

## Chapter 1148

I've done everything I needed to, but you know. (3)

"Is it finished?"

"Well, a little is still left—"

"No, seriously, how can using the yard be such a big deal that it's never finished on time? Isn't this laziness too extreme?"

"Oh, please, don't even say that. Rushing to finish within the time frame might lead to a degree of incompetence. Imagine the fury if Elder Hyun Young from Hwasan came and found a mess!"

"...Elder Hyun Young?"

"I'm not exactly sure, but that particular fussy person..."

"Right."

"Yes, anyway... If the place isn't kept clean when people who go to the training grounds visit, they'll easily look down on us gathered here..."

"...Then we should sweep."

"What?"

"..."

Among those working in the yards, the most feared figure was not Hyun Jong, the head of Cheonumaeng, or even Chung Myung, the demon of Cheonumaeng.

Hyun Jong was gentle to the extent that to those unfamiliar with martial arts, he might seem more like a naive... no, anyway, an endlessly warm person. Chung Myung didn't bother tormenting commoners, because he needed to focus on those who needed immediate attention, turning a blind eye to others.

To common people, the person akin to the Grim Reaper was none other than Hyun Young, Hwasan's financial head.

"People say that Taoist monks... have a good personality..."

"Oh, this guy! Why would you say such a thing! Are you asking for trouble?"

"I-I apologize."

"Keep those kinds of comments for when no one's around."

"Yes..."

The one sweeping suddenly turned his head to check the sky.

"It's time! Hurry, move aside!"

"Yes!"

The two hurriedly stepped aside. It was the time for the daily repetitive routine to begin.

'Ugh, really.'

'Seeing that sight again today.'

As if by some prearranged signal, the doors of the pavilions simultaneously opened, causing the two to tense up and swallow nervously.

However, what unfolded today was remarkably different from the usual scene.

“Ura-cha-cha-ah!”

“It’s morning!”

“Let’s go! To the training grounds!”

Before the people were even visible, a thunderous voices erupted. Soon after, disciples holding weapons streamed out in a rush from the now-open doors.

“Huh? What, what’s going on?”

Those who always walked out like half-alive corpses, now rushing out with vigor, astonished the onlookers, who widened their eyes in surprise.

‘What’s going on?’

‘Am I seeing things?’

But it seemed that they hadn’t mistaken what they saw. The people who came out of the door stretched and laughed heartily.

“Wow! I feel so light!”

“Now I understand why everyone is talking about these elixirs!”

“I could fight all day!”

“Let’s go!”

“I’m first!”

The rushing crowd began running towards the training grounds. The two sweepers leaning against the wall blinked as they watched the people pass by like the wind.

“Hello!”

“Yes?”

“Thank you for your hard work!”

“T-Thank you...”

People who had never made eye contact before now enthusiastically greeted them. Of course, despite their greeting, disciples swiftly passed by without stopping.

“What training are we doing today?”

“Maybe sparring with the elders?”

“Really? Finally, a day for revenge!”

“Well, they’re the elders. Calling it revenge seems a bit much.”

“Then why are you running so fast?”

Leaving behind a massive cloud of dust, martial artists disappeared toward the training grounds. The two sweepers standing by the roadside looked at each other with exasperated expressions.

“We...”

“Yes?”

“... We might need to sweep it all over again from the beginning.”

Looking at the mess that was left behind, one of them sighed deeply, lowering his head in disappointment.

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The people within Cheonumaeng all underwent significant changes. Those who had lived within one martial arts sect found themselves having to coexist with others, inevitably leading to changes that were more of a necessity than a choice.

However, surprisingly, the one who changed the most among the many within Cheonumaeng was not a martial artist.

«There!»

A loud reprimand poured forth from Ms. Chu.

«I told you not to lift the pot alone! It's heavier than you think, accidents can happen! Stick together, three of you!»

«Yes, Madam!»

«Is the chicken done yet?»

«Oh my! It still needs a bit more boiling. The pot is so big...»

«The fire is weak! Hurry, bring more firewood from the storage! We just got a new batch for the kitchen!»

«Yes! Yes! I'll go get it right away!»

Ms. Chu scanned the surroundings vigorously, ensuring she didn't miss a thing.

«M-Madam! They're asking for more rice!»

«We just brought out a pot, didn't we?»

«Oh my goodness. Today, they've devoured it as if they've been starving for days!

Everyone's clinging to the food as if possessed...»

«Rice! We need some more rice left as there should be. Bring out the rice cakes that were meant for dessert first. If there's anything to eat, they can wait a bit longer! They're in the back!»

«Yes, yes! I'll bring it right away!»

«A pot of rice... no, bring up two more pots! No, just bring up three pots! Quickly!»

«Yes, my lady!»

After giving the instructions until her voice became hoarse, Ms. Chu, breathing heavily, wiped the sweat streaming down her face with her sleeve as if trying to catch her breath.

‘What kind of chaos is this?’

Mealtime at Jangwon always resembled a battleground, but today seemed exceptionally chaotic.

«Madam! There's no rice!»

«Meat! Where's the meat? Meat!»

«Oh, I wish we had one more chicken.»

Hwasan's disciples poked their heads through the kitchen door, crying like hungry chicks...

No, like hungry adult chickens.

Seeing this, Ms. Chu trembled, but before she could say a word, someone grabbed the backs of their uniforms and pulled them out of the door.

«I told you not to come into the kitchen!»

