

Chapter 1156

An Orthodox Sect abandoned by all Great Sects. (1)

Everyone was at a loss for words and there was only one distinct reaction.

«What is that?»

In that moment, Yoon Jong punched Jo Geol's chin without hesitation.

«Khaaaaa!»

Seeing Jo Geol slump down in one swift motion, Yoon Jong briefly clicked his tongue.

«For once, act like a human...»

However, at that moment, Jo Geol suddenly sprang back up, shouting,

«No, not me!»

«Huh?»

Yoon Jong, bewildered, blinked his eyes as Jo Geol, with a face full of injustice, defended himself.

«No, Sahyeong! I'm from a merchant family that lived decently. Do you think I have no idea where that is?»

«...Oh, really?»

«Yeah.»

«Well, I guess that could be the case. If that's an island and the part marked with a diagonal line is the sea between the mainland and the island...»

«If it's an island?»

«Hainan island.»

Yu Iseol still had a perplexed expression, showing she still didn't understand. Even Tang Soso could not address this matter. Yu Iseol's confusion stemmed from the fact that she couldn't grasp why the man was pointing at Hainan Island, and even Tang Soso couldn't explain the reason.

As Yu Iseol's fierce gaze and Tang Soso's suspicious look coincided, Im Sobyong smirked.

«Hehehe. Yes, that's right. This is indeed Hainan.»

«...Uh, wait a moment.»

At that moment, Baek Cheon interjected, looking utterly bewildered.

«Hainan Island?»

«Yes!»

«Really Hainan?»

«Is your eyesight bad, by any chance?»

«Oh, no, it's not that...»

Baek Cheon couldn't understand at all, but still, he opened his mouth with a questioning expression.

«Then, by any chance... the sect that Nokrim King mentioned, the place that can join us — is on Hainan Island? Surely... no?»

«Hehe. Why not!»

Bang!

Im Sobyong declared enthusiastically, smacking the map with his palm.

«Among countless martial clans in the world, there is only one Great Sect that claims the southern sea, Hainan Island, as its stronghold!»

«...»

«Yes! What's there to hide! It's none other than the Haenam Sect [Haenam is Hainan in Korean]!»

«Geol-ah.»

«Yes, Sahyeong.»

«Do you know today's lunch menu?»

«It seemed to be beef today.»

«Oh, good. Shall we go grab a meal?»

«If you wish.»

«Well then, I should also continue my training.»

«Hmm, true. Come to think of it, there's still some work to be done. First, let's...»

As people began to rise from their seats with indifferent expressions, Im Sobyong shouted with an even louder voice.

«Oh no, why! I brought such a fantastic strategy!»

«I'm hungry.»

«Oh, my shoulder, which got injured during yesterday's training, is acting up.»

«Are you going to train again in the evening?»

«Listen to me!»

As Im Sobyong burst out yelling, Baek Cheon replied with a dismissive tone while picking his ear.

«You have to say something to listen to.»

«That guy is intolerable. Even though I thought he was somewhat clever for a while.»

«All bandits are like that. If they're so smart, why resort to banditry?»

Beyond reproach, resentment poured out. However, at that moment, Im Sobyong unfolded his fan and smirked.

«Oh my, oh my...»

Everyone furrowed their brows at the sight of Im Sobyong shaking his head.

«Why is that guy behaving like that again?»

«Just leave him be. Seems like some new eccentricity.»

Either way, Im Sobyong remained in his own world.

«Hehe. A genius always ahead of his time must endure the scorn and misunderstanding of those around him. Experiencing what is naturally bound to happen, there's no need to get upset.»

«...Ah, yes, yes. Of course.»

«Let's eat. I'm hungry.»

As people really started to head outside, Im Sobyong hastily lowered his fan and shouted.

«No! Just listen for a moment!»

«What's there to listen to? It's all nonsense anyway.»

«No! Why do you just reject it outright! People should consider and ponder with all possibilities open! How stifling prejudices and fixed ideas block so many good thoughts...!»

«No, you idiot!»

Unable to endure it any longer, Baek Cheon raised his voice.

«You have to say something that makes sense! Haenam is part of Gupailbang, so why will they join us, why! Do those bandits have no sense!»

«Are there not two descendants of the Five Great Families here right now? Have you ever thought that maybe Tangga and Namgung will leave Five Great Families and join Cheonumaeng?»

«Huh?»

Im Sobyong stated firmly,

«If someone had said that just five years ago, they could have received certification as a madman anywhere in the world. They should be grateful if people even acknowledge them as human beings!»

«Well, that's...»

Baek Cheon's words trailed off. In fact, it wasn't entirely wrong. They were in the midst of that sequence of events, and everything felt natural to them.

However, to those who observed Cheonumaeng's movements from afar, wouldn't Tangga and Namgung joining Cheonumaeng also be a shocking event?

«Why can't someone from Gupailbang join someone whom the Five Great Families did! Do those guys wear golden crowns on their heads since birth? Damn it! If they're Gupailbang, then they are! Why discriminate and disregard people...»

