

Chapter 1199

How on earth did you survive this? (4)

After struggling to organize his swirling thoughts, Tang Gunak finally spoke again.

«It's somewhat complex, but ultimately, are we deploying only a small number of forces to head to Haenam sect first and confirm their intentions?»

«Yes, Lord Tang.»

«If they agree to join Cheonumaeng, then Cheonumaeng's headquarters will provide support to find a way for Haenam sect to escape. And if they decide to stay with Gupailbang, we'll establish a communication line between Gupailbang and Haenam?»

«Yes.»

«Whether things go well or not, we can either aid Haenam or provide them with an escape route?»

«Exactly.»

Chung Myung chuckled upon hearing this.

«I hope Haenam shows some loyalty this time. Hehe.»

«...Chung Myung, you're a Taoist.»

«Who says I'm not? Hehehe!»

Tang Gunak, with a somber gaze, seemed to be trying to gather his thoughts as he rested his chin on his hand.

'Not bad.'

At least the prospect of reduced risk was enticing. In fact, isn't it fair to say that Haenam's current position is nothing more than Cheonumaeng's speculation?

Gathering all available forces, they advanced towards Haenam. But the moment Haenam's Sect Leader asks: «Why have you come?» Cheonumaeng would become the laughingstock of Gangho.

'As the number of troops increases, the likelihood of Sapaeryeon taking an interest grows exponentially.'

Initially, suggesting a small force to go to Haenam in this dire situation was indeed a good idea. Suddenly taking over as Acting Leader, and the radical statements made during the dialogue with Beop Jong, raised concerns, but Baek Cheon seemed to maintain balance better than expected.

«But.»

«Yes?»

«How do you plan to maintain this communication line?»

Tang Gunak tilted his head as if not understanding.

«It's not like Gupailbang completely severed communication with Haenam. They had no choice. Hainan to Gangbuk is a distance of over 2500 li, isn't it?»

«Yes, that's correct.»

«Even the renowned thousand li blue pigeon [천리청구(千里靑鳩)], that beggars boast of traveling a thousand li, can't cover such a distance in one go. In reality, five hundred li is the most one can manage. That's why they sets up relay stations and use intermediaries for communication, isn't it?»

Everyone nodded. This method was well-known in Gangho.

“But we can't establish branches in Gangnam, so according to your logic, we need to establish a communication line spanning over 2500 li without any branches, is that what you're saying?»

«...”

With no response from Baek Cheon, Tang Gunak's eyes narrowed.

“Surely you're not suggesting we use just one report from Haenam's Sect Leader to shape public opinion? That's not realistically feasible.”

«I never said I would shape public opinion...»

«Hmm? You clearly mentioned shaping public opinion to aid...»

«I simply meant to report the situation. Perhaps you're jumping to conclusions... Of course, I understand your negative sentiment towards Shaolin's views.»

«...»

Tang Gunak's face momentarily reddened.

«Aha. It seems I misunderstood.»

«Misunderstood?»

«Just forget it.»

«Sure.»

Tang Gunak cleared his throat once again and looked at Baek Cheon.

«So? If you're not trying to shape public opinion, then we don't need that?»

“Well, that...»

Just as Baek Cheon was about to respond, Chung Myung interjected in a nonchalant tone.

«Why worry about that?»

«Huh?»

As Tang Gunak turned to look at Chung Myung, Chung Myung swiftly turned his head.

«Hey! The map!»

«Yes!»

In response to Chung Myung's call, Im Sobyong immediately replied. People turned their heads, wondering what was happening, as Im Sobyong rose to his feet and then spread out the map that was lying beside him.

«Stand straight!»

«... Yes.»

Everyone instinctively turned their heads away, unable to bear the sight.

Goodness... Using Nokrim King as a map holder.

Even though Nokrim King is from Sapa, he is not a person who should be treated like that...
What exactly is that guy gaining by aligning himself with Cheonumaeng?

«Look over there.»

«Huh?»

As they looked at the map, their brows furrowed involuntarily. Although they already knew, seeing the distance between Hainan island and their current location on the map made it feel even more distant.

«But Hainan island is really big, isn't it?»

«It's about half the size of a typical province, isn't it?»

«Well, almost half.»

«Not there!»

«Huh?»

Chung Myung pointed to Hainan island on the map with his chin.

«Here. Here.»

As he gathered all the attention, Chung Myung began to explain,

«While Hainan island is indeed floating in the middle of the sea, it's both far and near from the mainland. Right above it, there's a peninsula.»

«That's right...»

They could see a peninsula protruding like a tail from the vast continent, with Hainan situated just below it.

«So, if we consider only the straight-line distance between the closest coastlines, it's only about sixty li.»

«Is sixty li close? It still takes hours by boat.»

«Well, it's not that far.»

«...»

Although they were awed by the vast concept, that was a secondary issue for now.

«But... what does that have to do with the communication line? Surely you're not suggesting sending people to cross that strait. The current problem is that people can't enter Gangnam, right?»

«That's why it's solved.»

«Huh?»

«The problem with maintaining the communication line now comes down to three things. Only humans can travel the two thousand five hundred li round trip. But humans can't enter Gangnam. And they have to cross the sea.»

«...So?»

While there were minor issues, that seemed to be the core of the matter. Sensing Tang Gunak's growing unease, Chung Myung added,

«Sapaeryoen aren't fools either. They'll likely guard that peninsula you mentioned.»

