

## Chapter 1120

I've already prepared for that! (5)

The handsome man, staggering from the poison's effects, finally knelt down on one knee. The countless gazes that had fallen upon him were tinged with a grim satisfaction.

«This...»

The trembling man couldn't lift his head and collapsed forward.

«Trash... all of you...»

Thud.

As Baek Cheon, who had persisted until the end, fell, everyone around him erupted in cheers.

«We've defeated the evil scoundrels!»

«We've won!»

«How about that! You, Hwasan's bastards! This is justice!»

Unjust groans escaped the lips of the fallen disciples of Hwasan lying on the ground.

'That justice was harsh...'

'Then are we the villains, you bastards!'

Even more unfair was the fact that among those cheering together were the bandits who deserved to rot.

No, winning shouldn't drive people this far. People might...

'This is going too far.'

'Is this really happening?'

However, in that moment, Tangga and Namgung embraced each other, their eyes moistened.

«The moment to satisfy this grudge has arrived.»

«Ugh... Namgung-hyeong. You've worked hard.»

«When those guys had us down last time and said, 'Nothing special,' I really wanted to bite my tongue and die....»

At these words, the fallen disciples of Hwasan exchanged glances discreetly.

'Did someone say that?'

'It felt like... I've heard something like that.'

«Please don't say that. When they sneered, 'Ah, the prestigious family is quite pathetic,' I wanted to go to our ancestors' graves and cry.»

The disciples of Hwasan... no, those vile bastards of Hwasan twitched and then looked at each other again.

'Who went that far?'

'It was Jo Geol Sahyeong. I heard it.'

'That bastard...'

Then, the bandits from Nokchae, unable to join the embrace, choked up and cried out.

«We heard them say, ‘They call themselves one of the great evil sects, but guess they are not all the same!’»

«Wow, that’s harsh.»

«That was the worst. We’re already on the worst terms with Maninbang.»

The scoundrels from Hwasan... no, the villains from Hwasan subtly turned their heads. They distinctly remember everyone hearing this...

‘Was it Sasuk?’

‘It was Baek Cheon Sahyeong.»

‘If he gets drunk, he gets worse than Jo Geol.’

Of course, it wasn’t just Baek Cheon who got drunk. If only one or two people had done such a thing, it wouldn’t have been noticed right away. The fact that no one had known until now meant that everyone had engaged in similar behaviour.

«Justice prevails, you trash!»

«How about that! Now you understand our resentment!»

«Hehehehah!»

Watching the triumphant joy of the three factions united, the disciples of Hwasan gritted their teeth. Especially Jo Geol, unable to tolerate this situation, glared and raised his head.

«You... you filthy lot... have no shame! It was a joint effort!»

«Hoho. That’s possible, Jo Geol Dojang.»

Im Sobyong waved his fan gently. Of course, with one eye swollen shut, he didn’t look that impressive.

«I never expected Jo Geol Dojang to understand the strategy. Hoho. What can we do? We live in different worlds.»

«Argh...!»

Enraged, Jo Geol convulsed, vomited blood and collapsed.

For the first time, the cheers of those who completely crushed the scoundrels from Hwasan resonated through the training grounds for a while.

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«Hehehehehe.»

«.....»

«Hyeong-nim. That bastard Jo Geol Dojang... no, did you see his face?»

“...”

“It feels like ten years of pent-up resentment has finally been released. Oh, I feel full even without eating today.”

“Is that so good?”

“I knew what you were going to say, Hyeong-nim.”

Tang Pae placed both hands on his waist, assuming a solemn expression.

“Is it really something to rejoice that three factions ganged up to barely bring down just one?”

“...”

“Is that what you wanted to say?”

“Hahah.”

Tang Pae laughed and shook his head. Tang Jan, with a face unable to contain laughter, said, “I know it’s embarrassing, but today, I’ll just openly celebrate. Don’t stop me.”

“I won’t stop you, so be as happy as you want.”

