

Chapter 1071

Who made a mistake? (1)

Kagaaaah!

A slight twitch crossed Yu Iseol's forehead.

As she blocked one strike, another blade flew towards her, pressing down on her sword before she could react. Before she could even respond to it, yet another blade approached.

Kaaaaah!

The preemptive strike swiftly collided, restricting the movement of her sword, and the subsequent massive blow seemed to crush her, leaving her no room to maneuver.

In this combination, displaying the characteristic flashy sword techniques of Hwasan was impossible.

If the advantage in numbers was only two or three times, there might have been room for a counterattack. However, a difference of over ten times makes it practically impossible.

Moreover, weren't they cleverly exploiting this numerical advantage?

But!

'Slow.'

Paaaah!

Her sword was pulled back like a flash. Leaving a long trajectory in the air, Yu Iseol pulled her sword faster than it was drawn, then swiftly thrust it. The elite Black Ghost warrior, who saw the sword flying like a lightning, widened his eyes, but before he could even let out a scream, her sword pierced mercilessly through his throat.

Clang!

Out of habit, Yu Iseol was about to lower the sword that had been driven into the enemy's throat, inadvertently lifting her body using the recoil. But she stopped without realizing it.

They were hoping that she would jump in.

It's not just about her being in danger alone. The moment she was surrounded by enemies, her fellow disciples would rush to save her without caring about their own lives.

The burden of knowing that her momentary misjudgment could lead to the annihilation of her comrades weighed on her for a moment.

Black Ghost's elite warriors, ignoring their fallen comrade, swung their swords towards Yu Iseol's exposed side again.

Squeaaaaak!

With blades aiming for both sides, she quickly retrieved the sword she had plunged into the enemy's throat. Then she swung it widely to the left and right.

'No need to panic.'

Kaaaah!

The oncoming blades clashed with her sword and were rapidly deflected.

Hwasan's swordsmanship clearly revolves around illusion and change. It induces countless transformations, subtly blending real and fake within those changes to confuse the opponent — that is the essence of Hwasan's swordsmanship.

However, that is not the entirety of Hwasan.

Paaaah!

Once again, her sword, rapidly extending, pierced through the enemy's shoulder as he retreated.

Quadung!

Their strategy is undoubtedly impressive. It's the first time that disciples of Hwasan have encountered an opponent capable of easily parrying their swords.

They felt a sense of confusion, and for a brief moment, they were taken aback. You couldn't make use of your feet, and drawing the plum blossom technique, which they had wielded countless times, was not an easy task. This is a precarious situation that simple words like 'unfavorable' can't fully describe.

However, Yu Iseol's gaze showed no signs of hesitation.

Pa-aat!

She stood her ground and swung her sword through the air like a flash of light. It's an incredibly efficient sword with no unnecessary movements, leaving no room for waste. 'My body already knows.'

It's the first time they've encountered an enemy capable of dismantling Hwasan's swordsmanship. Yes, the enemy is indeed new.

But the disciples of Hwasan have faced numerous battles where their swordsmanship was easily broken. They broke and shattered, only to rise again and continue fighting.

That's why, when facing such an opponent, they instinctively know how to deal with it. 'Sajil!'

Hwasan's sword is undeniably most powerful when groups confront each other head-on. However, in an intense melee where swords entangle, it can't fully unleash its potential. But they are different.

Beyond stubbornness, it's an obsession with emphasizing the fundamentals. And a relentless series of practical sparring, unlike what traditional orthodox schools would ever demand. All of it resides entirely within them.

Just as forging steel makes it harder, their tirelessly honed bodies moved to strike down the enemy ahead of the mind.

Kaaaaah!

As the soaring blade collided with the thin sword, it was effortlessly deflected.

'Power, it's not just about strength.'

She knows it in her head. Power doesn't simply come from exertion. What's crucial is precisely applying strong force when it's needed. If you can sense the right moment, the same strength can create multiple times the impact.

And her body remembered that perfect timing.

Almost involuntarily, every technique imparted to her flowed from her body.

Serguk!

She cleanly severed the opponent's carotid artery as they hesitated to retreat. Then, she calmly stared at another incoming foe without a hint of hesitation.

'Look at this.'

Im Sobyong's eyes widened slightly.

The difference in numbers was apparent. The difference in power was also obvious. That's why he had prepared various tactics. But to be able to overcome this large power gap, it was almost like a fluke.

But everything he had prepared was now utterly useless in this moment.

'Become stronger here?'

It doesn't make sense. They've already been trained as rigorously as possible. They're not beginners, and gaining significantly more skill from just one real battle is improbable.

This isn't about becoming stronger — it's about adapting. It's closer to transformation than adaptation. They adjust everything, from forms to sword techniques, and even their breathing, according to their opponent.

It was truly an astonishing sight.

Martial art is a framework, a standard. That's why those who start learning swordsmanship typically begin with drawing the correct sword form, right?

Continuous, repetitive training is the process of making their framework stronger. The longer someone has practiced, the more solid their framework becomes. Thus, it's virtually impossible to freely change the framework they've established once.

