

## Chapter 1136

However, what else could be done? (1)

“Oh no, damn it!”

Swear words burst involuntarily from Jo Geol’s lips. He gritted his teeth and swung his sword forward with all his might.

Clang!

At the moment the swords clashed, the muscles in his wrist twisted. He managed to suppress a scream, but the impact sent his body flying backwards uncontrollably.

“Kuk!”

Someone supported his back and blocked him as he was being shot backwards like a cannonball.

He didn’t need to turn to confirm. Sensing Yoon Jong’s presence behind him, Jo Geol instinctively kicked backward. As he did so, Yoon Jong lightly bounced his knee, lifting Jo Geol up.

“Urrraaagh!”

Jo Geol shot upwards and then landed on the ground. Yoon Jong charged straight ahead upon seeing it.

Rushing forward, Yoon Jong focused on the person in front. The moment he stared into Chung Myung’s frightening cold eyes, a shiver of dread passed through his chest.

“Ugh!”

Yoon Jong somehow endured the pressure and swung his sword with utmost precision. Unlike his burning chest, his swordsmanship was impeccably delicate.

Jo Geol’s sword descended upon his, overlapping with Yoon Jong’s sword. His swift and sharp blade perfectly contrasted with Yoon Jong’s sword.

However...

Thud!

Chung Myung’s sword moved as if orchestrated by the gods, simultaneously deflecting the blades of the two opponents. It was faster than Jo Geol’s sword and more delicate than Yoon Jong’s.

Moreover, the power contained within it was incomparable.

“Kuk!”

A pained groan was heard. This level of pain was expected. After all, how many times had he faced that damned bastard?

After a recoil, plum blossoms bloomed simultaneously from their swords. Once having seized the upper hand, that guy was bound to attack. Hence, for now...

“Huh?”

At that moment, Yoon Jong’s eyes widened.

As they bounced back, Namgung's swordsmen surged in. If they continued to wield their swords like this, they would undoubtedly be swept up by Chung Myung's blade.

In a moment of panic, as Yoon Jong turned his sword sideways, Chung Myung didn't miss the opportunity and plunged into Yoon Jong's side.

"No, no!"

Kwoooooong!

Yoon Jong, kicked in the side, flew away like a kite without a string. Jo Geol, left astonished and suddenly alone, somehow managed to swing his sword. However, in a panic, what force could be applied to a suddenly misaligned sword?

"Kkwueeeeeeeek!"

Kicked in the face, Jo Geol bounced back, producing a scream reminiscent of a squealing pig.

And in that very moment.

"Ha!"

Namgung Dowi, realizing his mistake, widened his eyes. In an instant, Chung Myung, who had swiftly taken care of Jo Geol and Yoon Jong, now was coldly and indifferently charging toward him with chillingly calm eyes.

"Yiig!"

For a moment, his knees trembled, but Namgung Dowi desperately put strength into his legs and vigorously swung his sword.

Namgung's sword was drastically different from Hwasan's sword, defined by its sheer strength and weight!

However...

Kwaaaang!

Namgung Dowi's face contorted terribly.

The moment their swords clashed, his sword was effortlessly pushed back. His full-force swing couldn't withstand Chung Myung casually deflecting his strike.

Incredibly, Chung Myung's seemingly playful swing held several times more substantial force than his own sword.

Immediately afterward, without a change in expression, Chung Myung landed a punch squarely on Namgung Dowi's jaw.

Pweeeeek!

He was sent flying like a kicked ball.

Paaah!

Chung Myung launched forward at the same time as he punched Namgung Dowi, catching up with him while he was flying away.

Thud.

Gripping Namgung Dowi's shoulders, Chung Myung dragged his almost unconscious body towards Tang Pae, charging at incredible speed.

“Darn it!”

When Chung Myung charged in, Tang Pae, who had been holding a dagger in each hand ready to unleash at any moment, froze in an instant, startled. His eyes shook as if it was an earthquake.

Chung Myung was rushing forward using Namgung Dowi as a shield. How could he possibly throw the daggers like this?

If Tang Pae had remained a bit more composed, he might have first created distance or, failing that, aimed for Chung Myung’s back throwing a Returning Dagger [회선비(回旋匕)\* -hoeseonbi]. And if not that, he would have at least scattered toxic powder.

However, facing an unforeseen situation, Tang Pae hesitated for a moment, unable to find a way out. But even a moment’s hesitation is fatal when facing someone like Chung Myung. Paah!

The sword extended from Namgung Dowi’s armpit surged toward Tang Pae like a flash. Startled, he rolled his body to the side, but in that moment, Chung Myung, who was holding Namgung Dowi, threw him straight toward Tang Pae.

For a moment, Tang Pae closed his eyes, hesitating, and then flew to avoid Namgung Dowi. Taking that blow would have been too obvious a trap.

“Ah, damn it.”

But he regretted that choice in an instant. Chung Myung was already waiting where he had flown to avoid Namgung Dowi, as if knowing he would make such a choice.

Rather than avoiding it and being hit, at least he could have kept his dignity...

Kwahng!

“Ah!”

Thrown like a cannonball after a solid kick in the chin, Tang Pae flew and rolled on the ground. Rolling beside Namgung Dowi, he landed right beside him.

Thud.

As Chung Myung descended to the ground, he glanced around with an indifferent gaze.

“Ugh....”

“Oh, I’m dying....”

The situation was simply dire. Those who had been shattered in an instant, without even putting up a proper resistance, were all groaning while clutching at something, each one in their own agony.

