

## Chapter 1107

It sends shivers down my spine sometimes. (2)

Tang Pae stared blankly at his hand. The empty spoon was twitching in his hand.

‘Haha...’

His eyes were dimmed, half dead. Glancing around, his brothers, who had given up trying to pick up anything with their hands to eat, were burying their faces into the bowls.

Without eating, they couldn’t survive. Unable to scoop food with their spoons, it was all about throwing away any dignity by somehow ‘putting’ food into their mouths.

‘Physical strength...’

Why had Chung Myung emphasized the necessity of stamina in the martial arts of the Tang clan? At this moment, Tang Pae understood it perfectly. With hands that couldn’t even lift a bowl of rice, how could they throw any hidden weapons?

It’s true that precision is needed in Tangga’s martial arts. However, such precision can only manifest on a sturdy physical foundation that never falters in any situation.

How can one claim being an expert when they can’t even control their own hands?

‘I know, but...’

He remembered Baek Cheon’s words from the past. When Chung Myung spoke, Baek Cheon would lash out with curses. Tang Pae had once been puzzled, questioning why he got so angry when Chung Myung seemed to speak the truth. Baek Cheon had clearly replied at that time.

- ...You’ll understand when you experience it later.

Yeah. Now he understands. He understands it painfully well.

When someone makes sense, there’s no room for rebellion. But following orders blindly would mean one might die on the spot.

The problem is, if he resist here, he’ll just be seen as stubborn and lazy. Who would have thought that being driven with justification could be this terrifying?

“Ugh...”

“Please, spare us...”

Constant groans poured from the mouths of the Tang’s people.

“No wonder Hwasan is so strong. Training like this, even rabbits would turn into tigers within a few years.”

“Brother, are we really going to die like this?”

“Don’t worry. We won’t die.”

“But, how do you know?”

“Look over there.”

“What?”

“They’re not dead, are they?”

Tang Jan raised his head, following Tang Pae's gesture. There, the faces of the exhausted Hwasan's disciples were pallid, half-slumped on their chairs, blankly staring at the food in front of them.

"Why aren't they eating?"

"They vomited everything they had for breakfast."

"..."

"I didn't know either. It seems our Lord was too enthusiastic."

"I've never seen such a sight in my life."

"Thankfully."

"What? Why?"

"It's the first time we've seen such a thing... It's better not to see it."

Tang Gunak met his match.

It seemed like he was a vengeful spirit who died out of resentment for not being able to throw the daggers, and whenever he saw people of Hwasan, he threw the daggers as a greeting. Of course, the recipients of these gestures couldn't possibly interpret them as greetings just because they were thrown as such.

The disciples of Hwasan, feeling the threat to their lives dozens of times a day, were visibly deteriorating due to the constant strain.

«So, aren't we in a slightly better position? Let's not keep crying.»

«Did you not hear it?»

«What?»

«After this morning's training, Chung Myung said, 'Now that we've got the basics down, it's time to increase the intensity and do it properly.'»

«That insane...!»

Cough! Cough!

Tang Pae quickly cut off the words that were about to burst out of his mouth with a dry cough.

«No, what...?»

At this point, isn't it more of a competition between Chung Myung and Tang Gunak to see who can torment the other side's disciples more? It's like when two whales fight, it's the tiny shrimp that get crushed in between.

«It's said that doing what you know is the hardest thing in the world.»

Tang Pae, exhaling a sigh deeply, suddenly looked at the disciples of Hwasan with a warm gaze.

«Still, it's fortunate that they are here.»

«What?»

«...Imagine if it was only the Tang clan experiencing this situation. Wouldn't complaints be ten times worse by now?»

«That... makes sense, doesn't it?»

Tang Jang nodded immediately.

There was no need for predictions. Until just a few days ago, there had been a constant stream of criticism against Hwasan and Chung Myung. However, ever since Tang Gunak had directly started to engage with the training of Hwasan's disciples, those criticism had dissipated.

Gradually, instead of subtle hostility, a sense of camaraderie began to emerge. After all, weren't they colleagues enduring the same pain, individuals who had undergone the same training until now?

«If you share the burden, it becomes a bit lighter.»

«...Isn't it just an increased burden?»

«Let's just leave it at that.»

Tang Pae looked at the disciples of Hwasan with a strange gaze.

'Did the Lord or Chung Myung also consider such a thing?'

Upon reflection, the notion that the relationship between Tangga and Hwasan was close was somewhat illusionary.

In reality, the close relationships were between Hyun Jong and Tang Gunak, and Chung Myung and Tang Gunak. They represented Hwasan and Tangga, so it wasn't entirely incorrect to say there was proximity between the factions. However, there wasn't much interaction among the members of each faction.

While it wasn't a strained relationship, it didn't signify an intimacy where personal conversations could take place.

'In other words, if the current leadership were to step down, it would likely alter the relationship between Hwasan and Tangga.'

Tang Pae may try to maintain a relationship with Hwasan, but no matter how much he thinks about it, becoming a supreme Patriarch like Tang Gunak is difficult. Eventually, he will have no choice but to listen to the opinions of others.

However, if situations like the present one continue to occur, a sense of camaraderie might emerge between Hwasan and Tangga. Not only among the leaders but also among the members, good relations might develop between them.

