

Chapter 1077

Next time it will be your neck. (2)

«Frankly, this has crossed the line.»

«That's what I'm saying.»

A disappointed sigh escaped from Yoon Jong's lips.

He had fought against dragons and the horde of charging wolves. He had endured those relentless battles, but now, wasn't he surrounded by tigers, the horde of wild dogs, and a pack of wolves?

There was no calculation or planning. From the beginning, the situation had been dire, even with allies like Jang Ilso and Red Dogs. Breaking through this place with just them was impossible, no matter how many times they died and risen from the dead.

«What should we do?»

«We...»

«At least think of something! You're Sasuk!»

«I'm not a strategist, am I?»

Everyone's gaze turned towards Im Sobyong at Baek Cheon's shout.

«Is there... a solution?»

Im Sobyong received hopeful gazes filled with anticipation and smiled confidently.

“What do you think of me? Of course, there is.»

«Oh?»

Hope filled their eyes when Im Sobyong smiled confidently, everyone's spirits lifted.

«So, you have a plan?»

Under their hopeful gazes, Im Sobyong confidently replied,

«Dying in the hands of the Sapa scoundrels would be painful, so it's better to end it here, preserve our honor, and protect our bodies...»

«Are you insane?»

«What nonsense!»

«This cursed bandit!»

«Monk, calm down a bit.»

«...No...»

As criticism rained down, Im Sobyong sighed in exasperation, looking unjustly accused.

“Even if Jegal Gong Myeong [a strategist] were to return, there's no solution to the situation. What should I do?”

“Then you should have resolved it before the situation got to this point! What were you thinking, helping Jang Ilso?”

“Well, everyone would have died if I hadn't.”

“What's different now?”

“Haha. We’re just dying a little later, aren’t we? A moment can be important... at least you can prepare your heart. But, hey, monk? Why are you clenching your fists?”

Stunned, Namgung Dowi cautiously grasped Hye Yeon’s fist. He was afraid the fiery golden energy would pierce into Im Sobyong’s face.

Baek Cheon gritted his teeth as he looked at those approaching Hwasan.

Baek Cheon was so frustrated that his stomach turned as he watched the Red Dogs blending in with the Black Ghosts. It was like they were already on the same side no matter how long they had been fighting each other to the death just moments ago.

‘These spineless bastards.’

It could also be said that Jang Ilso’s leadership was exceptional, but right now, Baek Cheon didn’t have the luxury to simply admire that fact.

“But these bastards!”

Jo Geol emitted intimidating energy toward the Black Ghost’s closing in to surround them. The approaching elites of Black Ghost hesitated and stepped back. However, they soon resumed narrowing the gap with menacing smiles.

This was a reaction unlike anything they had seen before. Black Ghosts had fully regained their composure. The disciples of Hwasan swallowed dry from tension and broke into cold sweat.

And then it happened.

“Well, well.”

A voice so unmistakably familiar echoed clearly. Then, the enemies who had been advancing to crush Hwasan came to an abrupt halt, as if it was all a lie.

A mere short remark stopped all the movements of everyone in this stiff world. In the middle of this frozen world, Jang Ilso confidently took steps forward, continuing his stride leisurely. The elites of the Black Ghost blocking his path quickly stepped aside to make way.

“Hm, you never know.”

Enjoying the abundant admiration and fear radiating from the surroundings, Jang-Ilso walked forward like an emperor without a care in the world. His destination was none other than Hwasan.

“Those energetic heroes of Hwasan.”

A mocking tone. However, his voice conveyed an authority that prevented any possible retaliation.

“Why are you all shrinking like this?”

Hwasan’s disciples’ faces distorted terribly in the face of those words.

“You don’t happen to think that this Jang Ilso... would betray his comrades he fought alongside with and do something so despicable, do you? Hmm?”

“...”

“Would you be somewhat disappointed if you thought so?”

Baek Cheon bit his lips.

He had a clear understanding of what Mangeum Daebu must have felt before his death. Could there be anyone in the world as dreadful to deal with as Jang Ilso, who had seized control as much as he had done it now?

It felt as if Jang Ilso had plunged his hand into Baek Cheon's chest and was toying with his heart, squeezing and letting it go as he pleased.

«This... is quite embarrassing.»

As Jang Ilso finally reached them, he chuckled as he poked Baek Cheon.

«You firmly believe that I'm such a malicious person... So should I should live up to that expectation... or gracefully let you break free.»

Baek Cheon growled.

«You never had any intention of letting us go from the start, so don't blabber nonsense.»

Sharp words poured out, and a strangely joyful expression flitted across Jang Ilso's face. He slowly wiped his face with his long fingers.

But before he could respond, Ho Gamyong, who was following behind, spoke with a slightly hurried tone,

«Lord Ryeonju, we must kill him.»

Ho Gamyong was looking at Hwasan, Chung Myung in the centre specifically, his eyes closed, while he continued his cultivation.

«While it's true that they've contributed significantly, but they're too dangerous, especially him...»

«Tsk tsk tsk. Gamyong-ah.»

Jang Ilso interrupted him with a dissatisfied tone, looking extremely annoyed.

«If you put it that way, I'd become a total pushover, wouldn't I?»

«I'm sorry, Ryeonju, but this matter...»

«Of course, there's nothing as foolish as seeking favor from the Sapa gods. We all know it, even them. However...»

