

Chapter 1128

Here. This is hell. (3)

Deep dawn.

While most corners were shrouded in darkness, the residence of Ho Gamyong, a military strategist of Sapaeryeon, still glowed brightly with lit lamps.

Seated at a large desk, Ho Gamyong, with weary eyes, leaned back in his chair while scanning through documents.

‘That’s not an easy task.’

He, too, was tireless. Rarely did anything exhaust him. But nearly ten consecutive sleepless nights had worn even him out.

Yet, there was still a long way to go, and resting was out of the question.

“... You expect too much from me at times.”

He muttered quietly.

He comprehended Jang Ilso’s intentions well enough. And by now, he fully understood the unquestionable validity of that intention.

The problem lay in the fact that it was now Ho Gamyong’s responsibility to practically realize that grand objective, previously tossed out nonchalantly by Jang Ilso while tilting his wine glass and saying, ‘This should do.’

It sounds easy.

Just recently, executing nearly a thousand created a massive personnel void within Sapaeryeon. Whether these trash lived or died didn’t matter. However, among those facing execution this time, there were several close to the core of each faction of Sapaeryeon. Their disappearance would create administrative voids, necessitating the minimization of such gaps and the appointment of new people in suitable positions. Simultaneously, all the inefficient and lacking operations within each faction must be identified and efficiently reorganized.

Is that all? Not only must the divided forces of Black Ghost Fortress, Maninbang, and Surochae be unified into one, but they also need to be coordinated.

This was a far more daunting task than forming a new martial arts sect.

Even those who had witnessed Ho Gamyong’s workload during the Maninbang era shook their heads in disbelief. But now, instead of Maninbang, he had to streamline the vastly expanded Sapaeryeon akin to the efficiency of the former Maninbang, all while handling the aftermath of Jang Ilso’s misdeeds.

Who on earth could manage all this? Even if the most capable scholars from the Imperial Palace were brought in, they wouldn’t last a few days before fleeing.

Nevertheless, Ho Gamyong silently endured all these tasks without a word of complaint.

If Chung Myung had known about this, perhaps, forgetting all past differences, he might have tearfully clung to Ho Gamyong, begging to work together.

In essence, it was as if Ho Gamyong took on the tasks that Chung Myung, Hyun Young, Hyun Sang, Un Am, and even Eunha merchant guild would otherwise handle, all in one fell swoop.

Given the circumstances, even as Jang Ilso, who casually gave orders with a wave of his hand, plunged into deep slumber until this late dawn, Ho Gamyong remained alone, unable to do anything but attend to his duties.

Sapaeryeon was a place that couldn't exist without Jang Ilso and simultaneously couldn't function without Ho Gamyong.

'Let's see.'

Ho Gamyong reached out and placed a report that had just arrived from Hao clan in front of himself.

Even amidst reorganizing the system, one must not overlook information. Information was the most precious asset. And the information heading to Jang Ilso was especially crucial among them all.

Information like this, which couldn't be entrusted to others, was one of Ho Gamyong's responsibilities — to sort and prioritize it before presenting only the essentials to Jang Ilso.

'The Ice Palace at the Beast Palace...'

Furthermore, the report that had just arrived was about none other than Cheonumaeng. Recent information regarding Cheonumaeng's movements was categorized as highly classified even within Sapaeryeon.

"Why on earth summon all these people? What are they planning to do?"

Furrowing his brow, Ho Gamyong muttered discontentedly.

This isn't remotely efficient. There isn't an imminent war, is there? Yet, just bringing in that many people to the Yangtze River would incur significant expenses to feed and house them alone.

Moreover, gathering people with different inclinations inevitably leads to conflicts and incidents. Isn't Sapaeryeon already grappling with these issues, shedding countless lives due to such clashes?

To willingly instigate disputes by doing something unnecessary? This is foolishness, plain to see.

"Damn it..."

A frustrated sigh escaped Ho Gamyong's lips.

Still, there was one reason why he couldn't dismiss or overlook this information as a foolish endeavor: the person behind these actions was Chung Myung.

'Hwasan Geomhyeop.'

It was hard to acknowledge, but Hwasan Geomhyeop was an entity beyond what Ho Gamyong's mind could handle.

Of course he knew it. Not that he wasn't a remarkable figure in his own right as a military strategist — perhaps even exceptional to ordinary eyes — but amidst the battlegrounds manipulated by monsters who twisted the world to their will, even Ho Gamyong was nothing more than an ordinary, if not foolish, human.

In a sense that battlefield they engage in is an area where ordinary individuals cannot tread. Ho Gamyong habitually pressed on his temples.

'Not that I've ever felt aggrieved by that fact.'

There were areas where his strengths came into play.

His value lay not in strategy but in administrative prowess, operational abilities, and the executorial power to somehow realize Jang Ilso's ambitions. While there were countless people in the world, there was only one Ho Gamyong capable of handling tasks that could satisfy Jang Ilso.

He took pride in this fact.

Yet, at times like these... he couldn't help but feel frustrated by his inability to see beyond the intricate battles unfolding among them. Yes, only at times like these.

"...It's irritating."

Muttering quietly, Ho Gamyong shifted the report he held to the left. Placed on the left were reports that couldn't be handled from his end and needed to be presented to Jang Ilso.

Recently, especially after experiencing the appearance of Demonic Cult in Hangzhou, there had been a frequent influx of reports concerning Cheonumaeng moved to the left.

'That much... must have been quite impressive.'

Ho Gamyong's eyes darkened.

Speaking objectively, it wasn't Jang Ilso or Sapaeryeon who resolved the demonic crisis of Hangzhou, especially the act of killing the Bishop — it was none other than Hwasan Geomhyeop.

