

Chapter 1269

Worry about Maninbang's bastards! (4)

«Uwaaaargh!»

«Aaaaargh!»

A section completely collapsed. Of course, compared to the overwhelming force that seemed to engulf the coast, the portion Chung Myung brought down was insignificant enough not to have any visible impact on the overall situation. However, for those calmly observing the situation, they couldn't help but clearly see the repercussions created by that small crack. The ripple emanating from Chung Myung spread out like concentric circles forming on a tranquil lake, gradually expanding. The force that seemed poised to tear through flesh and spill blood at any moment faltered momentarily, then began to lose momentum.

«Move! Get out of the way, you bastards!»

«Step back! Step back! Uwaaaaaah!»

It was no longer a battle between one man and an army. Those who had become completely disillusioned with Chung Myung, who had lost all semblance of courage despite bearing the title of «Maninbang,» turned and fled in fear.

Completely devoid of reason, they indiscriminately swung their swords at anyone in their path, including their own comrades.

«Are these guys insane?»

«Why are they acting like this?»

«Aaaaargh!»

Those struck by their comrades' swords were initially startled, then enraged. However, they eventually stiffened with deep confusion.

'What on earth is happening?'

One of Maninbang's men stood bewildered, his body tensed as he glanced around.

Confusion on the battlefield is common. It's not unheard of for fear of death to overwhelm soldiers and make them flee. But were they ever accustomed to killing from the start?

Yet the problem lies in the fact that those who are now turning against their own, wielding weapons and fleeing in terror, are all seasoned veterans of Maninbang. They're not newcomers to the battlefield. They've already fought countless enemies, dyed their hands with the blood of many sects.

How could they, of all people, who have faced death countless times before, suddenly turn tail and flee in such madness, as if they were seeing blood for the first time today?

«Get a hold of yourselves!»

«Move! Move! Move! Aaaaaaaaargh!»

Completely overwhelmed, they continued to writhe and shove him aside, still brandishing their weapons and desperately trying to flee. It was as if they would chop off his head along with the sword blocking their way if he didn't move immediately.

«These lunatics...»

And then it happened.

Crack!

The sound of air being torn apart pierced through their eardrums. Simultaneously, a crimson line appeared on the chest of Maninbang's member who had been struggling to escape.

«What...?»

At first, the line was as thin as if drawn by a fine brush, but it gradually thickened. Then, the upper body slid down along the drawn line as if it were sliding down a slope.

Even after being split in half, the body, unable to fully embrace death, still stood there.

Thump.

From the severed side, crimson blood gushed out. The one who had been blocking the man who was alive just moments ago saw it. He saw the black shadow rushing through the blood, terrifyingly surging forward.

As the blood, tinged with dark red, scattered in all directions like a burst dam, what stood out conspicuously were the lips, curved in a smile, peeking through the long black hair. And the strikingly white teeth.

«Aaaaaah!»

Now he understood why those in front had tried to flee as if possessed. Unfortunately, the grim reaper, obscured from his view, didn't even give him a chance to escape.

Crack!

With another fierce sound tearing through the air, the head detached from the body soared into the sky.

In the fleeting moments before reaching the definitive conclusion of 'death,' he saw it clearly. He saw the figure of Chung Myung, like a black leopard aiming for its prey, trampling over his decapitated body and leaping forward.

The world turned black.

No one would ever know what thought crossed his mind in those final moments.

Ho Gamyong observed the battlefield with cold eyes. The ones he had painstakingly trained, Maninbang, were being ravaged by just one person.

Despite this, Ho Gamyong watched the situation without any apparent change in expression. Suddenly, he glanced down at his own hands.

Slowly, he unclenched the fists that had been tightly gripped. As he relaxed his grip, he felt the sensation of ants gnawing at his blood-paled hand, a testament to the force he had exerted.

«Phew.»

Ho Gamyong took a short breath and slowly raised his head.

He could pretend to be unaffected, but by now, it would only appear feeble and pretentious. Ho Gamyong admitted it honestly. He acknowledged that he was deeply shaken.

«...This doesn't make sense.»

It's impossible not to be shaken when understanding why things turned out this way. Initially, overwhelming force suppresses the enemy's momentum in one fell swoop. Then, as violently and brutally as possible, they eliminate the enemy to ensure they understand the consequences of opposing them.

Ultimately, humans are creatures influenced by what they see. No matter how much they try to objectively assess the situation, instinctually, they first accept the imminent fear right in front of them.

What's the point of winning in the end? When I'm facing imminent death, what meaning does victory hold after I'm gone? Is the glory of Maninbang worth anything to the person standing in front of that sword?

The moment one person turns away, fear spreads. This contagious fear swiftly permeates and breaks the morale of the entire army, ultimately severing their will to resist.

Ho Gamyong knew this tactic all too well. The reason is simple: it's a method Maninbang has long favored.

