

Chapter 1262

Don't let them live. (2)

«Am-mi-ta-bul!»

A majestic golden light engulfed the coast.

«Aaahhh!»

«Aaahhh!»

Though the Buddhist light appeared serene, the power it contained was anything but gentle. Those struck by it keenly felt the merciless force as they screamed and collapsed in agony.

Crash!

«Aargh!»

As those rushing forward were swiftly repelled, Jo Geol turned to Hye Yeon with a mildly surprised expression.

Hye Yeon, with a hardened expression unlike usual, continued to unleash his powers with consecutive strikes.

At that moment, Yoon Jong sharply exclaimed,

«Don't be distracted, you idiot!»

«Sahyeong, isn't Monk Hye Yeon unusually proactive today?»

But Jo Geol paid no heed, pressing on with his question. Yoon Jong, who had just swung his sword, glanced briefly at Hye Yeon with a hint of suspicion.

«He must be furious.»

«Why?»

«Until now, we may have heard of their misdeeds, but we've never directly witnessed Sapaeryeon tormenting the common people, have we?»

«...What do you mean...»

Jo Geol, about to ask for clarification, belatedly grasped the meaning and nodded his head slightly.

While Sapaeryeon had occupied Gangnam, causing chaos even in Gangbuk, it was clear upon examination that those causing havoc in Gangbuk were not Sapaeryeon themselves, but rather those who had fled from them.

So, objectively speaking, they had never truly witnessed Sapaeryeon persecuting commoners.

«However, seeing people suffering on the way here, how angry do you think Monk Hye Yeon must be, considering his character?»

«Ah...»

«Forward! You bastard! In front!»

«Woah!»

Jo Geol swiftly twisted his body to evade the flying sword aimed at him, then retaliated with a decisive strike.

Crash!

«Aaaargh!»

His sword mercilessly pierced through the shoulder of Changgwi's member.

'The invincible armed forces of Maninbang.'

Jo Geol was no stranger to facing them. In fact, their true combat experience began when they fought against the enemy forces of Maninbang, to put it mildly.

Hence, it was clear.

They were undeniably strong.

From the speed of their blades to their momentum, nothing about them fell short of the word 'peak'. Each member of Changgwi Unit was undoubtedly recognized for their prowess across Gangho.

Yet...

'It's not difficult at all!'

Crash!

The plum blossom sword struck twelve times in succession, turning the wrists and chest of the assailant into a ragged mess. The face of Changgwi's member contorted in agony.

Jo Geol delivered the final blow to the chest of the writhing figure and lightly bit his lower lip.

'I have grown stronger.'

No, becoming stronger is not the only change.

«You, you darn wench!»

«Stop her! Don't let her rampage!»

As chaos erupted, attention turned to the sight of Yu Iseol leaping into the air, trampling over the Changgwi's member and soaring through the air.

It was a sight to behold. To hurl oneself through the air meant being exposed to the opponent's attacks without defense. Yet, how could she fight so recklessly and still avoid any injury?

If one couldn't manipulate their body as delicately as a single sheet of paper, it was a marvel beyond imagination.

«I told you not to jump, be careful!»

As Yu Iseol diverted everyone's attention, Tang Soso swiftly exploited the enemy's openings. Originally from the Tang clan, who uses hidden weapons and is renowned for their ability to exploit momentary gaps in opponents' defenses, Tang Soso, born and raised in such a lineage, wouldn't miss such a glaring opportunity.

«Haaargh!»

The strikes Tang Soso unleashed scattered like the daggers of the Tang clan, piercing fiercely through the ranks of Changgwi Unit.

«Aaah!»

«Damn it!»

Groans echoed from all around. While not fatal, who could be casual when a sword energy pierced their body?

Seizing upon the opportunity created by their distracted senses, Yu Iseol descended like a bird of prey aiming for its target.

Squelch! Squelch!

The sinister sound of the sword cutting flesh and severing tendons rang out continuously. Screams and spurts of blood erupted, yet Yu Iseol's expression remained unchanged. Her swordsmanship unfolded seamlessly like a snowy northern wind, without any superfluous movements.

‘Strong.’

Jo Geol tightened his grip on his sword.

Of course, Yu Iseol had always been strong. As the only swordswoman who could rival Baek Cheon in Hwasan, it was only natural.

But what Jo Geol was witnessing now wasn't just Yu Iseol's swordsmanship — it was her boldness, her fearlessness in facing multiple opponents without hesitation.

Yu Iseol always plunged into the most dangerous places without a moment's hesitation.

Firmly believing that those behind her would watch her back, her boldness was shaking the formidable foes of Maninbang's Changgwi Unit in an instant.

«... It wasn't in vain.»

«Huh?»

«Nothing!»

Jo Geol gritted his teeth, extending his sword as if to match Yu Iseol's determination.

‘She's like a ghost anyway.’

Seeing this spectacle, he seemed to understand what had been the source of his lingering unease since the battle in Hangzhou.

«Take that!»

Yoon Jong surged forward, scattering plum blossoms. As a result, the assailants who had been closing in from all sides faltered, losing their momentum.

Seizing the opportunity, Jo Geol exploded with determination as he thrust his sword. Like a venomous snake targeting its prey, his blade pierced through the enemy's body.

‘That's it!’

What Hwasan lacked most was the number of disciples.

So far, they had trained by either collaborating against Chung Myung, who was the absolute powerhouse within Hwasan, or sparring with each other. Until now, it had been sufficient.

The enemies of Hwasan were all either stronger than Hwasan itself or individuals who had to unleash their collaborative efforts somehow.

However, in Hangzhou, Jo Geol had finally realized something. Now, they were not facing a single absolute powerhouse or an adversary whose life and death depended on theirs, but rather a force that held absolute superiority in numbers.

