

Chapter 1119

I've already prepared for that! (4)

“Hmm.”

Sigh.

Chung Myung let out a long sigh and looked at Tang Gunak. With a worried look on his face, Tang Gunak asked,

«Haven't you changed your mind at all?»

«No, it's not that.»

Tang Gunak looked at him puzzled. At that moment, Chung Myung smiled and continued.

«I was thinking... someone like me becoming the Sect Leader.»

«... Why suddenly...»

Chung Myung rested his chin on his fist.

«Well, Elder Hyun Yeong seems to think that way. Even though I might dislike it now, eventually, I'll inevitably become the Sect Leader.»

«...»

«And it seems like Sect Leader occasionally entertains such thoughts too.»

Tang Gunak laughed bitterly.

In his view, it would be more peculiar if Chung Myung didn't entertain such thoughts.

Currently, within Hwasan, his influence surpassed even Hyun Jong. Even if Baek Cheon or Yoon Jong became Sect Leaders, if Chung Myung set his mind to it, turning them into mere figureheads wouldn't be difficult.

It wasn't crucial whether Chung Myung had that intention or not. What was significant was the fact that he could. Considering how significant this fact could be for the martial arts sect, particularly the potential issues it might cause, didn't Tang Gunak struggle enough with the Council of Elders that refused to relinquish power?

“Seems like I have an idea of what you're thinking.”

Rather than dividing power into two, perhaps it's better to consolidate it under Chung Myung alone. Unlike Chung Myung of the past, the current one subtly looks after people.

«But that's a useless thought.»

«Hmm? Why is that?»

«I have no intention becoming the Sect Leader.»

Tang Gunak wore an expression of utter confusion.

Granted, Chung Myung might consider himself devoid of any desire for power. However, from Tang Gunak's perspective, Chung Myung was someone who, when things didn't go his way, would erupt in fury and would break down mountains blocking his path, attempting to steer things to his liking.

Can you truly say someone doesn't possess a lust for power when they're restless if they don't directly control what they desire? Perhaps it's something that can be overlooked for now, but...

Interrupting his flow of thoughts, Tang Gunak calmly asked a probing question.

«What if, someday, Yoon Jong Dojang as the Sect Leader acts completely contrary to your views?»

«Huh...?»

Tang Gunak, noticing Chung Myung's slight confusion, pressed on a bit further.

«If you're convinced that certain actions would be detrimental and but he would execute them under the authority of the Sect Leader, how would you handle that?»

«Convince him?»

«And if persuasion doesn't work?»

Tang Gunak's voice was flat, without any pitch. There was no emotion in it. But that's why it came across even more clearly.

“Will you subdue them by force, or will you just facilitate their wrong path?”

Chung Myung didn't immediately respond. Tang Gunak then spoke in a slightly reproachful tone.

“If you step back, you should also relinquish your power. If you're not willing to step back, you can't give up your power. If you act hesitantly, it'll only make things difficult for everyone else.”

“Hmm.”

Chun Myung pressed his hand firmly against his chin.

‘I probably knew that.’

But just because one understands something doesn't mean they necessarily act upon it. Things that aren't immediately pressing tend to be postponed. Even if one knows that delayed issues can turn into bigger problems in the future.

“So, it's better to...”

“No, there seems to be a misunderstanding.”

“Huh?”

Chung myung looked at Tang Gunak. His expression was strangely indifferent for this serious conversation.

“If such a situation arises, I'll simply leave it alone.”

“...You?”

“Yes. What's strange about that?”

“Isn't that obvious? From what I know, you're not the kind to tolerate those headed down the wrong path.”

“That's right.”

“Then, isn't that contradictory?”

“No, it's not. The Lords premise for the question was wrong.”

Tang Gunak was puzzled by this statement.

«The premise is wrong?»

“Yes.”

Chung Myung spoke with an unwavering expression on his face.

“If such a situation were to arise, there would be no need for hesitation. I would be wrong and Yoon Jong Sahyeong would be right.”

“...”

“If I couldn’t change his mind after trying to persuade him as much as I could, then it’s just that I was wrong. Yoon Jong Sahyeong is not the kind of person to go down the wrong path, nor is he someone unable to recognize their own mistakes from others’ words.”

Tang Gunak looked bewildered.

“Does that even make sense? Everyone makes mistakes and misjudgments.”

“Yes, that’s true. But... at that time, Sahyeong is not a person, but a Taoist, and not a disciple, but a Sect Leader.”

“...”

“People might make mistakes, but the Sect Leader does not. I will make it so.”

Tang Gunak was at a loss for words.

‘What in the world...’

How could someone trust others to this extent?

“Is Baek Cheon Dojang the same?”

“Ah... Sasuk is a bit different. That guy is reliable in battle but tends to be kind of pretentious in everyday life.”

“...”

«If he does something stupid, I’ll just pull him down and replace him with Yoon Jong Sahyeong. Of course, before that, Yu Iseol Sago will stab him with a sword and drag him out.»

«Hu.....»

Chung Myung chuckled at Tang Gunak’s inability to hide his confusion.

“Do you understand? Do you see why I shouldn’t become a Sect Leader?”

“...”

“Today, I realized while listening to the Lord. Ah, the Lord does these things, and a leader must consider even these. Therefore, I shouldn’t become a Sect Leader for sure.”

“Couldn’t the same be said for you?”

“I’m someone who can’t do that.”

Chung Myung laughed heartily.

“You asked if I would regret it, right?”

“I did.”

