

Chapter 1137

However, what else could be done? (2)

The expressions of those gathered in the training grounds filled with tension and confusion. ‘Oh, no...’

What term would describe it? Unexpected? Peculiar? Absurd?

Those who have experienced even a little of Hwasan know it. Regardless of what anyone might say, Chung Myung is the representative of Hwasan. Whether seen from the outside or experienced from within, Chung Myung holds an incredible influence within Hwasan sword sect.

However, the thoughts of those who have spent considerable time near Hwasan are slightly different.

While Chung Myung might be at the center of Hwasan as a sect, within the disciples, Baek Cheon stands as the focal point. Chung Myung guides them, but no matter what anyone says, the one who harmonizes their thoughts and practically controls them is this humble young man.

Even Hyun Jong, the Sect Leader of Hwasan, goes to Baek Cheon rather than Chung Myung if anything needs to be conveyed to the disciples.

It’s not merely the second best solution because Chung Myung is busy. While he chooses the major course of Hwasan, the unspoken agreement results in Baek Cheon leading the disciples of the sect.

This is why the sudden act of Baek Cheon, the confirmed future Sect Leader of Hwasan and the current representative of the disciples, bowing unexpectedly before them, was so striking. Tang Pae looked around with a perplexed expression. No one dared to speak up.

Whether it was because only Tang Pae moved or because they considered him the appropriate person, everyone’s attention was drawn to him.

Under the implicit pressure, Tang Pae, wearing a troubled expression, finally opened his mouth.

“Dojang... Why are you suddenly doing this?”

Only then did Baek Cheon lift his lowered head. He looked at everyone, including Tang Pae. At that moment, several thoughts raced through Baek Cheon’s mind — polite words, attempts to console, deeper apologies to evoke a sense of remorse from the other side. However, those thoughts vanished in an instant. Now was not the time for decorum and reconciliation.

“This cannot continue.”

What finally came out were his genuine feelings.

“Right now, we are sparring against supreme masters, experts we can hardly gather anywhere else. Every moment is crucial and precious.”

Everyone nodded in agreement with his words.

Regardless of whether enduring this training was challenging or not, everyone resonated with the fact that this was an opportunity that might not come again.

How many chances in one's lifetime would there be to face the head of Sichuan Tang or engage seriously with the Lord of the Beast Palace?

Amidst this chaos involving not one but three such figures, where else could they possibly gain such an experience?

"Yet, we're wasting time. It's a chance that may never come again."

"..."

"I think of Cheonumaeng's excellence, I think of Gangho's prowess, but honestly, I don't quite understand such grandiose things. I just don't want to waste this precious time. I don't want to put my pent-up emotions forward at a time when I should be focusing all my strength on facing those people."

Some of them, especially Namgung Dowi, nodded vigorously.

"So please gather your strength, join us."

Tang Pae opened his mouth with a touch of bitterness.

"Is that because it's the path of justice?"

"No."

Baek Cheon cut in sharply.

"It's because it's the way to aid Hwasan."

Baek Cheon's gaze locked onto Tang Pae.

"Doesn't the Young Lord think so too?"

Tang Pae's lips tightened slightly.

Right now, Baek Cheon was asking him this: Did he want to let this good opportunity slip away as just a time to be beaten up because of some petty grudge? Or did he want to make this time a chance for his own improvement?

'He speaks well.'

There was a momentary surge of anger. The whole landslide of these events started when Hwasan blatantly bullied Tangga and Hwasan Geomhyeop tormented everyone to the point of no return.

But when the perpetrators themselves speak in righteous tones, it's only natural for emotions to flare.

Murder is a wrongful act. But if one who committed murder receives vengeance while stirring up trouble in the middle of their retribution, wouldn't it be natural for things to be turned upside down?

"It's outrageous for Hwasan to utter such words."

Tang Pae, who had caught a glimpse of an opportunity to point out any possible faults, groaned at this sight. He sighed and spoke,

"However... please don't think that the only concern is about Dojang's disciples."

What crossed Tang Pae's mind right now was none other than the look in Tang Gunak's eyes. The statement that 'You don't need to acquire anything by your own hands, since everything had been given to you, so there's no rush, nor any need to be desperate' resonated in his mind.

'Not a single word is wrong.'

What they needed most urgently was none other than the Tang clan. Despite being in a far superior position, they couldn't stand up against Hwasan's disciples.

So, they should be more eager, more restless. What Baek Cheon was doing now should have been done by Tang Pae first.

However, Tang Pae just stood there, and Hwasan, which had no reason to be in a hurry, bowed their heads first.

If one is desperate, they should act. Merely smoldering in one's heart without taking action isn't genuine earnestness.

«Something must be done, emotions aside. What they are doing to us isn't intended for us to stand still and get beaten up or to nurture grievances.»

Baek Cheon nodded resolutely.

"I agree as well,"

Namgung Dowi quickly spoke up at that moment.

«As it stands, even after a year passes, nothing will change. If we obstruct each other, we can never confront one enemy. It's not something we can overcome through determination or practice.»

This was a statement that could wound Namgung Dowi's own pride.

He is an actual acting head of Namgung clan. Saying that the Young Lords couldn't face the Lords and the elders was entirely different from a Lord unable to confront another Lord.

