

Chapter 1175

A man who can't even answer. (5)

It was an unexpected statement, at least from Chung Myung's perspective. So, he could only tilt his head and look at Baek Cheon curiously.

«Why are you saying such strange things? Are you insulting me now?»

Baek Cheon chuckled.

'It might sound strange.'

Since they both knew.

Chung Myung is not a perfect person. As a human, he is riddled with flaws.

He can be temperamental, stubborn, overly confident in himself, and occasionally makes mistakes. While he is certain about what he knows, he is profoundly ignorant in areas unfamiliar to him.

He may not consider circumstances when pressing someone, and he doesn't know how to acknowledge something that contradicts his own thoughts.

Therefore, Chung Myung might not understand what Baek Cheon is saying.

However, Baek Cheon's perspective was entirely different.

Does Chung Myung have issues that make him imperfect and human? Baek Cheon didn't think so.

While his personality may be rough, it doesn't necessarily lead to making enemies. Despite not knowing many things, he trusts others completely, assigning tasks he can't excel in to them. Although he might push someone excessively, ultimately, no one has given up or turned away because of it.

While he may not acknowledge things that differ from his thoughts, ultimately, he has proven that his thoughts were correct. Not entirely perfect, yet perfect in the outcomes. So, could it be that the person, Chung Myung, who leads to those results, is perfect as well?

Even if the form differs from what the world considers perfection.

Therefore, at times, it was burdensome to pursue that perfection. However...

«I just had such a thought. That you're also human.»

«A foolish one.»

Chung Myung didn't inquire further.

Baek Cheon took the bottle that Chung Myung had set aside, lifting it once again. Chung Myung, looking perplexed, asked.

«What got into you? A noble guy like you usually doesn't drink much.»

«Everyone has those days.»

«They say you'll die if you do things you don't usually do...»

Chung Myung, who was jokingly saying imprudent things, suddenly stopped talking and closed his mouth. Baek Cheon, nonchalant, responded as if it didn't matter.

«Don't worry. I'll live longer than you, anyway.»

«...Maybe so.»

Baek Cheon subtly observed Chung Myung's complexion.

Perhaps Chung Myung himself might not know what kind of response he just gave. It might have been a tossed remark in the absence of anything better to say.

However, moments like these reveal a person's true feelings. If it were Chung Myung from a few years ago, he would have never casually accepted it and moved on with such a brief statement.

He had forgotten. No, it might be more accurate to say he had been neglecting it.

Chung Myung is by no means a perfect person. Even if one were to call him perfect, he is not 'omnipotent.' As a human, he has limits, and ultimately, there are things he cannot handle alone.

'I 'had no choice but to forget'.'

Every time he thought that this time, there's no way that guy could handle it alone, that damn guy proved him wrong over and over again.

But Baek Cheon had to remember.

Being someone who can endure a lot doesn't mean it's not burdensome. Training doesn't make difficulties disappear, and experiencing being cut by a sword countless times doesn't make the pain of being cut go away.

No matter how much he is being treated, the scars remain, and memories of him groaning in pain do not vanish.

He had to remember. Even if others didn't, Baek Cheon had to remember.

When Baek Cheon remained silent, Chung Myung asked,

«Aren't you going to ask?»

«Ask what?»

«Isn't that why you came?»

«Why would I?»

Chung Myung looked at Baek Cheon with eyes that clearly said he had no idea what was going on.

«Weren't you trying to ask me what response I'd give to that damn bald-headed bastard?»

«Not interested.»

«...Huh?»

«I said I'm not interested.»

Baek Cheon answered in a nonchalant manner, then took a swig of his drink. Chung Myung furrowed his brow.

«You're not curious?»

Baek Cheon responded with an expression that clearly conveyed annoyance.

«I'm not. If I wait, the answer will come on its own. What difference does it make if I hear it first?»

«Well, you could try to persuade me.»

«If I persuade you, will you listen?»

«No, I won't.»

«Then, what's the point of persuading?»

«True.»

Chung Myung nodded with a realization written on his face.

Then, moments later, he tilted his head with an expression indicating he still didn't fully understand.

«Then why did you come?»

«...It's not funny.»

«What's not?»

«I'm your Sasuk, and you're my Sajil. We've been seeing each other every day in the same martial arts sect for years.»

«...And?»

«Yet, sitting here together and having a drink requires a special reason or explanation?»

Chung Myung scrutinized Baek Cheon with a skeptical look, as if probing for his intentions. It seemed like Chung Myung might be taken aback, perhaps because he had never heard such words before.

But Baek Cheon remained ignorant.

«Just drink, why do you need a reason?»

His index finger pointed to the moon partially obscured by clouds.

«Look there. The moon is pretty.»

«It looks quite gloomy, doesn't it?»

«That's what makes it beautiful.»

«...Sasuk, did you eat something weird for dinner?»

Baek Cheon chuckled softly.

A sense of alienation that he hadn't felt until now, or maybe something he didn't need to feel, shook him. He couldn't recall when was the last time he had exchanged such casual words with this guy. Well, he wasn't even sure if there had ever been such a time.

