

## Chapter 1053

I must have been crazy too. (8)

Two groups, standing amidst the completely ruined land of Hangzhou, ceased their actions, each for different reasons.

«...Bishop...»

Jeogil's chin quivered uncontrollably. If someone who didn't know who he was had witnessed this scene, they would have felt a profound sense of pity.

His duty was to ensure that these vile non-believers dared not disturb the Bishop's rest. As an Internal Law Enforcer devoted to the Bishop, he should have performed his duty honorably. But he had failed to fulfill that mission correctly. In the end, their blades were pointed at the Bishop. The fact filled him with unspeakable dread.

The cultists who had been following Jeogil's orders were no different. They all gazed at Danjagang, the solitary figure standing amidst the ruins, with devastation and fear.

And Hwasan's disciples, who had inadvertently led Jeogil to make an irrevocable mistake, looked at Danjagang with a different meaning.

'What's going on?'

Baek Cheon felt perplexed.

'Is that man the Bishop?'

The solitary man standing alone was entirely different from the Bishop that Baek Cheon had pictured. The Bishop he had seen in the Northern Sea was beyond description as anything other than a monster.

Wearing the disguise of a human, he did not appear to be a person at all but rather a colossal embodiment of malice [악의(惡意)]. That was the image of the Bishop as Baek Cheon remembered him.

But now, the figure he was seeing...

'Different.'

While his tall stature and abnormally slender body were eerily strange, he didn't appear as inhuman as Baek Cheon remembered the Bishop to be. In fact, he seemed like an ordinary mercenary one might find anywhere.

However...

Chilling.

It was all in his head. Baek Cheon could feel it.

Hidden beneath that seemingly ordinary appearance was something enormously vast. A profound, dark abyss that felt overwhelmingly thick, which could crush you with its mere presence.

Baek Cheon clenched his lips tightly and glanced around. The faces of those beside him were pale and frozen as well. They were experiencing the same thing as Baek Cheon.

His gaze stopped at Chung Myung's back. Even though he was facing the Bishop, there was not a hint of fear in his back.

Danjagang slowly lowered the cup he held in his hand.

The red liquor once held in the cup had become murky, covered in dust. No matter how much they conquered the land of the central plains, those who worshipped the Heavenly Demon did not deserve to drink the blissful wine.

Danjagang silently brought the cup to his lips and drank. The fragrant sensation that should have tickled his nose was nowhere to be found. All that remained was a foul, earthy taste, like dust and dirt.

However, Danjagang accepted the taste of the vile liquid without trying to avoid it. After all, what they usually drank wasn't much different from this unpalatable libation.

Savoring the taste of the foul concoction in his mouth, Danjagang slowly extended his hand that held out the cup.

Snap.

The smashed cup shattered into fragments.

«It's sad,»

Danjagang said with an expression of sorrow as he briefly observed the scattered white porcelain.

Then, he shifted his gaze to the two figures standing before him. One boisterous like a clown and one in black robes, with cold eyes of a swordsman.

He continued to observe those behind them, and the faces of the believers who stared at him in fear. Danjagang's eyes were still as dark as ever, leaving others unable to decipher his intentions.

'Are you implying that I cannot permit even the smallest crumbs of what you're enjoying?'

Danjagang laughed darkly.

From their perspective, Danjagang was nothing more than an invader who had come to seize everything they enjoyed.

«Your Eminence!»

Then, Jeogil shouted at the top of his lungs and fell prostrate on the ground.

«This is not a matter for Your Eminence to handle personally. I will deal with them!»

Danjagang glanced at Jeogil, who was in a miserable state. His lips curled slightly.

«Forgive my incompetence, and grant me the opportunity to atone for my mistake...»

«Step aside.»

«Your Eminence.»

Danjagang's gaze shifted to Chung Myung and Jang Ilso, who stood at the forefront.

They emitted different energies, one so distinctly pure it was repulsive, and the other nauseating to the point of disgust. Their energies remained starkly opposed, like water and oil that could never mix, but what Danjagang saw in their eyes was the same: unmistakable enmity.

Clearly, the eyes of an enemy. With that blatant hostility pouring out from both, Danjagang slowly began to speak.

«In this place...»

However, he stopped mid-sentence. He realized he was trying to engage in a ‘conversation’ with them.

Until now, Danjagang had spoken to Central Plainers, but that had not been a ‘conversation’. It had been one-sided communication to deliver his message.

But now, Danjagang wasn’t here to deliver a message. He was here to ask questions and listen.

Danjagang closed his eyes slightly.

‘I have been tainted’

Even if he wanted to deny it now, it was beyond his control. Whatever happens, Danjagang wouldn’t be able to return to the Danjagang from when he left the church to come here.

However... even then...

That was the moment.

«You, youngster.»

The black-robed swordsman at the forefront spoke with a crooked smile, his scrutinizing gaze sharp.

«Quite amusing, aren’t you?»

«...»

