

Chapter 1143

Did you bring it? (2)

As Hwang Jong-ui entered the room, what he saw was a familiar sight — a scene he had seen frequently even at Hwasan. There was Hyun Jong seated at the center with the elders on his sides. It was quite a common sight.

The problem was...

‘Who is that...?’

Hwang Jong-ui blinked as he saw a huge man leaning against the wall, sprawled out like a wet cotton ball.

‘Where have I seen that man... Ah!’

Recognizing the identity of this massive figure as the Lord of the Beast Palace, whom he had seen during Cheonumaeng’s opening ceremony, Hwang Jong-ui shivered momentarily.

What kind of experience could drain every ounce of vitality from a huge man like him? The sprawled posture of an ordinary person and this man seemed completely different. Moreover, from what Hwang Jong-ui remembered, the Lord of the Beast Palace was incredibly courteous despite his appearance...

‘How difficult it must have been...’

Realizing the fact that anyone involved with Chung Myung Dojang or Hwasan, whether the Lord of the Beast Palace or the head of Tangga, would be thrown into hell, struck Hwang Jong-ui anew.

‘And I’m probably no exception.’

What? Missing Hwasan?

Come to think of it, were there any moments as peaceful as the past few months when Hwasan had left Shaanxi? Just like how one learns when someone becomes addicted to alcohol, yearning becomes natural. What thoughts had made him miss these people?

«Oh, Master!»

As Hwang Jong-ui entered the room, the leader of all demons... no, the Sect Leader of Hwasan, with a smile, eagerly approached and warmly clasped Hwang Jong-ui’s hands.

«Master, how long has it been? Meeting you in such a distant place brings immense joy.»

«Yes. Um... Yes. Sect Leader, I am also honored to...»

If someone of the status of the head of Hwasan greeted one with such warmth, it should have brought forth an overwhelming sense of gratitude, but strangely, Hwang Jong-ui felt restless.

‘No, blaming Sect Leader isn’t the issue here.’

While holding Hyun Jong’s hand, Hwang Jong-ui quickly scanned the surroundings, seeking the cause of all these events. The origin of all chaos was sitting before him, smiling as if none of this was remotely related to him.

«You’re later than expected.»

Though the comment about covering such a distance in a month was not something to be mentioned to someone who had traveled from a far-off Shaanxi, Hwang Jong-ui didn't particularly take offense. After all, he had been through too much to be swayed by such remarks.

«How have you been?»

«What significant events could possibly happen here? Of course, I've been well.»

«Yeah.»

Sigh.

As Chung Myung responded, sighs and groans escaped from all directions, startlingly. Hwang Jong-ui, who could guess the reason behind all these reactions, simply shook his head nervously.

“It seems that... well...”

Observing Chung Myung's carefree demeanor, Hwang Jong-ui attempted to jest or make a joke but suddenly found himself subtly smiling.

“Hmm?”

“Why are you like this?”

After a brief moment of contemplation, Hwang Jong-ui discreetly approached Chung Myung.

“Can you stand up for a moment?”

“Yes?”

Though Chung Myung hesitated, complying with the request, as Hwang Jong-ui approached closer, he stood up with a confused expression.

“I don't have such preferences...”

“It seems like you might be a bit taller?”

“Really?”

Chung Myung's eyes widened at the remark. Hwang Jong-ui, having scanned Chung Myung up and down, nodded as if confirming.

“Quite sure.”

“Oh?”

Chung Myung moved closer to Hwang Jong-ui, comparing their heights by drawing imaginary line above their heads. Voices around seemed to agree with the assessment.

“That's right. Seems like I've grown a bit.”

“Are you still in your growing phase?”

“Argh! The heavens haven't abandoned me after all! I thought I was done growing!”

Although this body was much smaller compared to the past, fortunately, there seemed to be potential for further growth.

“No wonder I've been feeling so swift with a sword recently. Just you wait, Heavenly Demon!”

“Seems a bit odd that your favorite aspect is related to height.”

“When you get taller, your arms get longer, and longer arms are advantageous for wielding a sword. Of course, it shouldn’t be excessive, but right now, I’m a bit stumpy. Being a bit taller would be better.”

Hwang Jong-ui nervously shook his head. Nonetheless, this person has remained unchanged from the first time they met until now. It’s quite remarkable for someone to be so consistent.

“Oh, right. Did you bring it?”

“Whose words do you think I’d disregard? Of course, I brought it.”

“Ah, as expected, there’s no one I trust more than the Master.”

“If you put even a penny of sincerity in those words, it’d be nice.”

“Hehe. I always speak with absolute sincerity. So, where is it?”

“Seems like the object excites you more than me.”

“Oh, no way. I just want to make sure, that’s all, just to be sure.”

Upon hearing that, Hwang Jong-ui laughed softly.

«It was difficult to bring inside, so it’s placed in front of that door.»

«Oh!»

Before the sentence ended, Chung Myung, with eyes sparkling, rushed towards the door and swung it wide open.

Curious about what would prompt such a reaction, onlookers glanced at the object placed in front of the door.

«A pot?»

«What’s that?»

It was a solid, hefty pot placed before the door. Those inside, except for the members of Hwasan, seemed puzzled by it.

«A cold iron pot.»

«Cold iron pot? Did you say ‘Cold Iron’?»

«A pot made of ten thousand years cold iron. Come to think of it, it was stored in Eunha merchant guild.»

Non-Hwasan members’ eyes widened at this revelation.

