

Chapter 1195

Why did it have to be like that? (5)

«First of all...»

Baek Cheon, who was catching his breath, spoke firmly.

«While it's true that I have taken the position of Acting Leader, your treatment of me as your Sasuk or Sahyeong does not have to change at all! So just treat me as you always have. Understood?»

«We understand. However...»

«What now?»

«In the process of understanding that...»

All eyes turned to Jo Geol, who was lying face down.

«...you've made it very bloody.»

«That's true.»

«You've been too harsh.»

«Even if it's true, it's too much.»

Although everyone here had done the same thing, their past deeds seemed to have disappeared from their minds.

From Jo Geol's perspective, it might feel unfair, but what could he do? His swollen lips had already sealed any protest.

«Anyway...»

Feeling that he couldn't lose momentum here and be mocked for the rest of his life, Baek Cheon spoke with determination in his eyes.

«I haven't officially taken the position of Sect Leader, and my status as the head's disciple hasn't changed, so just treat me as usual! Just as you always have! Do you understand?»

«Yes, Acting Leader.»

«...Just call me Sasuk.»

«Well, isn't there still the law of the sect?»

«If you don't want to be punished by that law, then just call me Sasuk.»

«Oh, asserting your power.»

«Well, if you wield power, then followers have to follow.»

«Yes, Acting Leader.»

Baek Cheon's head drooped. Sensing his sadness, Yoon Jong gently placed a hand on his shoulder.

«Sasuk.»

«...Yes?»

«You said you would take responsibility. Hang in there.»

«...It wasn't this kind of responsibility.»

«Isn't that just life?»

Although Yoon Jong quietly comforted Baek Cheon, the situation didn't improve. Once this pack of hungry wolves was done tearing him apart, an even more vicious pack would come for him next.

«This sect needs to be destroyed.»

How did it come to pass that only wolves and dogs are left to howl in the sacred passage that needs cleansing? If the ancestors of Hwasan could see this, they would weep tears that could fill rivers.

Now, the problem was that Baek Cheon was the leader of these wolves. Realizing anew what he had done, Baek Cheon wiped away tears that had gathered in his eyes.

«Ugh... um... Listen, Sect Leader...»

Look at him, there he is. Despite being beaten black and blue, he's still trying to turn things around with just a few words!

Baek Cheon quietly extended his foot and lightly put it on Jo Geol's head, cleared his throat and attempted to lighten up the mood.

«Ahem. Guys.»

«Did you hear? Guys!»

«Wow! Acting Leader's tone has changed since becoming the leader! Is this the power of authority?»

«...Please, Soso.»

«Yes, yes, Acting Leader! Please, uh... give us your command!»

With a bright smile, Tang Soso accepted Baek Cheon's words. If she could turn people's minds upside down with such a smile, it was indeed a talent.

«Anyway...»

Baek Cheon coughed briefly and then spoke with utmost seriousness.

«As you all know, I am greatly lacking.»

Whatever he was about to say, Ogeom, who had been ready to interject, quietly closed their mouth when they heard his words.

«I did request the position of Acting Sect Leader from Sect Leader, but it wasn't because I was confident that I could lead Hwasan like Sect Leader. It was simply something that had to be done.»

Some nodded in understanding.

«And you all are probably the same. I know you still lack assurance. But... now that the situation has turned out like this, it's difficult for you to remain the same as before.»

«Yes, Sasuk.»

«We understand.»

This is the changing of generations.

Nothing has changed drastically. Hyun Jong is still Sect Leader of Hwasan, and they are still second and third generation disciples.

But now that Baek Cheon has become Acting Sect Leader, they will eventually have to become first and second generation disciples. That time has come much sooner than they anticipated.

«I apologize for suddenly burdening you with responsibility.»

«No need to apologize, Sasuk.»

Yoon Jong nodded.

«We understand why you made that decision. And we don't think it was a mistake. If you've resolve to shoulder that burden, then we must also shoulder our share of the burden.»

A gentle smile graced Baek Cheon's lips. Indeed, Yoon Jong was the one who understood his heart best in moments like this.

«For Hwasan to remain Hwasan, decisions had to be made. But I am still lacking, still insufficient to lead the sect. So...»

Baek Cheon bowed his head towards Ogeom.

«I ask for your help. Please.»

Ogeom and the others nodded in unison.

«Yes, Sasuk.»

«We'll do our best, Sasuk!»

Though they had teased him and not yet teased him enough, everyone present understood why Baek Cheon had made this decision. They also knew that it was thanks to Baek Cheon's initiative that they were able to avoid being dragged into a situation they didn't want to be in. So, there was no shortage of gratitude in their eyes when they looked at Baek Cheon.

Upon seeing their reaction, Baek Cheon bit his lip slightly.

He had secretly feared backlash from such a sudden decision. However, his Samae and Sajils understood the intentions behind his ascension to the Acting Leader's position.

«I... I'll help too... Sasuk...»

Even Jo Geol, who had been lying face down, managed to muster the strength to speak up. Baek Cheon's heart swelled with emotion, causing him to gently press his eyelids. He then composed himself and spoke with effort.

