

Chapter 1214

Without a doubt. (4)

«By sea! It seems the sea route is the best option!»

«Oh, no, wait. Let's consider the land route...»

«Oh, please! Just decide quickly!»

«By sea! Riding a boat has been my lifelong wish!»

«To be honest, if I don't ride a boat periodically, I feel like I grow thorns in my mouth! Seriously!»

Everyone was desperate. They knew what kind of person Chung Myung was. Especially the disciples of Hwasan, who knew enough about Chung Myung, felt their lives were in danger. However...

«Ah, so noisy.»

Chung Myung chuckled and waved his hand.

«I haven't decided anything yet, have I? I just wanted to hear his thoughts. Besides, if the great Nokrim King of Cheonumaeng brought up such a topic, there must be a reasonable cause, right?»

«Haven't you been calling him Sapa?»

«Saying he should be burned?»

«You said after hearing a Sapa talk, your stomach feels twisted, like you need to take indigestion medicine!»

«Me?»

Chung Myung glanced at Ogeom and clicked his tongue.

«Discriminating against people based on their background, isn't in the nature of a Taoist. What an age we live in. Tsk tsk tsk.»

Ogeom sighed deeply, covering their faces with both hands and bowing their heads. Despair weighed heavily on their shoulders.

Amidst this, Namgung Dowi, who managed to maintain some sanity, glanced at Im Sobyong and asked quietly,

«Nokrim King, what advantages does the third option offer?»

Im Sobyong wiped a drop of blood off his nose and replied gruffly,

«Can't you see? It's faster.»

A faint twitch passed over Namgung Dowi's eyes as he chuckled and said,

«Ah, my apologies.»

«Hm?»

«I asked too much of you, a Sapa bastard. Requesting excessive demands that do not match your abilities is also an act contrary to etiquette...»

«What?»

This time, Im Sobyong's face twisted in confusion.

«Seems like the little fellow got along with Hwasan a little and learned to be a bit mischievous. Growing up nicely, huh?»

«And how is that necessarily because of Hwasan? It's all thanks to Nokrim King's personal help.»

«Oh, is that so?»

The gazes of the two men clashed fiercely in the air.

Watching this unfold, Tang Pae began to press his palm against his stomach. Sensing his discomfort, Tang Soso silently handed him a small paper bag.

«What's this?»

«It's stomach medicine.»

«...»

«I brought plenty, so don't worry. We're used to it.»

«Thank you.»

But still, only his little sister seemed to care for him... No, that's not it!

«Now is not the time for this! Let's focus on the task at hand, please!»

«Hmm.»

«...»

Responding to Tang Pae's insistent statement with a loud cough, Im Sobyong spoke up.

«Of course, it may sound a bit absurd...»

«A bit?»

«Very absurd?»

«Are you even in your right mind?»

«...»

After a moment of silence, Im Sobyong continued with a troubled expression.

«But if you think about it carefully, it's not just an absurd option...»

«It sounds pretty absurd to me.»

«Isn't your standard of absurdity different?»

«Is this the Sapa way? After all, that guy Jang Ilso doesn't seem entirely sane too.»

Im Sobyong's cheeks twitched slightly. These Hwasan's brats clearly didn't regard him even as the passing bandit. Even if he is the Nokrim King...

«Ah, cut the nonsense and just explain clearly! Anyway, it seems like these Sapa bastards are natural born tricksters. They never stop talking, always wagging their tongues!»

But Im Sobyong's complaint faded away in the face of Chung Myung's irritation. Yes, just by being accompanied by that guy, Hwasan's people would surely be recognized as patient Taoists.

«What? Why?»

«...Never mind.»

Im Sobyong sighed and opened the fan with a snap. But the reaction was lukewarm, perhaps because they had already seen enough of his incompetence.

«The path that cuts through Gangnam via land undoubtedly entails considerable risks. However, it's worth taking all those risks for a certain shortcut.»

«Why is that?»

«Because the risks decrease.»