«Yes, yes. I know.»

Chung Myung nodded as if it were obvious.

«In that case, we just need a solution that can solve all three. Someone who can make the round trip of two thousand five hundred li, cross the sea of about sixty li in one go, and move back and forth without attracting attention!»

«Huh?»

Everyone looked at each other in confusion. Someone like that...

«Ghost Gate?»

«Well, even if it's Ghost Gate, that won't work. The situation isn't that straightforward.»

«... Then?»

And right at that moment...

Chung Myung suddenly reached into his robes, pulled out something, and held it up.

«Huh?»

«Wow...»

«Unbelievable.»

«Hey, isn't this... Wait, can this withstand...?»

«Kiiiiiiiiii!»

Baek Ah desperately resisted, grabbing onto Chung Myung's clothes. Being able to understand human speech, he sensed that the situation wasn't right.

«Euracha!»

But eventually, Baek Ah was dragged out and dropped to the ground with a thud.

As Baek Ah lay flat on the ground, he quickly glanced around, then suddenly attempted to sprint towards one side.

«Try running.»

«...»

Baek Ah's feet abruptly halted in midair.

«Where are you running off to? Yes, just like that. Winter is approaching, and it would be nice to have a scarf. With my chubby cheeks, I will need the scarf that's extra thick.»

«...»

«Whether it's a human or an animal! If you feed and raise them, they should pay back! This guy sucked up all the meat he could from the poor neighborhood and now he's trying to resist!»

«Kiiiiiiii...»

At that moment, people witnessed something unexpected. Tears like chicken droppings fell from white weasel's innocent eyes.

‘Poor thing.’

‘How did he end up like this?’

‘But isn't it better off than Nokrim King?’

Seeing that sight, Maeng So laughed and said,

«Indeed, if it's Baek Jeon, then even going to Hainan should be a piece of cake.»

«Is it really possible?»

«Just because it's Baek Jeon, the White Lightning [백전(白電) here the author specifies and provides hanja to translate the name]. If he sets his mind to it, he could travel a thousand li in a day.»

«But, but what about the sea?»

«Animals are naturally better swimmers than humans. With that guy, crossing sixty li of sea waters would be a breeze.»

«Wow...»

«He's not a spirit beast for nothing.»

Maeng So heard those words and felt a little bit bitter.

«As he's a spirit beast specially treated even in the Beast Palace, his abilities are undoubtedly remarkable. The problem so far has been not whether he can do it or not, but rather how to get him to do it...»

Maeng So glanced at Chung Myung.

«...I guess there's something to learn from him.»

«No, Palace Lord!»

«Don't learn from him!»

«The Beast Palace is friends with animals! He's not a friend, he's a wicked slave owner!»

Tang Gunak nodded in agreement.

«Indeed... They might be wary of humans, but they wouldn't be cautious of a white weasel. Even if they were, it would be impossible to find this small weasel in such a vast area.»

«Is that so?»

«It's logical. Indeed, creatures like this can be quite versatile.»

«Hehehe. I knew that's why I've been feeding and sheltering him all this time.»

«Excellent.»

«But what about eating and sleeping? Even if the round trip doesn't take more than a day or two, it would still take at least more than three days.»

«What's there to worry about? It's an animal. When hungry, it'll hunt, and when tired, it'll dig a burrow and rest.»

«...But you said spirit beasts like this are no different from humans?»

«Oh, come on. It's just a saying. It's an animal when needed, and a spirit beast when not. Isn't that how it goes?»

«Logical indeed.»

A horrifying scene unfolded as the powerful figures of Cheonumaeng, leaders of Gangho, chuckled in satisfaction, planning to exploit the helpless animal.

Baek Cheon could see Baek Ah lying flat on the ground, sighing deeply. It seemed as if he could hear a voice whispering, 'Ha... that's my life.'

There was a strange sense of camaraderie. Perhaps because they were both 'Baeks'...

«Ahem. Anyway, the matter of the communication line is resolved.»

Tang Gunak hurriedly summarized the situation.

“Although it’s been lengthy, the crucial aspects are whether this plan is feasible and what other sects think about it,”

Tang Gunak said, looking at the leaders of other sects.

«What do you all think? Are you in favor of this plan?»

Before the question could settle, Namgung Dowi spoke up.

«Baek Cheon Dojang. No, Acting Leader,»

he addressed Baek Cheon directly.

«I have one question. What are the conditions for those who will head to help Haenam?»

«As I mentioned, it’s preferable for individuals with high martial prowess and particularly swift foot techniques from each faction.»

Namgung Dowi tilted his head slightly.

«That’s not what I meant. I’m asking about the rationale for selecting individuals from each sect to go.»

«Oh, that’s simple. It’s to demonstrate that every sect within Cheonumaeng is willing to participate for the sake of helping Haenam under Cheonumaeng’s banner.»

«I understand. Then, the higher the position and reputation of the individuals heading to Haenam, the better?»

«That’s correct, but...»

«Very well.»

Namgung Dowi turned his head to look at Tang Gunak.

«From Namgung clan, we will send the most suitable individual.»

«Yes?»

«The person with the highest martial prowess and reputation in Namgung clan, someone who can persuade others...»

«S-Surely...»

«Yes! I will go myself.»

Tang Gunak covered his face with both hands.

‘Why, why are they all like this?’

You damn brats...