

## Chapter 1008

That's what it means to become an adult. (2)

The next day.

«Ugh....»

Namgung Dohwi made a groaning sound before even opening his eyes, clutching his head.

«Ugh, my head....»

It felt like a bell was ringing inside his head.

‘How much did I even drink?’

As time passed, memories began to return faintly.

The initial alcohol was quickly emptied, but Chung Myung suddenly got up and brought back bottles of alcohol in both hands.

— We should eat and drink. Hey, drink up! Drink!

— T-This?

— Why? Can't you drink it? Anyway, that's what men do! Tsk tsk.

— I'll d-drink it! Why can't I drink it!

«...That's right.»

The effects of the alcohol must have kicked in. One sip for you, one sip for me, one bottle for you, one bottle for me...

‘This is crazy.’

He downed all of it, every last drop.

Even if it had been water, it would have been too much to drink it all.

«Ugh... my head....»

He had experienced hangovers occasionally, but the headache that was currently hitting him shattered the concept of a hangover he had known until now.

Namgung Dohwi, who had been groaning while holding his head, suddenly had a very natural and fundamental question cross his mind.

‘What on earth was that alcohol made of?’

What kind of substance was that alcohol made from that it made him feel such a severe hangover, as if someone had beaten his head with a hammer?

And why on earth was Chung Myung, of all people, the one who brought that alcohol?

«Ugh....»

He groaned while holding his head and reluctantly opened his eyes.

‘Oh, it's blinding.’

Instinctively, he shielded his eyes from the sunlight. The sunlight was too harsh, and he couldn't open his eyes properly.

‘Wait a moment. Is it too bright?’

He blinked again. Bright sunlight was pouring in through the window. Staring blankly at it, Namgung Dohwi was so surprised that he jumped up.

«Uh-oh!»

The fact that the sun was this hot meant that it had been morning for quite some time already. He had sternly warned Namgung's disciples just yesterday. If he was late for training from the very next morning, what would they all think?

In a panic, Namgung Dohwi started circulating his inner strength to push hangover out of his body.

«My clothes! My clothes!»

In a hurry, he searched here and there, but he couldn't find his outerwear anywhere. With no memory of how he even got back to his room in the first place, it was impossible to recall where he had left his clothes.

'I'm going crazy!'

After rummaging around randomly, he finally found his clothes under the blanket. He quickly put them on, adjusted his uniform at lightning speed, and rushed outside.

Or rather, he tried to rush outside.

He hesitated.

'Why didn't they wake me up?'

They had decided to start training early in the morning, so if they had gone to train, shouldn't they have come to wake Namgung Dohwi up?

Could it be...

Namgung Dohwi hesitated, clutching the door handle.

What should he do if none of Namgung's disciples had come out for training? They had just discussed it yesterday, and did they really intend to conduct the training without his participation?

A deep sigh escaped him.

He knew. No matter what he saw, he must not be disappointed.

Hoping that people would act as he wished was nothing more than greed. If it were that easy, there would be no failed leaders in the world.

'Don't think impatiently.'

As Chung Myung had said, it was difficult for everyone. What's truly strange is when things aren't challenging. So he should take it slow. There were people who said he was doing well, after all. Someday, Namgung's swordsmen would understand his sincerity.

With determination, Namgung Dohwi swung open the door.

Finally, he widened his eyes upon seeing the scene in front of him.

«Ev-everyone...»

Namgung Clan's disciples were lined up in front of his room. Not a single person was missing.

«Oh, no. Why...?»

His face betrayed his confusion as he struggled to form a coherent sentence. As he stared at the lined-up disciples in a daze, Namgung Dan took a step forward.

«Have you encountered any difficulties?»

«Dan-a.»

He stepped forward as their representative and nodded respectfully toward Namgung Dohwi. It was a polite gesture, not overly so.

«We were naturally waiting for the Lord of the family»

«For me?»

Namgung Dowi's face stiffened slightly. Seeing his expression Namgung Dan smiled.

«In truth, I considered going ahead and starting the training first...»

«...»

«But it seemed meaningless.»

«What do you mean it's meaningless?»

«Whether I become stronger through that training or not, it's meaningless without Lord of the family.»

Namgung Dowi unconsciously clenched his fist.

«Lord, we are the Namgung Clan.»

«...»

«And the Namgung Clan follows only the orders of the Lord. If the Lord commands us to jump into a pit of hell, we will do so without hesitation.»

«Namgung Dan...»

«Yesterday, we went too far. We were just... No, I won't make excuses. I apologize.»

«We apologize, Lord of the family!»

«We apologize!»

Everyone lowered their heads toward Namgung Dowi.

«When Young Lord talked about Maehwado, we realized once again that you are continuously thinking about the best way to lead Namgung.»

«...»

«We should have thought about that aspect first.»

«No, no.»

Namgung Dowi shook his head.

«It's my fault. What I consider the best might not be the same as what you consider the best. So we should have talked enough, explained, and pondered together... I just thought that if I led, everyone would simply follow. I was arrogant.»

«No, Young Lord»

«So, I ask again in this place.»

Namgung Dowi deeply bowed his head to everyone.

«It may be insufficient, but I still believe this is the best way for the Namgung clan. So please trust me and follow.»

He lifted his head, looking at everyone. His gaze was clearer and sharper than ever.

«I, too, will continue to strive to become a Lord that you can be proud of.»

Everyone vigorously nodded.

«Of course, Young Lord!»

«We believe in you!»

Overwhelmed by emotion, Namgung Dowi closed his eyes.

