

Chapter 1080

Next time it will be your neck. (5)

«Uh...»

The moment the Sapaeryeon disappeared from sight, a sigh escaped from Jo Geol's lips as if the wind had been let out of him. It seemed like a signal, as the other disciples of Hwasan relaxed their legs and sat down on the spot, seemingly drained of energy.

Baek Cheon, who had been staring at the horizon with a vacant expression, spoke with a voice that lacked any strength.

«...Did they leave?»

«It seems like they did.»

«They're not coming back, are they?»

«Don't say unlucky things, Sasuk.»

Baek Cheon shook his head wearily, as if thoroughly worn out.

«...I really thought we were done for.»

While they had faced countless crises before, it felt like the first time they had been so disheartened. Facing just the Demonic Cult would have felt like their hearts would burst, but having to deal with that cursed Jang Ilso and Black Ghost Fortress as well...

Yoon Jong mumbled as he lay sprawled on the ground, echoing what Baek Cheon said.

«It feels like I have been given an extra year of life...»

«I have three years.»

«It feels like five...»

They all nodded with faces that had lost their color. But even then, they couldn't completely relax. The thought that those Sapaeryeon bastards might change their minds and return kept creeping into their minds.

‘Jang Ilso.’

Baek Cheon gazed beyond the desolate and vast terrain towards the horizon. All things considered, for them, this war began with the Bishop and ended with Jang Ilso. The impression they had of Danjagang, who had shown his brutal power, was ultimately overshadowed by Jang Ilso.

‘And... that Bishop.’

Baek Cheon found himself unconsciously biting his lips. When he thought about the man who had pierced the heart of Danjagang, his body trembled involuntarily.

‘Are there really so many monsters in Gangho?’

He seemed to understand why they called Gangho the “Dragon's Pool, Tiger's Den” [용담호혈 (as I've found 龙潭虎穴) — yongdamhohyeol] For every powerful figure in Gangho,

there were three more monsters. Seeing these three at the same time was something beyond comprehension, whether it was a blessing or a curse.

‘No... It’s not three.’

Baek Cheon turned his head.

‘It’s four.’

He saw Chung Myung standing with a blank face.

‘All things considered, this guy is the truly amazing one.’

At the very least, Jang Ilso had brought Black Ghosts and Red Dogs with him, and the Bishop had brought followers of the Cult. But Chung Myung had only rallied a group of ten people and had shaken the very stage where monsters ran amok.

‘How would I have felt if I had seen this guy from the enemy’s perspective?’

Perhaps those who faced Chung Myung felt something greater than the fear they felt when they saw the Bishops or the intimidation they experienced when they saw Jang Ilso. They might have left with something more significant in their hearts.

In moments like these, one can’t help but be reminded of it. You become so accustomed to it that you tend to forget, but you realize just how extraordinary this person is.

«What?»

Feeling Baek Cheon’s gaze fixed on him, Chung Myung asked bluntly. After a moment of contemplation, Baek Cheon spoke.

«Is your body okay?»

There were so many questions to ask, but ultimately, this was the one that had to be asked first. It might be a bit late now, but he had to ask and move on.

Upon hearing the question, Chung Myung chuckled.

«Don’t worry...»

He had been speaking casually, but suddenly, he closed his mouth and turned his head slightly.

«Why? Who’s coming?»

«No, it’s not that.»

«Then?»

«...No, I just have a slightly disturbing feeling.»

Before Baek Cheon could ask what he meant, red blood began to ooze from Chung Myung’s nose and mouth. Baek Cheon’s eyes widened for a moment.

«You... You, you... Oh, no, you, what’s happening to you?»

«Huh?»

As Baek Cheon reacted in shock, Chung Myung reached out and wiped his face with his hand. Chung Myung’s expression changed from one of nonchalance to one of bewilderment as he saw the palm smeared with the fresh, red blood.

«Uh?»

«You performed energy cultivation! This guy! You got back some internal energy, so why is this happening?»

«No. I was too busy recovering my strength... The Yosang* didn't even do much...»

«What?»

The disciples of Hwasan, seeing the color draining from Chung Myung's face, panicked and quickly stood up.

«No, it's fine. This is nothing... Wait, why am I feeling so dizzy...»

«Soso! Soso-ya! That guy is dying!»

Watching Chung Myung stagger backwards, apparently suffering from dizziness, Jo Geol screamed.

«Hey, you crazy human!»

Even before his scream had ended, Tang Soso was already leaping towards Chung Myung. Emptiness filled his eyes as he lay on the ground, gazing at the sky. His lips twitched.

“Hey...»

Puk!

«Kkuk...»

Chung Myung's lips were pierced with a needle in the middle of his upper lip, as he trembled all over.

«Why are you sticking a needle in my lip? This has nothing to do with treatment!»

«It's a technique I developed. For snout treatments, it's the most critical.»

«No!»

Puk!

Before Chung Myung could say anything, this time a needle pierced the middle of his forehead.

«...Go on. Continue.»

As Tang Soso held the needle and glared at Chung Myung, a cold aura flowed from her like a hellish gale.

Chung Myung quietly closed his mouth. He may be impulsive, but he knew the importance of reading the room. Especially at times like this.

«No, this crazy guy. We gave you time to perform cultivation, right? So what? You didn't do Yosang? Do you really want to die that badly, you bastard?»

«Soso... He is still your Sahyeong...»

«What?»

«...There's one empty spot on his forehead.»

«What?»

Puk!

The moment a needle pierced his forehead, Chung Myung convulsed like a fish caught on a hook. His watery eyes glared at Baek Cheon with resentment. Baek Cheon averted his gaze, his face filled with guilt.

