

## Chapter 1147

I've done everything I needed to, but you know. (2)

It was quiet. It was difficult enough to witness a gathering of warriors at the grand training grounds, but seeing all of them simultaneously assuming their positions and practicing cultivation was an extraordinarily rare sight.

'Amazing.'

Tang Gunak observed the martial artists cultivating with renewed admiration. To those unfamiliar with the ways of Gangho, it might appear merely wondrous, but for those knowledgeable about the nature of these people, it was an extraordinary spectacle.

Fundamentally, cultivation usually took place in secrecy, away from the gaze of others.

Why? It was quite simple: practitioners were most vulnerable when performing it.

Although they could normally shatter rocks with a single blow or leap rivers in a stride, during their practice, even a child's kick could disrupt their concentration.

That's why warriors rarely displayed this vulnerable state, even to their own siblings.

Avoiding revealing their vulnerable moments to others was almost instinctual, akin to how a wild animal seeks a concealed den when danger approaches.

However, here, in this place, numerous individuals were all practicing their cultivation in an area where everyone watched.

'Was it because of an order?'

Impossible. If it had been their usual selves, regardless of any command from Tang Gunak or Chung Myung, they would have sought a quiet place, perhaps even at the least, entering their own quarters to practice.

The fact that these individuals were casually cultivating in this vast training grounds meant they no longer perceived those around them as threats.

'You never know.'

Tang Gunak nodded his head faintly.

The word 'trust' was indeed a peculiar term.

There wasn't anyone unaware of the importance of mutual trust among each other in the leadership of their respective factions. All leaders wished for their disciples to build trust among themselves. Hence, they used numerous etiquettes to establish hierarchy among their disciples and enforced various rules to impartially arbitrate minor disputes among them.

However, trust was something not easily built. People could act as if they trusted each other outwardly, yet when it came to critical moments, they might make different choices because that's the essence of being human.

'If I had done the same thing at our clan, would everyone have been able to do it like this?'

The answer was already known.

That's why it was something unknown. All they had done before was gather, fight with each other like madmen, test each other's limits, and fight together against the elders.

Wasn't there hardly any room for human interaction? Yet, why did they trust each other, revealing their most vulnerable sides without hesitation?

Tang Gunak glanced subtly back at Chung Myung.

Every time this happened, he realized afresh: Hwasan Geomhyeop was seeing something he couldn't. When would he be able to see what that person was seeing?

"Why are you like this?"

"Perhaps I'm feeling a bit irritable."

"Oh?"

"....."

"Your temperament seems to have worsened a bit. Or rather, has it improved compared to before?"

"Ugh."

Tang Gunak shook his head. There seemed to be no limit to that temperament of his.

'Anyway, it's a good thing.'

Though he had traveled a long and arduous path, this sight seemed to convey something to him. It hinted that the 'connection' in Cheonumaeng that Hwasan Geomhyeop had been laboring to build was gradually solidifying.

"By the way, you managed to create an elixir that could be given to all those kids."

"Ugh. Well, that's..."

Chung Myung scratched his chin.

"To be honest, it's not a proper Jasodan. Every elixir has an appropriate dosage. Due to the lack of ingredients, I had to reduce the size, and compared to taking the proper dose, its effectiveness might only be about one-fifth."

"About one-fifth, you say?"

"Um... it could even be less than that."

"Wasn't this elixir said to be better made than before?"

"Yes. So, one can hope for at least about one-fifth of its effectiveness this time."

Chung Myung let out a deep sigh.

"They fight well when they're well-fed."

"... You're always harsh on yourself, criticizing what others couldn't even dream of accomplishing. You're too hard on yourself."

"It's not about being harsh on myself, it's about the harsh reality we're facing. But just because we were lacking doesn't mean we can simply accept defeat, right?"

"It's hard to argue against that."

Most people pay attention to their achievements, but Chung Myung only checks how close he's getting to the goals he set for himself. Sometimes, watching him, it gives one chills.

Tang Gunak felt fortunate that he hadn't encountered Chung Myung as an enemy.

“By the way...”

An involuntary sigh escaped his lips.

“From Alliance’s perspective, it’s undoubtedly a great thing, but from my perspective, it’s not all that easy to welcome.”

“Hmm? Why?”

“Even if it’s about one-fifth of its effectiveness, isn’t elixir still an elixir? Especially if it is one-fifth of Hwasan’s Jasodan, it would be equivalent to the greatest elixir of most sects.”

Tang Gunak emitted an almost groaning sound.

“Their capabilities will increase, their strength and resilience will improve, but having to deal with such kids...”

It was expected for the children to become closer and stronger through the elixir, but considering the position of controlling such kids, it wasn’t just an entirely welcomed situation.

Even while facing children who hadn’t taken an elixir and he was nearly collapsing from exhaustion on the street, how could he handle those who had taken it?