Jang Ilso's strange gaze shifted towards Hwasan, specifically, towards Baek Cheon.

«While the Sapa gods may not exist, isn't there still a thing called loyalty?»

«Ryeonju... Even so, isn't it unwise to abandon our principles for the sake of loyalty?»

«Shush.»

Jang Ilso lightly tapped his cheek as if he found the situation difficult. Then, he widened his eyes and gazed at Baek Cheon.

«That seems right.»

«...»

«It might be unfortunate for you, but I'm a more compassionate superior than you might think. When a subordinate pleads so earnestly, it wouldn't be proper for a superior to reject it so heartlessly, right?»

«This guy...»

«So he's deeply troubled. How to handle this. Hahaha!»

The disciples of Hwasan clenched their fists.

It was as if he was taunting his captured prey. Wasn't it his plan to torment them as much as he pleased before finally killing them?

Baek Cheon stared at Jang Ilso with eyes that seemed ready to kill.

«You seem to have some misconceptions, but if you think we're like the people you've dealt with so far, that's a grave mistake. We'd rather die than be toyed with.»

«Oh?»

«If you don't know that, your delicate neck might be severed, Jang Ilso.»

«Or your head might explode.»

«Or a sword might be thrust into your belly.»

Jang Ilso shook his head as if to say he couldn't stop the growling disciples of Hwasan.

«They're quite good at growling for a bunch of wild cats.»

Jang Ilso's eyes grew cold.

«However... it makes me curious, you know. Would you really be able to hold your head up high even when your neck is severed?»

As he finished speaking, he raised his hand slightly.

«Oh, no, no. I shouldn't say this to you. I need to correct myself.»

A peculiar smile curled at the corners of Jang Ilso's mouth.

«Can you brag while watching your comrade's throat being cut right next to you?»

«You... you scum!»

Baek Cheon gnashed his teeth. His eyes began to redden.

Having faced Magyo together and subsequently facing the Black Ghost, the subtle sympathy Baek Cheon had for Jang Ilso was completely extinguished. Blood rushed to his head.

Baek Cheon stomped the ground seemingly ready to rush forward at any moment.

Suddenly, a cold voice from behind caught his ankle.

«Try it.»

Baek Cheon's head instinctively turned back. It was impossible to divert his gaze from Jang Ilso with him in front of them, but it was possible when he heard this familiar voice.

«Chu... Chung Myung!»

«Hey, you!»

«... You're awfully late. Seriously.»

Relieved sighs escaped the lips of those surrounding Chung Myung. It was an absurd sight.

Only one person had been added. They were still surrounded by Black Ghosts and Red Dogs, threatened by the likes of Jang Ilso and Cheon Myeon Susa.

But the moment that one person opened his eyes, an undeniable sense of relief settled on the faces of the disciples of Hwasan. As if, with just him opening his eyes, his entire situation could be solved.

After scanning those around him, Chung Myung fixed his gaze on Jang Ilso. Jang Ilso, too, looked at him with a peculiar smile.

«Who said someone's head would be cut off?»

A voice that seemed to blow like a northern wind in a snowstorm. In response to that voice, Red Dogs instinctively lowered their posture, ready to charge forward to protect Jang Ilso at any moment.

«Go ahead. Guess whose head might be sent flying.»

«Hmm.»

Jang Ilso raised his hand and lightly touched his chin.

«...If it goes this far, the conversation will certainly change a bit, but... isn't this a bit too extreme? It doesn't seem like a situation that requires such a threat, right? Right, Hwasan Geomhyeop?»

«That's why I'm telling you to try it.»

Baek Cheon, as if still not trusting Chung Myung's physical condition, blocked him with a worried expression. However, Chung Myung lightly patted his shoulder and stepped forward.

«Now there's nothing we can't do, right? Isn't that right?»

«What do you mean?»

«There's no reason to needlessly keep a Sapa bastard alive who is no longer useful.»

At that moment, the disciples of Hwasan certainly saw it. The unsettling smile on Jang Ilso's face froze for a moment.

However, his stern expression quickly disappeared, as if it had never been there in the first place.

With a suddenly softened face, he leisurely asked,

«So... I didn't use you — you used me?»

«That's enough to be the glory of a lifetime. I've even managed to make use of a Sapa guy who's best used as fertilizer, right? Oh, you don't have to thank me. No one gets a thanks from a tool. Isn't that right?»

«Hahaha... Hwasan Geomhyeop.»

Jang Ilso's face distorted.

«It's still incredible how you manage to scratch at people's deepest vulnerabilities. I'll give you that. But... you should be careful. My patience might not be as remarkable as you think.»

«You might not know, but I'm quite good at something.»

Chung Myung gripped the sword hanging at his waist.

«Cutting the wretched throat of a Sapa guy to make them understand their place even in the afterlife. How about it? Don't you want to give it a try?»

A bluish aura emanated from Jang Ilso's eyes. In response to that gaze, Chung Myung revealed a murderous smile.

Righteous and evil. These two, representing the two factions, were now openly displaying their animosity towards each other without holding anything back.

The bond between them, which had only been as thin as a thread, holding only onto their two enemies: Magyo and Black Ghost — was severed. They were no longer anything more or less than the most hated enemies.

The overwhelming aura of the two who had returned to their rightful places spread in all directions.