‘Sorry.’

But isn’t it wise to avoid getting hurt when the wind is blowing?

«By the way, Sasuk.»

«Huh?»

Jo Geol asked as if it was completely absurd.

«Is it usually possible to divide energy while cultivating into recovering inner strength and healing the body separately?»

«Usually not?»

In an instant, complex complex range of emotions emerged on Jo Geol’s face. He looked at Chung Myung thinking that using such extraordinary skills in that manner is also a skill itself.

Un Geom looked at Chung Myung, who was shaking with needles stuck all over his body, looking like a hedgehog, and asked Tang Soso.

«How does it look?»

«It’s a mess.»

Tang Soso replied curtly and then let out a deep sigh.

«While he is not even close to being a normal human, he should recover some energy. But if he had continued to fight from there, he would have really died. I mean, he does have some common sense...»

«If I hadn’t, it wouldn’t have been just me dying, but everyone here...»

As a needle flew like a streak of light towards Chung Myung’s lips, Un Geom couldn’t bear to watch and tightly closed his eyes.

Puk!

Chung Myung just had to keep his mouth shut to avoid getting poked by the needle, but was it really so hard...

A deep sigh escaped from Un Geom’s mouth.

‘It’s not something I can’t understand.’

Tang Soso might be expressing frustration and anger towards Chung Myung, but in reality, she likely knew what would have happened if he had finished his cultivation just a little bit late.

Within that short span of time, it was impossible to simultaneously recover inner strength and heal the body. Chung Myung had no other choice in that situation. The reason Tang Soso was so angry likely stemmed from the feeling of helplessness and self-blame for pushing Chung Myung into such situation.

Un Geom’s frustration might be based on what Chung Myung experienced too.

«No, what’s the point of saving you! What was I supposed to do? Anyway, these days...

Ugh!»

A needle poked into Chung Myung’s lips, causing him to be unable to finish his sentence.

The needle was pushed into Chung Myung's forehead by Yu Iseol, who had been sitting crouched beside him.

«Sago. I understand the situation. But if the needle goes in too deep, it's really over for Sahyeong.»

«That's what I wanted.»

Yu Iseol firmly pushed the needle into Chung Myung's forehead. Tang Soso quietly lowered her eyes after glancing at Yu Iseol's expressionless face.

«The emergency is over.»

«Hmm.»

Yu Iseol looked down at Chung Myung with disdain. Even the world's best Chung Myung had no choice but to avoid her eyes at that moment.

«That crazy guy.»

Baek Cheon muttered, shaking his head as he watched the scene.

«Soso-ya.»

«Yes, Sasuk.»

«So, when will the treatment be over?»

«It's impossible to fully recover here. So it's just enough to keep him breathing. That part is already done.»

«Huh? But why do you keep the needles in?»

«Should I remove them?»

After a moment of hesitation, Baek Cheon nodded heavily.

«Let's keep them in a little longer.»

«Okay.»

Listening to the conversation among Hwasan's disciples, Im Sobyong suddenly shivered due to the cold wind.

«Well, at least you have good ventilation.»

Chung Myung's face distorted when he looked at hundreds of holes pierced in his clothes. In response, Tang Soso grabbed the needles she had collected.

«Why? Are you cold? Should I patch up the holes again?»

«...I didn't say anything, okay? I didn't say anything.»

Chung Myung slowly moved away from Tang Soso. Personally, in situations like this, Tang Soso is even scarier than the Bishop.

«Anyway, really...»

Tang Soso ground her teeth. The sound was fierce. Om Sobyong chuckled bitterly alone.

‘As if I'm in debt.’

Even without overexerting himself so hard, Jang Ilso would have left Chung Myung alive.

That's what Im Sobyong thought. At this point in time, Chung Myung is absolutely the one person who should not die on Jang Ilso.

But Im Sobyong knows. All Jang Ilso needs is Chung Myung. The other disciples of Hwasan didn't matter, whether they live or die. In fact, killing them might have been better. 'In my case, I don't need to think about it.'

If he was Jang Ilso, he would definitely have killed Im Sobyong here. By any means necessary.

Because he guessed all of this, Chung Myung was trying to recover the power that could threaten Jang Ilso. Even in the midst of this dangerous battlefield, while performing cultivation.

'And the result...'

In the end, he succeeded in not having a single casualty on this harsh battlefield. Incredible. Im Sobyong had believed until now that Hwasan had not had any victims simply because they were lucky. Given the battles they had experienced, it was strange that there had been no casualties.

However, during this battle, he was absolutely sure.

'It wasn't luck.'

Luck refers to something that happens unintentionally. It's not called luck when the leading party is well-prepared and thorough in their efforts.

Im Sobyong, as a leader himself, understands this. How meaningless and challenging it is to exclude sacrifices from calculations.

However, Hwasan Geomhyeop had actually accomplished these seemingly impossible tasks. Sometimes he prepared, sometimes he rushed in, and sometimes he embarked on life-or-death journeys.

Im Sobyong couldn't even fathom how much thought Chung Myung had put into leading Hwasan to this point.

'What an incredible person.'

Im Sobyong looked at Chung Myung with newfound admiration.

At this moment, Chung Myung's figure standing tall on the desolate land felt more imposing than ever.

*This is the authors note on yosang: 요상(療像: 운기를 통해 상처를 치료).

療 — to treat, to cure, to heal; therapy/treatment.

像 — picture/image/figure; to resemble/to be like.

So hanja says something along the lines of Treatment through Image, as imagination.

Healing injures through martial arts.