

## Chapter 1266

Worry about Maninbang's bastards! (1)

'They're the members of Cheonumaeng!'

Geum Yangbaek couldn't suppress his astonishment.

In fact, when discussing the initial plan, Geum Yangbaek had never doubted that they would be the ones leading the operation.

The issue was slightly different from who formulated the plan. It was about who would carry out the plan.

In Geum Yangbaek's mind, it should naturally be him and the elders of Haenam.

Why? Isn't it obvious? Even though the fame of Hwasan Geomhyeop covers the entire world, and the reputation of Hwasan's Ogeom echoes even in Haenam, these young men who came with them are ultimately still inexperienced youths.

Aren't they even younger than Gwak Hwanso, Haenam's senior disciple? Granted, their fame and status are undeniable, but the idea of being outdone by them, even for a moment, was unthinkable.

However, the members of Cheonumaeng, especially the disciples of Hwasan, shattered his thoughts completely.

«Haahhh!»

Baek Cheon's sword, the sword of the Vice Sect Leader of Hwasan, spewed out crimson energy, dispersing into crimson petals that swept over the enemies.

It's impossible to distinguish between what's real and what's an illusion with this technique. Originally, the purpose of this technique was to neutralize the defenses of opponents that were difficult to penetrate with straightforward techniques alone.

But the essence of this sword technique transcended that realm.

Amidst the scattering hundreds of sword energies, distinguishing between what's real and what's fake was meaningless. Even if one could distinguish perfectly, they couldn't block it.

«Kuk!»

«Aaaargh!»

And that fact was clearly proving to be a challenge for Maninbang facing Baek Cheon's sword technique.

Within this chaotic battle, blocking each of those small sword energies was definitely impossible.

It might seem easy to assume that blocking those sword energies alone would be much more difficult, but in reality, it's entirely different. In one-on-one combat, there's plenty of room to maneuver, but in a situation like this, retreating is impossible.

In other words, Hwasan's sword technique demonstrates remarkable power in group combat on the battlefield.

‘It’s easier said than done.’

If using such sword techniques were as easy as speaking, wouldn’t all skilled warriors in the world have made the same choice?

A sword energy is the force extended through the sword. Manipulating that force into precise segments is an incredibly complex task.

It’s unimaginable what kind of training these young individuals must have undergone to wield such skills even in dire situations.

‘How could these young ones possess such abilities...’

Coming from someone else, it might sound disrespectful. But Geum Yangbaek was certainly qualified to think so. After all, he was one of the pillars of Haenam sect within Gupailbang. And in his view, even Geum Yangbaek himself had to admit that the skills of these young swordsmen were on par with, if not surpassing, the elders of Haenam. Objective assessment might even suggest they were superior.

«Die, you bastards of Maninbang!»

«Hey! Didn’t I tell you not to rush out like a lone foal?»

«But they’re from Maninbang. Damn it!»

«For god’s sake, shut up and keep your feet on the ground, you damn brat!»

Moreover, their prowess in facing the enemy, aside from swordsmanship, was incomparable to the elders of Haenam. Despite the madness of the battlefield looming before them and the enemy closing in like a flood, they not only held their ground but also boosted morale as if they were ready to charge out at any moment.

‘Is this the power of Hwasan?’

Geum Yangbaek realized anew.

While Haenam was engrossed in the illusion of honing their swordsmanship in the distant land of Hainan, these people had grown stronger through countless battles.

Stagnant water rots.

Perhaps, he pondered, his efforts for Haenam had inadvertently turned it into a stagnant puddle trapped on the small island of Hainan, rather than the vast ocean it should be.

«Sect Leader!»

«I got it!»

A strong voice from beside him snapped Geum Yangbaek back to reality.

Swish!

Unlike his usual demeanor, he stomped forcefully, and simultaneously, a fierce sword energy erupted from his blade, akin to a raging wave crashing down.

Roar!

Haenam’s sword energy surged forth like a rushing wind, akin to an incoming tidal wave. Geum Yangbaek’s sword struck again and again, like endless waves crashing against the shore, relentlessly pushing forward towards the enemy.

The complexion of the men of Maninbang turned pale. Unlike the flashy and menacing yet light sword of Hwasan, Geum Yangbaek emitted sword energy that was truly rough and heavy. Its inherent strength alone was enough to intimidate people.

«Guard your positions! We must hold this place until we completely secure the ships!»

«Yes!»

Upon witnessing that sword energy, the elders also bravely wielded their swords.

Watching the situation from behind, Im Sobyong chuckled.

‘The Gupailbang is indeed Gupailbang.’

It’s true that the young members of Haenam running around to seize the ship weren’t much help. It’s not easy for those experiencing real combat for the first time to fulfill their roles properly, even if they are from Haenam. It’s fortunate if they can even demonstrate half of their usual skills.

However, Geum Yangbaek and the other elders, as if to prove their accumulated experience in Gangho, were demonstrating their skills without reservation. Their joining had visibly strengthened the front lines.

However...

«We must kill them!»

«Kill them all!»

The members of Maninbang were rushing forward like madmen, trampling over the bodies of their fallen comrades.

The number of those maintaining the front line was merely around thirty. No matter how skilled they were, it was impossible for just a hundred or so warriors to withstand such a large number of Maninbang’s members until the end.

