

## Chapter 1068

Kill me, you say? (3)

Trust is a truly beautiful resonance of words. There's no greater strength between people than the trust they build between each other.

However, in some relationships, trust is like a sandcastle.

'I knew it, but...'

Baek Cheon clenched his lips tightly.

Jang Ilso was the least trustworthy person in Gangho, the one you should never trust. Who would dare to argue with the fact that it was Jang Ilso?

Still, the reason he briefly let down his guard against him was because of the way he had performed in the intense battle. The emotions of camaraderie with someone who fought alongside you often help overcome all conflicts, even if only temporarily.

But Jang Ilso was still Jang Ilso . He was the last person to trust until the end.

«Sasuk...»

«... Yes.»

Baek Cheon drew his sword heavily.

The Black Ghost's 's forces, closing in as they tightened their encirclement, numbered over two hundred, at the very least. If Red Dogs, who were guarding Jang Ilso, joined them, the numbers would increase even further.

Considering that these were the ones chosen and carefully trained by the Black Ghost Fortress and Maninbang, there was no way that a mere ten or so followers of Hwasan could handle them. But...

«We have to fight.»

Baek Cheon's eyes grew colder as the desperate situation unfolded. It wasn't as if it would suddenly become any more despairing. Was there ever a battlefield they had been through that wasn't desperate until now?

'We just need to open a path.'

There was no reason to stand and fight them. They just had to break through this encirclement, cross the Yangtze river, and escape. Of course, the distance from Hangzhou to the Yangtze river was excruciatingly long, but that was a matter to consider later. For now, their priority was to get out of this place.

Baek Cheon's fiery gaze was directed at Jang Ilso. Seeing him glaring at him so fiercely, Jang Ilso burst out laughing.

«You naughty child, looking at people with such eyes.»

In reality, Baek Cheon was provoking Jang Ilso with that gaze, but his attention was completely focused on Chung Myung.

Hwasan's strength is now largely halted. Namgung Dowi, who broke through at the front, was nearly exhausted, and Hye Yeon had also expended a significant amount of inner strength, but they should still be able to keep up to some extent.

The biggest problem right now is none other than Chung Myung. Baek Cheon glanced at his back for a moment.

'Can he still fight?'

Objectively, it was impossible. Just looking at the external injuries alone, he was barely alive. And considering the nature of that rascal Chung Myung, who didn't even groan when he was near death, the internal injuries were probably much worse than the external ones. However... Baek Cheon was certain.

The moment the battle began, Chung Myung would charge towards Jang Ilso without looking back. Because that was Chung Myung's way.

However, this time, they had to find a way to stop Chung Myung from going wild, even if they had to use any means necessary. To ensure they only survived and didn't witness Chung Myung turning into a corpse, they had to do it.

In that case, the only person who could take Chung Myung's role here was Baek Cheon. At that very moment when Baek Cheon's two eyes turned sharp and full of murderous intent...

Jang Ilso, who had been watching the elite forces of the Black Ghost closing in with an enigmatic gaze, slowly opened his mouth.

«It's a very... proper siege. I'd even like to give you my compliments.»

With a twisted smile, he fixed his gaze on one place.

«But... I don't remember giving such orders. Huh? Mangeum Daebu.»

At those words, Baek Cheon unconsciously turned his gaze. He knew he should never take his eyes off Jang Ilso, but his instincts led him to track Mangeum Daebu with his eyes.

Among the elite forces of the Black Ghost Fortress, Mangeum Daebu was walking, fluttering one empty sleeve. Unlike the tattered appearance of Chung Myung and Jang Ilso, he was maintaining a pristine look without a single injury.

Mangeum Daebu, who caught Jang Ilso's gaze, didn't change his expression and spoke in an utterly emotionless tone.

«Indeed... a good subordinate is one who can anticipate the wishes of their superior and act accordingly.»

«Haha.»

Jang Ilso let out an ambiguous laugh. It was hard to tell whether it was out of approval or displeasure.

«Those people are dangerous.»

Mangeum Daebu's gaze shifted away from Jang Ilso and onto Hwasan. Faced with his emotionless gaze, Hwasan's disciples unconsciously bit their lips.

«Ryeonju must have sensed it too, right? Those people are different from the idiots of the orthodox factions who are intoxicated by their power and just occupy positions. Sooner or later, they will surely grab Ryeonju's ankles.»

«...»

«We have to remove them from this place before it's too late. We have to catch the cub and kill it while it's young.»

Upon hearing these words, Baek Cheon clenched his teeth. As if savoring those words, Jang Ilso nodded slowly.

«Catch the cub and kill it when it's young... That's indeed a valid point.»

«Uh...»

Baek Cheon bit his lower lip.

Jang Ilso face as he looked at Mangeum Daebu began to turn dark.

“Don't you think it's a little too late to talk about it now?”

In that moment Baek Cheon felt something was amiss.

In Jang Ilso's gaze when he looked at Mangeum Daebu, and in Mangeum Daebu's gaze when he faced Jang Ilso, there was not a trace of the camaraderie commonly seen when looking at someone from the same side.

It looked more like the eyes of a beast looking at an intruder in its territory.

‘Could it be?’

Jang Ilso spoke again. The words that flowed from his mouth gave Baek Cheon confidence.

«There's no way you set up such an elaborate siege just to capture these guys. So...

