

Chapter 1015

They got me today. (5)

Namgung Dan was truly confident. Isn't there a saying, 'It all depends on your mindset'? Of course, he wasn't someone who fundamentally believed in such theories. However, he had lived believing that, even in doing the same thing, a lot could change with just one's attitude.

Now, he had decided to fully accept Chung Myung's training, and he had a renewed determination. He believed things would be different from what they were so far.

Until just half an hour ago.

Thud!

Namgung Dan, trembling, looked down. A pile of rocks that had fallen from where his foot had slipped was dropping into the abyss below.

His eyes trembled as if experiencing an earthquake.

«Ugh... Uhh...»

Struggling to breathe, he looked up this time. Under the blue sky, a sharp mountain peak stood tall.

Indeed, he was climbing a cliff now.

«Ugh!»

He desperately tried to find footing for his uncertain steps, pressing himself against the cliff's face. He was so frantic that he almost seemed to be digging into the cliff.

«Ugh! Huh! Ugh!»

His breathing became rapid, his body trembled. Every time he looked down at the pitch-black abyss below, it felt like his heart was permanently gripped in fear.

Until just a short while ago, he had a mindset like, 'What's the big deal, it's just death.'

'No, die? Die, you crazy people!'

These Hwasan sect members seemed even more insane than he had imagined.

«Hey, getting weak in the arms?»

A voice echoed from above, now sending shivers down his spine.

«Sure. Why not try losing your grip. To fall is the only other option, isn't it?»

Upon hearing those words, Namgung Dan involuntarily looked down again.

'No, no!'

He quickly shut his eyes tight and pressed his body against the cliff. Every time he looked down into the dark abyss, it felt like all the strength was draining from his legs.

At least if there were some footholds hanging on this cliff, it might be possible...

'Is it reasonable to expect me to climb this steep cliff with this belt on? You crazy people!'

«Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!»

After taking a deep breath for a while, he wiped the sweat dripping down his face with his sleeve and turned his head slightly.

«Do... Dojang.»

«Yes?»

He addressed one of Hwasan's disciples who was effortlessly climbing the cliff slightly below.

«Um, excuse me... Isn't this training too intense?»

«Ah...»

Namgung Dan harbored some hope. While he was gradually realizing that Hwasan sect's members were all quite unusual, he still thought that this Hwasan disciple called «Yoon Jong» seemed relatively normal. He might be able to provide a reasonable response to counter that demon.

However, Namgung Dan's expectations were shattered by Yoon Jong's response.

«Intense?»

«Yes, yes! Dojang! Isn't this too dangerous!»

«Dangerous?»

Yoon Jong raised an eyebrow. His expression clearly conveyed the message, 'I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.'

«Dojang?»

«Dangerous? Here?»

«...»

At that moment, Namgung Dan felt that something was seriously amiss between the two of them.

«Isn't this situation really abnormal?»

«It is definitely abnormal.»

Yoon Jong removed one hand from the cliff and scratched his head slowly.

“He wasn't such a lax person like this...”

«Yes?»

“At best, climbing this cliff won't amount to much practice... You'd need to climb a cliff two times taller to make it worthwhile training, but even if we consider there aren't many high mountains around here near the Yangtze River... it's still quite something.”

What on earth is this person talking about?

Yoon Jong sighed deeply, as if he was worried.

«Namgung Clan members finally seem to be determined, so we should do our best to respond to their commitment. But if we keep doing such sloppy training, I'm worried. In my opinion, it would be perfect if we doubled the height of the cliff and made the slope a bit steeper.»

Is he in his right mind?

Namgung Dan, at a loss for words, momentarily forgot that he was hanging on a cliff and stared blankly at Yoon Jong. Then, suddenly, he snapped back to reality and shouted.

«This is a cliff, isn't it, Dojang! Falling means death!»

«... Yes?»

Upon hearing this, Yoon Jong glanced down as if to say, 'I still don't understand what you're talking about.' Then he suddenly flashed a very friendly smile.

«Oh, I see that's what you're worried about.»

«Yes! That's exactly...»

«If that's your concern, you don't have to worry. You won't die.»

«...»

Namgung Dan looked at Yoon Jong as if he had been unexpectedly struck on the back of his head. Yoon Jong's smile remained bright, without a hint of malice.

«I fell from a place about twice as high as this one, five, maybe six times, and I didn't die.»

«...»

«And falling isn't as scary as you'd think. After a while, it's more like, 'Well, I guess it's happening'.'»

What really unnerved Namgung Dan was that there was no hint of malice in Yoon Jong's words, no matter how disturbing they sounded.

«So, relax...»

«Aaaargh!»

«Huh?»

Yoon Jong turned his head abruptly. One of Namgung's disciples who had been ahead of them, climbing the cliff, screamed and fell down below.

Kwoong!

«...»

Namgung Clan's swordsman, who was now stuck on the ground, foamed at the mouth, convulsed and collapsed.

Even after witnessing this gruesome sight, Yoon Jong shrugged his shoulders as if it were no big deal.

«See? He's not dead.»

«...But he looks dead.»

«Haha. You really have a good sense of humor.»

