

Chapter 1197

How on earth did you survive this? (2)

Whether it's a stereotype or not, why does such a thing exist?

The typical expectations that come with a change in leadership within a group or organization, when a young person takes over the position.

Of course, there may be concerns, but if there are no issues in the process, generally one expects the new young blood to bring vitality, broad aspirations, and so on.

But this is...

Tang Gunak's eyes trembled.

'My uncle, who resides in Sichuan, would surely have much more vitality than these guys.' Nowadays, he's an old man whose mind wavers, but still better off than a sick chicken, right?

What bothers him even more is the fact that the Acting Leader, who has been worn out to the point where his handsome face is no longer recognizable, recently heated up Tang Gunak's heart during the confrontation with the Abbot.

You just can't understand those Hwasan's guys. You can't understand...

Chung Myung, who swings between being an unparalleled swordsman and crazy bastard, or Baek Cheon, who goes back and forth between shouldering the expectations of Hwasan as the next Sect Leader, and Dong Ryong, the neighborhood foolish older brother...

The thought of discussing the fate of Cheonumaeng with these people already makes Tang Gunak feel the emptiness of Hyun Jong's seat deeply.

"So... um..."

Tang Gunak, who couldn't continue to keep his mouth shut, opened it hesitantly.

"You were the one who created this position, right?"

"Yes?"

"Is this position a curse?"

"...It's me, isn't it?"

"..."

At that moment, Tang Gunak realized why violence was so prevalent in Hwasan.

When people like this gather, isn't it natural for fists to fly before words?

"Ah... yes, I... Yes, it was me."

"..."

"So, the reason I gathered all of you is... um..."

Baek Cheon tilted his head.

"...What was it again?"

And at that moment, Tang Gunak saw it.

Chung Myung's face, which was fluctuating between anger and depression, was now truly terrifying, distorted like a vicious murderer's.

Tang Gunak had never witnessed such a frightening sight in his life. Even if Heavenly Demon were to appear before him, he wouldn't feel this kind of terror.

"... There was a reason."

"Hey, you!"

When Chung Myung's eyes rolled over in a fit, Ogeom, who had been waiting in advance, flew in as if anticipating it, blocking his mouth and striking his body.

Even Hye Yeon, who usually kept his tongue in check from behind, panicked and slumped over Chung Myung's chest, pressing down with his bald head.

«Chung Myung! It's Acting Leader, Acting Sect Leader!»

«Other people are watching!»

«Shut your mouth! If you say the wrong thing here, you'll really be dragged to repentance cave!»

«Hold him properly there!»

Watching the scene in dismay, Tang Gunak instinctively covered his face with both hands and lowered his head.

'Is it really okay?'

Wouldn't it be better to join hands with Gupailbang now? Even the vehemently opposed clan members, seeing this spectacle, might think, 'After all, isn't Shaolin a prestigious sect boasting of history and tradition?' and rush blindly towards mount Song.

At that moment, Yu Iseol, who had been dazed, tapped Baek Cheon's head lightly and handed him a bottle of cold water.

«Drink.»

«Ah...»

As Baek Cheon gulped down the cold water in one go, color gradually returned to his face. It was quite a curious sight. Just by tightening the expression that had been loose and unruly, it made a person look different.

«I'm sorry. I'm in a bit of a bad state.»

«When was it ever good?»

«What?»

«...Forget it.»

Tang Gunak bit his lip. It seems he's picked up the bad habit from those damn Hwasan bastards. After saying such things...

Baek Cheon cleared his throat and opened his mouth slowly.

«The reason we gathered the lords is to discuss the most important task that Cheonumaeng should prioritize.»

«Discuss...»

Quietly pondering, Tang Gunak nodded slightly and said,

«I hope the meaning is clear, Acting Leader. Is it a suggestion to decide on the most important task first? Or is it a suggestion to discuss the method for the task you've already decided on?»

«The latter is closer in meaning.»

«Hmm.»

Tang Gunak's expression subtly changed.

If it were Hyun Jong, he wouldn't have spoken like this. Before deciding on anything, Hyun Jong used to listen to others' opinions first. But Baek Cheon suggests discussing what he has already decided on.

It could be dismissed as a difference in temperament, but it did feel a bit uncomfortable.

At that moment, Baek Cheon spoke up.

«Oh, please don't misunderstand.»

«Hmm?»

Perhaps noticing Tang Gunak's demeanor, he calmly elaborated.

«I am merely the Acting Sect Leader of Hwasan, not the Acting Alliance Leader of Cheonumaeng. My words are not meant to represent the decisions of Cheonumaeng's head, but merely to present the opinions of Hwasan as its Acting Leader.»

«Hmm...»

«The authority to make decisions has always been with the Alliance Leader, so please don't mistake my words as his opinions.»

It meant a proposal made from a lower position, not from a higher one. Upon closer examination, the Acting Leader of Hwasan held a position lower than that of the Vice Leader of Cheonumaeng, and there was no difference from other sects.

However...

«Acting Leader, it's difficult for us to see it that way. Firstly, both you and Alliance Leader belong to the same sect...»

«Will Alliance Leader favor our opinions?»

