

Chapter 1078

Next time it will be your neck. (3)

He felt like his energy was about to erupt, and it wasn't solely because of the intensity they exuded. Just the fact that they were openly displaying their enmity, right next to each other, sent one's blood racing.

The circumstances were different, and what they possessed was different. What they could do was undoubtedly distinct. However, it seemed as if neither of them cared about these differences and refused to yield an inch.

The tension was as taut as a drawn bowstring.

The suffocating tension was broken by a faint sigh that escaped from Jang Ilso's lips.

«Ha.»

Despite being a very faint sound, it felt like a razor-sharp blade cutting through tightly drawn strings.

As Chung Myung's shoulder twitched slightly, Jang Ilso took a small step back.

A stifling silence filled the air.

As Jang Ilso calmly stepped back, he looked at Chung Myung with a bewildered expression he couldn't hide.

«What...»

As he stepped back, Chung Myung moved forward. It meant that his threat was no mere bluff. If Jang Ilso had shown the slightest sign of attacking, Chung Myung's sword would have flown straight at his throat, even in such a situation.

«Really, you're out of your mind.»

It was a statement that could be taken as admiration or criticism, or perhaps both. Chung Myung snorted.

«Maybe it's not your place to say.»

However, Jang Ilso shook his head.

«No, it's meaningful because I'm the one saying it. I don't easily recognize someone as crazy.»

«But this bastard?»

Under normal circumstances, the disciples of Hwasan would have either agreed or countered that statement. However, now they couldn't even open their mouths. The standoff between these two was so intense and sharp that it left no room for any response.

And Baek Cheon knew.

Jang Ilso was the one who stepped back first. But retreating in such a tightly entangled atmosphere was by no means an easy feat. To step back in this context meant revealing a vulnerability. To step back was essentially creating an opening.

Who would dare to show an opening in front of Chung Myung?

So even though Jang Ilso stepped back, it was by no means a sign of weakness. On the contrary, it was a situation in which Jang Ilso had proven he had guts.

‘Whether it’s him or that guy...’

It was a confrontation where a dragon and a tiger fought to a standstill, a battle of unyielding spirits.

Watching this unique standoff from up close was a fortune as an observer, but it was an unfortunate situation for someone as a person involved.

«Confirmation, huh...»

Jang Ilso clicked his tongue, then twisted his smile slightly.

«Well, I’m not the type to shy away from confirming things myself... But that’s subjective, too. I’m not so audacious as to test my own life by confronting Hwasan Geomhyeop, the best in the world.»

«... You’re spouting nonsense.»

Chung Myung retorted.

Everyone knows that Jang Ilso isn’t the type to value his own life. And those who have observed Jang Ilso here should be even more aware of this fact. The smug attitude was annoying.

However, Jang Ilso raised both arms and took a step back as if surrendering, but his expression and actions showed no sign of fear. Rather, there was a mocking confidence in his demeanor.

«So, should I step back at this point?»

«Rye-, Ryeonju!»

Ho Gamyong shouted in bewilderment. He understood that Jang Ilso’s words did not simply mean stepping back a few steps.

“W-we can’t allow them to go like this!”

Facing fierce opposition, Jang Ilso sighed deeply and turned to look at Ho Gamyong.

“Gamyong-ah.”

“This is not like you, Ryeonju! We mustn’t let Hwasan Geomhyeop bastard live. We must definitely...”

“Gamyong-ah.”

At the second calling of his name, Ho Gamyong fell silent. Jang Ilso’s voice was calm and gentle, devoid of any irritation. This made it even more impossible to disobey.

Jang Ilso looked at Ho Gamyong with a gaze full of regret and said,

«I never knew you were so ambitious.»

«... Yes?»

«Did you really want to go to such lengths to kill me?»

«What... What are you talking about?»

Ho Gamyong was greatly perplexed. Jang Ilso, alternately looking at him and Chung Myung, as if he was mocking him, continued,

«Don't you understand? The one who's life is being held hostage right now isn't Hwasan Geomhyeop's but mine.»

«... What?»

Ho Gamyeong asked as if he didn't understand, and Jang Ilso turned to Chung Myung without answering.

«Thirty percent. Maybe it's around that much.»

Those words made Chung Myung's eyes widen with astonishment.

«... That's correct.»

Jang Ilso let out a deep sigh.

«Anyway, the martial arts of those orthodox sects are dirty. He managed to regain thirty percent of internal strength in just a brief period of cultivation. Will the people from Evil Faction be able to live with this?»

Jang Ilso shook his head as if he was fed up.

«With thirty percent of internal strength in his hands, it shouldn't be that difficult to cut my powerless and feeble neck.»

Ho Gamyeong opened his eyes wide.

Here, there are also Cheon Myeon Susa and Red Dogs, and Black Ghost's elites. All of them would stand in front of Jang Ilso and protect him. But does that mean Chung Myung can break through all of them and get to Jang Ilso ?

'No, no...'

Ho Gamyeong, who had been lost in thought, bit his lip for a moment.

Didn't he already see it? Chung Myung's performance when he fought with the Bishop. Considering his persistence and boldness, it was hard to argue with Jang Ilso's words. Even if his body was to be torn to shreds and broken, Chung Myung would definitely swing a sword at Jang Ilso's throat.

'Can he really not be stopped?'

Ho Gamyeong was briefly caught in a conflict. However, reaching a conclusion was a simple and easy matter. Ho Gamyeong was someone who could never gamble with Jang Ilso's life at stake. Even if there was a one-in-a-billion chance of danger, they should back off.

Watching Ho Gamyeong's changing expression, Jang Ilso shrugged his shoulders.

«Do you understand? Begging for ones life...»

Jang Ilso's eyes drew an arc.

«...it's our side instead.»

