

Chapter 1263

Don't let them live. (3)

«Aaargh!»

Gwak Hwanso exerted all his strength to shake off the opponent's sword.

Changgwi's member's face showed a mix of surprise and panic as the powerful sword strike engulfed him.

«Aaaargh!»

Changgwi's member, his entire body cut, screamed in agony as he retreated. He appeared unbelievably feeble, considering he had just effortlessly blocked Gwak Hwanso's sword moments ago.

'This...!'

Gwak Hwanso tightened his grip on the sword with all his might.

'This is Hwasan's Vice Sect Leader!'

It's entirely different.

Beside him, Lee Jayang also swung his sword almost in trance, driving away the enemy.

Probably, those following behind Gwak Hwanso would be doing the same.

'No, no way!'

In fact, it's not appropriate to say «following behind Gwak Hwanso.» The one they are following is not Gwak Hwanso but Baek Cheon!

Gwak Hwanso let out a scream as if his throat would burst.

«Push forward!»

«Yes!»

Responding with all their might, Changgwi's members countered the relentless attacks from Haenam.

«These damn island country bumpkins!»

Their menacing eyes seemed to emit flames. But it was short-lived.

«Aaargh!»

Before they could convert their anger into momentum, a desperate scream echoed from behind them. Instinctively turning their heads, they were met with a spectacle of crimson petals raining down upon them from the front.

Despite being notorious members of Changgwi and enduring the more infamous training of Maninbang, maintaining their usual composure while being attacked from all sides was impossible.

Moreover, the biggest problem was that swordsmanship.

«Aaargh!»

«Damn it!»

If Baek Cheon's sword flying from behind was an honest sword like that of other orthodox sects, they might have momentarily suppressed their urgency and focused on dealing with Haenam first.

Anyway, while the ones behind are being taken out, it should buy some time. However, Baek Cheon's sword is not a straightforward sword. It was impossible to block all the swirling petals of sword energy. Even using the ones behind as shields didn't provide complete freedom of movement.

So...

«Aargh!»

«Ugh! My back...»

The swirling sword strikes pierced through the gaps between Changgwi Unit's ranks, embedding themselves in their flesh. While these thin and small strikes mostly resulted in superficial wounds, depending on where they hit, it was evident that they could lead to fatal injuries with excessive bleeding.

Truly maddening, isn't it? With the constant barrage of strikes from behind, how could one focus solely on the enemy in front? So even with these greenhorns, who would have been no match under normal circumstances, Changgwi couldn't help but feel overwhelmed. While they could handle just Haenam in front of them, they also had to endure the onslaught from Hwasan from behind.

«Those damn!»

The frustration of being lost boiled over. One of Changgwi Unit members shouted towards their rear.

«Damn it! Why can't you deal with just one guy, you useless idiots!»

«What?»

«Grab his ankles or something! Don't act like idiots, trying to save your worthless lives!»

«This son of a b-!»

The anger that should have been directed at the enemy poured onto their comrades. In the midst of intense combat, there was no proper exchange, but under normal circumstances, they would have been at each other's throats even amidst battle.

These individuals were not bound by camaraderie but by power, sharing one name. With their lives hanging by a thread, there was no room to worry about or spare for others.

The resulting crack in their emotions was enough to disrupt the momentum of Changgwi Unit in an instant.

«Oooh!»

As the enemy faltered, the disciples of Haenam surged forward with even greater momentum.

In the rear, a voice bolstered their courage:

«Do not forgive the evildoers! This is Haenam!»

As the resounding voice of Haenam's Sect Leader, Geum Yangbaek, echoed, the swords of Haenam became even sharper. Watching Haenam charge like waves, the faces of the enemy paled.

'Oh no, this can't be happening!'

Immediate action was needed to salvage the situation. Changgwi Unit was maintaining a straight-line formation along the coast. If the center were to be breached, the members would be divided into two groups, leaving the remaining forces surrounded by enemies from all sides. Given that the enemy was already weakened by the divided numbers, such a scenario would be disastrous.

Historically, surrounding the strong with numbers of the weak was the most efficient method to neutralize their power.

Therefore, it was imperative to prevent the breach in the center. But...

Kagang!

«Argh...»

«This bastard, turning a blind eye on me while plotting something?»

The rough-haired young man from Hwasan in front of him didn't let go. No, it was more than just not letting go. If he flinched, it seemed like the guy's sword would pierce his throat.

Then the man from Hwasan narrowed his eyes and asked,

«Why? Do you want to go over there? Ah, it's possible.»

A sly grin played at the corners of the Jo Geol's mouth, leaving Heo Maeng perplexed.

«If you kill me, sure. But will that happen?»

«Stop the bullshit and fight, punk!»

«Ah, really!»

Jo Geol grimaced and momentarily thrust his sword towards Heo Maeng.

Paaaah!

The fierce blow narrowly missed Heo Maeng's neck, leaving a gash and a trail of blood.

Cold sweat trickled down Heo Maeng's forehead.

'What the heck are these guys?'

Even Maninbang wouldn't be astonished by the strength of Hwasan.

The premise that Hwasan was powerful was already firmly established within Maninbang.

After all, they were Sapa. It was natural for them to accurately gauge the opponent's strength. Otherwise, they wouldn't have survived on the battlefield.