«...Understood.»

Tang Gunak immediately nodded.

While others might not, Hyun Jong would never do that. Is there room for doubt about Hyun Jong's integrity?

Moreover, Hyun Jong had an unbelievable amount of trust in his disciples. But at the same time...

'Because you're probably the one who distrust your disciples the most in the whole world.' More accurately, it's not that he doesn't trust his disciples, but rather that he understands their madness the best... Anyway.

So, there won't be any special attention paid to Hwasan's opinions.

«But then, Hwasan would be treated as just another faction with equal speaking rights. Are you okay with that?»

«It's only natural.»

Baek Cheon replied immediately as if there was nothing to think about.

«That's how it should have been from the start. That's what Cheonumaeng is. The reason Hwasan seemed to lead Cheonumaeng up until now was simply because the Alliance Leader of Cheonumaeng also held the position of Hwasan's Sect Leader. If the Sect Leader takes the position of the Alliance Leader, then our faction had to take on that role.»

«Hmm.»

«Hwasan has no intention of demanding privileges from Cheonumaeng. Isn't our ideal based on equality for all?»

Tang Gunak's lips curled up slightly, almost involuntarily.

'Indeed...'

People are often praised for not being attached to power when they can afford not to be.

Ultimately, even for someone deeply attached to power, relinquishing the power they already have isn't easy.

Power is comfort, after all.

What need is there to reject the comfort offered and choose discomfort? Especially when no one is blaming you, there's even less reason to do so.

But now, Baek Cheon is saying that Hwasan will willingly relinquish the implicit superior rights and positions it held within Cheonumaeng.

It might be something possible in youth, but even so, it looked impressive.

«Is that Hwasan's stance?»

«Yes, Lord.»

«Hmm. That's good. Indeed, young people are different.»

Tang Gunak nodded approvingly, then suddenly wore a peculiar expression.

«But there's something I'd like to mention.»

«Yes?»

«...Seems like there's someone whose thoughts differ from yours?»

«Yes?»

At that, Baek Cheon glanced sideways.

«Uh! Ugh!»

Chung Myung, pinned down by Ogeom, was squirming with bloodshot eyes. His eyes, filled with resentment and hatred, seemed to be shouting, 'Who gave you the right to do that, and why are you surrendering it just like that! You arrogant brat! Get lost from Hwasan!'

«Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!»

«Stay still!»

«Someone go get a rope, quickly!»

«A rope? Why not a metal chain? What are we going to do with a rope!»

«No, how can I find a metal chain right away...»

Ogeom desperately pressed down on the squirming Chung Myung. At the sight of this bizarre yet terrifying scene, a fleeting smirk crossed Baek Cheon's lips.

«Lord.»

«Hmm?»

Baek Cheon, now leisurely diverting his gaze, spoke to Tang Gunak with a relaxed tone.

«You don't need to worry about it.»

«...Is that so?»

«Yes. I'm speaking to you now as the Acting Leader of Hwasan. I find it hard to understand why you're concerned about the reaction of a mere 'one' third generation disciple.»

«Co-ugh!»

Tang Gunak, taken aback for a moment, coughed violently.

«A mere third generation disciple?»

«Don't worry about it. He's just one of the many third generation disciples at Hwasan. He may have some skill with the sword, but he's still just an individual third generation disciple, completely unrelated to Hwasan's official stance. So, you can consider him nonexistent.»

«Uh...»

«Which is more important, the opinion of the Acting Leader of Hwasan or that of a 'mere' third generation disciple?»

«Well, that's... um, it's okay... It's the right thing to... But...»

«Haha. Isn't it all too obvious?»

Tang Gunak saw it. Baek Cheon smoothly glanced at Chung Myung before smiling.

At the sight of Baek Cheon's face, Chung Myung began to convulse uncontrollably. Soon, white foam bubbled up from his mouth.

«Grk...»

With a strange sound, Chung Myung's eyes rolled back, and he collapsed. The room fell silent as his sporadic spasms subsided.

'Is... is this okay?'

Of course, it is. No matter how skilled Hwasan Geomhyeop is, in terms of status, he is just third generation disciple of Hwasan. According to protocol and laws, he doesn't have the right to speak in such settings.

'But still, he is the Hwasan Geomhyeop, isn't he?'

Is it really okay like this?

«I would like to speak as the Acting Leader of Hwasan, rather than as a disciple...»

«Yes?»

«The most urgent task for Cheonumaeng right now is to follow its righteous path, clearly distinguishing the Alliance from Gupailbang.»

«Well, I suppose so.»

«So, Hwasan suggests to the other lords that they immediately chose personnel to dispatch to Haenam. The goal is to complete preparations as quickly as possible, within no more than three days if possible. We will break through Gangnam and reach Hainan island.»

«Uh... that seems a bit hasty...»

«Only those who are confident in their skills should join. If no one joins, Hwasan will head to save Haenam alone.»

Silence fell. Baek Cheon finished speaking and grinned.

«That's all.»

At that moment, Tang Gunak realized something. The target of this mad Acting Sect Leader wasn't just Beop Jong.

Tang Gunak's stomach began to ache again.