

## Chapter 1086

In my past life, what sin did I commit? (1)

«They've already returned?»

«That's right!»

«You're saying they've already defeated that Demonic Cult? It hasn't even been four days since they left?»

Tang Sumyeong [당수명(當水明)] asked astonished with his eyes wide open.

The fear associated with the name of the Demonic Cult was deeply ingrained into him. Who doesn't know about the brutal war a hundred years ago? It would be the same for all martial artists in Gangho.

Even though it was rarely mentioned due to its taboo nature, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that there was no martial artist who didn't know the terrifying and dreadful existence of the Demonic Cult.

However, to defeat them in just four days, how could one not be surprised?

«Is that possible?»

«Well, surely the real Demonic Cult didn't all come rushing at once? It was probably just a scouting party.»

«No, this person... Do I sound like I don't know? Even if it's a scouting party, it's still the Demonic Cult. Don't you know what it is?»

«Hmm.»

Upon hearing those words, Tang Munhyeok [당문혁(當文奕)] shook his head. Even if it was just a scouting party, the Demonic Cult was still the Demonic Cult. Moreover, considering that the scouting party had laid waste to the whole Hangzhou, it couldn't be casually underestimated as just a mere scouting party.

«How could that arrogant leader of Sapaeryeon have sought help? There are rumors that even Mangeum Daebu suffered greatly at the hands of the Demonic Cult.»

«Surely not to that extent...»

«Oh, this person! Would I make things up? It's news that came straight from the Beggars Sect.»

«Is that information reliable?»

«Why not!»

Tang Sumyeong firmly stated and then nodded slowly.

«But... no matter how much they relied on the Sapa bastards, to tidy them up and return in just four days... What the hell is Hwasan Geomhyeop?...»

«It's not just Hwasan Geomhyeop's strength. The Five Swords that went together, along with other martial artists, must have played a role.»

«That's right, that's right. That makes sense.»

The faces of the people discussing showed a subtle pride, whether they realized it or not. Originally, martial artists couldn't simply watch the activities of other factions with joy. The rise of another faction meant a relative decline in their own influence.

However, the faces of Tangga's people discussing Hwasan's actions didn't show any signs of resentment.

«Indeed, Patriarch's foresight is truly remarkable.»

«That's true. Who could have imagined Hwasan turning out like this?»

«The elders and most people in the family were against it at the time. Honestly, who would have thought of forming an alliance with Hwasan? We are the most respected martial arts clan, and they were just a fallen sect.»

Everyone expressed their admiration in awe.

In a time when Hwasan's prestige was far from what it is now, Tang Gunak established an equal alliance with them. Because the authority of the family was so strong, and because the council of Elders, which had actively opposed it, had been disbanded, no one was able to openly oppose it. But how much discontent simmered beneath the surface?

Yet, who could have foreseen that this choice would lead to such results?

«At that time, the only one who truly understood the value of Hwasan in the world was our Lord.»

«Ah! That's why he's our Lord.»

Pride naturally appeared on the faces of those from the Tang clan.

To the people of the Tang clan, Hwasan was never just another faction or an outsider. It had been a place they formed a relationship with and supported from the time it didn't receive recognition from the world. It wasn't just an alliance — it was a unique blood bond.

As Hwasan's status rose, it only emphasized the greatness of the Tang clan, giving them every reason to be pleased.

«With this, Hwasan's status will rise once again.»

«That's obvious! It's not just Hwasan! The status of the Cheonumaeng and the Tang clan will also rise again.»

Tang Munhyeok laughed.

«Those guys from the Gupailbang, especially that bald leader of Shaolin, must be turning inside out just thinking about it. It feels like ten years of pent-up frustration is finally being released.»

«That's right, that's right!»

Those gathered erupted into hearty laughter.

Since the old days, there hasn't been a favorable sentiment towards the Gupailbang, including Shaolin. Given the local rivalry with Qingcheng, which represented Gupailbang, it was only natural. The negative feelings escalated to the extreme due to the Maehwado incident, and such reactions lingered even now.

«But... where are our heroes who accomplished such remarkable feats? I heard that Lady Soso also visited.»

«Tsk tsk. You're talking nonsense. Obviously, they must be receiving honors from the high-ranking people by now.»

«Is that so?»

«Is this an exceptional situation? It's not just anyone — it's Magyo. Moreover, they came back crossing the enemy's territory of Gangnam. Penetrating that deep into the enemy's territory is a feat in itself! It wouldn't be enough to be praised all day long! For seven days and nights!»

«Heh, I envy them. I wish I could receive praise from our Lord once.»

«You'll never experience that in your lifetime, so be careful not to pick unnecessary fights and avoid cursing without reason.»

«What?»

The atmosphere became lively. Although they didn't directly accomplish it, being members of Cheonumaeng was enough to ignite their pride. Everyone gathered to heap praise upon Hwasan Geomhyeop Chung Myung and those who supported him as soon as they heard the news.

They had no doubt that those who achieved this grand feat would receive well-deserved praise.

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At that moment.

«Straighten up.»

«...»

«I said put them up straight!»

Having infiltrated the territories of the notorious evil sects, defeating the Demonic Cult who massacred innocent civilians, and successfully achieving a tremendous feat by escaping unscathed from the ruthless Gangnam, the heroes of Hwasan... were lined up, kneeling in a row with their arms raised.

Baek Cheon, who had silently bowed his head, subtly glanced up at Hyun Jong seated at the head of the table. Seeing the veins bulging on his forehead like a blue snake, Baek Cheon quietly lowered his gaze again.

«We... survived...»

«...»

«What? They give you a pirates' ship and you just hop on to come here?»