It's the fear instilled by the name Jang Ilso and the notion that Jang Ilso's warriors, perceived as a group of fierce creatures who wouldn't hesitate to leap into hellfire. It was Ho Gamyong and Jang Ilsu themselves have created and fueled it. To instill fear in their enemies.

By leveraging fear, they establish overwhelming dominance from the outset, breaking the enemy's morale. Through this, they've achieved victories that seemed outright impossible. Now, Ho Gamyong fully realizes the repercussions of their own tactics being turned against them.

No, it's even worse. They're witnessing firsthand how a formidable force crushes their own ranks in a more aggressive and brutal manner.

‘...Hwasan Geomhyeop.’

Indeed, that man is insane.

While Jang Ilso expressed uncertainty about evaluating Hyun Jong, Ho Gamyong felt differently. From Ho Gamyong's perspective, Hyun Jong was nothing more or less than a fool ensnared by the facade of righteousness.

What he truly couldn't comprehend was Hwasan Geomhyeop Chung Myung.

‘What on earth is he thinking?’

Chung Myung's strength wasn't surprising. If one were to be amazed by his strength at this point, Ho Gamyong would be nothing more than a fool unworthy of being a commander of Maninbang.

What he genuinely couldn't fathom was the behavior of that madman, who charged alone against an army.

Is there anyone stronger than Chung Myung in Gangho?

Of course.

There must be. Ho Gamyong was certain of it. Jang Ilso alone was stronger than the lunatic of Hwasan. In the orthodox sects, some Sect Leader or some hidden master of previous generation, were stronger than Chung Myung.

But among those strong individuals, none would dare to act as recklessly as Hwasan Geomhyeop.

It's not because they value their lives. It's because they understand the immense loss their sect would suffer if they were to die as a result of their reckless actions.

However, that lunatic charged forward as if his own life meant nothing, swinging his sword, trampling over enemies at the forefront.

It was foolish, pathetic, and downright despicable behavior. That's how Ho Gamyong saw it based on his understanding.

«Aaaaah!»

«Run away!»

«Aaaaaa!»

But despite his utter foolishness, his actions ruthlessly shattered the discipline Ho Gamyong had painstakingly instilled in them.

Ho Gamyong lowered his head. His fist was clenched tightly again. Seeing blood flowing from his broken nail, he shut his eyes tightly.

‘Gamyong-ah.’

He had to admit it. Although he already knew, acknowledgment was necessary. That young man was not someone he could judge based on common sense.

«The damage is too significant.»

As Ho Gamyong struggled to calm his boiling insides, the mocking voice of Goe Yang, the leader of the Blood Sword Squad, echoed in his ears.

«They won't be able to catch him.»

«...»

«This isn't a fight between men. It's a fight between people and a beast. Of course, sometimes wolves gather in packs to hunt down a tiger...»

A sinister smile crept onto Goe Yang's lips.

«That's when the wolves have the leisure. But if the one at the forefront has his throat ripped out and starts spewing blood from the first step, all that's left is one-sided slaughter.»

Momentum is particularly crucial on the battlefield. And Hwasan Geomhyeop undoubtedly knows that fact instinctively.

«So what? Are you here to watch the already set stage?»

«Why? Do you regret the lives being lost? The renowned Ho Gamyong?»

Ho Gamyong stared at Goe Yang with cold eyes.

«Don't look at me with those eyes, commander.»

Goe Yang chuckled grimly. Though his laughter sounded joyful, his eyes never once missed a beat, coldly observing Chung Myung's every move.

«Beasts can't catch tigers. It's the hunter who catches the tiger. Do you know what's most important when trying to catch a mighty tiger?»

«...Not being caught?»

«No, it's getting caught.»

Ho Gamyong's eyes narrowed with suspicion. But as if anticipating his reaction, Goe Yang continued his explanation.

«Ordinary tigers can indeed be caught by surprise attacks, as you say. But real tigers can't be caught that way. The crucial thing is to let go of your strength. It's about letting them smell your presence from a distance where an ambush is impossible. It's about making them weary by constantly being aware of my existence, for days, for months.»

«...»

«Is that level of effort worth it?»

Goe Yang smirked menacingly.

«Even if those mediocre fools manage to wear down the stamina of Hwasan Geomhyeop, wouldn't it be a glorious death rather than a dishonorable one? I feel like applauding them.»

«You...»

«Ah... Instead.»

A sinister aura emanated from Goe Yang's eyes.

«He will die. The more he goes wild, the more certain it becomes.»

Feeling the creeping aura of Goe Yang, Ho Gamyong nodded silently.

‘Hwasan Geomhyeop.’

His gaze fell squarely on Chung Myung, swinging his sword amidst the crimson tide.

‘You will die without fail.’

Even if he lost everyone here, if he could just kill Hwasan Geomhyeop, it wouldn't be a bad deal.

‘Without fail...’

He slowly unclenched his tightly held fist.