

Chapter 1234

So I heard that's true? (4)

The waves rippled across the sea.

The sunlight gently shined down, and seagulls cried out peacefully. It was truly tranquil...

«Whoa!»

Faces that seemed to have just escaped from hell suddenly burst out of the water, shattering the peace.

Splash! Splash! Splutter!

As they coughed up water from their noses and mouths, the distressed people blinked their eyes.

«Why on earth are you pushing people under the water all of a sudden? What's going on!»

«Hey, calm down for a moment...»

«Calm down? Do I look calm to you? I almost drowned!»

It was quite shocking to be suddenly shoved underwater while struggling for one's life. But unlike Ogeom who had long been used to Chung Myung, never having experienced such evil things before, Tang Pae seemed to not find it amusing.

«Hahaha! Did you see that big fish just now?»

«I did! But wasn't it a size of a person?»

«Could it be a whale or something? Wow! I've never seen anything like that before.»

«Should we go take another look?»

«I kind of want to touch it...»

Amidst the innocent banter of his Sajils, Baek Cheon smiled contentedly.

'That's a shark, you crazy fools.'

Touch it and you'll lose your hand.

Considering whether to enlighten the seemingly blissful Sajils about the harsh reality of the world, Baek Cheon soon shook his head. There was no need to inform them about the sharks swimming beneath their feet. Even if they were to come under attack, they weren't the type to die from something like that...

«Hey, it's coming this way! What's sticking out? Should we pet it?»

«Don't go over there, you idiots!»

Baek Cheon's abrupt shout made Jo Geol and Yoon Jong sullen.

«Why are you getting mad, Sasuk?»

«You don't really like animals, do you, Sasuk?»

«Oh, really?»

«Baek Ah doesn't like him either.»

«Maybe it's just some weird rivalry thing within Baek clan? They're both Baek disciples, after all.»

«I think it's more about getting his clothes dirty with fur. You know he's a neat freak.»

No! You've got it all wrong, you crazy bastards!

As Baek Cheon brooded over the unjust accusations, those around him, who seemed utterly indifferent to his plight, casually spoke up.

«We've come quite a way since then, haven't we, Sago?»

«Yeah, farther than I thought.»

«Will it be easy to go from here?»

Yu Iseol nodded lightly.

While it was unknown how people from other sects would fare, the disciples of Hwasan were accustomed to underwater combat. Chung Myung's doctrine stipulated that swordsmanship should be honed not only in the air but also underwater and even amidst the flames. Therefore, the disciples of Hwasan had trained their swordsmanship in various situations.

Although the cunning ploy of Chung Myung, who attempted to push them into the fire pit under the pretext of ensuring they could wield their swords even in flames, was thwarted by the swift kick of Hyun Jong, there was still a lingering concern about Chung Myung's potential future schemes. Nonetheless, thanks to that rigorous training, the disciples of Hwasan could easily swim through distances like this.

While the slightly higher waves were a bit bothersome, they had experienced similar waves on the Yangtze River, so this wasn't much of a challenge compared to that...

«Let's not waste time and hurry up.»

«With this speed, can we arrive before sunset?»

Showing great enthusiasm, Namung Dowi chuckled.

«Before sunset? The sun is already halfway down, you're talking nonsense.»

«What? What do you mean? The sun is setting? Is the daylight shorter here in the Southern Sea?»

«Well, that's not what I heard. As far as I know, the daytime here is a bit longer, isn't it?»

«Then why is the sun already setting? In terms of time, there's still a long way to go. It should be around noon now.»

«Is it? Then why is it so dark here?»

«It's quite dark... Wait...»

Namung Dowi abruptly stopped speaking.

«What's wrong?»

Just a moment ago, it was clearly a hot summer afternoon with bright sunlight shining down, but now it was strangely dark, just as Tang Pae had described.

«No, why is it suddenly so dark...»

At that moment...

Rumble!

At the ominous sound echoing from somewhere, everyone slowly turned their heads.

The looming dark clouds became visible at last.

«...It's pitch black.»

«We marveled at blizzards in the Northern Sea, and now, what kind of bizarre clouds are moving so sharply defined like that?»

«Isn't this remarkable in its own way?»

«Haha. Indeed...»

Rumble!

At that moment, everyone saw it.

Above the sea, amid the greenish clouds, a series of blinding flashes erupted one after another.

For a moment, everyone fell silent.

Namgung Dowi, who had been staring at the scene blankly, murmured without realizing it.

«Wow... It's breathtaking.»

It was a sight that was breathtaking in more ways than one.

«Looks like a typhoon, doesn't it?»

«To me, it seems more like a storm.»

«What's the difference?»

«Well, there's definitely a distinction.»

Kwaaaah!

At that moment, fierce winds accompanied by crashing waves swept over them. In that instant, everyone there reverted to their three-year-old selves. Awkwardly, they chuckled as if riding on their father's shoulders.

Rumble!

Lightning and gales surged simultaneously, while a towering wave loomed overhead like a house. Jo Geol smiled contentedly and said,

«Well, we are screwed.»

And they were indeed.

Kwaaaah!

«Aaaah!»

The rushing tsunami lifted people up like pieces of paper and tossed them around. Those who had stood tall just moments ago were now swiftly submerged below.

«We're... We're going to die!»

Jo Geol's eyes widened as he screamed in terror.