There was a moment of silence. Everyone listening thought, 'So he finally injured his head after being hit so many times.' Im Sobyong quickly spoke up, sensing their sympathy.

«Think about it carefully! Just think in reverse. It's very simple. What problems arise when the journey becomes longer?»

«Is it that Haenam becomes more in danger?»

«That could be. Haenam is in urgent need right now.»

Amidst the relatively sensible opinions voiced by Namgung Dowi and Tang Pae, Im Sobyong firmly shook his head.

«No, that's a secondary issue. The real problem is that Sapaeryeon and Gupailbang will find out about our absence.»

«Ah...»

Upon hearing this, Yoon Jong nodded vigorously as if he had just realized something. Jo Geol, still not fully understanding, asked curiously.

«What do you mean, Sahyeong?»

«Think about it. Whether it's Gupailbang or Sapaeryeon, wouldn't they be on high alert given the current situation in Jangwon?»

«...That's true.»

Of course, they wouldn't be able to directly monitor the surroundings. It was practically impossible for weaker forces to surveil stronger ones. Unless the leaders like Jang Ilso or heads of the sects personally intervened.

It's not easy to deceive Chung Myung and monitor the surroundings in detail.

But it's not difficult to speculate about the situation in Jangwon through the coming and going people.

«Among them, what they are most concerned about are Chung Myung, the Lords, and Sasuk's movements, who became the Vice Sect Leader this time. But what would they think if the talks about them suddenly disappearing spread?»

«...They'll know we've left Jangwon.»

«That's right.»

Tap!

Im Sobyong struck the fan in his hand.

«Exactly. In my estimation, it won't take them more than three days to be certain that we've left Jangwon.»

Everyone could only nod in agreement. Upon reflection it was such an obvious statement.

«In that case, no matter how discreetly we move, we won't be able to hide the fact that we're heading to Haenam. Then how would they respond?»

«They'll likely release people to search for us.»

«No, not necessarily.»

Tap, tap!

Im Sobyong lightly tapped the lower part of the map depicting Hainan island with the end of his fan.

«There's no need for that. Simply mobilizing those with the means to do so to block Haenam sect would be sufficient. Regardless of the route, we'll eventually arrive at Hainan island, won't we?»

«Ah...»

«Or...»

A cruel smile flickered at the corners of Im Sobyong's mouth.

«Another option would be to erase Haenam before we even arrive.»

For a moment, everyone fell silent. A palpable tension hung in the air, too difficult to express in words. The thought that their actions might ironically hasten the fate of Haenam crossed their minds.

«These three days are crucial.»

Im Sobyong drew another line from Jangwon to Hainan with the end of his fan.

«The distance from here to Hainan in a straight line is 2500 li. It's a staggering distance, but... with the people we have here, we can travel at a speed that might seem a joke. Even if we cover only a hundred li in an hour?»

«... Twelve hundred li.»

«Yes. Two days should be sufficient. We might reach Hainan before Sapaeryeon even realize we've set off!»

«Wait a moment! Nokrim King!»

Namgung Dowi raised his hand with a perplexed expression.

«Isn't that too optimistic? The route to Hainan island isn't a straight line. Furthermore, we can't just run on roads. With over ten people, even if we were to sprint, it's unlikely we could cover two days' worth of distance without being noticed by everyone in Gangnam.»

«Of course, we won't do that. Moreover, as humans, it's impossible for us to maintain the same speed without resting for two days straight.»

«True.»

«But even considering all that, it's the same. With this group, even if we use inconspicuous mountain paths and move cautiously, it won't take more than five days to reach the vicinity of Hainan.»

«...»

«If that's the case, even if they realize our absence on the third day and send troops to Haenam?»

«We can still arrive in Haenam first.»

«That's right.»

Tang Pae nodded cautiously in response to Im Sobyong's words.

«Just a moment. If we enter Haenam like that, won't we just end up being surrounded along with them?»