However, the movements of these guys couldn't be explained so simply. Despite being spread out across the wide battlefield and unable to communicate with each other, they moved organically, as if they were exchanging shouts and having a conversation.

As the hesitant Haenam began to be led by Hwasan, the others seemed to grasp the situation and started to block any support heading in that direction.

'How is this possible?'

Strategic movements are not solely dependent on individual abilities. Even if someone has tactical prowess, it's impossible to fully utilize their skills in real combat situations. It's a world of difference between planning at a desk and assessing the situation in the midst of the chaotic battlefield where sharp-edged swirlds come and go.

Countless battles must be experienced before one can even begin to grasp such movements, yet how on earth do these youngsters exhibit such ability?

«Ah!»

At that moment, a flying sword pierced through Heo Maeng's shoulder.

«Urgh!»

He staggered backwards, blood gushing from the gaping wound on his shoulder.

«Don't you dare space out while I'm in front! You weak Sapa bastard!»

«This damn...!»

«If you feel unjust, then win!»

Though light-hearted words poured from his mouth, in Jo Geol's eyes, a deep, intense murderous intent flicked eerily.

Meanwhile, similar events were unfolding elsewhere.

«Ooooh!»

Kwooong!

«Haaaaaah!»

Kwaaaaang!

Changgwi Unit, too, didn't earn the title of the Iron Wall of Maninbang through sheer luck. They were well aware that they had to block the advancing force of Haenam, piercing through the center.

«Uaaaaaah!»

However, despite their efforts to thwart them, what poured down towards those trying to resist were Hye Yeon's golden light, Namgung Dowi's cannonball-like white sword energy, and Tang Pae's pink poison raining down even from the skies.

«This, this is....»

No matter how confident they were, facing the combined might of Shaolin's power, Namgung's swordsmanship, and Tangga's poison, could they really push forward? It was nothing short of suicidal, and nothing more or less.

Given the circumstances, while witnessing the collapse of their formation in front of them, there was nothing they could do.

As they hesitated for a moment, Haenam's vanguard finally broke through the midst of Changgwi's formation!

'Oh, no...'

Heo Maeng's face momentarily turned pale blue.

'Damn you!'

At times like this, Daeju who should have given orders swiftly had already lost his head to Hwasan Geomhyeop. So, there was no one else here to issue commands.

«Fall back! We're being surrounded. Change formation...!»

Paaah!

Before he could finish speaking, Heo Maeng hastily twisted his waist backward. Jo Geol's sword once again mercilessly cut across his face.

«Still looking elsewhere?»

«This bastard!»

Despair etched across Heo Maeng's face. If things continued like this, their fate was sealed. With Haenam and Cheonumaeng breaking through the center, all it would take was a change in direction to surround them and finish them off...

But it was precisely at that moment.

«Charge! Board the ship!»

«Yes!»

Instead of changing direction after penetrating the center of Changgwi Unit, they dashed straight toward the coast. Then, they leaped towards the anchored ships.

«Enemies might be on the ships too! Don't let your guard down, seize control!»

«Yes!»

Prompted by Geum Yangbaek's swift command, Haenam's disciples doubled their efforts, swiftly leaping aboard the ships to seize control.

«What?»

Heo Maeng opened his mouth without realizing it.

What in the world were they up to? They weren't destroying the ships — they were boarding them?

Did that mean they had engaged in this madness of fighting Changgwi Unit just to board those ships?

'Why on earth?'

This was Hainan, after all.

Ships were as plentiful as carriages on land. What possible reason could they have for such a reckless act?

No, even before that...

'After finally seizing the opportunity to encircle us, they just let it slip away like that?'

If their main force boarded the ships, Changgwi Unit remaining on the coast would gain time to regroup.

It's a judgment that can only be deemed insane by common sense.

«What, what are you doing?»

Heo Maeng blurted out. Though he knew there wouldn't be a straightforward answer, the absurdity of the situation forced the words out of him.

However, the young Hwasan's warrior facing him was clearly not in his right mind either.

«What do you mean, isn't it our ship now?»

«...Ship?»

«Yeah. Upset?»

«...No.»

Momentarily at a loss for words, Heo Maeng bit his lip. There was no basis for them to exchange words in the first place.

He couldn't fathom why they were targeting the ships. But at least he quickly understood why they hadn't encircled them.

«They're coming!»

«Huh?»

At someone's shout, Heo Maeng hastily looked up. The forest leading to the coast was being shaken violently!

“Co...”

A mixture of momentary relief and fear erupted from Heo Maeng's lips.

«Commander! The main force! The main force has arrived!»

As if hit by cannonballs, trees burst outward, revealing a staggering number of martial artists of Maninbang. Among them, a military commander of Maninbang, Ho Gamyong, surveyed the coast with cold eyes.

His gaze landed on a corner of the coast. More precisely, it focused on a figure standing there leisurely.

Ho Gamyong slowly spoke, without changing his expression.

«...Didn't expect to meet you in a place like this.»

He spoke, his demeanor unchanged.

«What business brings you to this remote island, Hwasan Geomhyeop?»

At his words, Chung Myung stared at Ho Gamyong intently, then tilted his head slightly.

«Uh... Sorry.»

«Hmm?»

«Who are you?»

For a moment, silence hung in the air. Ho Gamyong's thick eyebrows twitched slightly.