Yet, they are accomplishing the impossible right now. Their seemingly unyielding framework is bending and changing smoothly, adapting to their enemy.

'Has anyone ever seen something like this?'

The presence of the Demonic Cult and the power of the Bishop were enormous shocks, but this transformation, in another sense, is equally astounding. Those who understand the meaning behind this change will be even more shocked.

'I thought I'd become stronger in three years, but...'

Naturally, after being trained by a monstrous figure like Chung Myung, one should become stronger.

But what they're demonstrating goes beyond Im Sobyong's understanding.

'What in the world did you create, Dojang...?'

A shiver ran down his spine. A sword that can adapt to any battlefield, any situation. Doesn't that imply it's a sword without weaknesses?

Of course, having no weaknesses doesn't mean it's perfect...

'At least I won't die miserably, unable to utilize my skills.'

Im Sobyong, watching the scene before him, finally chuckled.

«... You're a tenacious one.»

It's felt in that sword. What the person who passed on the sword to them truly desired. If they had simply focused on honing Hwasan's sword to be stronger, the first time they encountered an opponent who could dismantle it, someone would have undoubtedly died or been seriously injured.

But because they mastered a sword capable of adapting to any situation, they can block and withstand. While their disposition is primarily focused on overwhelming and defeating their opponents, the sword specializes in safeguarding their lives.

Easier said than done. He couldn't even begin to imagine what kind of process it takes to master such a sword.

There's a profound level of dedication and determination that borders on terror. The teacher, as well as the disciples, must have crossed countless thresholds. Their dedication to their chosen path was vividly evident in the eyes of Im Sobyong, who stood behind them.

«Your ambition is excessive, isn't it...?»

Im Sobyong, shook his head and then his eyes shone once more. Regardless, from his perspective, an additional piece in his hand was just as beneficial.

'Let's see.'

Centered around Chung Myung in the middle, the Five Swords, including Baek Cheon, surrounded the area. Between Chung Myung and Five Swords, Un Geom and Hye Yeon, Tang Soso and Namgung Dowi, and Im Sobyong positioned themselves to support those guarding the front.

The arrangement of those who stood in the innermost circle was irregular, but it didn't seem to matter. Right now, they were holding an impenetrable shield.

«So, shall we push a little further?»

Whoosh!

He lightly waved his fan. The energy that emanated from the fan swept past Yoon Jong's back, instantly pushing back the approaching enemies.

«Let's create more room by widening the gap!»

As soon as he spoke, the swords of Baek Cheon and the others moved forward fearlessly. Thanks to this, the number of enemies they had to face at once increased, but their movements became somewhat freer.

«Dieeee!»

With a formidable momentum, Jo Geol unleashed a storm-like series of strikes towards the elite warriors of the Black Ghost. Dozens of sword energy blasts emitted in an instant, piercing through their advancing foes one after another.

For a brief moment, the front space cleared, but instead of charging forward as usual, Jo Geol looked around.

Pa-aat!

Without hesitation, he swung his sword toward the enemies rushing towards Yoon Jong. Startled, one of the elite Black Ghost's warriors reacted quickly to a sword that suddenly flew in from the side. However, Jo Geol's sword was faster than his response.

Fwoosh!

«Ugh...»

The sword penetrated his neck and emerged on the other side, causing the warrior to collapse with frothy blood at the spot.

«You don't have to say thank you.»

«Do your job, you imbecile!»

«Helping is a curse, too.»

Jo Geol used the momentary opening not to strike down the enemy but to assist others, which was uncharacteristic of him.

Im Sobyong's gaze became increasingly sharper.

Perhaps the battlefield of Maehwado was too confined for these individuals to showcase their skills. After all, what tricks could mere numerical superiority have against these accomplished warriors?

'You've truly created monsters.'

Im Sobyong's eyes scanned the battlefield. The situation was still far from ideal. Even if some had fallen, against the ant-like enemies, it amounted to little more than a minor setback.

Im Sobyong's gaze shifted beyond to Mangeum Daebu.

'You've created Hell where you'll die if you get too worked up and rush in without thinking?'

Im Sobyong tightened his grip on the fan.

«That goes for our side as well, doesn't it?»

The one who moves first loses. He thought of this less as a strategic battle and more like a test of guts. Im Sobyong glanced back for a moment.

And, wouldn't you know it...

'That's right.'

Chung Myung had closed his eyes. He might seem outwardly calm on the battlefield, which might appear carefree. But in fact, it wasn't a break — it was a cultivation of inner energy. Performing internal energy circulation while maintaining the offensive stance, attempting to achieve the minimum necessary state of a physical body to return to the battle as quickly as possible.

Practicing internal energy cultivation in a standing posture on the battlefield? It's an impossible task for a sane person.

It's impossible without the conviction that those surrounding him will surely shield him against any attack that comes his way.

«The guy's insane.»

Im Sobyong's gaze once again turned towards Mangeum Daebu.

Perhaps he was witnessing this spectacle as well. Just the fact that Chung Myung was performing internal energy cultivation would be creating an incredible mental pressure.

«Alright, let's see who's got more guts.»

Im Sobyong, wearing a bright smile, looked at Mangeum Daebu with a confident expression.