

## Chapter 1159

An Orthodox Sect abandoned by all Great Sects. (4)

«Huh?»

«You?»

As perplexed glances were directed toward him, Chung Myung's face distorted.

«Why? Can't I be against it?»

«Well, actually, that's not the strange part.»

«No, when you think about it, it's much weirder that you simply listened to what others had to say.»

Everyone nodded in agreement with Baek Cheon, the authority figure on the studies of Chung Myung.

«Is that so?»

«That's correct.»

«Indeed, that's what Sasuk says.»

«These bastards?»

However, when Chung Myung glared, they all averted their eyes. Unconsciously, Tang Gunak, who had also glanced down, swiftly returned his head to its original position.

«Hwasan Geomhyeop.»

«Yes.»

«What are your thoughts on this?»

Chung Myung raised his head slightly and looked at the map.

«Hey, listen carefully.»

«Yes, Hyeong-nim!»

Beon Chung quickly spread out the map and raised it higher than when Nokrim King had commanded. Although he appeared much more disciplined than when ordered by Nokrim King, no one found this fact peculiar. When it came to Chung Myung getting involved, strange things tended to become somewhat acceptable.

Chung Myung picked his ear and spoke,

«Well, it's not that I don't like it when the great baldy gets so angry that his head turns into a well-cooked red octopus' head.»

«More than anyone, I suppose.»

«In my opinion, that day, that guy will ascend to heaven.»

«... Will he be accepted?»

«Ah... I didn't think about that.»

When Chung Myung will go to the heavens, they'll have to hold an emergency meeting.

Accepting something like that without discussion could lead to unpredictable consequences.

«Of course. Besides, this is not just about our feelings towards Shaolin, is it?»

Tang Gunak spoke with a serious tone,

«Taunting Shaolin... Hehehehm! No, releasing the emotions tied to Shaolin is just an additional matter. What's important is to strengthen the power of Cheonumaeng and let the world know that the Alliance is now on equal footing with Gupailbang.»

«Hmm.»

«As you know, people don't easily accept new things. To have a greater influence than Gupailbang through conventional means, we'd need at least a hundred years.»

Even Hyun Jong nodded, agreeing with this statement.

When Hwasan was on the verge of destruction, Hyun Jong's dream was to return to Gupailbang someday. Despite knowing it was impossible, and his continuing grief of being expelled from Gupailbang, Hyun Jong's dream persisted.

If even Hyun Jong, who experienced the sorrow of being expelled from Gupailbang, had such a dream, how much more would others yearn for it?

«But if one sect within the Great Sects chooses Cheonumaeng over Gupailbang, we can achieve that goal in one fell swoop. Isn't that right?»

«Well, that's true.»

However, Chung Myung's response was rather sour.

«But why are you opposing this? Making Cheonumaeng stronger to resist Sapaeryeon and Demonic Cult has always been your argument, hasn't it?»

«Well, yes. It's a good thing if it can be done.»

«Huh?»

Chung Myung grinned.

«Well, then let's decide this now. Gangnam is full of Sapaeryeon's bastards, it will be quite obvious that someone invaded Gangnam. That crazy guy, Jang Ilso, will open his eyes wide and shout, 'Oh-ho-ho-ho! You crawled in well!' and will rush forward at full speed to welcome them as they break through the defenses of Gangnam with a bell on their necks.»

As Chung Myung snapped his fingers, Hyun Young spoke, as if she had been waiting.

«For the reference, if you take Gugang is a starting point, you'd have to travel three thousand li just to reach Zhanjiang, which is the neighboring area of Hainan Island.»

«Hiiiiik!»

«T-Th-Three thousand li?»

«And that's in a straight line.»

Wide-eyed, Yoon Jong turned to look at Tang Soso.

«S-Soso. How far was it when we went to the Northern Sea?»

«Back then... well, it must have been around five thousand li. We started from Shaanxi, you see.»

«I-It was only five thousand li to the Northern Sea?»

Jo Geol's voice sounded soulless.

«Even back then, we almost died.»

«Yeah. I really thought we were going to die.»

«Moreover, there were no enemies there. But now, we have to roar through Gangnam, which is swarming with enemies, and go three thousand li?»

Everyone looked at the map with a bewildered expression. Seeing the entire Central Plains on a single map momentarily made them lose their sense of reality. It was only after hearing the words «three thousand li» that the reality sank in.

«So, um, how long would it take?»

«If we assume an average pace, let's see... If we can somehow manage around seventy to eighty li a day...»

«Forty days?»

«If you're lucky, maybe a month. That's assuming we only travel on well-maintained roads.»

«Ha... haha...»

Baek Cheon burst into laughter.

«This won't work.»

Frankly speaking, anyone who could survive in Gangnam under the control of Sapaeryeon for a month was someone who didn't need to go to Hainan in the first place.

Such a person would likely be a martial god. What's the point of going to help Haenam? It would be more effective to just sweep away Sapaeryeon and be done with it.

«Well, let's say we can go. Let's say we go to Hainan.»

Chung Myung picked his ear with a sullen expression and continued.

«And what are we going to do when we get there?»

«What's that supposed to mean? Oh! I get what you're saying. Um, but considering the situation, wouldn't Haenam cooperate?»

«No, what good would cooperation do?»

«...Huh?»

Chung Myung tilted his head with a puzzled expression.

«Let's say they lose their minds and go, 'Ah, we've been annoyed by that baldy too!' Then they decide to join the Cheonumaeng!»

«Yeah.»

«Then they come back and say, 'Oh! We're counting on you now!' So what changes compared to now?»

«...Haenam's affiliation would change.»