As the head of Namgung clan, considered the greatest of the Five Great Families, that was absolutely not appropriate for him to say.

However, Namgung Dowi willingly acknowledged his own limitations. In the past, he might have never let such words slip, even at the cost of his life. But now, he understood that not acknowledging his own limits was even more damaging to his pride.

"There must be a way we can fight together. There must be a way so we do not hinder but help each other. Why not start by looking for that?"

Tang Pae firmly nodded in agreement.

But that was when it happened.

"Well said."

One of the best warriors, who had been observing the situation, openly sneered.

"The three mighty factions of the Central Plains have made a truly remarkable decision."

As the three individuals looked on with stern faces, before anyone else could speak, Baek Cheon intervened.

"If I've offended you, I apologize."

“No, no. What is there to be offended about? If the three esteemed factions have made such a decision, we’ll simply follow along. Where would lowly barbarians like us find reason to object to that?”

It wasn’t merely accepting the open mockery of just one person with a twisted personality. Though it was one who spoke, the gazes of those seated behind him were all alike. Even the Ice Palace warriors, not just the Beast Palace, nodded as if acknowledging the validity of the statement.

«We didn’t intend to...»

«Your intentions must be noble.»

This time, an ice warrior spoke up.

«However, when it comes to deciding the direction of Cheonumaeng at every turn, isn’t it Hwasan, Tangga, and Namgung, rather than us? We simply receive notifications.»

«...»

Baek Cheon was hesitant to provide a response to these words.

The sudden targeting of Namgung might seem unfair, but in reality, it was hard to deny that it had been Hwasan and Tangga, not to mention that others had simply been informed, who had determined the major events of Cheonumaeng. Certainly, this deviated from the original intent behind establishing Cheonumaeng. Even if it wasn’t Baek Cheon’s fault, the situation where Tangga and Namgung naturally took the lead in front of everyone was enough to stir up the accumulated animosity.

«We apologize for that part. However, we didn’t intend to...»

«No, Baek Cheon Dojang. There’s no discontent. I don’t understand why you’re saying that. We simply need to follow your words.»

A sigh escaped Baek Cheon’s lips. Dealing with those who attacked honestly was somehow manageable, but handling those who taunted like this was quite challenging. In his position as Hwasan’s top disciple, anything he said could easily be construed as just being nice.

Amidst Baek Cheon’s contemplation of what to say, an irritated voice resounded sharply, «Your damn mockery, you damn barbarians.»

Instantly, the disciples from the Ice Palace and the Beast Palace turned their furious gazes, but as soon as they saw who spoke, their half-opened mouths closed shut.

Im Sobyong, wearing a horribly crumpled scholar’s uniform, was barely able to keep his upper body upright, glared at everyone, seething with annoyance. His appearance left everyone momentarily stunned.

«Do you think you’ve experienced discrimination as much as us Sapa bastards? Even before Namgung clan joined, we were enslaved by Hwasan, yet we’re still here!»

Im Sobyong’s outburst made the Ice Palace and the Beast Palace disciples subtly avert their gaze.

«I’m the Nokrim King, you bastards! The Nokrim King! If your lords were in this state, you’d have revolted long ago! Do you see what I’ve become?»

With one eye visibly blue, Im Sobyong erupted in fury, leaving everyone unable to utter a word. If such treatment had been inflicted on a leader from another faction, it might have led to immediate alliance dissolution or even war.

Yet, Im Sobyong endured such treatment without a single word of complaint. Isn't it an exaggeration to say that outer palaces were treated as VIPs compared to what happened to Im Sobyong and Nokrim?

«This is why the Central Plains, outer palaces, and all humans, none of them have any shame. You're making a fuss about what you've done for Cheonumaeng until now! But even after years of enslavement, we still can't say such things!»

«... Well, I mean...»

«Cough.»

Some almost responded reflexively with 'But you're Sapa,' but hastily shut their mouths. It wasn't so different from saying outer palaces deserved discrimination.

«If you're going to complain, suffer for three years and then come to complain.»

«...»

«Damn it.»

Im Sobyong, exhausted, sighed deeply while gazing at the sky.

«Baek Cheon Dojang.»

«Yes, Nokrim King.»

«You've taken quite a beating, haven't you?»

«... Yes.»

Im Sobyong's eyes flickered with flames.

«I'm tired of being beaten too, so let's find a solution. It's not entertaining anymore, even when you're the ones getting hit.»

Baek Cheon subtly lifted the corners of his mouth in response.

«I agree.»

«So, then...»

Im Sobyong, with fiery determination in his eyes, scanned the empty space where Chung Myung and others had vanished.

«Let's show these esteemed gentlemen how frightening a rebellion can be! Whether it's an emperor, a patriarch, or just ...»

«Hey, that's enough!»

That's crossing the line, you Sapa scoundrel!

«Everyone, gather around!»

Responding to Im Sobyong's swift command, those scattered about began to gather gradually.

Watching this scene, Baek Cheon smiled to himself.

'I've done what I could, damn it.'

Baek Cheon, who silently conveyed his words to Chung Myung in his mind, who was probably watching this from somewhere, approached Im Sobyong with face that seemed to know nothing.