

Chapter 1212

Without a doubt. (2)

The appointment ceremony ended simply.

Perhaps it might seem underwhelming for the appointed of the Sect Leader of Hwasan, the sect representing entire Shaanxi. Typically, the change of Sect Leader in an orthodox sect would be a huge event that would stir the entire region.

However, neither Hwasan's disciples participating in the ceremony nor those observing from a distance seemed to feel any disappointment in its modest scale. In fact, some even thought that this simple ceremony represented the essence of Hwasan the best.

As Un Am accepted Purple Mist Divine Sword, he looked at it with newfound appreciation. Honestly, Un Am wasn't someone who had profound sentiments about this sword. Yet, the reason he couldn't handle the sword easily was because of the significance it carried. It symbolized something he never thought would come into his hands.

After taking a deep breath, Un Am slowly drew out the Purple Mist Sword. As he examined the gleaming blade with his eyes, just before fully drawing it out, he paused and then slowly sheathed it back into the scabbard.

Thunk!

For a moment, he felt an impulse. An impulse to fully draw out the sword and give it a swing. Regardless of what the sword symbolized, any swordsman who held a sword in their hand would feel such an impulse.

However, the reason for not drawing the sword until the end was quite simple.

The significance lay in the moment when the sword in his hand remained untouched.

There wasn't much that had changed.

It was merely a brief interruption by Un Am during the process of transferring the Purple Mist Sword from Hyun Jong to Baek Cheon.

The outcome remained unchanged.

However, this brief "process" leading to an unchanged outcome might have altered many things.

There are countless swords in the world.

Some swords take lives on the battlefield, while others save them.

Some are wielded for profit, while others for oppression.

Whether used rightly or wrongly, each sword carries its own significance.

So then...

A sword forged but never once used to harm or threaten.

Wouldn't even such a sword, left untouched in its scabbard, hold its own meaning?

Un Am smiled.

'That's all there is to it.'

Anything beyond that would be excessive.

Un Am subtly turned his head to glance at Hyun Jong, as if implying it was time to conclude the ceremony.

Yet, Hyun Jong merely returned the gaze with a bright smile.

Only then did Un Am realize his mistake, coughing softly before assuming a somewhat unfamiliar, solemn expression and speaking.

«Those disciples headed for Haenam, step forward!»

«Yes!»

Before the words had finished echoing, the disciples of Hwasan dashed forward and stood behind Baek Cheon.

Un Am, after catching a glimpse of them, spoke again.

«Vice Sect Leader.»

As Un Am turned his head and called out to Baek Cheon, Baek Cheon politely bowed.

«Yes, Sect Leader.»

At the mention of the title, Un Am slightly narrowed his eyes. But before he could fully sense the sentiment, Un Am opened his eyes again and spoke with a determined gaze.

«It's Vice Sect Leader who must convey Hwasan's intentions to Haenam, not me.»

Baek Cheon met Un Am's gaze with shining eyes without saying a word.

«Even if the Sect Leader of Hwasan cannot go personally, Vice Sect Leader will prove Hwasan's intentions, as this sword will testify for it.»

As Un Am extended the Purple Mist Divine Sword, Baek Cheon accepted it with the utmost reverence, showing the most respect he could offer.

As Baek Cheon strapped the sword to his side, Un Am spoke again.

«Vice Sect Leader.»

«Yes!»

«Lead Hwasan's disciples, prove Hwasan's intentions, and return.»

«Yes!»

Un Am saw it all.

Baek Cheon's response was undeniably serious, yet infused with an unmistakable vigor.

‘He...’

No one is without ambition. Despite that, Un Am felt strangely moved witnessing the genuine joy in his Sajil's eyes while being elevated to Sect Leader's position.

It's not just Baek Cheon.

Behind him, in the eyes of the disciples watching him, there was a shared sense of happiness.

As Un Am's lips twitched slightly with an indescribable emotion, Baek Cheon's voice rang out.

«Disciple Baek Cheon!»

Un Am's gaze turned to Baek Cheon.

«I will uphold Sect Leader's command, clearly convey Hwasan's intentions to Haenam, and return!»

As Un Am nodded slowly, Baek Cheon rose to his feet. Seeing his determined figure, a smile unconsciously formed on Un Am's lips.

With the Purple Mist Sword by his side, Baek Cheon strode towards the main gate. And behind him, Ogeom followed like the guardians.

It's a sight he has seen many times before. Yet, as Un Am looked upon it now, it remained the same, yet different.

In Un Am's ears, Hyun Jong's voice echoed.

«How does it look?»

«...»

«That doesn't put one's heart at ease, right?»

At that voice, Un Am let out a short sigh.

«I thought it was a decision made with consideration for me... But now it seems you had plans to give me a hard time.»

«Haha. That may very well be.»

It's not that it's not true, but his heart felt heavy.

No matter if everyone agrees, accepting that decision is the responsibility inherent to being Sect Leader. Becoming Sect Leader means bearing the responsibility for all those decisions.

If even one of those kids returns hurt, can Un Am bear that pain?

«Have you always sent the kids off with this feeling?»

«Didn't you suspect as much?»

«I did suspect. But I didn't expect the difference between suspicion and reality to be this stark.»

Un Am nods slowly.

Only now does it seem like he might understand why Hyun Jong changed his mind at the last moment.

Even for those watching, it's hard to bear. If the one going to Haenam has to bear that responsibility as well, how heavy will the burden on Baek Cheon's shoulders be?