«Tsk tsk. It seems Young Lord Tang still lacks an understanding of large-scale troop movements. Consider this: How many days did it take for Sichuan Tang clan to arrive after they decided to move to the Yangtze River?»

Recalling the past events, Tang Pae blushed slightly before responding.

«It took about ten days.»

«It only took that long because Tang clan can exert its power with only a small number of people. To blockade or annihilate Haenam sect, it would require a force far larger than that. It would take at least two weeks for Sapaeryeon to move, if not longer.»

«Ah...»

«In that time!»

Tap, tap!

Im Sobyong struck the map lightly with his fan.

«It won't be so tight until we persuade Haenam and devise a way to escape before the island is surrounded. Of course, it depends on the situation in Haenam.»

Listening quietly, Chung Myung chuckled.

«And even if things go wrong, you have enough time to withdraw, don't you?»

«Well... I won't deny it. I'm not someone who would risk my life for those people like you all would.»

Chung Myung laughed and nodded. It would be even more awkward if words of loyalty and righteousness came from his mouth.

«It sounds plausible, but is it really possible? Will they really not know that we are heading to Gangnam?»

At Jo Geol's question, Im Sobyong grinned.

«Of course, it's possible. That's why I requested such a noisy succession ceremony.»

«What?»

«Changing the head of a sect is a very significant event. Even Jang Ilso was tied up as a new leader after swallowing everything into Sapaeryeon, wasn't he?»

«That's true.»

«No matter how rootless and thoughtless Hwasan... no, no! That's what they think! Not me! Please, lower your fists!»

«...»

«Anyway, even with such a sect, they wouldn't think of throwing the newly appointed Vice Sect Leader out of the sect immediately after changing the Sect Leader. This sounds

especially true for Sapaeryeon, who cannot accurately understand what happened in the conversation with the Abbot.»

Everyone nodded in agreement. They accepted the situation smoothly because they knew why Baek Cheon became Vice Sect Leader and who Baek Cheon was. But from the perspective of Sapaeryeon, wouldn't it seem like a second generation disciple of a sect became Vice Sect Leader out of the blue?

And then, the next day, or even on the same day, he left the sect and headed from Gangbuk to Haenam?

'That's insane.'

'That's not something a sane person would do.'

'He should be sent to a mental institution.'

'But wait, aren't we the ones doing that?'

Im Somyeong chuckled.

«Do you know?»

«...»

«You wouldn't expect it. If they find out later, even Jang Ilso would say he heard he was crazy, but they never imagined he was this crazy... Hey! I'm not cursing, I'm not! Someone, please restrain him!»

As everyone was charmed by Im Sobyong's eloquent words, Yoon Jong opened his mouth again.

"I understand your concern. However, Nokrim King, can we truly penetrate Gangnam without being detected by them? Within the territory of Sapaeryeon? It seems implausible, doesn't it?"

At that moment, Im Sobyong smirked, lifting the corner of his mouth.

"It seems you've forgotten what I mentioned initially."

"Yes?"

"The primary consideration in determining these routes is to relocate to areas where Cheonumaneg's influence is strong, minimizing our exposure. That's why we selected places like Zhejiang, Anhui, Sichuan, and Yunnan."

"... Indeed."

"But what's the issue?"

"Yes?"

Momentarily perplexed, Yoon Jong blinked, prompting Im Sobyong to narrow his eyes.

"Through which route do we have to travel when we head to Gangnam?"

"Well... a discreet mountain path... Ah!"

Yoon Jong's eyes widened in realization.

At that moment, an overwhelmingly suffocating aura emanated from Im Sobyong.

«It seems everyone has forgotten, but I am the king of Nokrim.»

«.....»

«Whether it is Gangnam or Gangbuk, every mountain in the world belongs to Nokrim's territory.»

Under his imposing demeanor, everyone looked at Im Sobyong with renewed astonishment.

«Allow me to guide you. To Gangnam. Under the protection of the Nokrim King.»

A confident smile spread across the face of Nokrim King, Im Sobyong.