

Chapter 1074

Who made a mistake? (4)

Thud!

The hand that had pierced his side drove even deeper.

«Aaaaaaah!»

In unbearable agony, Mangeum Daebu screamed as if he was about to vomit blood. What tormented him the most at the moment was not the hand of Cheon Myeon Susa that had plunged into his side or the dark energy coursing through his entire body but the situation itself, which he couldn't comprehend.

«How... How...?»

Why was he here? How, in the world?

«Tsk, tsk, tsk.»

Wi Chung, or rather, Cheon Myeon Susa, who had inserted his hand into Mangeum Daebu's side, clicked his tongue as if he found it pitiable.

«It seems you miscalculated your moves, Mangeum Daebu.»

«Kkuuuuh...»

His body trembled as if struck by an electric shock. At that moment, Cheon Myeon Susa, in the guise of Wi Chung, smiled with a sense of triumph.

«... You're indeed an impressive swordsman. To the point where I'm in awe.»

His words contained both recognition and mockery towards Mangeum Daebu.

He was undoubtedly holding his sword with his left hand. However, when he sensed the presence of Cheon Myeon Susa approaching from the right, he involuntarily tried to draw his sword with his nonexistent right arm and swing it.

Despite knowing that he no longer had a right hand, Mangeum Daebu's body, trained for a lifetime, instinctively repeated the most familiar action at the most critical moment.

«Guh...»

Cheon Myeon Susa let out a sly smile.

Even though he had attacked with that fact in mind, the moment Mangeum Daebu's right shoulder flinched in response to the anticipated attack, his spine turned cold. The reputation of Sapa's First Sword was well-deserved.

However...

«The First Sword doesn't look so impressive now.»

Cheon Myeon Susa playfully twisted his wrist, as if mocking.

Thud!

«Atroooh!»

Simultaneously, an uncontrollable scream erupted from Mangeum Daebu's mouth.

«My... my lord!»

«This bastard!»

In response to the tumultuous situation that unfolded behind them, the elite forces of the Black Ghost, who had been fiercely engaging with Hwasan and Maninbang, turned around to see what was happening. Filled with every ounce of murderous intent they could muster, they growled and glared at Cheon Myeon Susa, ready to attack.

«No, no.»

Yet, even in the torrent of murderous energy directed at him, Cheon Myeon Susa nonchalantly shook the hand embedded in Mangeum Daebu's side.

«Guh... Guuuuh...»

Mangeum Daebu's complexion had turned from pale to bluish, and frothy blood bubbled from his lips.

«If you don't want to witness your lord's heart bursting, wouldn't it be better to release the siege and withdraw?»

Cheon Myeon Susa's voice, dripping with menace, penetrated the ears of everyone present. Shaking gazes converged on Mangeum Daebu, who was screaming in agony.

«Re-release... Ahhhhh!»

Whatever he had intended to say was immediately drowned out by his agonized scream. The faces of the Black Ghost's elite warriors turned pale.

They knew they had to save their lord, but in a situation where an enemy had plunged into his side pouring menacing energy, how could they possibly save him? Moreover, the one holding Mangeum Daebu's life in his hands was none other than the head of the Hao clan, Cheon Myeon Susa.

Would it not be easier to rescue a rabbit from a predator's jaws? Or, as Cheon Myeon Susa suggested, should they release the siege and withdraw? But could they really save Mangeum Daebu's life by doing so? Would Cheon Myeon Susa truly release him without any further harm?

Caught in an impossible situation, the elite warriors of the Black Ghost struggled with their thoughts. Then, a sinister voice whispered in their ears.

«Why are you hesitating?»

The attention of those who had been focused on Mangeum Daebu and Cheon Myeon Susa suddenly shifted. Regardless of what anyone said, the most dangerous person in this situation was the one right before them.

«Loyalty means...»

Jang Ilso. He had everyone's attention, and he slowly began to speak.

«...To protect a living person.»

His red lips formed a smooth curve.

«In your eyes... does your lord still appear to be alive?»

At his words, everyone shuddered.

A person who is alive but not really alive. That was the current situation of Mangeum Daebu. And their situation was probably not so different.

Even if they were to kill Jang Ilso here, the possibility of withstanding the wrath of Maninbang, who had lost Jang Ilso, and the Hao clan was slim to none.

«No need to worry.»

Jang Ilso casually took a step forward.

«I'm not that heartless. If you stop here, I won't hold you accountable. In fact, you might gain more under the name of the Sapaeryeon than you've enjoyed so far.»

Anyone could see it.

Jang Ilso is not in a condition to fight right now. Even if he was the world's greatest Paegun Jang Ilso, in the state he was in, he was no different from a third-rate warrior. For him to boldly throw himself at the elite warriors of the Black Ghost in this condition would be nothing short of suicidal.

But even though everyone knew this fact, no one dared to raise their sword against Jang Ilso. One step.

And another step.

Jang Ilso approached the Black Ghost with an astonishingly casual demeanor. He had lost his strength, but now the pressure was on the Black Ghost's warriors. Just moments ago, they had charged recklessly towards approaching Jang Ilso, but now they couldn't even catch their breath.

«If you don't like that...»