Tang Pae smiled, but soon Tang Jan slumped into the chair, looking exhausted.

“To be honest, I wanted to celebrate all day, but I don’t even have the strength for that now...”

Tang Jan leaned his head backward, his body as limp as cotton soaked in water.

«I thought winning wouldn’t be tiring at all... but winning ultimately means fighting until the end. It’d be less exhausting if one fell earlier.»

«That’s true.»

«These scoundrels from Hwasan... they’re remarkable. Every time they manage this... I wonder how.»

Tang Jan stopped his words abruptly. Tang Pae turned to look at him. Tang Jan had suddenly fallen asleep, as if he fainted.

«It must have been tough.»

In truth, the body had long reached its limits. Sparring was different from regular training. It drained one’s stamina in an instant. The kind of sparring they had engaged in, resembling a chaotic battle impossible to discern, had continued for days without rest, leading to complete exhaustion.

‘If this is the extent of training...’

Then, how much strain did those who fought countless battles in the past, without proper rest while contending with the enemies of the Demonic Cult, truly endure?

Undoubtedly, the ancestors of Tangga must have fought their hardest on those battlefields.

But was the present generation truly honoring their sacrifices?

‘Perhaps we were too indifferent to the past.’

Amidst the radiant glory, the blood shed to achieve that glory gets buried, fitting words indeed. Perhaps what they truly needed to acknowledge were not the achievements of those who defeated the Demonic Cult, but those who sacrificed everything to achieve those results...

As thoughts of reviewing the records from a hundred years ago upon returning crossed Tang Pae’s mind, he too fell into a deep slumber.

In the room where the two had fallen asleep, only the light of the lamp burned quietly.

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Sometimes, humans experience surpassing their own limits.

Physically, those who were already on the verge of collapse found the only driving force to endure till now was a single determination: to thrust their fists into the faces of those vile and filthy scoundrels from Hwasan.

That intense resolve was what propelled their mental strength to move their bodies. Of course, for those drenched in blood and screams in this martial arts clash, it would become a valuable experience. Some might have found a path to higher enlightenment through this process, while others might have delved deep into contemplating if their chosen path was indeed the right one.

Even if they did not achieve such progress, the experience of fighting until their limits would undoubtedly be beneficial. Perhaps one day, when faced with a critical moment, this experience might just be what allows them to survive at end of a pole that reaches one hundred zhang .

Yes, it would surely be beneficial. ...In the distant future.

«Ugh...»

«I feel like I'm gonna die...»

«Please... end it...»

But what mattered to them wasn't the distant future — it was the present. All that remained for those who burned themselves like candles to the utmost limits — was melted candlewax... no, bodies nearly shattered to pieces and an excruciating pain that felt like being scorched by fire with just a brush against their skin.

Their lips were cracked, eyes deeply sunken. These people, so deteriorated that one might casually remark, 'Are they beggars?' were barely standing on trembling legs.

«...Feels like I'm going to die, Young Lord...»

«...Even tougher than Maehwado, it seems.»

«Isn't that going a bit too far?»

«No. It really feels like that...»

Even Namgung clan, who had already experienced its limits at Maehwado, couldn't gather their thoughts. Back then, the sense of imminent danger to their lives had kept them going. But now, there was no such desperate situation. Wasn't it a situation where they had to support their shattered bodies solely with their mental strength?

Among those trying to stand somehow, Tangga and Namgung were in slightly better conditions. The bandits, with no need for appearances or restraint, were openly seated in the training grounds, groaning in pain.

«Oh... my... my back...»

«Brother, is it really necessary to lie down like that?»

«You should lie down too. It's more comfortable.»

«Should I?»

«Look at the leader over there. He's already lying down.»

«Really.»

Im Sobyong had tossed aside the fan he always carried and was half-lying down. His already pale face had now turned almost ghostly, like a Jiangshi.

«Me... what... just wanted to enjoying wealth and honor...»

«Nokrim King, please mind your words. I'm afraid you might get into trouble soon.»

«Argh...»