He was a seasoned swordsman trained in the notorious Hwasan. Even if thousands of enemies surged before him, he would charge forward without blinking an eye, brandishing his sword... A courageous soul indeed.

But that was a tale for when there were enemies present.

«Ah! Heelp! Sasuuuk! We're going to die... Guh-ruh-ruh-ruh!»

In a situation where waves several zhang deep were crashing overhead, what could they possibly do with a sword? Even if their martial arts prowess could allow them to slice through dozens of waves with a single stroke, from the ocean's perspective, it would simply scoff and say, 'Yes, bring on the next wave.'

«Just shut up and swim! Stop blabbering and start moving!»

«How can we swim when the waves are pounding like this!»

At that moment, Baek Cheon's eyes snapped open.

«Whether it's waves or whatever, we are disciples of Hwasan! If we overcome this, that's the end of it!»

«We are Taoists!»

«So what?»

«Adapting to nature is what Taoists do! Is Taoism teaching you to resist nature?»

«Then let's drown!»

«That's the point...»

At that moment, a white lightning bolt struck not far from where they were.

Rumble! Crash!

Shortly after, everyone's jaws dropped at the ensuing thunderous blast.

«Wow... It's lightning fast.»

«If anyone dares to brag about having a lightning-fast sword in front of me, I'll tear them apart.»

«...Indeed, nature is greater than anything, and all cycles...»

«Why are you saying such things in this situation? Huh?»

Everyone felt a tingling sensation throughout their bodies. Seeing lightning strike before their eyes, they knew what it meant. If they were struck by something like that, it didn't matter if they were the greatest swordsman in the world or possessed unprecedented skills — they would all meet their end.

«Let's go back, Sasuk!»

«...No.»

«If we continue like this, we'll only meet disaster, right? We should retreat to the coast now and come back when the storm subsides!»

«I understand, but...»

«Whether it's Haenam or whatever, we need to survive for them to survive too! Even if Jang Ilso himself came, seeing this storm, he'd probably say, 'Hmm. Let's just drink until the storm passes!' So, we can come back later, right?»

«No! That's not the problem!»

«Then what's the problem?»

«...Returning won't be easy now, that's the problem.»

«What?»

In a moment of panic, trembling, Jo Geol looked back at the path they had come from. Far away, the distant land was visible.

«...»

«Whether we go forward or backward, death awaits us.»

«...»

Even in facing death, he managed to face it with style.

«So let's move forward!»

A gleam of madness flickered in Baek Cheon's eyes. But before that madness could fully erupt, the rushing seawater struck his face.

«Grrk!»

«... Well done.»

Rumbling thunderbolts struck one after another.

At this point, it's not the time to debate whether it's an exaggeration or not. The raging currents sweeping people away at tremendous speed, and the waves towering like houses overhead, were terrifying.

No matter how much one has experienced, there is nothing human power can do about the lightning that strikes several times in the blink of an eye.

'Really, we're going to die!'

Everyone's face turned pale with fear as they instinctively turned their heads.

«Chung Myuuuung!»

«Hey, you bastard!»

«Do something!»

Chung Myung looked at everyone as if they were pathetic.

«No... Do you think I'm some kind of magician's hat? What do you expect me to do when a typhoon is coming?»

«You're the one who said we should set off!»

«You said we should swim!»

«You said we would arrive in half a day, you jerk! We'll arrive, sure. But where we arrive will be the afterlife!»

«Oh my, Sect Leader... Your disciples are leaving this place!»

«...Father.»

«Don't cry, Sago!»

Watching the half-crazed people silently, Chung Myung clicked his tongue.

«The disciples of the great Hwasan Sect... No, the disciples of the Great Cheonumaeng are all so cowardly. Despite being the young lords, and the Vice Sect Leader...»

Rumbling thunderbolts struck again!

«Ah, damn!»

As the thunderbolt struck just a dozen or so zhang away, Chung Myung's body trembled.

«Look at this bastard!»

«What are we going to do about this?»

«At any rate, these guys... Their heads are like ornaments!»

There was a moment when Chung Myung was about to open his mouth confidently, but then.

«Everyone, dive!»

«Yes?»

Chung Myung turned his drenched face. The soaked, rat-like Im Sobyong, spoke again with his chapped lips.

«Dive! Just dive a few zhang down, and it'll be calm under the water. Even if lightning strikes, there won't be any problem below.»

«Oh!»

«Indeed, the soldier of Cheonumaneg!»

«Well... That guy can look cool sometimes. His face is pale... Are you okay?»

Im Sobyong weakly chuckled after being hit in the face by the rough water.

«Haha. I'm fine... cough, cough. Fine... cough, cough. Ahh!»

«Wow, blood is gushing out of his mouth like a stream.»

«It's strange he's not dead by now, isn't it?»

«It looks like something vague is escaping from above his head.»

«Sahyeong! Sahyeong! Recite the rite chant! What do we do...»

Kwururururung!

At that moment, the sky roared loudly once again. After hastily exchanging glances, everyone shouted:

«Get in!»

«Dive!»

«Ahhhh!»

«I, I have a bit of... thalassophobia...»

«This guy has acrophobia too! Just get in!»

With long breaths, Cheonumaeng's members plunged deeper and deeper into the dark waters.

Kwaaaaaaaah!

A colossal wave swept fiercely over the surface, concealing their presence beneath it.