Jang Ilso, who had come within arm's reach, flashed a sly grin and whispered.

«You could just cut my throat right now.»

With a gulp, a warrior, who was standing right in front of Jang Ilso, raised his pale and tired face and met his gaze.

He knew. He knew that he could kill Jang Ilso right there and then if he wanted to. But he stood frozen, unable to reach out and do it.

Jang Ilso's red lips curved strangely, as if they were twisting up. His pale face was even more eerie with the stains of blood.

«What will you do?»

Under the weight of his presence, the elite warriors of the Black Ghost involuntarily took hesitant steps backward. Perhaps this was their primal instinct, acknowledging the shifting tide, or a habit of someone from the evil faction.

Jang Ilso smiled so gently that it was out of place on the battlefield. His face that seemed to praise them for good behavior.

«Right, you're a good kid.»

«...»

Jang Ilso continued to walk, taking steps step by step, while the elite warriors of the Black Ghost who surrounded him backed away to his sides. A path started to open up before him, leading towards Mangeum Daebu.

The group from Hwasan clenched their fists, watching this scene.

The distance between Jang Ilso and the elite warriors, who just moments ago came charging to take his life, was now just a few steps. In other words, Jang Ilso was calmly walking right through the midst of those who had risked their lives to end his.

Even though they were a formidable force, was it truly possible for them to act in their right minds.

But his unhurried steps never ceased.

He walked through the space opening up before him. The people standing in his path stepped back, as if they had seen a ghost. No one dared to rush at him. In fact, they didn't even dare to meet his gaze.

Bow to the strong and submit. That was the nature of Sapa.

And at this moment, the elite warriors of the Black Ghost understood it perfectly. The strength they had talked about and praised so much was not just about might and the ability to shake the world.

It was about the essence of the human being itself.

Ho Gamyong and Red Dogs quickly followed behind Jang Ilso.

There was no way the Black Ghosts, who couldn't even handle the presence of Jang Ilso, could stand in their way. Those who had previously retreated step by step, now opened up the path wide, unable to hold their ground any longer.

The corner of Jang Ilso's mouth curled up. It was the path that Black Ghosts had been blocking like a black curtain. At the end of that path, Mangeum Daebu, his side pierced, looked at him with a contorted face.

How should one express the light in those eyes? Distrust? Resignation? Or maybe hatred? Well, perhaps it could be all of them.

Passing the subdued forces of the Black Ghost Fortress, Jang Ilso finally reached Mangeum Daebu.

At that moment, Cheon Myeon Susa roughly pulled his hand from Mangeum Daebu's side. «Krehk!»

His body leaned forward. He didn't even think to stop the blood pouring from his side as he pounded his head on the ground, shivering like a pine tree. But anyone seeing that scene would know what was making Mangeum Daebu tremble now.

It wasn't the pain that was making him shake. It was the intense sense of humiliation that dominated him. And perhaps...

Mangeum Daebu's jaw trembled as he looked up at Jang Ilso. His bloodshot eyes and Jang Ilso's cold gaze collided in the air.

At that moment, the thought dominating Mangeum Daebu's mind was somewhat absurd.

Is there anyone else in the world who looks down on someone more arrogantly than him?

«Hmm.»

At that moment, a sigh escaped from the corner of Jang Ilso's mouth. He, who had been staring at Mangeum Daebu expressionlessly, raised the corner of his lips and asked,

«Who... made a mistake?»

Mangeum Daebu's body convulsed as if struck by lightning.

«No, Mangeum Daebu. Oh, should I call you Gong Yawol?»

Jang Ilso's sly smile was etched vividly in Mangeum Daebu's eyes.

«It's not me who made the mistake — it's you.»

Jang Ilso slowly bent his waist and thrust his face close to Mangeum Daebu, who was barely supporting his upper body with his remaining arm as if he might fall to the ground at any moment.

«Did you really think I wouldn't know? That you were coming to tear my throat out?»

Mangeum Daebu's face contorted miserably, and as it did, an indescribable expression gradually darkened Jang Ilso's face.

It resembled... a demon from hell who was torturing and enjoying the suffering of a human.

Jang Ilso reached out his large hand and grabbed Mangeum Daebu's face.

Thunk.

As if about to crush it at any moment, Jang Ilso gradually tightened his grip, whispering in Mangeum Daebu's ear,

«I will tell you one thing, Mangeum Daebu.»

“...”

«I...»

It was indeed a smooth and sardonic voice.

«I will never trust a person like you»

Mangeum Daebu trembled.

«You thought you understood everyone, calculated everything. But Gong Yawol... What about it? In your calculations, it seems that 'you' were left out. What others think of you.»

«Jang Ilso...»

Jang Ilso laughed like a demon.

«Seems like your clever plan has fallen apart, hasn't it? Yes, Gong Yawol?»

In the end, Mangeum Daebu, filled with despair, began to cry out loudly,

«Jang Ilsooooo!»

«Hahahahahahaha...»

And then, as if unable to contain it any longer, Jang Ilso burst into maniacal laughter.

«Hahaha! Hahaha! Hahaha!»

The piercing scream of Mangeum Daebu and Jang Ilso's mad laughter echoed through the desolate land, shattering the silence.