“Ah, you worry too much. I’ve prepared a special batch for the lords.”

“Huh?”

Chung Myung rummaged through his robe and brought out neatly wrapped packag.

“I’ve set aside the most potent pills. One for Lord Tang, another for Lord Maeng, and one for Sobaek.”

Tang Gunak stared at the pill in Chung Myung’s hand. It was different in size from what was distributed to the children, a proper dosage.

“This...”

“Don’t suggest I share it with the kids or anything.”

“In the past, I might have said that out of pride, but I’m not in a position to do so now.”

“I’ll keep this for you to take separately tonight. Oh, I’ve also prepared something for the elders, albeit smaller.”

Certainly, in this aspect, Chung Myung left no room for any shortcomings.

“... Wait a moment. One for each of the lords? Then what about... Nokrim King...?”

“Shh.”

Glancing around, Chung Myung brought his index finger to his lips and whispered,

“Keep it hidden and take it where others can’t see. Got it?”

“....”

“These greedy Sapa bastards run around causing trouble endlessly.”

Tang Gunak turned his head to look at Im Sobyong, who was cultivating. Seeing Im Sobyong smiling and cultivating seemed pitiful now.

‘He happened to be born in Sapa...’

No, precisely, how did someone born in the evil sect end up meeting Chung Myung?

Understanding Chung Myung's deeply rooted hatred towards Sapa, something impossible to be cured, Tang Gunak silently put away the pill deep into his sleeve.

"I understand."

"Yes, hehehe."

Chung Myung turned his head, observing those cultivating.

"It's about time to finish up."

A faint smile appeared on his lips.

Wuuuuung.

Deep within, Namgung Dowi's suppressed energy surged through his meridians. He guided his energy to Hundred Convergence Acupoint [백회혈(百會穴) — a point at the top of your head]. Forces that had been deeply suppressed surged upward fiercely, like an ascending dragon.

Kuuuuuuung!

Simultaneously, a reverberating sound akin to a large bell tolling echoed within his mind.

Dark, coagulated blood trickled from Namgung Dowi's nose and mouth. It wasn't an internal injury but rather the expulsion of impurities accumulated from prolonged and arduous training, released along with the dead blood from his body.

'Again!'

Kwaaaaang!

Once more, a surge of energy soared, creating a magnificent explosion upon contact with Namgung Dowi's upper daintan. The energy spreading throughout his body generated an indescribable vitality that words alone couldn't explain.

"Phew..."

Namgung Dowi slowly opened his eyes. Simultaneously, what he saw was Chung Myung standing ahead, observing them.

'Now is the time.'

It seemed as if the overflowing energy within his body was conveying this message. It meant that if he had consumed this elixir before beginning his training, achieving the same effect as now would have been impossible.

The elixir increased internal energy. But beyond that, there was something more crucial.

Upon consuming it, one gained the opportunity to utilize a massive amount of energy that could never be harnessed under normal circumstances.

The crucial point lay in how one utilized such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Constantly battling, realizing one's limits and shortcomings instinctively taught them how to harness this energy effectively.

'I've crossed one wall.'

Without the aid of the elixir, it's impossible to determine how much longer it would have taken. The timely administration of the elixir dramatically shortened that time. It was a triumph significant enough to belittle the newly accumulated internal energy within his body.

He rose to his feet, exuding confidence. His eyes emitted clear radiance.

And shortly after he rose to his feet, Tang Pae also stood up. His expression was not much different from Namgung Dowi's.

Another one. And another one.

Those who were seated, cultivating, started to rise one by one. And before half an hour had passed, all those who had been cultivating stood up.

Their collective gaze naturally focused on Chung Myung.

Though unsure of what words to say, it was unmistakable at that moment who they should be looking up to.

Receiving everyone's attention, Chung Myung nodded significantly.

Meeting his sharp gaze, they all mustered confident smiles.

Chung Myung began to speak.

"At first..."

"...Huh?"

Splurt!

"...Huh?"

Suddenly, Chung Myung, looking nauseous, held his nose and hastily stepped back.

"...Go wash up and come back... please..."

Everyone flinched and inspected their bodies. Their clothes had become soiled and discolored due to the waste ejected from their pores, sticking and smearing across their bodies.

"Oh..."

"What's this smell?"

"Ugh!"

Only then did those who smelled the repugnant odor emanating from their bodies start to groan and moan in discomfort.

Tang Gunak, solemnly covering his nose with one hand, raised his voice gruffly.

"...Go to the river. Quickly!"

"..."

"I said, go!"

Those expecting something remarkable, dashed toward the river with embarrassed expressions.

And for the following few days, those living along the banks of the river suffered from collective stomach issues.

This led to officials investigating for signs of an epidemic, but ultimately, the river flowed peacefully as ever.