suffocating demonic energy, all he needs to do is find the place where the thickest demonic aura dwells. With his senses even more heightened than before, it shouldn't be too difficult.

A moment later, Chung Myung turned his head upwards.

In the ruined Hangzhou, where all the high pavilions collapsed, on the land, that has been flattened to reveal the horizon, there was only one tower that stand out.

"This..."

Chung Myung exposed his teeth in a grin.

"I'm not the only one who's kind, am I?"

His eyes gleamed with a fierce determination.