«For someone who’s never seen a Heavenly Demon and is groveling at the feet of a nonexistent God, that’s quite a statement.»

Had Danjagang been the Danjagang from a short while ago, he would have felt overwhelming anger at those words. Like the believers who couldn’t vent their boiling anger in front of Danjagang, he would have been seething, unable to say anything.

But curiously, the current Danjagang wasn’t particularly triggered by those words. He also believed that the words weren’t completely wrong — they proved his shaken faith.

So, he became curious.

«I have one question, swordsman.»

«We are not friendly enough to have a conversation?»

Danjagang laughed softly.

«Even if I ask for a favor, it should be okay.»

To that, there was a hint of curiosity in Chung Myung’s eyes.

‘A hundred years ago...’

He was suddenly reminded of how incredibly long ago that was. Chung Myung never thought he would witness a Bishop saying such things.

«Speak.»

There was a brief silence. Danjagang slowly opened his darkened dry lips, gazing at Chung Myung and Jang Ilso intently.

«Why do you not run?»

«What?»

Danjagang's indifferent gaze pierced through Chung Myung.

«A person of your caliber must have felt it by now. You probably understand.»

Danjagang's tone was not a threat, at least from his perspective.

«The difference in power is evident. You cannot stop me.»

«But why do you not run? Why do you resist? Why engage in a fight where the outcome is clear?»

This is what is truly foolish.

Certainly, he acknowledged their strength. They were formidable enough that it would be hard to find a rival for them in the Church, unless it was someone on the Bishop's level. However, it was precisely because of this that he thought they should understand clearly as soon as they stood before him. They should recognize that they had no chance of victory.

‘Why do they have such resolute eyes?’

As meaningless as it was, he couldn't help but ask it.

However, the response he received was slightly different from what Danjagang had expected. Instead of a serious answer, there was unmistakable mockery.

«Why should I entertain such foolish questions? Have you suddenly turned into philosophers, while living in the outskirts and eating nothing but dirt?»

The tone was impolite and devoid of any meaningful sentiment when addressing the Bishop. Chung Myung laughed aloud and then asked Danjagang:

«Well? If opponent is strong, we should bow our heads and submit, just because they are somewhat powerful?»

“...”

«Listen here, you stupid brat. Cowards like you might tremble in fear, thinking about death at the hands of a non-existent Heavenly Demon, but I'd rather die than grovel.»

«Are you not afraid of death then?»

«Of course, I'm scared, you ignorant cultist.»

Chung Myung laughed as he was surprised.

«But bending the knee is just worse than dying, especially for people like you.»

Before Danjagang could respond, a soft groan reached his ears.

«Hmmm.»

Danjagang's gaze turned towards Jang Ilso, who was standing beside Chung Myung.

His pale face was lightened with red lips that resembled painted lines, curving in a sinister fashion.

«Hmm. They kept calling you ‘bishop, bishop’ so grandly. I wondered how extraordinary a human you were. Well. This is disappointing.»

Jang Ilso sighed exaggeratedly, pausing his speech for a moment.

«You know, Bishop, so much for your reputation. I thought you were something more than this.»

Danjagang's eyebrows twitched uncomfortably.

«Just remember one thing,»

Jang Ilso said in a strangely sardonic tone. His friendly appearance contrasted with his words, causing even the stern Danjagang to furrow his brow.

«When you acknowledge someone above you as an obvious existence, that's when you end as a person.»

“...”

«That's the difference between the one who rules and the one who is ruled. And I am not afraid of beings who chose to be ruled. No matter how strong they are, it ends the same way, people who choose to submit.»

Jang Ilso's rings clinked together sharply.

«So, what kind of person are you?»

Jang Ilso asked.

Listening to Jang Ilso's words, Danjagang smiled quietly.

«I don't know.»

Silence followed.

«You don't know either,»

Danjagang continued.

«The answer I want doesn't exist, not for you, not for anyone. Or... perhaps it may never be heard by anyone in the world.»

Disappointment filled Danjagang's voice as he spoke.

«Don't submit. Overcome. Resist.»

As Danjagang's muttering grew longer, his face contorted further.

«That's just something that those who haven't truly experienced real fear, real greatness, or real divinity can say.»

Under Danjagang's feet, black demonic energy flowed and welled up. This darkness was so thick that it felt like something from beyond this world. It started coiling around his feet.

«But even if you insist on saying such things...»

Whiiiiiiing!

The energy Danjagang released spun faster and faster, creating a massive vortex of raging black flames.

«I'll show you.»

Danjagang's voice grew increasingly rough. His eyes emitted an intense crimson glow.

«Let me teach you what true despair is!»

Kwaaaaaaah!

The black demonic energy soared into the sky like a black dragon.

Finally, Danjagang threw himself into madness. From his mouth, the scream of a demon from hell erupted. It was such an overwhelming and shocking sight. In front of horrifying demonic feast, the world began to be drenched in fear.