

Chapter 1209

Now the sect is finally back on track! (4)

«...Raise your hands properly.»

«Hands!»

The hands, descending slowly, rise sharply again. Hyun Jong let out a groan as he watched Chung Myung frown.

‘How did I end up with someone like him?’

Honestly, who would have thought that it would be such a strain for a guy, who could beat up Demonic Cult’s Bishop, to just have his arms raised? The more he thought about it, the more irritated he became. Chung Myung could hold up his arms for a month and a half if he wanted to. Watching him make such a fuss over it only made Hyun Jong’s blood boil even more.

«Chung Myung.»

«.....»

«Chung Myung!»

«.....Yes.»

Watching his pursed lips, Hyun Jong pounded his chest, feeling like his heart was about to burst into flames.

«What are you so dissatisfied with?»

«.....»

«What’s the point of venting your frustration on your Sasuks! Not even your Sahyeongs! Sasuks»

«Well, I mean.....»

«They are soon to be the elders of the sect! You’re not some ignorant fool, and yet you’re beating up your Sasuks in front of others as if you are catching rats!»

«That’s what I meant! That’s what I’m saying!»

At that moment, Chung Myung rolled his eyes once again. But Hyun Jong wasn’t letting up.

«Don’t lower your arms sneakily, raise them properly again.»

«.....Yes.»

Chung Myung raised the arm that had been lowered. Yet, his mouth kept moving.

«No, Sect Leader! Honestly, does it make any sense for them to be elders of Hwasan?

They’re not even near this position yet!»

«... You’re the youngest one here, you...»

If those guys weren’t capable, you wouldn’t be shedding blood left and right. Chung Myung, please realize how old you are...

«There are strict rules in the sect, norms to be upheld! No matter the circumstances, where do they get off behaving like that! Ugh! That never happened in my time!»

Hyun Jong grabbed his stomach in silence.

‘Where did I put the digestive medicine?’

Talking to this guy sometimes felt like his deceased master was rolling in his grave and jumped out.

«But circumstances are circumstances, right?»

Yet Hyun Jong, drawing upon the patience he had built up over the years of cultivation, tried to reason with Chung Myung as calmly as possible. It was truly an adult-like, mature behavior, but Chung Myung glared back with fire in his eyes and countered.

«Sect Leader! That’s the situation! This time, we have no choice! If we keep violating principles for reasons like this, eventually the sect’s laws will become as flimsy as a sheet of paper! Then norms collapse! Morality collapses! Families collapse! The country falls into turmoil!»

«...Is it really going to lead to the country’s downfall?»

«Of course it will! Why wouldn’t it!»

“...”

Chung Myung rolled his eyes once again and continued.

«Sect Leader!»

«Why...»

«I’m not doing this because I dislike or can’t stand Sasuks!»

«Is that so?»

«Well... um... honestly, there might be some... aspects like that...»

«...Honesty is appreciated. Yes, a true taoist must be honest. In a way, our Chung Myung here is quite a taoist. There was a time when I thought I had found a gem to illuminate Hwasan just by looking at you...»

«Anyway, what kind of sect is Hwasan?»

«... What kind of sect?»

«The Great Taoist Hwasan Sect, isn’t it! Hwasan Sect! A prestigious sect of Shaanxi! A sect boasting history and tradition!»

Hyun Jong’s grip on his stomach tightened. Did anyone expect him to be treated like this at this age?

«Yes? That Hwasan! Yes? How can a thief be made into a Sect Leader! This is ridiculous!

Where do these barely initiated ones get off becoming Sect Leaders, skipping a whole generation!»

«But it’s an Acting Sect Leader... Acting Leader. I am the Sect Leader...»

«That’s the point! I mean, in all my years...! If the ancestors of Hwasan hear this news from the Heavens, they’ll think Hwasan is being destroyed by the hands of those guys, not even by Heavenly Deamon, and they’ll immediately kick the lids of their coffins and rush here!»

«... You were fine when you first joined, what happened to you?»

«What?»

«Oh, no, never mind.»

Hyun Jong awkwardly cleared his throat and sighed before asking,

«So, what do you want to do?»

«We need to stop this ridiculous behavior immediately! This is just...»

Looking at Chung Myung with a disappointed gaze, Hyun Jong asked,

«So, even if I ask, will you continue to oppose?»

«Well...!»

Chung Myung hesitated for a moment, closing his eyes. It wasn't that he was avoiding eye contact due to the awkward situation. Rather, a fierce battle had begun in his mind among countless conflicting thoughts.

«I mean... No, but... Sect Leader said... But still? What?»

«...»

«Well... if you insist, then... um... I'll follow. Yes. I should follow. I'll follow...»

As reason and instinct clashed fiercely, wisps of white steam seemed to emanate from Chung Myung's ears.

Hyun Jong spoke with a sigh in his voice.

«...It's going to explode if this continues, Chung Myung.»

«Y-yes... If you order, I'll follow.»

«...Thank you.»

Hyun Jong chuckled softly. Each time he observed Chung Myung, he couldn't help but feel there was something peculiar about his way of thinking. How could this guy, who would eagerly tear apart anyone, including Beop Jong, given the chance, obediently follow the commands of Hwasan's elders? He even doubted if it was some kind of mental illness.

At that moment, Chung Myung grumbled discontentedly.

«I'll follow, but don't think I'm doing it willingly!»

«...As if I would.»

Still not feeling entirely satisfied, he muttered under his breath.

«As a Sect Leader, you should uphold the sect's laws. It doesn't make sense for you to overturn the hierarchy...»

