

## Chapter 1079

Next time it will be your neck. (4)

Jang Ilso, who had been walking silently, turned to look at Ho Gamyong.

«Hmm.»

In response to his peculiar sound, Ho Gamyong looked at Jang Ilso with a puzzled expression. Jang Ilso spoke.

«It's surprisingly unlike you.»

«What do you mean, Ryeonju?»

«I expected you to bring up the idea of dealing with them again once we reached this point.»

Ho Gamyong let out a deep sigh. It wasn't an entirely inaccurate assumption. The reason he stepped back was that Jang Ilso's safety was not guaranteed. Acknowledging Hwasan Geomhyeop so highly was a matter of pride, but Jang Ilso's life was much more important than his own pride.

So, considering his usual self, now that Jang Ilso's safety was assured, he might have vehemently insisted on reversing the agreement and capturing and killing those bastards.

«Lord Ryeonju.»

«Yes?»

«I'm not that foolish.»

Jang Ilso laughed heartily in response to Ho Gamyong's words. Of course, he had never considered Ho Gamyong a foolish person. He simply understood that Ho Gamyong's loyalty was exceptionally strong, enough for him to willingly relinquish his position as an advisor.

A faint smile crossed Ho Gamyong's face as he gazed at Jang Ilso for a moment.

«While you may say that, there were several ways to take their lives if you truly wanted to.

It's just that, in your opinion, they may still have some use, isn't that right, Lord Ryeonju?»

Jang Ilso, upon hearing this, laughed again.

«It would be good if you realized that a bit earlier.»

«It's not an easy thing to do, my lord.»

Ho Gamyong sighed deeply.

«No matter the reason, there's no advisor who would simply watch their lord jump into a pit.»

«Tsk tsk. That's the problem with you.»

«I have no intention of changing that, even if you say that.»

Ho Gamyong was by no means a foolish person. In fact, in terms of managing their forces, he showed more ability than Jang Ilso. The reason Jang Ilso could employ seemingly insane strategies and still have the support of a loyal advisor like Ho Gamyong, who would match

their forces according to his plan, was because Ho Gamyong was more than qualified to be called Jang Ilso's right-hand man in the truest sense.

But the reason why Ho Gamyong sometimes displayed frustration was simple. His top priority was always Jang Ilso's safety, more than victory or gain.

Seemingly giving up on trying to convince him, Jang Ilso shook his head.

«You're right. They shouldn't die just yet. Or, to be precise, Hwasan Geomhyeop shouldn't die just yet. At least not today.»

At that moment, Cheon Myeon Susa, who had been silently listening to their conversation, asked cautiously.

«Is it because of the Demonic Cult, by any chance?»

Jang Ilso turned slightly to look at him. A sinister smile twisted at the corners of his lips.

«Well, it might be... who knows.»

Feeling the chill from that smile, Cheon Myeon Susa's mouth suddenly went dry.

Jang Ilso was not in a condition to fight properly due to his injuries at the moment. Perhaps the most dangerous opponent for him right now was not Magyo or Hwasan's disciples, but the Thousand faced man standing beside him.

Undoubtedly, Jang Ilso must be aware of this fact.

However, he didn't display any signs of tension towards Cheon Myeon Susa. That composure only made him more nervous. Although he had a formidable presence that matched anyone in Gangho, there was a tremendous sense of presence emanating from Jang Ilso that was incomparable to the past.

«Magyo. Yes, they were certainly threatening.»

Jang Ilso's narrowed eyes evoked the image of Heavenly Executioner.

«They were... to the point where it gave me chills.»

Magyo is strong. Denying this fact would be a foolish act of not recognizing reality. It's not about pride — it's about acknowledging the truth. The Demonic Cult, where a person like Heavenly Executioner dwells so calmly, may be a place so strong that it would be difficult to deal with even if the entire Central Plains fought them together.

«But that's not all,»

Jang Ilso drew a clear line.

«It's foolish not to prepare for the future, but it's even more foolish to neglect what needs to be done now for the sake of some distant future. I'm not so idle that I'd let myself be blinded by fanatics who might reappear again.»

«Indeed, my lord. If what they say about the existence of the Heavenly Demon is true...»

«But that won't change anything,»

Jang Ilso's voice flowed with a heavy undertone.

«Certainly... someday, that day may come when the so-called Heavenly Demon, as they say, returns and Magyo invades the Central Plains.»

Ho Gamyong nodded.

It's hard to ignore the possibility of the Heavenly Demon reappearing with just the existence of Heavenly Executioner. It went beyond Ho Gamyong's understanding, that a person of that caliber believed in an empty legend and cared so much about his benefactor.

«But just because it's possible doesn't mean we can sit around waiting for that day, chewing on our fingers. Human life is not that long, and my patience isn't all that great either.»

For a moment, a sinister expression flickered across Jang Ilso's face, but it quickly softened.

«And... there's no way to prepare for it? Are we to fear Magyo and spend our time partying with those pigs from the righteous sects?»

«That's... difficult.»

It's practically impossible. Even if Jang Ilso wanted it, the righteous sects wouldn't accept it. There is already a deep-seated animosity between them that cannot be easily reconciled.

'Rather...'

Ho Gamyong turned and glanced behind him. If the central power of the righteous sects is currently Cheonumaeng, there might be a different way. However, the Gupailbang and Sapaeryeon will never be able to cooperate with each other.

"If you're afraid of Magyo, there's only one way."

Cheon Myeon Susa and Ho Gamyong both turned to look at Jang Ilso. He didn't pay any attention to them and continued to gaze at the distant sky.