The actions and strategies implemented by him that day remained as an indelible mark in Ho Gamyong's mind.

Ho Gamyong was a cold-hearted man, and that applied to himself as well. He never overestimated himself. He admitted that he couldn't handle Chung Myung with his own capabilities.

'It's still incomprehensible.'

The sole reason why Ho Gamyong silently complied with Jang Ilso's unreasonable order to suppress those showing signs of resistance without leaving any trace behind was simple — there was no time to accept and reform all of them. War was not far off. Hence, it was a choice to cut away the wound before it festered.

On the other hand, what about Cheonumaeng? Chung Myung's current actions seemed nothing less than inflicting wounds all over one's body. What could possibly be the reason behind such actions?

'Could it be for the sake of some kind of preemptive strike before the issue escalates?'

Ho Gamyong chuckled dryly. Even as passing speculation, it seemed utterly nonsensical.

“There’s a reason. There must be a reason. But it’s a reason I find difficult to fathom...”

Ho Gamyong smiled softly to himself.

He was human. Humans couldn’t understand why monsters fought or their motives. All they could do was speculate, like licking the surface of a watermelon.

The conflict between Jang Ilso and Chung Myung fell into that category for Ho Gamyong.

He merely wished not to become a burden to Jang Ilso. All he hoped for was that Jang Ilso would fulfill that grand purpose of his.

«Have been lost in thought dar too long,»

Ho Gaemyeong muttered as he tossed aside the report in his hand and reached for the new one laid beside him.

To finish tasks that needed completion before dawn, even entertaining stray thoughts seemed extravagant.

Yet, despite the urgency, his mind didn’t readily shift towards the freshly presented report.

‘Hwasan Geomhyeop...’

Lately, recalling him had left a tightness in his chest. That person known as Hwasan Geomhyeop... reluctant as he was to admit it, bore astonishing resemblance to Jang Ilso.

Different yet alike — a statement implying the greatness of Hwasan Geomhyeop.

‘I guess I have the confidence to handle it.’

A sigh escaped Ho Gaemyeong’s lips. Undoubtedly, Cheonumaeng’s actions held deliberate intent, likely stemming from the confidence of Hwasan Geomhyeop.

‘But in the end, we will be the ones who are right, Hwasan Geomhyeop.’

Turning his gaze towards the direction of Gangbuk, Ho Gaemyeong bit his lip slightly, then swiftly refocused on the documents.

There was no time to rest, not for a moment, to manifest Jang Ilso’s will into reality.

Likewise, Chung Myung, seated at a massive desk, was furiously rubbing his tired face and tearing at his hair in frustration.

At that moment, the door burst open urgently.

«Chuuung Myuuuuuuung!»

Chung Myung stared at the figure rushing in, a look of despair etched on his face.

Confirming it was Baek Cheon, Chung Myung muttered in a voice drained of life.

«Why... again...»

«There’s another fight!»

«...»

«Tangga and Namgung are fighting!»

«Why?»

No, what sort of combination was this again?

«I don’t know! They were eating and suddenly started bickering!»

«Enough! Try to calm them down.»

«They drew their swords!»

«...»

«Please do something! The whole building might collapse.»

«That...»

Before Chung Myung could say anything, Jo Geol forcefully pushed his way in, shoving Baek Cheon aside and abruptly pushing his head inside.

«Chung Myung! There's a fight between Nokrim and our disciples!»

«...then intervene.»

«No, Sasuks are fighting too so they won't listen to me even when I try to stop them! ...

Huh? Baek Cheon Sasuk! Why are you here? Now is not the time for you to be here — you should be stopping Sasuks!»

«You do it! I need to stop Namgung and Tangga!»

«But those are others' matters! Our disciples are apparently thrashing Nokrim's people like they're catching mice!»

«If our people are winning, it shouldn't matter. It's not even the right thing to do.»

«What?»

Jo Geol paused, momentarily stunned by the realization.

«Come to think of it, why did I rush here?»

«...»

The remaining half of Chung Myung's soul slipped away.

Why is this okay? You crazy punks.

But this ordeal was far from over.

«Sahyeeeeong!»

Staring blankly at Tang Soso, who had pished her face next to Jo Geol's, Chung Myung muttered in a daze.

«Why? Are Ice Palace and Beast Palace fighting?»

«No! Sahyeong, it's not that!»

«Then what is it?»

«Beasts brought from Yunnan broke out of the warehouse and attacked the village!»

«...And why are you just standing there? We need to capture them!»

«We're short-handed! The other Sahyongs are currently in a brawl with Nokrim.»

«And Beast Palace?»

«They're currently fighting the Ice Palace.»

«What?»

Chung Myung looked at Tang Soso with vacant eyes.

«You said they weren't fighting...?»

«That meant it's not my concern. Whether they fight amongst themselves or not, what do I care?»

«...»

«They probably escaped because we were too caught up in the fighting and didn't feed them on time. It seems challenging to subdue them with only the remaining people, but can we take down a couple as an example?»

Chung Myung slumped down and melted into the chair.

«How do we handle this?»

«The fighting keeps escalating.»

«Yeah. Was it a mistake to let them rest? Without an official match, they're using their remaining energy to brawl amongst themselves.»

Chung Myung burst out laughing, staring blankly at the ceiling as the voices continually pierced his ears.

«You know...»

«Yeah. What should we do?»

«Everything...»

«Everything?»

«I hope it all falls apart.»

«...»

«You bastards...»

A single tear trickled down Chung Myung's cheek. Harmony? Talking about harmony and falling for it.

Oh my, Sect Leader Sahyeong.

Here. This is hell. Oh my...