«I heard that.»

«Cough.»

Chung Myung averted his gaze. Hyun Jong let out a deep sigh.

Of course, he understood. Even if he spoke like this, he knew that Chung Myung would be of a great assistance to Baek Cheon. The decision to appoint the young Baek Cheon as the Acting Leader and eventually pass on the position of the Sect Leader to him within a short period of time was only possible because Chung Myung believed in him.

With Chung Myung around, Baek Cheon wouldn't easily make reckless decisions, and if mistakes were made, they could be rectified. However, the blatant display of Chung Myung's

discontent was a problem. Whether it was just a fleeting resentment or not, they were soon to depart for Haenam, and he wanted to resolve this issue as much as possible before then.

«Chung Myung.»

Chung Myung didn't respond as if he hadn't heard. Hyun Jong called him again, more insistently.

«Chung Myung.»

«... Yes.»

Seeing him like that, Hyun Jong couldn't help but smile.

This kid would probably be like this even after a hundred years. That fact subtly reassured him. If this kid didn't change, then neither would Hwasan.

«I understand your feelings.»

«... «

«And I know your words aren't wrong. But Chung Myung, I can't help but repeat that 'circumstances are circumstances.'»

«In all things, there's a principle at work. And shouldn't we also know when to just let things flow naturally? We are followers of Tao. Therefore, we should follow what is natural...»

«Well, I know.»

Chung Myung interjected bluntly at that moment.

«Every time I hear those words, I just can't seem to understand.»

«Huh? What do you mean?»

«They say Taoists should follow what is natural and not be swayed by human intentions.»

«That's right. That's what nature is.»

«But aren't humans part of nature?»

«...Huh?»

«Are humans not part of nature?»

Hyun Jong blinked at that statement. After a moment of silence as if he was struck, he spoke again.

«Indeed, humans are also part of nature.»

«So, isn't it strange?»

«What do you mean?»

«If pursuing Tao means following what is natural, and humans are also part of nature, then can't following human heart also be considered Tao?»

«They say to exclude human intentions to achieve the Tao, which means following nature without humans. But we are human, so I don't understand the point of trying to resemble nature without humans.»

Hyun Jong pondered for a moment before speaking.

«So, what you're saying... humans are part of nature.»

«Yes.»

«To follow nature is Tao.»

«Yes, Sect Leader!»

«So... following human emotions is also Tao.»

«Yes, Sect Leader!»

«So... doing as one pleases. Is that it?»

«...»

«Where's the logic in that, you rascal! Then whatever people do in the world is Tao!»

«Oh, I got busted.»

«Hey, you!»

«Oh, my! I'm just so frustrated!»

As Hyun Jong was making a fuss, Chung Myung swiftly darted out of the room.

«Don't you stand there! I'm not finished yet, you rascal!»

«I haven't finished preparing for departure! This disciple! I will make meticulous preparations to complete the mission entrusted to me perfectly!»

«You!»

After disappearing behind the wide-open door, Chung Myung popped half his body back in with a chuckle.

«Oh, don't worry. Even though he is just the Acting Leader, I'll still treat him well!»

«...»

«Well then!»

Chung Myung vanished abruptly. Hyun Jong found himself clicking his tongue without realizing it.

It's worrisome. He was worried.

He let out a deep sigh and then burst into laughter alone a moment later.

«Such nonsense...»

Following human emotions is the Tao...

Hyun Jong's gaze drifted up to the ceiling. And for a long while, he silently stared at nothing but the ceiling.

As the lingering sun set, darkness descended, and dusk fell, it was finally time for the group to depart for Haenam.

«Are you ready?»

«What preparations do I need? It's the usual routine.»

Yoon Jong shrugged in response to Baek Cheon's question.

«We've traveled far so often that now I can pack even with my eyes closed.»

«True.»

«...Sago, Sago. Have you packed the luggage?»

«...»

«Sago? Where are you looking at? Sago?»

Baek Cheon chuckled.

«Oh, I see. That was a pointless question. But... where did Jo Geol go?»

«Preparations are done.»

«Done?»

«He got hit by Chung Myung earlier today, so I had to leave him lying down for now.»

«On a bed?»

«No. On the floor.»

... Yoon Jong...

‘He’s not saying he laid him down, he’s saying he neglected him. Sometimes, I don’t quite understand you. I think I understand, then I don’t...’

At that moment, Yoon Jong casually interjected.

«Rather than worrying about us, is everything prepared for the departure?»

«Huh?»

«Sect Leader mentioned that before departure, he would officially appoint an Acting Sect Leader in a simple ceremony, right?»

«Well, yes.»

Forgotten tension flashed across Baek Cheon’s face.

Even though Baek Cheon was not the type to be easily intimidated by formidable opponents, the official ascension to the position of Acting Sect Leader in front of everyone still made him nervous.

«There’s nothing specific required for preparations. If anything, it’s just mental readiness.»

«That’s why I’m asking. Are you ready?»

At that question, Baek Cheon offered a faint smile.

«Of course.»

With his firm answer, Yoon Jong smiled and nodded.

«Then let’s go. Everyone is waiting.»

Baek Cheon nodded decisively and stepped forward. As he opened the door, he was greeted by the sight of Hwasan’s disciples filling the courtyard. All eyes were on Baek Cheon.

«Phew.»

Taking in those gazes, Baek Cheon took a short breath.

It was a mixture of excitement and overwhelming pressure. With all those feelings, he took his steps forward towards Hyun Jong and the elders waiting for him at the front.