

Chapter 1139

However, what else could be done? (4)

The next day.

«Come on!»

Chung Myung warmed up his shoulders energetically.

«So, how shall we display our skills today?»

While Chung Myung remained energetic, Tang Gunak's and Maeng So's expressions didn't match his vigor — they seemed less spirited.

«...Aren't you feeling tired?»

«Tired?»

Chung Myung glanced briefly at Tang Gunak and Maeng So. Fatigue was evident on their faces.

Of course, once they entered the training grounds, their expressions would transform into the solemn visages of martial experts. However, there was no need to exert that kind of effort in this setting.

«What? Are you exhausted already from doing what exactly?»

«Well...»

«Aging is a scary thing.»

Maeng So and Tang Gunak nodded in agreement.

Setting aside Chung Myung's martial prowess, it was clear they couldn't keep up with his unwavering stamina.

«Well, considering you're dealing with the kids, you wouldn't be crying, right?»

At Chung Myung's jest, the two of them shook their heads.

«It might be nothing once, but when it happens repeatedly, it's not easy to wake up in the morning.»

«People don't completely recover just by practicing cultivation and sleeping, right?»

Chung Myung clicked his tongue in response.

«When a war starts, sometimes one doesn't rest for three or four days, and sometimes not just three or four days but for a month or two. Will you be saying the same thing then?»

He glanced around.

«It seems the elders are also having similar thoughts. When a war breaks out, and if I, due to my age, can't keep fighting as much as you all, and I say I'll rest at the back, that's when the meal table gets cleared. If you don't want to become old folks at the rear, you better hold out even if it means dying.»

«Ugh...»

«Sigh...»

The elders grumbled in response. Though their insides churned, it was hard to counter or argue against Chung Myung's words, as there was no mistakes in each of his points.

«It wasn't that hard to begin with. What's with this exaggeration?»

At that, Tang Gunak suppressed a bitter smile.

«Not that hard, huh...»

In some ways, that was true. Facing them wasn't particularly challenging as long as one didn't show weakness and if the condition didn't demand overpowering them constantly. 'And besides... I'm getting better with every repetition.'

It was evident that they were learning how to face this side, either physically or mentally.

«It's not as easy as it sounds.»

Maeng So finally chimed in.

«They might find facing a group like us unfamiliar, but in reality, we've also never experienced fighting against such a large group.»

Everyone nodded in agreement.

«That's true. Who in this world would ever have such an experience? Even if one trains to confront multiple opponents, the number usually doesn't exceed five. We need to adapt as well,»

Maeng So softly added, but Chung Myung cut in bluntly.

«We need to adapt then.»

His expression remained cold, as if there was no need to hear Maeng So's words directly.

«If there's something to adapt to, we adapt. Do you really think the blades of Demonic Cult or Sapaeryeon will only be aimed at them, avoiding you altogether?»

«Well, I mean...»

As Maeng So stumbled slightly in his response, Tang Gunak's eyes gleamed with a peculiar light.

«Do you think we will encounter such situations often in the future?»

«It's not about the number of such events. What's crucial is that it's unlikely to not encounter such situations,»

Chung Myung added, as if it wasn't enough.

«We have to do something, even if it's from the weaker side.»

“...”

«As you said, arrogantly sitting at the back while the lower ranks deal with the lower ranks, and targeting the enemy leaders won't work. Before meeting the enemy leaders, all your subordinates will all be dead,»

At those words, Tang Gunak, Maeng So, and even the elders' faces tensed slightly.

«In the end, those capable will have to make up for the insufficient forces. If a real war breaks out, there won't be any chance for you all to lag behind and leisurely assess the situation. Absolutely not,»

Chung Myung's eyes narrowed slightly.

«There are only two choices. Either make excuses while watching others die in the front, claiming you're waiting for the right moment. Or fight at the very front, rolling the mud.»

«Hmm...»

«Which side will you choose?»

As the elders attempted to respond, Chung Myung waved his hand, cutting them off.

«Never mind. Asking this won't change the fact that everyone claims they'll fight on the front lines, but in reality, very few actually do. Most get scared and retreat, and those with the most enthusiasm often don't know their limits and end up dying first.»

«Ah...»

«So, take this opportunity to get accustomed. Experience what it means to face countless enemies.»

Tang Gunak smiled bitterly.

«I always feel this, your demands are just too high.»

«Everyone in Hwasan does it.»

«That's a sure way to explode internally.»

Tang Gunak shook his head.

“Is it too much to ask for one's own progress while training them? But isn't it my duty to hope for my disciples' growth?”

“There wouldn't be a place anywhere in the world practicing such training.”

“So it seems.”

“...”

“It's not just a problem between martial arts sects. Strangely, those who start as low-level disciples, once they rise to higher positions, often fail to understand those below them. They repeatedly vow that they won't be like that, but later on, they say things like ‘You don't understand because you're ignorant’ or ‘In time, you'll understand,’ while sighing.”

Tang Gunak cleared his throat. There was a prickling feeling in his heart.

“If they don't understand, you could just explain rather than say they'll understand later without explaining... Isn't that just taking the easy way out?”

“... That's true.”

“So, it's not just them who need to change.”