Even though he spoke about the risk to his own life, there was no trace of embarrassment or fear on Jang Ilso's face.

But Ho Gamyeong was different. As he grew increasingly uneasy, he hesitated and tried to stand between Jang Ilso and Chung Myung, but Jang Ilso tapped him on the shoulder and pulled him to the side.

«Tsk. You're not very convincing.»

«Well...»

«Don't worry. Unless I make the first move, that sword won't fly at my throat.»

Jang Ilso smiled strangely and asked Chung Myung.

«Isn't that right?»

«...It might seem that way if you only look at the surface.»

«Hahaha!»

Jang Ilso burst into laughter at the roundabout response. Right now, Chung Myung could kill Jang Ilso. But if that happened, all the remaining disciples of Hwasan, along with Chung Myung himself, would have to bury their bones here. It was a ridiculous situation, but if Jang Ilso stayed alive, they would too, and if he died, they would too. So, while Chung Myung could kill Jang Ilso, he absolutely couldn't kill Jang Ilso at the same time.

«Hmm, there's no other choice.»

Jang Ilso muttered, letting out a sigh. Everyone's attention was fixed on his words. Finally, Jang Ilso said,

«Send them off.»

He shrugged his shoulders after a brief statement.

«As a gesture of respect to our fellow comrades.»

«Ridiculous.»

«Good heavens, you're so stubborn. When someone speaks with such sincerity.»

As if he was offended, Jang Ilso shook his head, and then he seemed to make up his mind, narrowing his eyes and carefully scanning the surroundings.

«Let's see...»

After surveying the surroundings for a while, Jang Ilso smiled.

«Over there.»

He casually took a step forward, leaving everyone in front of him as they were. None could stop him – neither the disciples of Hwasan, nor his subordinates, and not even Chung Myung, who held Jang Ilso's life as a hostage.

Jang Ilso headed towards a place quite a distance away, looking down quietly. It was a ruin that had been engulfed by the battle, and no one could even guess what it originally was.

Kuwung!

Jang Ilso forcefully stamped the ground, and something shot up with a loud rumble.

‘A chest?’

The disciples of Hwasan tensed up. This man was Jang Ilso, known for his unpredictable actions, and they couldn't help but suspect what kind of trick he was up to this time.

«That's right.»

However, as if he didn't sense their suspicions at all, Jang Ilso casually opened the chest. He took something out of it and then walked back towards the disciples of Hwasan with slow steps.

«Here.»

Jang Ilso threw what he was holding in his hand to Chung Myung. Everyone around were taken aback, but he simply caught it with ease.

All eyes were on what Chung Myung was holding in his hand. Baek Cheon let out a muffled laughter. It was truly absurd.

The item in Chung Myung's hand was undoubtedly...

«...Alcohol?»

It was a bottle of liquor.

«What's so surprising? Do you think I might devour you or something?»

Jang Ilso chuckled and let out a languid sigh.

«If it's a grand opponent, you should have at least one wine cellar underground.»

«...»

«If we've fought together, sharing a drink to wash away our blood is our way. I don't know if the distinguished members of the orthodox faction would appreciate the customs of us lowly Sapa folks...»

Before Jang Ilso even finished speaking, the sound of a bottle being uncorked rang out clearly.

Chung Myung glanced briefly at Jang Ilso, then casually tossed the cork aside and took a swig of the liquor. There was no hesitation.

«Hmm.»

A faint smile appeared at the corner of Jang Ilso's mouth.

«He has a taste.»

He too removed the cork from the bottle he held and, like Chung Myung, took a swig of the liquor.

It was a strange sight indeed.

Two people, who were once enemies and had fought together, now stood face to face, silently drinking. In the quiet surroundings, the only sound that faintly echoed was them gulping their drinks.

Drinking in silence, the two of them seemed as though they might empty their bottles right there. Then, without any indication of who would do so first, both of them suddenly withdrew their bottles from their lips.

Their gazes met in the empty air. Chung Myung's eyes remained cold and composed, while in contrast, Jang Ilso's eyes seemed to be simmering with a strange glow.

Jang Ilso broke the silence.

«Next time...»

«Sure.»

Chung Myung picked up where Jang Ilso left off.

«It'll be your neck.»

Simultaneously, smiles appeared on their lips. There was a palpable absence of any intent to hide their murderous intent.

After a moment of gazing at each other like that, Jang Ilso turned first.

«Let's go, Gamyong.»

«Yes, Lord Ryeonju.»

Ho Gamyong, who was following Jang Ilso quickly, turned his head slightly towards Hwasan. With a determined look in his eyes, he spoke.

«Head north. I will only allow that one path. Stray from that path, and you will die.»

«...»

«I hope you'll heed my warning this time.»

With those words, he followed Jang Ilso. Red Dogs and Black Ghosts, who had surrounded Hwasan, also lifted their siege and retreated.

As Chung Myung watched Jang Ilso moving further away for some time, he suddenly raised his voice.

“Hey, Jang Ilso.»

Jang Ilso, who was already walking away, stopped in his tracks. He turned his head slightly to look at Chung Myung.

As their gazes met, Chung Myung let out a sneer.

«Thirty percent.»

Jang Ilso's eyebrows twitched slightly. Chung Myung continued.

«The debt has been paid. There won't be a next time.»

«Haha...»

The blood-red lips on Jang Ilso's pale face drew a sinister curve.

«Hahaha, hahaha...»

Jang Ilso, who had been laughing like a demon, said as he spat out the words.

«See you again, Hwasan Geomhyeop.»

Smiling warmly at Chung Myung, Jang Ilso withdrew his burning gaze and continued walking forward.

The disciples of Hwasan remained in their places as if frozen, until the figures of Jang Ilso and those following him were no longer visible.