Mangeum Daebu.»

A boundless and ruthless light streamed from Jang Ilso's eyes. It was eerie enough to freeze one's soul just by looking at him.

«Which one are you truly trying to hunt here?»

«...»

«Them? No, no. That's impossible.»

Jang Ilso revealed it while smiling.

«It will be me.»

«...»

«Or not?»

Mangeum Daebu looked at Jang Ilso with indifferent eyes, without saying a word. In response, Jang Ilso said with a tone of amusement.

«If you think about it — it's a good opportunity. Yes, a truly great one. I brought these few people here, and I'm completely exhausted.»

«...»

«But... I never thought that the renowned Mangeum Daebu of The Black Ghost Fortress would engage in such foolish actions. It looks like the abacus you were so proud of was

completely destroyed by the demonic cultists, right? Do you believe you can take my place if I disappear? Seriously?»

«Take your place?»

Mangeum Daebu, who had been listening quietly, countered with a cold tone.

«It's not about taking your place. Anyway, this alliance, Sapaeryeon, was created out of necessity. If you're gone, Gangnam will just return to its original state.»

His words were like a perfectly placed wedge. It was meant to make everyone here fully understand the situation. Mangeum Daebu's siege was not prepared to capture Hwasan's disciples. His sole purpose was Jang Ilso.

«You're babbling nonsense.»

Jang Ilso spoke slowly, looking at Mangeum Daebu with a cold gaze.

«Do you think orthodox factions will just let Gangnam be, after Sapaeryeon disappears?»

«You are the one who is mistaken, Jang Ilso.»

Mangeum Daebu no longer called him Ryeonju.

«Mistaken?»

«They don't hate Sapaeryeon. They hate you and Maninbang.»

«...»

«At this moment, do you really think these people, consumed by their lust for power, would waste their strength on Gangnam without you? It's not that they're not attacking Gangnam because of you. It's because with you here, there's a possibility they'll head to Gangnam.»

It was quite a painful point to make. Even Jang Ilso couldn't help but smile silently in response to this fact.

But Mangeum Daebu wasn't done yet.

«And... why should I care in the first place?»

«Hmm?»

A chilly smile appeared on Mangeum Daebu's face.

«Even if Sapaeryeon, under your leadership, was to dominate Gangho, it doesn't seem like there would be a place for me, would there?»

«...»

«Isn't that true?»

Listening to Mangeum Daebu's speculation, Jang Ilso let out an eerie smile. Mangeum Daebu, without flinching in the least, met his gaze with a sinister demeanor.

«After the hunt, the hunting dog goes into the pot. There's only one way for the hunting dog to survive.»

Mangeum Daebu's voice spread coldly across the desolate land.

«Either it bites the hand that feeds it and runs away before its master becomes suspicious... or it bites the master's neck first.»

«...»

«What do you think, Jang Ilso?»

This time, all eyes were on Jang Ilso. He scratched the back of his head with a somewhat exaggerated movement and then clicked his tongue briefly.

«Tsk.»

In an instant, his long eyes traced an arc.

«I thought I'd wait at least until Shaolin withdrew...»

«You don't underestimate your enemies. But... it was a mistake to no longer consider me your enemy.»

Mangeum Daebu glared at Jang Ilso with murderous eyes.

«If you wanted to turn me into one of your dogs, you should have put the leash on properly. Did you really think I'd be like the puppies you've tamed so far?»

«...That's a bitter statement.»

«Regret in Gangho comes quickly, but it's too late. If you made a mistake, you have to pay the price. That's the way of Sapa.»

Mangeum Daebu turned to Jang Ilso, Red Dogs, and Hwasan, his chin raised.

«Kill them all, leave no one alive.»

«Ryeonju...»

«Kill them. Don't leave any survivors.»

«Forward!»

With determined spirits, the elite forces of the Black Ghost slowly closed in, their slow approach no different from before. Their careful approach, free of any complacency, created even greater pressure.

«Tsk.»

Jang Ilso glanced back at Chung Myung.

«Now that the situation has turned out like this, we have no choice but to join forces, don't you think?»

In response, Chung Myung looked at him with an indifferent gaze.

«You were talking so big earlier, but you can't even restrain your own subordinate. What a stupid Sapa bastard.»

«...When someone falls into a pit, aren't you supposed to help them? You shouldn't spit on them and step on them just because it's amusing. Anyway, you really have a bad personality.»

Chung Myung, being called someone with a bad personality by Sapa scoundrel, shook his head and gripped his sword.

While he had boasted earlier, now it was a real crisis. Neither he nor Jang Ilso had any strength left at the moment.

However, Chung Myung's gaze was directed at the backs of Hwasan's disciples. They were protecting him diligently, surrounding him tightly.

Just as Tang Bo had done in the past, they were guarding him now. Perhaps not just now, but every time he fought.

Looking at their backs, which had suddenly grown significantly wider than before, he turned his gaze towards Mangeum Daebu. Pushing down the emotion that had briefly welled up in his heart, he spoke with a cold voice.

«It seems like being a Sapa bastard, you still don't understand. Then I'll have to make you understand.»

Chung Myung bared his teeth fiercely.

«No one who has turned Hwasan into their enemy has gone unharmed.»

At that moment fierce energy surged from the swords held by Hwasan's swordsmen.