Watching this pitiful sight quietly, Chung Myung let out a sigh.

“No... Chung Myung...”

Jo Geol tried to say something but quickly shut his mouth. It was because of Chung Myung’s unusual, stern expression.

With chilling eyes fixed on Jo Geol, he turned to the fallen people and spoke.

“It’s been three days.”

Upon hearing those words, Jo Geol lowered his head silently.

“It’s been three days, and nothing has changed. Rather, it’s worse than before.”

The faces of those who heard these words contorted. Wasn’t that a given? After three days of enduring such beatings, it was only natural to feel more exhausted and powerless.

However, their thoughts vanished the moment Chung Myung continued speaking.

“It seems you might be under a misapprehension, but if this were a real fight, do you think you’d have another chance?”

It wasn’t because those words held significant meaning. It was because the emotions in that voice were so heavy that hearts sank, and shoulders trembled.

“Do you believe it’ll somehow work out?”

“...”

“Do you think everything will somehow resolve itself if you just go along with it? That someone will clean up the mess with Sapaeryeon, and someone will handle the Demonic Cult?”

The surroundings fell into a dead silence.

“And when, if you are unlucky enough, you encounter a formidable enemy, all you have to do is just retreat?”

The voice was too dark and heavy.

Even those who were internally dissatisfied couldn’t bring themselves to meet Chung Myung’s eyes at that moment. It was an uncharacteristically calm statement from someone who usually erupted with anger and curses, devoid of emotion, which made it all the more weighty and intense.

“Well then, go ahead. You’ll know soon enough. The scariest thing isn’t dying, it’s surviving.”

“...”

“It’s the moment when you realize that the guy you fought with and cursed at until yesterday will never return.”

Chung Myung turned around after surveying everyone with cold eyes.

“I doubt idiots like you will ever understand what I’m talking about.”

And Chung Myung left the training grounds after sheathing his sword. Tang Gunak, Maeng So and the elders, who were observing the scene, also departed the training grounds with stern expressions.

Even after they had all vanished from sight, silence lingered for quite some time.

But after a while.

“Hey...”

“You did so well. Dammit.”

As Namgung Dowi attempted to say something, curses erupted from Im Sobyong’s mouth.

“Damn it, can’t argue with how well you’re putting it. That’s why people who just talk are the first to fall behind. They get stabbed in the back.”

Namgung Dowi looked at Im Sobyong with bewildered eyes. Wasn't it a remarkable skill to sarcastically acknowledge the validity of someone's words?

"Ah, damn it!"

At that moment, Jo Geol erupted in a loud voice.

"I don't understand! When we fought among ourselves, it wasn't this devastating! Why is it such a mess now?"

Jo Geol's anger seemed reasonable on the surface.

Hwasan's disciples clashed swords with Chung Myung for several years. Admittedly, he couldn't claim to have drawn out Chung Myung's full power, but even so, it shouldn't have been this easy to be defeated.

Moreover, with additional power added, logically, the fight should have been more advantageous. It was frustrating that the situation was getting worse.

However, that was Jo Geol's perspective, and other factions had to accept it differently.

"So, are you saying we did something wrong?"

When Tang Jan pressed the issue, Jo Geol shot him a resentful look.

"Then what should we have done right..."

"Stop it."

"No, Sasuk! I said something wrong..."

"I said stop."

Jo Geol shrugged his shoulders.

Yoon Jong is someone who rarely shows his anger, not just to Jo Geol, but to anyone.

However, there is someone who shows even less anger, and that is Baek Cheon.

He was currently staring coldly at Jo Geol.

"No... I..."

Jo Geol bowed his head deeply. Baek Cheon, observing this, shifted his gaze toward Yoon Jong and asked,

"Didn't you know there was someone behind you?"

"I... I knew."

"But why did you unsheathe your sword?"

Baek Cheon questioned sharply.

"You thought you'd dodge it? You didn't care? If your skills were lacking, shouldn't you have known your place and stepped back?"

"That, that's..."

"Since when did such arrogance grow inside you?"

"...I'm sorry."

Yoon Jong couldn't muster a retort and bowed deeply.

Baek Cheon, who had been coldly observing the disciples of Hwasan, glanced at members of other factions. Those who met his gaze lowered their heads without even realizing it.

Baek Cheon slowly stood up. At that moment, everyone's attention focused on him.

Everyone keenly felt the weight Baek Cheon carried, as the top disciple of Hwasan.

Excluding Im Sobyong, there was no one with more influence than him.

In fact, perhaps Baek Cheon's influence might be even greater than Im Sobyong, the King of Nokrim. The title of the next Sect Leader of Hwasan was, at least within Cheonumaeng, an enormous responsibility.

When someone of such stature deliberately showed anger, no one dared to mutter a word of complaint. Tang Pae, the Young Lord of Sichuan Tang Clan, the actual head of Namgung clan, Namgung Dowi, as well as members of the Beast Palace and the Ice Palace, even Im Sobyong himself, all looked at Baek Cheon without saying a word.

“Everyone...”

Baek Cheon spoke. Everyone tensed, anticipating a sharp reprimand.

However, at that moment, Baek Cheon bowed deeply.

“I apologize.”

Everyone stared at him with a perplexed expression.

Silence fell over the training grounds as if time had frozen.

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\*회선비(回旋匕) — the final attack of the Twelve Daggers of the Dark Explosive Dagger technique (暗爆匕). The final dagger, previously thought to have been blocked, spins in the air and flies, aiming for the opponent's back.