Why on earth would they create such a thing out of ten thousand years cold iron? It wasn’t as if they were overflowing with money.

«No, this is insane!»

Particularly, Tang Gunak vehemently examined the pot. Shortly after, he muttered in a dazed expression,

«It’s genuine ten thousand years cold iron... No, last time, they made all their swords out of it... Does Hwasan have some cold iron mines? Now they’re making pots out of it...»

Watching Tang Gunak lost in his thoughts, Hyun Jong whispered to Chung Myung,

«Didn’t Lord Tang know about that?»

«Come to think of it, I don’t recall him being informed about it. There wasn’t really a reason to mention it.»

«That's true.»

«But why were you so late?»

At Chung Myung's question, Hwang Jong-ui offered a bitter smile.

«Is that something ordinary? It might not be an issue for Hwasan to carry it around, but if we encountered bandits while moving it, wouldn't it pose a problem? It took some time to summon the guards for escort.»

«Ah... I didn't think about that. If I had known, I would have sent some bandits to fetch it.»

Hwang Jong-ui gave up on his thoughts. The events unfolding at Cheonumaeng had long surpassed his realm of reasoning.

«Anyway, thank you for your hard work.»

«Yeah.»

At that moment, Maeng So, rising from his spot, glanced at the pot placed outside the door and chuckled.

«Why did we have to bring that?»

«It serves a purpose.»

«A purpose?»

«The youngsters seem a bit aimless these days.»

«Because of whom?!»

Chung Myung shrugged.

«You give the illness and then give the cure. I gave the illness, so now I have to provide the cure.»

«That's not necessarily the phrase for this situation...»

«Huh. I probably know more about Central Plains than the lord does. Isn't this the phrase to use at a time like this?»

The massive head of the Beast Palace Lord drooped. Witnessing this, everyone felt a sense of pity, but no one dared to step forward to defend him. It was universally acknowledged truth that trying to engage in verbal banter with Chung Myung only resulted in sore mouths.

«But what medicine?»

«We have the ingredients but forgot to bring the pot. Now that the pot's here, we should give the youngsters some pills.»

Upon hearing this, Hyun Jong looked at Chung Myung with admiration. He had been contemplating whether it was time to intervene, seeing that the disciples seemed to be struggling too much lately.

«That's right. That's a good idea.»

As Hyun Jong was about to nod in agreement, Maeng So, with a bewildered expression, hastily asked,

«Wait, wait! Who are you giving it to?»

«To the youngsters.»

«To whom?»

«To the youngsters? Lord, seems like you're losing your touch. You're not comprehending what's being said.»

Maeng So stared at Chung Myung in disbelief.

«... When you say 'youngsters,' are you referring to Hwasan's disciples?»

«No, I'll give it to everyone here. All the people present.»

Maeng So's expression wavered upon hearing this.

«Even the Beast Palace and the Ice Palace?»

«Of course. The most crucial ingredients were brought by the Beast and Ice Palaces.

Excluding them wouldn't be right. People should have a conscience.»

Maeng So's lips pressed tightly together. After a prolonged moment of contemplation, he finally spoke with a heavy tone.

«...It doesn't seem right.»

«What?»

«The value between ingredients and the finished elixir is incomparable. No matter how much ingredients we have brought, no one would consider receiving the elixir as a fair exchange.»

«...»

«Yet, are you giving it away without any compensation?»

This is too much. Though it's true that Cheonumaeng publicly declared equality among the disciples and affiliated factions, no one truly believed it would be possible. Not even Maeng So, a key figure at the Alliance, genuinely hoped for such a thing. But now, does Chung Myung truly intend to carry out such an unreasonable act?

Chung Myung chuckled.

«No compensation at all. Why would you think that?»

«...Huh?»

A sinister smile crept onto Chung Myung's face.

«Even for a beast, to work well, you have to feed it well, and when you ride a horse, you have to feed it carrots to make it obey, right?»

«...»

«If even mere beasts do that, then shouldn't people be fed well to work as obediently as cattle or horses?»

«...»

«With these youngsters already complaining about how tough things are nowadays, let's see if they still grumble after we shove elixirs down their throats. If people have an ounce of conscience, they'll roll without protest. Hehehe!»

Maeng So shivered visibly. Chung Myung nodded as if understanding the expression.

«Don't worry. We'll give one to the sect leaders and elders too.»

«U-Us too?»

«Dealing with these youngsters these days seems rather strenuous. How will you cope with them running wild after taking the pills? With your age, you must already feel different levels of endurance.»

«...»

«Even the elderly need to eat well to handle cattle or horses... I mean, to handle lively young ones, right? I'm considering everything. Absolutely everything.»

...What a kind offer. How could giving away such valuable elixir for free be considered anything but generous?

Yet, everyone present keenly felt that depending on who says such words in what situation, these words could become truly ominous.

«You have to eat well to grow well. If they take one of these, they won't be able to complain about hardships for months to come!»

As Chung Myung's eyes shone brightly, Maeng So quietly stepped away.

«I-I think I may not need to eat...»

«Eat it.»

«No, I'm really fine...»

«Eat it.»

«...Fine.»

A self-satisfied and proud smile spread across Chung Myung's lips as he looked at the pot placed outside the door.

«After we get rid of Jasodan, I guess I can act a little better than I am now, right? It's been suffocating lately, but this is a perfect opportunity. Hehehe!»

Upon hearing this, everyone's expressions turned pale. A heavy atmosphere loomed over the entire Cheonumaeng.