

Chapter 1152

Well, if it's absolutely necessary. (2)

When he finally regained his senses, there was only one thought on his mind.

'I must, I must handle this!'

If he couldn't somehow manage this situation, the moment he stepped out of the room, he might find himself trampled to death by those haunting figures, who glared at him like ghosts. Then, a gravestone inscribed with «Two Generations of Namgung Clan walked alongside the Yangtze River» would surely be erected. Everyone would gossip about it. While father bravely went off in a fight, the foolish son, out of recklessness, teased the wrong person and met his retribution.

'No, this can't be.'

Among the countless scenarios Namgung Dowi had envisioned for his own demise, this was not one of them. Trembling with a profound sense of crisis, Namgung Dowi desperately spoke up.

«W-well, this matter should be postponed a bit...»

«Why? It looks fine to me. Just do it right away. What's the big deal?»

«N-no, it's not like that!»

Namgung Dowi's mind began to spin more fiercely than it ever had.

«Creating the right position and appointing the right person to that position is a crucial matter. It's not something to be hastily decided in a situation like this!»

«Hmm?»

«People say personnel decisions are everything! Dynasties that failed to handle personnel matters properly throughout the generations inevitably perished! So, you must take it seriously!»

«...To that extent?»

«Well, it's only natural!»

«Hmm.»

Chung Myung savored this fact with a hint of disappointment.

«But can't we just decide on a few crucial positions beforehand and fill in the other minor ones later?»

«The human heart doesn't work that way. If you decide on important positions first, the process of selecting the rest may become somewhat negligent!»

«...»

«Please understand that everything I say is driven by my concern for Cheonumaeng!»

«Well, if you put it that way...»

«Yeah, Chung Myung. It seems like deciding this matter on the spot isn't appropriate.»

«Right, Hwasan Geomhyeop. We will discuss this matter deeply with the elders.»

As even Hyun Jong and Tang Gunak sided with Namgung Dowi, Chung Myung tactfully stepped back.

«Well, if that's how it is...»

«Haha. Yes, yes. It's not such a simple matter. Well then.»

At that moment, Chung Myung glanced at Namgung Dowi.

«By the way...»

«Yes?»

«It seems like Namgung Young Lord's wit has become quite sharp.»

«...»

«It didn't seem like that before. Is it because of hanging out with those Sapa bastards these days?»

«...»

«You learn good things. Quite interesting.»

Feeling unjust, Namgung Dowi's expression twisted as he pursed his lips. Comparing him to Sapa was too much, even if it was just as a joke.

Chung Myung chuckled and turned to address everyone.

«Now, what about other matters?»

«Hmm, other matters...»

Tang Gunak cleared his throat discreetly. Despite experiencing it several times, he still wasn't entirely comfortable exchanging opinions on equal grounds. However, in moments like these, he had to express his thoughts.

«Listen, Hwasan Geomhyeop.»

«Yes, Lord.»

«There will be a war, won't there?»

Chung Myung's gaze at Tang Gunak turned solemn. Wasn't that already an old story?

«So, do you plan to maintain Yangtze River front until the war breaks out?»

«That's not for us to decide.»

«Huh?»

«It's up to Gupailbang guys. If they're not withdrawing, it wouldn't look good if we withdrew first, right?»

«Indeed, that makes sense.»

Tang Gunak furrowed his brow slightly.

‘What on earth is Beop Jong thinking?’

In truth, while Cheonumaeng had somewhat unintentionally secured a place here, it was Gupailbang and Five Great Families, particularly factions aligned with Shaolin, that swiftly established themselves along the Yangtze River.

As this conversation unfolded, Baek Cheon scratched his head thoughtfully.

«Come to think of it, we've been too preoccupied with our immediate concerns, but what on earth are they doing?»

«Hmm?»

«We've been training here, and others had to join us here. We naturally ended up settling in Jangwon. But it's not the same for Gupailbang.»

«That's true.»

«It feels like they could withdraw at any time...»

Initially, Gupailbang couldn't easily leave the Yangtze River because of the uncertainty of when Sapaeryeon might cross the river. But now?

«...There's no way they wouldn't know about the information suggesting the need for internal maintenance within Sapaeryeon.»

«That's underestimating Gupailbang. They must be aware, naturally.»

It just didn't make sense. If Sapaeryeon wasn't advancing north, Gupailbang didn't necessarily need to guard the Yangtze River basin. So, why were they still holding their position there?

«Why complicate things like that?»

«Hmm?»

All eyes turned to Chung Myung. His expression was somewhat sad.

«It's not that deep of a thought. Just put yourself in their shoes.»

«...What do you mean?»

«If you were in the shoes of Gupailbang's bald leader, what would you do? He has run all the way here, only to do nothing. He heard there was Demonic Cult in full swing, but some guys went and sorted it out before he could take advantage of it.»

Thinking from the perspective of the other side seemed quite awkward.

«While we might not care about such things, that baldy is tremendously concerned about it.»

«You are talking about dignity and justification?»

«Yes, that's it.»

Chung Myung smiled as he spoke,

«Even if they don't know, in such a situation, they probably wouldn't want to withdraw from the Yangtze River before us. At least, they'd want the justification that they guarded Yangtze River until the end. Initially, they might have just thought of waiting for us to disperse and return to our respective sects, then they would follow suit.»