«Yes, I request your guidance and support in the future...»

«Whether you ask or not.»

Baek Cheon's head turned at the sudden, snide remark. Chung Myung, leaning against the wall, seemed to say with his face, 'Well, aren't you doing quite well?'

«It's a sight to behold.»

«Now, watching the future Sect Leaders pat each other on the back, saying, 'Oh! Being an Acting Leader is such a tough position! Thank you for your hard work!' I can't help but feel relieved and happy knowing I'll never become an Acting Leader in my life. Don't you agree?»

Baek Cheon glanced briefly at the others, as if signaling them to intervene. But even Ogeom, who seemed filled with passion and willing to do anything for Baek Cheon, discreetly averted their gaze at this moment.

‘Rain should better be avoided, not fought against.’

‘That’s something you don’t want to mess with right now.’

They say experience comes with time, but has Chung Myung spent all these years with them and still can’t read the atmosphere? Right now, he’s like a nearly ignited oil barrel. No one wants to get close to a barrel of oil that’s about to explode.

But their perspective was different from Baek Cheon’s.

‘...Bastards.’

Just a moment ago, they said they would do their best to help.

Those guys will run away without looking back if those bastards from Demonic Cult show up. No, they’re the ones who would throw Baek Cheon as bait.

Baek Cheon, reminded once again that there’s no one to trust in this world, cautiously opened his mouth after glancing at Chung Myung.

«Ahem. Uhm! You, Chung Myung...»

«Huh?»

Chung Myung’s face momentarily brightened.

«Oh! Acting Sect Leader of Hwasan personally speaking to this humble third generation disciple.»

«...»

«I’m so honored I don’t know where to put myself.»

Baek Cheon’s face gradually turned pale.

‘I knew that guy would react like that.’

When he mustered the courage to request the position of Acting Leader, what worried him the most wasn’t the weight he would have to bear as an Acting Leader, but rather the reaction of that damn guy.

Look! Look at that guy’s eyes rolling back!

«Even if the entire sect goes upside down, it doesn’t matter. Forget about norms and regulations, the second generation disciple takes the position of Acting Sect Leader!»

«Well, traditionally, a sect has its norms and principles, right?»

«Chung Myung.»

«When you start ignoring principles and everything else just for the current situation, even a well-established sect can become third-rate in no time! At the prestigious Hwasan, to have such...»

“Chung Myung-ah.”

«Until dirt gets in my eyes...»

«Chung Myung!»

«Yeah?»

Chung Myung, who had been babbling absentmindedly, looked up. Baek Cheon who interrupted Chung Myung's rambling, grabbed his chin. Baek Cheon raised his head as if to show off his sharp jawline and blurted out in the most miserable tone in the world.

«If you're unhappy, then why don't you become the Acting Leader yourself?»

Chung Myung's mouth hung open in shock.

«Uh...? Uh...»

«Or go argue with the Sect Leader.»

«...»

«You can't, can you? You can't do anything?»

«...»

«Then shush. Quietly keep your mouth shut, Third generation disciple.»

As Baek Cheon smirked, Chung Myung's body suddenly tilted to the side.

Thud.

His eyes lost their light like rotten fish, and the remaining scraps of his soul escaped from his weakly parted lips.

«Why... Why did I...»

Watching Chung Myung collapse with just one blow, Ogeom turned to Baek Cheon with genuine admiration.

«Good grief... with just a few words to Chung Myung...»

«Is this the power of authority?»

«That guy is surprisingly weak against authority.»

«Surprisingly? He's blatantly weak.»

Yoon Jong whispered to Baek Cheon.

«Isn't this a bit too harsh?»

«...He needs this level of treatment. Otherwise, he would have continued like this for another year.»

«I see...»

Yoon Jong nodded in understanding.

Baek Cheon gestured with his hand and spoke up.

«Anyway, there's a lot to discuss, but let's start with what needs to be done.»

«Hmm? What needs to be done? Is there something urgent right now?»

«Yoon Jong, Jo Geol.»

«Yes, Sasuk!»

«Go and deliver my message to the lords of Cheonumaeng.»

Baek Cheon's lips curled into a meaningful smile.

«If a person has spoken, they must follow through. We're going to save Haenam.»

«Ah!»

Finally, Jo Geol, who remembered the issue, sighed with a realization. With shocking events happening one after another, it had been completely forgotten.

«We don't have the luxury of time to finish everything and then leave. Let's quickly discuss the situation.»

«Alright...»

«What? Haenam?»

At that moment, Chung Myung, who had been almost dead, suddenly sat up with wide eyes.

«Hey, you crazy bastard! What exactly are you planning to do with Hwasan?»

«Oh, if you feel unjust, you should have entered early and become the head of Beak disciples. Ah, how can I handle this? Even if I wanted to give you the position of Sect Leader, there's no way to give it to Chung disciple? Someone said there's a law that must be upheld in the sect.»

«I, I...! I...»

As Chung Myung finally collapsed backward, Ogeom and the others looked at each other with strange expressions.

'Not bad, huh?'

'Rather, isn't it better?'

They were already starting to feel the benefits of the change in leadership.