Amidst the triumph over Hwasan, the words of someone who had forgotten they were sickly were harrowing.

Under normal circumstances, Tangga and Namgung would have scoffed at such a display from Nokrim, but at this moment, they sent envying glances to their side.

‘Must be comfortable.’

‘I want to lie down too.’

‘Sapa seems better off. Why was I born into Tangga?’

Both factions realized afresh that to uphold dignity or protocol, they needed at least some minimum level of leeway.

At that moment, a group approached them.

«Oh, they look so drained.»

«The injuries from yesterday must be really painful?»

«We need to seek revenge today!»

«You can lose once. But not twice!»

Entering the training grounds were the disciples of Hwasan. Namgung Dowi and Tang Pae gawked at the sight.

«What's going on?»

«Why are they so lively?»

It was incomprehensible.

Just yesterday, they surely had defeated those dogs... no, those disciples thoroughly. Yet now, while their own people were dying left and right, why were those who received the beating so full of energy?

They trained together and fought together.

«Alright, today... Huh?»

Baek Cheon, who was about to roar at the forefront, tilted his head in surprise.

«Why are these people in such a state?»

«...»

«Did you perhaps fight among yourselves again yesterday?»

Namgung Dowi exhaled painfully.

‘Is he even human?’

This wasn't an issue that could be explained simply by differences in temperament or experience. At this point, wasn't it acceptable to assume they were fundamentally different?

«...Even if we don't beat them, they seem doomed, don't they?»

«Yeah... seems that way?»

«Should we just go back today?»

«Yoon Jong.»

«Yes?»

«I can't help but be disappointed in you.»

«... Why?»

Baek Cheon spoke with a stern expression.

«Even if they're exhausted, they are members of respected families! Not understanding that such consideration is an insult and a breach of etiquette?»

«Oh...»

«Especially at a time like this, it's the essence of propriety to give our best efforts... No, to deal with them!»

Baek Cheon Dojang... such courtesy is not needed now.

«But Sasuk, still, we are an orthodox sect...»

«Huh? We?»

«... Yes?»

«Yesterday, didn't they call us evil?»

«...»

Baek Cheon grinned and approached those who were on the brink of death.

«If they treated us as villains, shouldn't we truly act like villains? Isn't that right?»

«Hehe. That's true.»

«I'll kill you.»

«Wait, you! Tang Jan, come here. Speak nicely. Come. If you don't, I'll kill you. Whether you come or not, I'll kill you.»

Watching Baek Cheon, Jo Geol, Yu Iseol, and Tang Soso gradually advancing, Yoon Jong shook his head.

Isn't this what real villains are like?

«Blood for revenge!»

«Revenge!»

As Baek Cheon charged forward with his eyes rolled back, suddenly, someone appeared from behind and kicked his rear.

«Show some restraint, you foolish bastard!»

«Ah!»

Chung Myung clicked his tongue as he looked at Baek Cheon, who was lying face down in front of him.

«I believed in these things...»

«Chung Myung, it's Sasuk...»

«Because it's Sasuk, that's why this is happening! Show some restraint!»

«That statement actually makes sense.»

Baek Cheon nodded and got to his feet. Chung Myung glanced around, surveying Namgung, Tangga, and Nokrim, barely hanging on, looking like they were at death's door. Though the direct descendants seemed slightly better, the others were on the verge of drawing their last breath.

Chung Myung shrugged his shoulders.

«I'd love to play around a bit longer... But well, I suppose we have to assess the situation.»

«...Are we really taking a break today?»

«A break?»

Chung Myung widened his eyes.

«Is there such a thing in this world?»

«...Never...»

«Today, instead of sparring, we should do something else.»

«What? What else...»

«Let's start by greeting our guests.»

Namgung Dowi tilted his head in response to this unexpected statement. Then, Chung Myung glanced in a certain direction.

«Over there.»

At that moment, a thunderous roar echoed in Namgung Dowi's ears. It was the first time he had ever heard the cry of such a beast in his life.