«The only way to deal with that so-called Heavenly Demon is for me to unite the Central Plains before that demon returns to invade it. Then, there won't be any need for us to awkwardly cooperate. Everyone will stand under my command to confront the threat.»

This is also an absurd statement. Achieving unity within the Central Plains is far from easy. However, it sounded more realistic to their ears than the story of cooperation between righteousness and evil.

Once the so-called Heavenly Demon returns, and before that demon invades the Central Plains, all the different factions under Jang Ilso's leadership would unite to confront the threat.

Cheon Myeon Susa's eyes narrowed slightly.

'It's not impossible.'

Just three years ago, no one could have imagined this. That Jang Ilso would unify the Shinjuopae into one, create the Sapaeryeon, and in just three years, completely subdue them under his command.

If we compare leading Sapaeryeon and controlling the Central Plains to a feat that is as absurd as it is, doesn't it seem rather easy?

"Stagnant water doesn't flow until the dam is broken. Even those who have a blade to their throats won't feel threatened by the existence of Magyo they haven't seen with their own eyes."

"..."

"So, nothing has changed. We just need to do what we've always done. Just as before."

Ho Gamyong nodded solemnly.

This story combines fantastically surreal elements with strangely realistic ones. It's a story where you can't quite tell what to believe and where the line between reality and illusion blurs. However, there was certainly a compelling power in Jang Ilso's story.

"Lord Ryeonju."

"Yes?"

"May I ask one thing?"

"Of course."

After a moment of hesitation, Ho Gamyong asked,

"But what if... Magyo's attack comes sooner than expected, and it happens while we're engaged in a battle with the orthodox sects? What will you do then?"

"Tsk tsk tsk. Gamyong, Gamyong. You're talking nonsense,"

Jang Ilso chuckled.

«Why should we be concerned about that? If the righteous sects come begging for a truce and to join forces, we can think about it then. And if it comes to that point, if they don't swallow their pride, we can die together, can't we?»

«...»

«Remember this clearly. Anyway, it's impossible for us to fight the orthodox sects again after we unite to stop the Demonic Cult. Think about the characteristics of that cursed demonic arts. The side that will suffer more will be us.»

Karalarak.

Jang Ilso's rings made a momentarily eerie sound.

«In other words, when that time comes, the world can't be mine. If it's a world I can't possess, whether it ends or not, what does it matter to me? I'd rather...»

Jang Ilso's eyes drew a strange curve.

«I'd rather see everything burn and disappear.»

Ho Gamyong closed his eyes silently.

Certainly... even if the right and the evil unite to stop the Demonic Cult, in the end, it will only benefit the righteous sects.

«...To achieve Lord Ryeonju's goal, we may have to settle the score with them before Magyo awakens.»

«That's right.»

«I understand.»

Ho Gamyong nodded heavily, with his top priority being Jang Ilso's safety and the second carrying out Jang Ilso's will.

«But... what does that have to do with saving Hwasan Geomhyeop? If what you say is true, wouldn't it be better to quickly eliminate anyone who could be a threat?»

«I told you, right now Cheonumaeng is centered around him. Without Hwasan Geomhyeop, Cheonumaeng and the others are nothing. If we kill and eliminate him here, Cheonumaeng's power will fall apart in an instant, and they will become easy prey.»

«That makes sense.»

«Can we claim the credit for it?»

Ho Gamyong lowered his head in thought for a moment.

«It's difficult.»

«Why?»

«We can't cross the river until we stabilize Surochae and Black Ghost Fortress. And... right now, the death of Mangeum Daebu and the injury of the Black Dragon King are critical.»

«Right, that's true. So, who will seize the opportunity we've created and rip all the benefits?»

«Poisonous Gupailbang bastards.»

Ho Gamyong replied.

Jang Ilso nodded.

Perhaps Gupailbang harbored as much resentment toward Cheonumaeng as Sapaeryeon did, or maybe even more. So there was no doubt that they would seize the opportunity without any hesitation.

«Until now, drawing the line along the Yangtze river had its meaning. But... if Gupailbang engulfs Cheonumaeng, that line will become an impenetrable wall for us. It's the worst-case scenario.»

«Indeed...»

That's why Jang Ilso had to keep Chung Myung alive.

It's truly a peculiar relationship.

«A useful pawn, truly useful.»

Jang Ilso muttered, looking back. To someone beyond the distant horizon.

After silently gazing at the horizon for a while, Jang Ilso spoke in a cold voice.

«But... it won't be like that anymore.»

«...»

«Those who raise a tiger should never let their guard down. You never know when that kitten will turn into a real tiger. If you fail to recognize that time, the tiger's fangs will be embedded in your throat.»

Ho Gamyong's concern was precisely that. That Chung Myung was too dangerous to keep alive just for his value.

«Every pawn has its moment of usefulness. So, this time is the last. Next time...»

A fleeting chill passed through Jang Ilso's eyes.

Like a colossal Imoogi aiming at the whole world, he soon turned his attention away from the horizon without any hesitation.

«Let's go. We'll be busy for a while.»

«Yes, Lord Ryeonju!»

As they walked, Jang Ilso's mind began to spin rapidly.

'Magyo, Gupailbang, Cheonumaeng, and Sapaeryeon...'

In an already incredibly intricate structure, the introduction of Magyo was a new variable.

However, Jang Ilso found the situation oddly enjoyable.

'They'll all come to understand. Opportunities aren't something you wait for — you create them.'

His excited gaze gleamed with cruelty.