«Alright, then why did you come?»

«Haaa...»

Baek Cheon slightly twisted his face, being obviously annoyed.

«Saw a young guy looking at the moon alone, looking poetically pitiful, so I came. Well, because you're my Sajil.»

«...Did you really eat something weird? What if you get hit, won't it hurt?»

«I'll get hit anyway, you bastard.»

«That's true.»

Chung Myung gave Baek Cheon a puzzled look, then casually shifted his gaze towards the moon.

«Here.»

Baek Cheon extended the bottle he was holding.

Chung Myung, eyeing the suddenly presented bottle, slowly took it and tilted it toward his lips.

After a moment, Baek Cheon, who had been gazing at the moon, spoke.

«But...»

«You said you wouldn't ask.»

«I'm not asking. Just curious.»

«But seriously, did you lose your mind today? We don't call it 'asking' for that kind of thing!»

Baek Cheon, indifferent, waved his hand.

«Why go to such lengths?»

«Huh?»

«I know the reason. Roughly, I get it. What you're afraid of. But... that's something everyone in the world has to face. It's not something only you should bear alone.»

«...»

«Even if the things you worry about actually happen, no one in the world would blame you. Yet, why do you act as if you should bear all of it as if it's your duty?»

At that question, Chung Myung smiled, but that smile gradually faded from his face.

«Well...»

He naturally thought that those were things he had to do. But was it really so?

In the past, Chung Myung did his best. The methods may not have been perfect, but no one could deny that what he did ultimately saved the world.

Yet, why did he seem to carry all these burdens alone, as if he had committed some crime, as Baek Cheon said? Even if he lay down saying, 'I've done what I can, you guys take care of the rest,' no one would point fingers at him. Even if Chung Mun were watching, he wouldn't reproach him.

«... Well»

Repeating the same words, Chung Myung hesitated and eventually picked up a cautious expression.

«I don't really know. Why I am like this.»

«Is that so?»

«Just, um... It just feels that way.»

Baek Cheon silently stared at Chung Myung's side profile. He thought, once again, that same expression. Those eyes looking somewhere far away.

«There's no one else to do it. If not me.»

«...»

«Just, well... um.»

Chung Myung scratched his head awkwardly.

«To be honest, I'm not someone with a great sense of responsibility, nor am I someone who enjoys leading others. I'm just the type of person who does nothing and makes fun of what others are doing, you know? Then, in the remaining time, I drink.»

«You're trash.»

«...»

After a momentary silence, Chung Myung raised his head.

Honestly, this wasn't just something he said. Chung Myung of the past was truly like that. Before the chaos of war with Demonic Cult, when the world was at peace, Chung Myung was a useless human who rolled around Hwasan with nothing to do.

That was the most comfortable and enjoyable time in his life.

But how did he end up like this?

«Anyway, it's not like I want to be like this.»

«Then just don't do it.»

«But that's not easy.»

«Why?»

«Because there's no one else.»

Chung Myung sighed with a heavy expression.

«If I don't do it, there's no one else. It's not like someone will take over for me if I decide not to do it, and there's no one else who can do it as well as me.»

«...»

«If I give up because I can't handle it, it's clear that things will go south, but it's not easy to just stand by and watch.»

«...»

«As a result, I end up taking on more and more tasks.»

If there had been a little more time, perhaps even now, occasionally, he would be having fun in Hwasan. Laughing and joking with his Sahyeongs, teasing each other, and building many memories together.

Who would blame him for the lack of time?

“But it's not like I want someone to do it for me. It's just something I have to deal with myself.”

Because the people who could replace him are no longer here.

Chung Myung had that thought.

Perhaps he couldn't share what he should have shared in the past, so now he had to bear all of this alone.

If that was the case, then he had to accept and endure all of this as a natural consequence of his actions.

«So don't worry unnecessarily. If I feel like I've done enough and it's still not working, I'll throw everything away. It's just that I don't feel like I've done enough yet.»

As he rambled, Chung Myung felt like he was talking about something unnecessary. He cleared his throat awkwardly.

«Ah, I'm talking nonsense. I shouldn't be talking like this with Dong Ryong.»

«I'm serious, you might die.»

Chung Myung chuckled and took another sip of his drink. He drank deeply, wiped his mouth with his sleeve as usual. His expression brightened a bit, and his voice became slightly higher than before.

«Don't worry. I'll be fine soon.»

«Huh?»

«Everyone goes through times like this. It's just that I have a lot on my mind right now.»

“...”

«If a day or so passes, something might become clear. Then things will return to normal as usual. It's one hundred years too early to worry about me, Dong Ryong-ah.»

«You're talking nonsense.»

Baek Cheon laughed.

A short silence settled between them. It wasn't heavy, just a quiet pause.

Baek Cheon, who had been staring blankly at something beyond the moon, the night sky, and the clouds, slowly spoke up.

«If I... or rather, if we were a bit stronger. If that were the case, would your worries be reduced even a bit?»

The quiet voice lingered in the air between the two, who still avoided each other's gaze.