But the coordination demonstrated by Yu Iseol and Tang Soso now indicated otherwise. As always with that ghostly bastard Chung Myung, he was the first to grasp this fact and had already made arrangements accordingly.

‘The Yangtze river!’

The relentless sparring between sects at Jangwon on Yangtze river, fought not on an individual level but on a sect’s scale, during the time of endless conflict between different sects.

At times, it felt like a waste, but in reality, it was never wasted effort. Without that experience, they wouldn’t have been able to face Changgwi Unit as confidently as they were now.

What they thought was solely aimed at enhancing the abilities of other sects was, in fact, also about nurturing Hwasan’s abilities together.

Slaaash!

Namgung Dowi was not just fooling around either.

«Kwaaaaah!»

The unleashed white sword energy turned those who rushed forward into mere bloody scraps.

At the sight of the powerful sword strikes, a disappointed voice escaped Jo Geol’s lips.

«...I should have been born in Namgung clan.»

«What nonsense are you spouting!»

«...Or maybe in Shaolin.»

«You’re not even focusing now!»

Under Yoon Jong’s nagging, Jo Geol, filled with frustration and injustice, unleashed a dozen sword strikes in quick succession.

He could bring down one person with his relentless stabbing, while they could take out two or three with each swing. How could he not feel unjust?

‘This is why it’s Shaolin, this is why it’s Namgung!’

The leader of Gupailbang, Thousand Year Old Shaolin, and the head of Five Great Families, Namgung clan, not having earned their reputation through luck, clearly demonstrated their power, guiding the future of each sect...

«Aaaargh!»

Swish!

«Aaaargh! Why are there so many!»

For a moment, Jo Geol’s eyes reflected the sentiment of feeling overwhelmed. Tang Pae was vigorously swinging his arms like windmills to protect Namgung Dowi, who was unleashing his sword technique relentlessly.

«...The future of Tangga doesn't look very bright.»

«Focus, you idiot!»

Finally, it was when Yoon Jong, bursting with frustration, was about to step forward.

Crash!

Accompanied by a loud sound that seemed to pierce the ears, a powerful presence was felt from behind.

Both of them turned their heads simultaneously. The vividly red plum blossom was visible. Even those wielding the same sword were momentarily stunned by the dazzling sword strikes. At the center of those strikes, Baek Cheon, representing the power of Hwasan, was charging forward with full force. Behind him, the warriors of Haenam were closely following suit.

For a moment, the determination in Jo Geol's and Yoon Jong's eyes mirrored each other's.

«Sahyeong!»

«Got it!»

The two of them broke through the encirclement and dashed forward side by side.

«You pests!»

Then, as if they had planned it in advance, they split left and right near the enemy, dispersing the red plum blossom sword strikes.

«Block them!»

«These damn dogs!»

The solid formation of Changgwi Unit momentarily faltered and shifted left and right as they faced the onslaught. In that moment...

«I'll pierce through!»

Seizing the opportunity created by the disruption, Baek Cheon, leading the warriors of Haenam, swiftly thrust his sword through the tiny gap.

Swish!

Baek Cheon, taking advantage of the opening created by Jo Geol and Yoon Jong, gracefully dodged an incoming sword strike and delivered a decisive blow.

«Where to now!»

«Don't make me laugh. You bastards!»

Desperately keeping up, Gwak Hwanso and Lee Jayang intercepted the swords incoming towards Baek Cheon.

And!

Crash!

From the tip of Baek Cheon's sword, extended in a powerful thrust, red flower petals burst forth. Against the backdrop of a white sandy beach, crimson plum blossoms bloomed, like on the snowy peaks of Hwasan's mountains.

Rustle!

The plum tree swayed for a moment like a mirage, then vanished. But the petals remained, carried by the winds of the Southern Sea, swirling in all directions.

To some eyes, it was exquisitely beautiful.

To some eyes, it was intensely vibrant.

And to some eyes, it was incredibly dangerous!

«Aaaargh!»

«What is this!»

«Aaargh!»

Baek Cheon's dazzling display of plum blossoms erupted in the midst of Changgwi's formation's chaos.

Even Changgwi's members, who were extremely familiar with this battlefield, were compelled to run away, creating a gap in their ranks.

Seizing the opportunity, Baek Cheon shouted for all to hear,

«Board the ship! Charge!»

«Yes!»

With Baek Cheon at the forefront, the disciples of Haenam became a single entity, surging against the crimson wall erected by the Changgwi Unit.

Crash!

Baek Cheon swiftly cut down those blocking their path and leaped forward with determination. Before him lay the large Maninbang's ship anchored on the coast.

«Forward!»

«Yes!»

Gwak Hwanso and Lee Jayang sprang forth. With waves of Haenam's swords, they struck at those who stood in their way, their faces etched with unwavering resolve.

Clang!

In the momentary gap created by the clash of swords, Baek Cheon stepped on Gwak Hwanso's shoulder and leaped into the air.

«What's that?»

«What!»

Startled by the sudden shadow looming over them, they quickly looked up. What they saw in that moment was the figure of a swordsman's silhouetted against the blazing sun.

«Taah!»

Baek Cheon shouted as he swung his sword. The crescent-shaped sword energy that followed its trajectory tore through the hot air of the Southern Sea.

Clang!

The thick anchor line securing Maninbang's ship was severed in one fell swoop.

Swiftly descending with a graceful spin, Baek Cheon immediately slashed at the backs of Changgwi Unit's members.

In contrast to the intense battlefield, he smiled brightly and whispered softly,

«You should also know how it feels when something is taken away.»
Whether his words reached their ears, nobody could say for sure.