«...Ah.»

«Yes. But we're not going home.»

«...»

«In that situation, if we ask them why they're not going to their homes when we're not, their insides would burst at the thought of having to explain that.»

Tang Gunak laughed.

«While what you said isn't entirely wrong, leaving the headquarters of the sect and spending time here isn't as easy as it sounds. There's no other sect like Hwasan that could exert their

influence in Shaanxi due to Southern Edge's Bongmun. However, for other sects, even a brief vacuum could lead to fatal issues.»

«Hmm?»

«Of course, the dignity and justification you mentioned have some impact, but thinking they're staying there just for that one reason seems a bit excessive. It's definitely not the only reason.»

As Tang Gunak confidently explained, Im Sobyong interjected abruptly.

«What kind of half-baked thoughts are you having?»

Tang Gunak's gaze shifted to him. Im Sobyong leaned against the wall with a nonchalant expression and spoke in a drowsy tone,

«Although it is said that if one respects even a grandchild, it can lead to a hundred generations of prosperity, our esteemed senior members seem to know their enemies but remain ignorant of themselves.»

«What's that supposed to mean?»

When Tang Gunak asked, Im Sobyong smirked.

«Think about it, think. Don't you reckon they've been observing what we've been up to all this time?»

«Well... I guess?»

Originally, Jangwon was not designed to conceal internal affairs from the outside. Moreover, those in charge of the manor came and went countless times, making it easy for them to obtain information about this place without having to resort to espionage.

And in a way, they might be more curious about the movements of Cheonumaeng than Sapaeryeon, naturally paying attention to it.

«So, what do you think they're thinking?»

«What do you mean?»

«Consider what they might have seen and heard all this time.»

«What they might have seen and heard... well, they...»

At that moment, Baek Cheon spoke up.

«Hwasan and Tangga have been engaged in constant conflicts all day long.»

Yoon Jong followed up,

«The leader of Tangga is infuriated, mobilizing the elders and ruthlessly beating up his disciples.»

Tang Pae subtly sneaked in.

«Suddenly the Beast Palace emerged from Yunnan and is actively involved, clashing with other sects there?»

Namung Dowi spoke with a cold sweat breaking out.

«S-Surely the rumor didn't spread that Namung clan is engaging in dirty tricks and brawling with Nokrim?»

As Tang Gunak's expression twisted, Jo Geol, who had both hands clasped behind his head, smiled as he spoke.

«After witnessing that spectacle as the decisive blow, I heard that Chung Myung bastard lost half of his sanity, or so the rumor goes.»

«...Huh?»

«Do you know?»

Im Sobyong drove the point home as if saying, «Take a look at this.»

«Right now, the ones probably wanting to ask, 'What the heck are you guys doing here?' are not us, but likely them over there.»

At this point, Tang Gunak couldn't laugh or cry.

«Abbot.»

«...»

«How long do you plan to stay here?»

«...»

«You surely don't intend to bury your bones here, do you?»

The Abbot remained silent with eyes closed. Jonglihyeong persisted and probed again.

«Abbot, you must know. For a while, Sapaeryeon won't be advancing north. Now that Surochae is occupying Maehwado, they don't have the capacity to cross the Yangtze River. With their leader injured, there's no way they can handle things independently without the support of Sapaeryeon.»

«...»

«But why do you keep staying here? How many days has it been, waisting our time here?»

Jonglihyeong, unable to overcome his frustration, pounded his chest.

«The discontent among the disciples is beyond description. Shouldn't you understand the feelings of those who hastily left their hometown and got stuck in this distant place? There are already frequent suggestions from the Paeng family to leave this place even if we are the only ones leaving!»

«...»

«Abbot! Please say something, anything!»

At that moment, Beop Jong slowly opened the eyes he had kept shut. However, that was it. He stared at Jonglihyeong with eyes sunk deep, still maintaining his silent demeanor.

«Abbot...»

In response, Jonglihyeong spoke as if he had made up his mind, his voice lower than usual.

«I didn't want to say something like this, but... currently among the disciples, there's talk that the Abbot has been scared. It's like being intimidated by a lid on a chest. Do you understand what I'm saying?»

«...A lid of a chest, you said?»

«Yes. Abbot! To the extent that... «

«What's the problem with that?»

«...»

Perplexed, Jonglihyeong widened his eyes and looked at Beop Jong. Beop Jong remained calm.

«Why would it be wrong for someone bitten by a snake to be scared by a chest popping open? It's more foolish to act like nothing happened and get bitten again.»

Beop Jong added with a bit of sharpness.

«Even if they say it's frustrating and regrettable, it wouldn't be right for me to suffer another disgrace from them, don't you think?»

«Ab-Abbot»

Beop Jong's eyes were clearly directed at Jonglihyeong sitting across from him. However, what he truly saw was the image of Chung Myung rising behind Jonglihyeong.

'Hwasan Geomhyeop.'

Beop Jong let out a long breath through his nose.

'What kind of scheme is he plotting now?'

Chung Myung's illusion chuckled. Unconsciously, Beop Jong clenched his fist.