«Oh, right. That's true. A very nice development. Now, when Sapaeryeon starts attacking Haenam, and we are three thousand li away, we might hear a story from a Great Bald Man: 'If it were us, the Gupailbang, we would have helped. Damn it!」

Just listening to it made it sound absurd.

«...So they'd help... No, no.»

Even Jo Geol, who was about to say something, stopped in the middle. It was that ridiculous. What's the use of sending troops more than three thousand li away?

If they could send their main forces to the southernmost part of Gangnam, there was no need to help or not. They would have already defeated Sapaeryeon by the time they got there.

«Ugh. You're thinking too one-sidedly.»

«Huh?»

That's when Jo Geol smiled and said.

«I've learned something from you all this time. In times like this, you just need to reverse your thinking! If Sapaeryeon attacks Haenam, we'll storm from the side of the Yangtze river! Then the front line will split in two!»

«Oh, really? Then Cheonumaeng and Sapaeryeon will have a full-scale war while the baldy cheers them clapping his hands! Well done! Well done! Fight each other until both of you perish!»

Jo Geol's cheek twitched slightly. Chung Myung retorted,

«Hey, you crazy bastard! Do you think we will gain strength to defeat Sapaeryon just by absorbing one Haenam sect? Do you know what it's called when the weaker side initiates a two-front battle?»

«Well, um...»

«It's called 'divide and conquer,' you idiot! Divide and conquer!»

Enraged, Chung Myung tried to rush towards Jo Geol, but Hyun Jong quickly grabbed him by the back of his collar.

«Chung Myung.»

«No, that punk...!»

«Alright, alright. But he does have a point. It's a valid argument. If we can find a way to move Gupailbang, then...»

«Then we need to stop Jang Ilso.»

«...W-Why?»

«That jerk should not be seen as an ordinary human, you know? He's the one who came all the way here, willing to kneel down, just to defeat Demonic Cult's bastards that appeared on his land.»

«...»

«To attack Jang Ilso from the back?»

Chung Myung snorted.

«I guarantee you, the moment we cross the Yangtze river, he'll casually withdraw his troops as if it's nothing.»

«...So, he will abandon his positions here?»

«Tsk tsk. This is why upper-class people... No, those in power are like this.»

Chung Myung shook his head lightly.

«Trapped by the prejudice that they can't easily give up the land they've once possessed. That's why they think Jang Ilso will resist. Jang Ilso is not someone who protects — he's

someone who attacks. If we go on the offensive, Jang Ilso will nonchalantly withdraw his troops. So, what should we do?»

«Well, um...»

Chung Myung sighed.

«We'll have to keep pushing forward. Otherwise, it's meaningless.»

«Yes. We need to keep attacking until we reach Hainan. How many li?»

«...Three thousand li.»

“Yeah, yeah. Facing those guys, leading the troops and buying some time, it'll take at least several month. In that time, Jang Ilso can chew up Haenam sect, build a villa on the Southern Sea, try his hand in writing a few poems, and come back. It'll be more than enough.”

“...”

“If Jang Ilso returns like that?”

Chung Myung stared at the map with a cold look.

“We feared that it might happen during the Hangzhou incident. Would we be encircled and defeated in the middle of Gangnam?”

“...It's terrifying just to think about it.”

The issue is the distance. If Haenam sect is attacked, realistically, there's no way they can help.

At that moment, Baek Cheon said, seemed perplexed.

“Well, I don't really get why we've come this far. What we initially discussed wasn't about leaving Haenam sect there. We were supposed to...”

“Dong Ryong-ah.”

“Huh?”

As Chung Myung stared at him with eyes that seemed to find him the most pathetic being in the world, Baek Cheon flinched and checked the surroundings as if to catch the atmosphere.

“Oh, yeah. If we bring Haenam's disciples on our side, it's over, right?”

“Well, there is a problem with the ships, but somehow we can plan that as well...”

“Yeah, right. You took a ship and arrived on land. What now?”

“What do we do? We...”

“Yeah. If we get Haenam sect, there will be over five hundred of them. And we have to break through Gangnam.”

“...”

“It would be meaningless if we lost our forces, so we have to break through Gangnam keeping our forces intact.”

“Wow... that's an incredible achievement.”

“What, you punk?”

“Oh, come on! Speak it out! Speak!”

Although Hyun Jong grabbed Chung Myung, this time he couldn't calm down easily.

“If it were me, would I be pondering here? I’d just go down to Gangnam, beat Jang Ilso, and come back! Hey, this crazy bastard! You’re trying to strengthen your forces to beat Sapaeryeon, and you’re bringing something that can only happen with that! Everyone’s going ‘Wow, wow’ about that? Hey, you people! Because of you, my insides turn and are all messed up, messed up!”

Everyone avoided Chung Myung’s gaze as they coughed awkwardly.

After a long while, he finally seemed to calm down, taking a deep breath.

“The saying ‘gains and losses’ is used in situations like this. Gains are good, but you often have to lose more to gain something.”

“...”

“We’re not leaving the Great Baldy alone because he’s thoughtless. There’s no clear answer. It’s a place where meddling only causes more trouble.”

“Well, certainly...”

“We thought too much.”

“Too bad. It was a good idea.”

The gathered people understood the practical difficulties and nodded. The plan wasn’t bad, but it wasn’t something that could be easily handled. They realized it might be more profitable to stay out of it.

Everyone accepted this fact. However, there was one person, Yu Iseol, who, amid all this, was silently staring directly at Chung Myung with a transparent gaze.

Chung Myung, pierced by her indifferent gaze, squinted his eyes.

“What, Sago?”

“Then what about Haenam?”

“Huh?”

«...Are we going to abandon the people of Haenam just like this?»

Chung Myung fell silent at her sudden question. His eyes sank into a deep darkness.