«...»

«You proceed to you tear apart a ship to make a fire for cooking?»

Hyun Jong's eyes flared up with murderous sparks.

Of course, the Hyun Jong present here was not the same one who used to worry about his disciples and couldn't sleep at night.

Having heard the news of a war-torn ship being spotted on the river, Hyun Jong rushed all the way to Nanjing, crossing thousands of miles up the river. Worried about those on board, he arrived to find out that the very individuals they were concerned about had arrived at the mouth of the river aboard the warship, setting up a drinking party. Hyun Jong, who had just covered another thousand miles, had now arrived at the mouth of the river once again.

«Haha... Ha. Hahaha...»

Laughing as if finding it absurd, Hyun Jong suddenly rolled his eyes and charged forward.

«Are you people human?!»

«Capture him!»

«Block him!»

As Hyun Jong soared through the air Tang Gunak and Hyung Sang, who had been nervously guarding him by his sides, swiftly leaped after him.

Hyun Jong, who was grabbed by them and hung in the air, threw furious kicks repeatedly.

«I thought our remaining disciples had burned, and their insides had rotted and burst open!

What? Did you come riding an enemy's ship? Hungry, so you tore the ship apart? You guys seem worse than those Sapa barbarians!»

«Oh, Sect Leader! Please endure it! Anyway, aren't these the ones who contributed the most and came back?»

«Contribution? Whaaaaat? Damn it! What? They contributed? What's the point of it! These crazy youngsters! Crazy!»

Hyun Jong's extended foot narrowly grazed in front of Baek Cheon's pale face. The air pressure struck Baek Cheon's lifeless face, but he couldn't muster the courage to turn his head away.

'I didn't know...'

Who could have imagined that Sect Leader Hyun Jong, instead of waiting in the mouth of the river, would be wandering around the Yangtze? He thought it would be no problem to go straight to the mouth of the river.

He never dreamed that Hyun Jong would be so distressed, that he would go upstream while they were coming back, warming themselves by the fire on the deck.

«Well, if... if one is hungry, they can eat some food..»

«Shut up, you idiot!»

«Be quiet!»

«Big snout!»

«Don't you dare open your mouth! Never open it! I'll really kill you!»

Ogeom panicked and poured threats towards Chung Myung.

«Well, did I say anything wrong?»

«Shut up!»

Chung Myung, who had received a good beating with words, pursed his lips.

Unlike Chung Myung, Ogeom had nothing to say even if they had ten mouths.

Think about it. Imagine hearing news that the kids who insisted on going to the riverside despite being told not to play near the water had fallen in. You rush there immediately, searching for them all day, only to hear that the kids were leisurely playing at home. How would the parents feel? Surely, their hearts would be thoroughly upset, wouldn't they?

'Even someone like me would first smash my backbone into pieces.'

'Sect Leader is a true Taoist. He lets us live.'

Hyun Jong turned his gaze towards Un Geom with murderous eyes.

"And you! You bastard! You!"

Un Geom's head lowered even further.

"I let you go thinking something like this might happen! What? Are you enjoying yourself, sharing porridge there? Did that go down smoothly? Did it?"

Un Geom's forehead now seemed almost touching the ground. Seeing his back, buried like a snail in its shell, Ogeom couldn't hold back tears.

'Sasuk.'

'Sorry, Sasukjo.'

'Oh...'

Though Un Geom had a mouth. However, at this moment, it's purpose for speaking had completely vanished. During the leisurely ascent through the river, had he just made a brief stop on the riverside and put in only one signal for them, things wouldn't have escalated to this extent. It was the oversight of that simple thing that led Sect Leader and other disciples to sprint all the way to Nanjing.

Thinking about how desperate they must have been during the full-speed rush to Nanjing...

"I apologize..."

"Oh, my poor soul! How could three generations..."

To prevent accidents, he sent the first generation disciples, second, and third all mixed together. However, a situation unfolded where all three ended up doing the same thing. At this point, it's seriously worth considering if there's some kind of demonic influence in the faction, isn't it?

Of course, there's room for unjust treatment even for Un Geom. Yet, the reason he can't utter a single complaint is because there are others here who are more unfairly treated than him.

«Even the Young Lord approved of that!»

«What?»

Suddenly hit by a stray spark, Namgung Dowi opened his eyes wide. He had been sitting in a corner discreetly, kneeling.

«If your companions are acting crazy, shouldn't you stop them first? Yet, the esteemed Young Lord of Namgung Clan seems to be doing the same thing as these bastards!»

Namgung Dowi's eyes widened even more.

«Me?»

«Yes!»

«These people?»

«Well...»

«Me?»

«...»

«Me?»

The soul seemed to drain from Hyun Jong's face. Just by observing his reaction, one could almost understand what Namgung Dowi had witnessed.

And then, as if utterly unable to comprehend the situation, Chung Myung opened his mouth.

«No, I mean, I just told you to wait without worrying, saying we would come back on our own. Sect Leader is getting old now. It's no good to worry unnecessarily.»

«...»

«Anyway, everyone came back safely. Isn't that right?»

At that moment, everyone present witnessed it. Hyun Jong, who had been staring blankly at Chung Myung, gradually transformed. His face, which had been changing, twisted into an expression of a ruthless murderer.

It was undoubtedly a sight the disciples of Hwasan had never seen before. For a moment, the word 'escape' vividly flashed through their minds.

«Uwaaaah! You little rascals!»

Hyun Jong, having finally exploded, threw off Tang Gunak and Hyun Sang, who had been grabbing his arms, and rushed towards Ogeom.

In the distant future... Hyun Sang recalled witnessing an Asura ascent there.