«...Thank you.»

Once again, he realized that even though their thoughts and approaches might differ, their aspirations were the same.

Isn't that what 'family' is?

«Let's go.»

«Okay.»

Namgung Dowi nodded his head. This might not be enough. Perhaps they would need to have more discussions in the future. However, he wouldn't hesitate to persuade them. There isn't just one way to lead people. He didn't need to become Namgung Hwang. He just needed to preserve the spirit Namgung Hwang had passed down to him.

«Let's move out.»

«Yes!»

Namgung Dowi led the Namgung disciples forward with a stride filled with confidence.

«Ugh...»

«I think... I'm going to die...»

«Kill them... Kill! Kill...»

«Really kill them?»

«Oh, no...»

Chung Myung blinked at them as they lay flat on their faces with rocks on their backs.

«But seriously, these guys, the more I think about it, the more I can't believe it. Are they playing around with me right now? Did they skip group training?»

«...»

«Even that bastard named the Young Lord? I thought about treating him decently since I owed him a bit, but...»

«...»

Namgung Dowi's face, distorted by pain, was now stained with a sense of injustice.

'No, it's because of you!'

Who was it that had made him drink so much alcohol? Was it human to wake up sober in the brink of the sunrise after downing all of that?

«What? Whether we die together or live together?»

«...»

«Hey, you guys! Those guys who said that, they're all dead! These are the kind of guys who would say, 'Let's die and live together,' even if Kang-gi(강기) flew in from across the river, you know!»

«Oh, no...»

«They're doing well. They're doing great. A guy like the Young Lord can't handle a bit of alcohol and ends up sprawled out. And the ones who should wake him up are just waiting around like idiots.»

«...»

«If Namgung Hwang saw this, he would have chopped all of your heads off, you idiots!»

«...»

Well, just a little while ago, it was a very touching moment...

After hearing Chung Myung's words, it seemed that his words were also correct. If the ancestral Lord had seen this, it was certain that they would all have been in deep trouble.

Is that so?

«... What?»

“It's nothing.”

The gazes of Namgung's swordsmen looking at Namgung Dowi felt subtly different from a moment ago. Was it just his imagination?

«It seems like you guys can't understand what I'm saying.»

«...»

«If you skip even one day of training, it means you're wasting ten days in the end. There are countless excuses to take a break from training, and the moment you start accepting them as natural, your martial arts journey is over!»

«...»

«Whether it's raining, snowing, or the wind is blowing, even if the Sapa bastards attack, you train! That's the basics! Those who drink and slack off on training in the morning don't even have the right to hold a sword!»

At that moment, a trembling hand of Namgung Dan was raised.

«What?»

«A qu-q-question... Can I ask a qu-question?»

«Try it.»

«Th-that... Is th-this... d-dis-d-d...»

Thud!

The moment Namgung Dan opened his mouth, his remaining arm suddenly loosened and fell to his side. He soon slumped forward.

Chung Myung, with a determined expression as if ready to endure anything, approached the crumpled rock that had flattened Namgung Dan and kicked it with his foot.

«Ugh! I th-thought I was g-going to die...»

«What's your question?»

«Oh, yes!»

Namgung Dan, with a face filled with determination, quickly got up.

«Hwasan Geomhyeop! This is absolutely not rebellion! It's not dissatisfaction.»

«Put aside the excuses.»

«Yes!»

Namgung Dan swallowed hard and continued with fierce determination.

«If we go through with this training, can we truly become stronger?»

«What?»

Chung Myung squinted, and Namgung Dan quickly waved his hand.

«I told you! This is not dissatisfaction!»

«Carry on.»

«Yes!»

Namgung Dan nodded vigorously and continued speaking.

«Of course we know that you are strong enough to subdue the Black Dragon King. But our foundation is ultimately the Namgung clan.»

«So?»

«Although he returned to the afterlife, we believe that our previous ancestral Lord was a master who was in no way inferior to Hwasan Geomhyeop, if not greater.»

Chung Myung's lips twisted slightly.

Namgung's disciples thought Chung Myung was offended and did not know that he was desperately suppressing his ridiculing remarks.

«So...?»

«The training we are currently undergoing is very different from what we learned from the Namgung family. Isn't it the best way to master the martial arts of one's own clan, as we know it better than anyone else in the clan? That's why we are not sure if it's right to push ourselves so hard in training that our Lord didn't ask us to do.»

«So, to sum it up...»

Chung Myung flicked his finger lightly.

«You don't believe that you will become stronger through this training?»

«Exactly, or to be more precise, if we had more convincing evidence, we would be more willing to work harder.»

«You're twisting your words dirty.»

«Sorry...»

Namgung Dan cursed inwardly.

If you were going to say that, either don't say anything from the beginning or don't hesitate and fumble around like this!

«Dojang, I would like to ask as well.»

At that moment, Namgung Dowi put down the rock he had been carrying and approached Chung Myung.

«These are not the ones who have seen everything I have seen. Forcing them to follow might do more harm than good. I humbly request you.»

Chung Myung stared at Namgung Dowi for a moment and asked,

«Do you really want to confirm it?»

«Yes?»

«Well, it doesn't seem like such a great idea, but... it's not a bad thing for me.»

«...»

«Follow me. I'll prove it.»

Chung Myung chuckled and said,

«Chicks should know they're chicks from the start. Let's go, little chicks. I'll show you guys someone who at least look a bit like chickens now.»

Namgung's swordsmen followed him, shaking their heads.