'So, are those two volunteering to play the villains?'

Perhaps the leaders are envisioning a bigger picture that he cannot yet see. Thinking this way, Tang Pae unknowingly nodded his head.

Unaware of his thoughts, Tang Jan spoke with a distressed expression.

«...How about the afternoon training?»

«Stop complaining. Don't we get time to rest?»

«Sleeping doesn't entirely recover fatigue. Even practicing energy cultivation doesn't make the body feel any lighter nowadays. It feels like carrying a load of iron on my shoulders.»

Upon hearing this, Tang Pae nodded and looked at Tang Jan.

«That's the point.»

«... Yes?»

«In the future, we will have to face not short battles but a war. Do you understand that?»

«Yes.»

Tang Jan nodded.

«A war doesn't conclude overnight. Everyone must have realized this during the recent Mehwado incident. It might continue with us fighting day in and day out, without proper rest or sleep, for a few days in short battles or even for months in prolonged ones.»

«...»

«Look.»

Tang Jan turned his head at Tang Pae's words. The people of Tang clan were still unable to eat properly and were gradually fading away.

«There too.»

Following Tang Pae's words, Tang Jan's eyes, when turned in that direction, widened slightly. Hwasan's disciples, who moments ago were lying like corpses, were now gathering energy and shoving food into their mouths.

«If we were to enter a war in our current state, can you understand what kind of situation we would be in?»

«Yes, Hyeong-nim. I probably wouldn't be able to exhibit even half of my abilities.»

«That's an incorrect statement.»

«What?»

«The idea of not being able to exhibit your skills is not about your abilities in the first place. It's nothing more than an excuse. Only the power that can be fully exerted in actual combat can be called a skill.»

«...»

«If you think that way, everything in the world changes. Even the societal assessment that Tangga is ahead of Hwasan in terms of power is also incorrect. Right now, we're just not as good as them.»

«But, Hyeong-nim...»

Tang Pae looked at Tang Jan with a cold gaze.

«Why? Do you also want to elevate yourself based on the superficial assessments of others?»

«...»

«Even seeing someone like Namgung clan, who was considered stronger than us, facing such a humiliating situation?»

«No, Hyeong-nim. That's not what I meant.»

Tang Pae nodded.

«In my opinion, Chung Myung Dojang and the Lord do not simply act upon observing one thing — they probably consider at least three or four perspectives. Even though it may be difficult right now, if you trust and follow them, there will come a time when things will surely turn for the better. Would they really torment us knowingly?»

«...That makes sense too.»

«Yeah. So let's eat. If we want to endure, we have to eat.»

Tang Pae managed to grasp the food bowl somehow and began to put food into his mouth. However, at that moment, he didn't know.

No matter how good the intentions might be, even if acting with an endlessly kind motive, depending on the method, it could be more dreadful than acting with malice.

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«...What did you say?»

«Can't you understand this?»

Chung Myung smiled brightly.

To anyone else, it was an undoubtedly refreshing expression, but at least in Tang Pae's eyes, that smile didn't look pleasant. No, it rather resembled a grin of a devil emerging from hell.

«You're tired too.»

«... Yes.»

«You want to rest. Isn't that right?»

«Well...»

«That's why I'll give you a chance to rest.»

Tang Pae was momentarily stunned.

Wait, Dojang? I'm not a fool — of course, I understood that.

«But the method to...»

«Ugh. Okay. That's the point.»

Chung Myung snapped his fingers sharply.

«Rest is good, isn't it? Really nice. But humans are like that, right? They can't appreciate something given so easily.»

«What's that supposed to... I mean, what are you talking about?»

«So, I'll make you appreciate that value.»

Chung Myung grinned.

«You, as members of Tang clan, also take pride in your abilities, right? That you can win against anyone.»

«...That's true.»

Chung Myung nodded in agreement.

«Yeah. But those guys are probably the same, right?»

He gestured towards the disciples of Hwasan. Those brats, with only pure venom left in their eyes, nodded their heads like starving killers.

«The rules of Gangho are simple. The strong possess, and the proven ones obtain. So...»

Chung Myung snapped his fingers sharply once again.

«Those who win will be exempted from tomorrow morning's training. Simple, isn't it?»

«Wait a moment. What's this about?»

Even if they trained together, asking comrades to fight against each other! Is this behavior something that can be tolerated?

Moreover, if Tangga and Hwasan were to fight against each other, wouldn't the camaraderie they built vanish? This shouldn't happen...

«Oh, this brat talks too much. Well, it's alright. Maybe it's still unfamiliar. I understand. The solution to that problem is also incredibly simple.»

Chung Myung smiled brightly.

«After a good punch, things will become clear.»

«Yes?»

«The one left standing at the end wins. Prepare yourself.»

«Yes?»

«Start.»

Chung Myung clapped his hands.

Tang Pae let out a bitter laugh. Even if he pushed so forcibly, who would comply...

«Aaaahhh!»

Suddenly, a desperate scream echoed. Tang Pae was startled, swiftly turning his head.

The disciples of Hwasan, who felt like comrades in arms, or rather, those heretics of Hwasan, with bloodshot eyes, were rushing in a frenzied manner.

«Kill theeeeeeeeem!»

It was a moment when the alliance between Hwasan and Tangga completely shattered into pieces.