That was precisely the beginning of this conversation. Wasn't it regrettable to assign the Jasodan to a different faction than the disciples of Hwasan? The answer to that question comes now.

"I won't regret it at all."

"...Really?"

"Yes."

Chung Myung shrugged his shoulders.

«That's what I'm telling you. I don't know about Hwaseon's future. I tried to understand it, but to be honest, I still don't quite grasp it. And even if I do understand, I don't think I can genuinely take care of that.»

«Can't you do it?»

«There are things that are done with the head, and there are things that are done with the heart.»

Tang Gunak was momentarily left speechless. Chung Myung clapped his hands.

«That's why instead of pretending to take care of descendants whose faces I don't even know, whose future and when it will happen are uncertain, not making use of what's present, I'd rather distribute Jasodan to save at least one more person. From my standpoint, that's a hundred times better.»

«...It's an incomprehensible statement. No matter how important your current disciples might seem, when it comes to passing on the legacy of Hwasan through generations...»

«It's not even worth comparing.»

For a moment, Tang Gunak flinched. It was because of the unknown eeriness in Chung Myung's voice that cut through the conversation.

But looking at Chung Myung again, he continued to smile.

"Or, well, you can make it that way. In return for that, let each and every disciple who survives become a person more valuable than a hundred Jasodan pills. To become someone who can pass on something more to the descendants.»

«.....»

«Isn't that enough?»

In the end, Tang Gunak shook his head silently.

«I don't know, utterly clueless.»

«That's why I'm saying, because that's not something I excel at. Do you know what I realized this time?»

«What is it?»

«I don't have to do everything. We just need to do what each of us can do well.»

Turning his head towards training grounds, Chung Myung continued to speak.

«Baek Cheon Sasuk will lead and develop Hwasan. There won't be anyone better than that person for it. Yoon Jong Sahyeong is the one who will achieve the Tao that Hwasan lacks

now. The person with more fame will be Sasuk, but the person who will have a greater impact on future generations will be Yoon Jong Sahyeong.»

«...»

«Yu Iseol Sago will become the foundation of Hwasan's swordsmanship. Just by her existence, the way descendants handle the sword will change. Jo Geol Sahyeong... that person might just be a troublemaker, but such a person is also necessary for a sect, right?»

«Hmm...»

«And Lord's daughter will be the one to cultivate the female disciples that Hwasan lacks. That's something that even Sago won't be as good at as the disciple. And since she's good at communication, she'll be a channel for Sasuk and Sahyeong to convey the words they can't say directly.»

Chung Myung shrugged.

«The rest are similar. Baek Sang Sasuk will manage Hwasan's finances, while current third generation disciples will pass on their present experiences to future generations. Everyone has their role to fulfill. There isn't a single person who can be considered dispensable.»

Tang Gunak looked at Chung Myung again with a new feeling.

Tang Gunak was surprised. He had never thought that Chung Myung was paying such close attention to each and every disciple.

This led to another question.

«Then, what are you here for?»

«Me? That's obvious.»

Chung Myung smiled broadly.

«I'm the sword that cuts down Hwasan's enemies.»

«.....»

Tang Gunak let out a deep sigh.

“I'll do anything to cut down those threatening Hwasan right now. Jasodan? I don't regret it at all. If saving one disciple of Hwasan requires not just a hundred but a thousand Jasodan, it wouldn't be too much. What's so great about those trivial things?”

“I thought I knew you reasonably well... but I still don't quite understand,”

Tang Gunak admitted.

“You just need to know one thing.”

“What is it?”

“That I genuinely need the Sichuan Tang Clan as much as that.”

Tang Gunak looked at Chung Myung with a perplexed expression. However, seeing his persistent smile, he couldn't help but smile back involuntarily.

«.....If you're going to use us, take good care of the Tang Clan.»

«Of course. That's a given.»

Tang Gunak looked at Chung Myung with strange eyes, then got up and walked away.

«Leaving already?»

«Predictable matches don't interest me,»

Tang Gunak replied as he turned his body.

«It's somewhat entertaining. Well, we'll see later.»

With his back turned, Tang Gunak continued,

«And... there's one thing I'd like to correct.»

“What is it?”

«You mentioned being the sword that cuts down the enemies of Hwasan.»

«Yes.»

«...If you have the will to exchange thousand precious elixirs even for one disciple, you wouldn't call yourself a sword that only cuts down enemies.»

«...»

«That's a Guarding Sword, not a cutting sword. It guards Hwasan.»

With those words, Tang Gunak silently walked away, feeling Chung Myung's gaze piercing his back.

‘I couldn't ask.’

Tang Gunak slowly closed his eyes. There was indeed something he truly wanted to ask about. Yet, it was a question he couldn't muster the courage to ask, not even to himself.

‘Everyone growing perfectly and leading Hwasan in their respective positions. That's the ideal, I suppose.’

Without a doubt, Hwasan will become an even greater sect. Perhaps it will become a sect that is unprecedented in history.

But if Chung Myung's role is to protect Hwasan, to cut down Hwasan's enemies... Where is his place in a world where Hwasan's enemies have disappeared?

In a world where swords are no longer needed, what will he live for?

‘Does he really think that the position of the Sect Leader doesn't suit him?’

Or...

Tang Gunak shook his head.

That's a tale for a distant future. Yes, it's still too far away. The story isn't one to be spoken by those who still have so many mountains left to cross.

Tang Gunak took a few steps and walked away.

And as he moved farther, Chung Myung watched his back for a long time.

It was a gaze steeped in boundless darkness.