«Whoa whoa, Nokrim King. That's not it. You should exclude your personal feelings when talking about it.»

«Oh, right.»

As Im Sobyong calmed down, his expression changed completely. Those who witnessed this scene had eyes that were a bit more discerning.

«Gupailbang are just people who share the same meal in one room. It's not a perpetual commitment just because someone was once part of Gupailbang, as proven by Hwasan sect...»

«What, this bastard?!»

«Chung Myung!»

«Chung Myung! Calm down!»

«Get rid of that guy! Quickly! Why bring up that topic out of the blue and agitate the kid who was quiet!»

Horrified Ogeom and elders pressed down agitated Chung Myung. Madness spewed out of his partially turned eyes.

«What? Expelled from Gupailbang? This bandit has an open void instead of a mouth!»

«I didn't say it was expelled...»

«But this bastard?»

«Hold on, hold on!»

«Hey hey! Grab him tight, tight! If he gets hit now, Nokrim King will be in trouble!»

Im Sobyong, whipping cold sweat, stepped back.

«Ahem, anyway...»

Bang!

Im Sobyong spread his palm and struck the map and Hainan Island on it once again.

«To understand the meaning of what I'm saying, you need to comprehend the current situation in Haenam Sect.»

«Do we have to listen?»

«Why?»

Despite disheartening reactions, Im Sobyong persistently continued his speech.

«The crucial point to pay attention to is here.»

Im Sobyong drew a long line horizontally across the center of the large map.

No one present here was oblivious to the significance of that line. It cut through the Central Plains, signifying the Yangtze River.

«The current center is divided between the south and the north by the Yangtze River. The south is dominated by Sapaeryeon, while the north is influenced much more significantly by Gupailbang and Five Great Families.»

«Hmm.»

As the familiar story unfolded, people gradually became interested.

«The flow of the Yangtze River passes through Sichuan, extending to The Hengduan Mountains that forms the boundary between Sichuan and Xizang. In other words, the moment the Yangtze River is occupied, the path from below to rise upward is completely blocked.»

«What obvious nonsense.»

«Then look. Where is Gupailbang located?»

«Well...»

Baek Cheon's expression, about to answer with a grumble, subtly changed for a moment.

«Do you see?»

Im Sobyong swiftly took out a brush from his sleeve, opened the lid, and dotted the map.

«Do you understand?»

Baek Cheon nodded silently. Im Sobyong shrugged and said,

«There you have it.»

«As you can see, the majority of the factions belonging to Gupailbang and Five Great Families are clustered above the Yangtze River. Emei, Qingcheng, Diancang exist right above the Yangtze River, while Wudang is located at Hubei, along with Zhongnan [Southern Edge Sect] and Hwasan in Shaanxi, and Shaolin is in Henan and Shaanxi above Hubei. Kunlun in Qinghai and Kongtong in Gansu need no mention.»

«That's true.»

It was a reaffirmation. The fact that Gupailbang and Five Great Families were centered in the north was widely known. There was no need to revisit the matter.

Except for one place.

Im Sobyong fiercely drew around Hainan Island below Guangxi province with his brush.

«How about here?»

«...It's in the south.»

It was a natural conclusion since Hainan Island is at the southernmost tip of the central region.

Indeed. Only Haenam Sect exists in the south. Not just in the south, but it's alone, separated from the mainland and dropped into the southern sea beyond Gangnam dominated by Sapaeryeon. A position where no help can be expected from any faction.

«As you know, Gupailbang and Sapaeryeon have crossed a river of no return. It's just a matter of when each will reveal it.»

«Well...»

«Then, let me ask you one thing.»

Im Sobyong smirked, raising one corner of his mouth.

«Where does the war begin?»

«...»

«Until now, everyone naturally assumed that the war would start at the Yangtze River. But... would it really?»

Baek Cheon remained silent.

«Let me ask you this: Would Paegun start a war with the enemy left behind his back?»

No. Everyone here could confidently assert that Jang Ilso would not spare those who could pose a threat to his rear.

«I assure you, the signal for war won't come from the Yangtze River. It will be Hainan Island. While to our eyes, Hainan seems isolated and facing crisis alone, how about in the eyes of Paegun Jang Ilso?»

Chung Myung, still pushing away those suppressing him, sat up straight.

«...Is it like a separate unit detached at the rear?»

«Exactly. When focusing their forces on the front, the main front line, it seems like a place where one can break into Sapaeryeon's territory and wreak havoc in the rear.»

Im Sobyong chuckled.

«What do you think, Dojang? If you were Paegun, how would you handle Hainan Island?»

«I'm not Jang Ilso, that Sapa bastard. That's quite annoying.»

«...»

«But...»

Chung Myung gripped his chin and stared intently.

«If I were Jang Ilso... No, even if I weren't Jang Ilso, I wouldn't just leave Hainan alone.»

«Indeed...»

«But saying the war starts from there is incorrect.»

«... What?»

At that moment, Chung Myung's voice gradually deepened.

«They'll probably clean it up before starting the war.»

«...»

«Maybe right now.»

With that statement, the atmosphere in the room became cold.