If that were possible, would Maninbang have become the top dogs of Sapaeryeon?

The only reason they could hold on now was that Hwasan had decisively suppressed the enemy’s momentum by breaking it once.

But even that couldn’t last forever.

Numbers could sometimes mean nothing, but at other times, they could mean everything. Despite the strength of those blocking the way ahead, Maninbang’s members, knowing they outnumbered them overwhelmingly, relentlessly pressed forward, driving Cheonumaeng’s forces back.

«Argh!»

«Endure!»

Swish!

Jo Geol’s left arm received a long cut by the sword swinging towards him, blood spraying everywhere.

«Geol!»

«Don’t panic, Sahyeong!»

«Get back! I’ll...!»

«Ah, I said don't panic!»

With clenched teeth, Jo Geol pierced the throat of the oncoming attacker in one swift motion. Thunk!

As he withdrew his sword, hot blood gushed out from the gaping hole, splattering across his face.

'It never ends.'

No matter how many they killed, the enemy's numbers didn't seem to diminish. Frankly speaking, it was impossible to grasp where this battlefield would end. The vast coastline felt entirely overrun by Maninbang.

«Aaaaaaaah!»

At the sound of the scream beside him, Jo Geol almost instinctively turned his head, but with superhuman patience, he forced his gaze forward at the last moment. Now was not the time to look away.

'No!'

The voice wasn't familiar to him. It was probably the sound of one of the elders from Haenam falling.

But there was no reason to feel reassured. After all, more and more of those who couldn't hold out were coming out.

«Charge!»

The enemies' response became even more agile.

Realizing that they would only be slaughtered in small numbers, Maninbang pushed more of their own forward, some swinging swords overhead, others stabbing randomly into the gaps between people.

Though it seemed like futile slashing, even that posed a significant threat to those holding their ground.

«Ugh!»

«Watch out!»

«Protect the position!»

Yu Iseol's calm voice brought Jo Geol to his senses.

«Damn it! Nokrim King! How far?»

«...No, by now, they should be... What are those bastards doing?»

«Yes?»

Suddenly, Im Sobyong erupted with a shout.

«Hey! You idiots! What are you doing right now?»

Im Sobyong was looking at Haenam's disciples who had jumped off the ship and were pushing towards the sea with all their might. In response to the curses flying from behind, one of them yelled as if in protest.

«The ship, the ship! It's stuck on the sandbar! We need to push it off!»

«What?»

Im Sobyong blinked in surprise and looked back at the ship. Indeed, the front part of the ship was wedged on the shore.

‘Didn’t it look different earlier?’

He couldn’t have misjudged the situation?

«The tide’s going out, so that’s why!»

«Tide? What are you talking about?»

At this, Lee Jayang rolled his eyes in frustration.

But Im Sobyong had something to say from his perspective too. Having lived his whole life in the mountains, how was he supposed to know anything about the tides on the island?

«Just push it off right now!»

«But, the ship, the ship is so big...»

Just as Im Sobyong was about to lose his mind, there was a moment.

«Nokrim King! This way!»

«Yes?»

«Monk Hye Yeon!»

«Yes!»

Before Im Sobyong could make a decision, Hye Yeon, urged by Baek Cheon, rushed like lightning. Watching the scene, Im Sobyong’s eyes widened in astonishment.

«You crazy idiot! Then the front line will be...»

«I’ll go!»

«Ahhh! Get out of the way! Not you, it’s this punk!»

Im Sobyong kicked aside the determined Seol Sobaek and plunged into the spot where Hye Yeon was, wielding his fan furiously.

«You clueless fools! You won’t realize until you’re dead!»

No matter what Im Sobyong muttered, Hye Yeon reached the front of the ship and shouted, «Move aside!»

«Yes?»

«Hurry!»

The disciples of Haenam were startled and quickly made way. Hye Yeon took a brief moment to concentrate before pressing his palms against the ship.

«Huuung!»

The sound of the ship scraping against the sand filled the air.

«Ooooooh!»

Simultaneously, Hye Yeon pushed forward with all his might, causing the massive ship to inch forward.

«Just a moment!»

Panic-stricken Gwak Hwanso rushed to stop him. Although the ship was sturdy, ultimately it was made of wood and thus vulnerable. If concentrated force were applied, it could potentially break before it even budged, creating holes.

«S-Stop right away!»

But Gwak Hwanso's concerns were quickly dispelled. A golden aura emanated from Hye Yeon's palms, enveloping the front of the ship. Soon after, the massive vessel began to groan and move backward.

«...This can't be happening...»

How could one person possibly push such a large ship alone? This was more than just physical strength. It was something beyond comprehension.

«Ooooooh!»

In that moment, Hye Yeon roared like a beast, pushing the ship completely out. As it slid beyond the sandbank, the ship's hull made a resounding splash in the water.

«Done!»

«He did it!»

«Amazing!»

The disciples of Haenam cheered as if they had personally pushed the ship.

«Next!»

«This way, to this ship!»

«Those remaining, hurry and get on board. Quickly!»

«Yes!»

While clinging to other ships and pushing, Hye Yeon shouted.

«Sail the ships out! Right now!»

«Unfurl the sails!»

«Those with idle hands, grab an oar and row!»

The ships, once stranded on the shore, slowly began to move toward the vast sea.