«S-Sasuk, it's not that!»

«Oh, I can't bear this! Why on earth are you all like this?»

«No, Soso, our stomachs are so empty...»

Baek Cheon and Tang Soso dragged Hwasan's disciples away. Yoon Jong, bowing apologetically, lowered his head towards Ms. Chu.

«I'm sorry. They have good hearts, but they are just... a bit stupid...»

«Oh, no worries. I'll bring it quickly.»

«You can take your time.»

«Oh, Sahyeong! If they take too long, we won't finish during our mealtime...»

«Shut that mouth of yours!»

Yoon Jong, who belatedly smashed Jo Geol's forehead with his elbow, nodded again with an embarrassed look on his face.

«Well then.»

As the two disappeared, Ms. Chu wiped the sweat from her forehead once more.

‘What could have happened?’

Normally, despite eating a lot, none of them had a lively appearance. Yet, urging them for food with such excited faces somehow made her feel strangely pleased, even though her body felt weary.

«Those devil-like kids really know how to take advantage of others.»

Startled by a voice from the side, Ms. Chu quickly turned her head. Hyun Young approached with an agitated expression on his face.

«Have you arrived?»

«I'll be eating a lot today, especially. Please prepare a lot.»

«Will I be the one preparing? It should be the cooking staff.»

«I mean...»

Hyun Young made an uncomfortable expression and then suddenly handed something he had tucked into his side to Ms. Chu.

«Oh my! Hak!»

Ms. Chu was startled as she received the child Hyun Young handed to her.

«Why is the child...»

«The child keeps crying and it's so noisy! Calm him down for a moment!»

«I'm sorry...»

With an apologetic expression, Ms. Chu examined the child's condition and eventually let out a deep sigh.

«Elder, I don't need you to change the baby's diaper...»

«The child cried so hard, so I did it. Do you think I did it because the child is cute? Don't worry about it.»

«But still...»

«Nonsense! You there! Carrying a knife near the child here!»

«Apologies, Elder.»

Kitchen staff, who was passing by thoughtlessly, stumbled in fear at Hyun Young's scolding. Of course, it was more Hyun Young's fault for bringing the child into the dangerous kitchen, but nobody dared to mention that fact, as it wasn't a point worth bringing up given the gravity of the situation.

Moreover, everyone knew why Hyun Young had brought the child here, which made it even harder to say anything further.

As Ms. Chu comforted and rocked the child to sleep, Hyun Young, wearing a troubled expression, received Hak again from Ms. Chu's arms.

«Is it difficult?»

«No, it's not... difficult.»

«Work is naturally tough. If one doesn't feel tired while earning a wage, then they must be a thief.»

Muttering with a distressed expression, Hyun Young continued,

«But the wages earned through hard work belong to all who worked. There's no need for anyone to help or not help. Understand?»

«Yes, Elder.»

«Tsk.»

Hyun Young swiftly adjusted the child in his arms and turned around. Then, like a lightning, he reprimanded another worker.

«You there! Properly clean up what's spilled on the floor!»

«Yes, yes! Apologies, Elder.»

«Starting tomorrow, we'll receive double the provisions. Ask some people to help with cleaning up in the morning.»

«Oh, Elder... We're really short on people. If we do that, we'll be...»

«When did I say not to hire more people? If there's a shortage, hire more. Discuss and hire more people. Right now!»

«Yes, yes! But if you could just...»

Pointing out things here and there with each step, Hyun Young walked farther away.

Watching his departing figure, a small smile appeared on Ms. Chu's lips.

«How far is the food?»

«We don't have any chicken right now.»

«Ah! Nokrim and Namgung are fighting over the meat! Meat! Give us some meat here! Quickly!»

«...»

Ms. Chu covered her face with her hands.

‘No. It doesn’t seem exactly like that.’

Those devilish-like people...

However, in no time, Ms. Chu raised her head abruptly and shouted,

«I’ll handle it here in the kitchen! Get out! Quickly! I said if you block there, it’ll take longer!»

«Oh, no. We were just...»

«Quickly!»

«Yes!»

Watching the staff obediently retreat, she shook her head in frustration.

«Is the chicken boiled?»

«We’re on it, Madam!»

«Hurry up and bring it over!»

Her shoulders shook vigorously as she rolled up her sleeves.

Observing the chaos in the dining hall, Chung Myung tore off a chicken leg. The younger ones were enthusiastically devouring their portions, their vitality causing them to jump around joyfully.

‘These are better results than expected?’

As always, it seemed that pushing people as hard as possible yielded the best outcomes.

People usually only appreciate their well-being when it’s absent. Realizing the value of physical strength, which they hadn’t considered important before, they now understood the need to train themselves.

«Alright, let’s see. I’ve done everything I needed to, but you know...»

The structure was in place. Therefore, it was time for them to begin pushing themselves just as Hwasan’s disciples had done in the past. To open a new path, one must dig the ground — yet, once a path is opened, the water flows continuously.

In other words, a quite long and challenging journey had now reached its end.

«Now, it’s time to move on to the next step.»

He nodded and pushed the torn chicken leg into his mouth. Chewing vigorously, he snapped his oily fingers loudly.

«Tell the lords to gather after everyone finishes eating!»

There were murmurs of dissent here and there.

«Speak after you’ve finished eating what’s in your mouth!»

«You’re splattering food everywhere, you bastard! That’s disgusting!»

«...»

Seems like the kids are overly spirited. Ugh.