This decision is not only for Un Am but also an act of consideration from Hyun Jong to Baek Cheon.

«It's only until that kid returns.»

«For now, that's enough.»

Un Am nodded.

It was when he let out a sigh and was about to step forward.

«Where are you going?»

«Yes?»

«Now that you're the Sect Leader, it seems you want to go and fully enjoy that feeling with the kids... Unfortunately, you don't have time for that.»

«...»

«After all, there's a mountain of things that I haven't been able to pass on since Baek Cheon is going to Haenam. We need to start the handover immediately, so come to my place.»

«...»

«Oh dear. It feels refreshing. If Baek Cheon had become Sect Leader, I would have still had a mountain of work as retired Sect Leader.»

«...»

Un Am looked at Hyun Jong. Hyun Jong truly had a refreshing look on his face. It was a moment when Un Am's expression went blank at the playful expression of his teacher, as if seeing him for the first time in his life.

As Jo Geol headed towards the main gate of Jangwon, he chuckled and spoke.

«Oh, Vice Sect Leader.»

The moment Baek Cheon heard that voice, veins bulged on his forehead.

«I thought you'd skyrocket in rank, but how come you're lagging behind? Oh, I can't bear this pitiful feeling! How much it must hurt you, Vice Sect Leader!»

«...»

«But don't worry! This Sajil's loyalty will never change! Even if Vice Sect Leader takes a slightly longer path, this pitiful one will steadfastly guard Vice Sect Leader's side and become a reliable support...»

«Agh!»

Yoon Jong grabbed Jo Geol by the collar and smacked his lips repeatedly. After giving Jo Geol a few more shakes as he screamed in pain, Yoon Jong smiled and asked Baek Cheon.

«This is a bit sudden, isn't it. Did you know?»

«No, I didn't know either. Really.»

A smile appeared on Baek Cheon's lips.

«But this must be the right direction. Thanks to this, I feel a bit relieved.»

Yoon Jong sighed deeply.

«You said you took on responsibility to grow, didn't you? It's normal to feel less burdened now that the responsibility has been lifted.»

«That's different.»

Baek Cheon shook his head.

«Originally, the position of Sect Leader should have rightfully returned to Sasuk. I also wanted that, but Un Am Sasuk was firm, so there was no choice.»

«That's true.»

«Even though Sasuk became Sect Leader, it doesn't lessen the responsibility I carry. What I feel relieved about is not that the responsibility has decreased, but rather that the burden of obtaining a position that wasn't rightfully mine has lessened.»

Baek Cheon shrugged his shoulders.

«Actually, I also skipped the hierarchy and took the position of...»

«You should make some sense when you speak!»

At that moment, the grumbling of an old fogey who had been silent for a hundred years echoed in Baek Cheon's ears.

«Where! Where? In Hwasan, where norms and laws are upheld! Behaving like a thief sneaking in from behind!»

«...»

«I won't stand for it until dirt gets in my eyes! Oh my! Of course not!»

«Geol-ah.»

«Yes, Sasuk?»

«Go fetch some dirt...»

«Has anyone been designated to throw?»

«Let's all try together, shall we?»

«Say what makes sense. Otherwise, we'll be the ones with dirt in our eyes first.»

«...»

«This is how things should be done! This!»

«Ah, geez.»

From Ogeom's perspective, Chung Myung was just being Chung Myung, but for him, this was an important issue.

After all, wasn't Chung Myung like a living embodiment of a thief, striving to faithfully fulfill the duty of being one of Hwasan's third generation disciples by sacrificing all the life and achievements he had built up?

From his point of view, there was no way he could tolerate the way the hierarchy was being reversed right before his eyes, while he was being treated dismissively by the children who would have previously played on his lap.

«After all, it's about the sect!»

«Let's go, let's go!»

«We'll waste another day if we listen to him. Please, let's go! Haenam!»

«Give me some cotton. Plug your ears and let's go.»

With heads hanging low, Hwasan's disciples left Chung Myung behind and headed towards the main gate.

At the gate, those who were already prepared were waiting for them.

Namgung Dowi, Tang Pae, Seol Sobaek, and even Im Sobyong, who was visibly displeased and pouting.

Baek Cheon, as their representative, greeted them.

«Thank you for waiting.»

«Not at all.»

Namgung Dowi accepted gratitude.

«It's only natural. Congratulations on officially becoming Vice Sect Leader, Baek Cheon Dojang.»

«Thank you.»

«First, let's...»

«Ah!»

At that moment, Im Sobyong let out a loud shout.

«Are you trying to kill me? Me? Ah, let's get going! Why change the Sect Leader on the day of departure and make everyone wait! Making such a fuss over something meaningless...

Ugh!»

Chung Myung, almost soaring into the sky, slammed his foot straight into Im Sobyong's face.

Then, like a wolf, he pounced on Im Sobyong, who was making noises of a pig being slaughtered.

«Meaningless? What nonsense is this Sapa bastard spouting about the succession ceremony of the Great Taoist Hwasan Sect!»

«Ack! Ah! Aaaah!»

«Just when we're about to head to Gangnam, let's get rid of one of these Sapa bastards first! Die! Die, you Sapa bastard!»

«Aaaah! Please spare me! Ah!»

As everyone watched Chung Myung beat Im Sobyong like catching a rat, they all sighed in unison.

«Shall we depart?»

«... Yes.»

It seemed that this journey to Haenam was bound to be anything but easy.