Is this supposed to be a joke? Is it?

«Why on earth are we doing this kind of training...»

Namgung Dan stopped himself from asking the question and clamped his mouth shut in a hurry. Hadn't he sworn never to voice any complaints about the training, of all people? He was the one who made that vow.

«Well, there is a clear reason for it.»

«Reason?»

Yoon Jong smiled and answered.

«For a swordsman, there are many things needed, but most importantly, wrist strength and finger strength. A swordsman who loses their sword in a fight is no better than a rolling stone on the street, don't you think?»

«...»

«That's why training to keep strength in your grip, no matter what happens, is necessary. Only at a place like this cliff can you truly experience the sense of danger that your life is at stake if you lose strength in your hand.»

As Yoon Jong spoke, he briefly glanced down below. He muttered to himself,

«I'm not sure if you can truly feel that sense of danger on such a low cliff.»

Namgung Dan desperately tried to ignore this mumbled comment.

«Oh, and climbing the cliff naturally trains your knees, ankles, and back strength as well.

Besides...»

Yoon Jong said no more, instead gave a nudge to a stone that Namgung Dan had been standing on.

The stone broke with a 'crack,' and Namgung Dan's body slipped down.

«Aaaargh!»

Namgung Dan, with his arms and legs spread wide, clung to the cliff in shock. He barely managed to stop his body from slipping further, and with a face drenched in cold sweat, he turned to look at Yoon Jong.

«What on earth is this...?»

«As you can see, all sorts of things happen on cliffs.»

«That's...»

Namgung Dan had to forcefully suppress the urge to say, «What does any of that have to do with this, you crazy bastard?!» Yoon Jong calmly continued.

«Sometimes rocks break, and sudden gusts of wind blow. Even passerby birds might decide to peck at your back.»

«...»

«Warfare is much the same. In the midst of a battle, you might suddenly trip over tree roots, get hit by a broken sword, or even have a fallen comrade's blade stab your leg.»

«...»

«Swordsmen need to be quick in handling all these situations. That's why climbing a cliff is good training.»

Yoon Jong gestured upward with his chin.

«...That's what he insisted on, anyway. Well, I kind of agree. I've seen the results firsthand.»

«...»

«So, hurry up and climb. If you take your time, you'll be late for dinner.»

Namgung Dan swallowed his frustration and once again gazed down the cliff below.

The height he had climbed now was not significantly different from the height he had to ascend. At this point, climbing up this absurd cliff seemed safer than going down.

Namgung Dan clung to the cliff with all his might.

‘These guys are all crazy!’

«Hmm.»

Chung Myung, lying down on top of the cliff, lightly shook the liquor bottle in his hand.

“...There isn’t much time left”

In a moment, annoyance washed over him.

«Why are they taking so much time to climb just one cliff? These bastards all falling behind.»

«It’s their first time, after all. It can happen.»

«It can happen? Of course, it can. Naturally, I don’t think that way.»

«Hmm?»

With a swift movement, Chung Myung extended his foot and lightly tapped something set on the edge of the cliff. There was a pile of stones the size of human heads. Chung Myung grinned while putting his foot under the bottom of the pile.

«But I wonder if they think the same way?»

Cold sweat broke out on the back of Baek Cheon’s neck.

«But... isn’t that a bit too much?»

«Too much?»

«Yeah, Chung Myung. Think about it. Intense training is good, but humans usually start with what they can handle and gradually build their skills. First, you need to calm down and...»

«Hmm.»

Chung Myung nodded as if there was logic in Baek Cheon’s words.

«Yeah, that makes sense.»

«Right? So, step back for now and...»

«That’s when... Oops!»

In that moment, Chung Myung extended his foot and sent a pile rolling off the cliff.

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

«Aaargh!»

«Rocks are falling!»

«What the... What kind of bastard did this?»

Desperate cries and shouts erupted from below. Baek Cheon finally shut his eyes for a moment and then cautiously opened them again. This time, Chung Myung was grinning.

«Aigooo. My foot slipped.»

‘Demon.’

«Kikikikikiki.»

Amidst the screams and curses from below, Chung Myung, with a wicked grin, crossed his arms and gazed into the distant sky.

‘Peaceful.’

The waters of the Yangtze River flowed tranquilly. It was as if the rivalry between the Gupailbang and Sapaeryeon was insignificant, separated by the river.

Neither the Gupailbang nor the Sapaeryeon found it easy to make the first move in this situation. In other words, it meant that this peaceful everyday life would continue for a bit. Well, that unlucky bastard might have a lot on his mind, but Chung Myung had no need to rack his brain for them.

«Hmm.»

His gaze, as if searching, turned to the other side of the river again.

As he slowly lowered his gaze, the wind that blew gently brushed against Chung Myung’s cheek.

‘I hope it continues a little longer.’

It was a small wish, almost embarrassing to call a wish.

However, at this moment, a different movement was unfolding. An intense wind, carrying a thick scent of blood, was blowing in, unexpected by anyone in the world, including the Abbot, Jang Ilso, and even Chung Myung himself.

It was the harbinger of a storm that would once again plunge the world into deep darkness.