As Tang Gunak was about to say something, Maeng So scratched his head nervously.

“I've heard enough preaching. Let's go quickly. We are being scolded, so it might be easier to deal with them than facing this.”

“Yes!”

His words carried no hint of reproach.

In terms of their position in Gangho, or in appearance, considering their outward age, these two were not the kind of people who would willingly listen to lecturing from Chung Myung. Objectively speaking, the fact that these two, were listening to a third generation disciple of Hwasan, without showing any sign of dissatisfaction, was quite impressive.

Chung Myung also knew this fact and didn't push it too far.

'Ugh. There's too much to pay attention to.'

Before, just saying, 'What? Just do as I say!' would at least silence anyone in front of him, but now, he had to delicately phrase his words so as not to offend people's feelings.

'Sahyeong. This is how I am now.'

— Do you understand how it felt when I tried not to offend you with my words?

'Oh. That's different.'

— You little...!

Chung Myung shook his head and headed towards the training grounds.

'Will today be any different?'

The fastest way to change someone is to pinpoint the problem. But sometimes, even with such an approach, nothing changes. This isn't something that can be taught — it's something they have to feel themselves.

'It won't be that easy.'

Patience was needed. It was the same patience as Chung Mun's, who knew Chung Myung wouldn't change easily and yet waited and waited.

«Phew.»

Chung Myung stood there, taking a deep breath.

You must not rush. As much as Chung Myung dislikes the saying, 'The more you hurry, the less you move forward,' right now, he needed to engrave those words in his heart.

Dragging and forcibly trying to change them won't work. Ultimately, if he forcibly leads them, there will be chaos if Chung Myung isn't present. If he couldn't protect everyone, then he had to make sure everyone could protect themselves.

No matter how past events were, if there was no other choice, he had to do it.

"Alright."

Chung Myung nodded and briskly headed towards the training grounds after turning the corner.

"Come on, are you ready to have a lively time toda- huh?"

But just as he stepped into the training grounds, he paused for a moment. Chung Myung's head slightly tilted.

"What's this?"

The sight before his eyes was quite different from usual.

Until now, each martial arts sect had been waiting separately. However, what he now clearly saw was unmistakably different.

The Beast Palace stood at the forefront, followed by Namgung. Behind them, Tangga was ready to intervene at any moment, while the Ice Palace and Hwasan drawn their swords on both sides, like two wings.

It was a basic formation, but the sight conveyed a definite sense of preparation.

"Hmm?"

“Whoa...”

Maeng So and Tang Gunak, who followed behind, looked at the scene as if finding it amusing.

Chung Myung discreetly covered his mouth with his hand. He didn't want to inadvertently show the upward curling of his lips.

‘Faster than I thought.’

He had anticipated that Baek Cheon, along with Ogeum, and Im Sobyong, wouldn't just take the beating as it was. But he had expected it to take at least another ten days.

‘The growth of these kids is always faster than what their parents expect. Turns out, I'm only human after all.’

Everyone was progressing day by day. It just felt slower when observed up close.

Chung Myung's gaze shifted to Baek Cheon, who wore a confident smile. As he continued to stare intently, Chung Myung glanced this time at Nokrim, situated behind Tangga, specifically at Im Sobyong.

Seeing Im Sobyong shrug his shoulders, Chung Myung composed himself and lowered his hand.

“You seem to be enjoying the show...”

His words were not a satisfied compliment but a blatant mockery.

“Will that change anything?”

“Well?”

Baek Cheon, with a smirk, responded to Chung Myung's provocation.

“I don't know what will change. Maybe a sword might end up stuck in that big snout of yours.”

Namgung Dowi politely interjected,

“You might experience an unexpected defeat.”

Of course, Tang Pae didn't yield either.

“Even if everything fails, it's hard to avoid confrontation, isn't it? It is the same for the Lords too!”

“Huh?”

As Chung Myung looked at everyone incredulously, Im Sobyong, who had been fanning himself at the back, raised his voice.

“I always say this!”

His voice pierced through everyone's ears.

“Winning or losing is a matter for later. First, we just need to give that unlucky face a good beating!”

“Oh!”

“Darn it! Then I can sleep soundly tonight!”

“Please! Please! Please!”

Before their enthusiasm waned, Im Sobyong aimed the fan he had been holding forward, pointing it at Chung Myung.

“If you’re confident, come at me then?”

“Confident?”

“Or are you just sitting there being afraid? Have you lost your nerve?”

“Oh... really?”

Chung Myung chuckled and gripped his sword.

Swoosh.

Slowly, the Dark Plum Sword emerged from its sheath on his belt. Witnessing this sight, everyone swallowed hard.

“It seems you’re quite confident...”

Tang Gunak and Maeng So stood on either side of Chung Myung. Behind them, the elders chuckled and followed suit.

“At best, you’ll just endure a bit longer. I will make these rascals understand the difference in skill!”

As Chung Myung charged forward with his sword, Im Sobyong shouted loudly.

“Crush them!”

“Kill!”

“Justice prevails over evil!”

Everyone rushed in with fiery determination in their eyes.

Chung Myung lowered his stance and slightly inclined his head. Unseen by them, a faint smile grazed the corner of his lips.