

Chapter 1061

Is this how it's done? (1)

Kwaaah!

In the aftermath of the erupting explosion, Hwasan's disciples hesitated and opened their eyes wide.

«That... that....»

With each strike of Danjagang's monstrous power, the earth shattered and the terrain distorted. Yet, even within the explosive force of the refined demonic energy, Jang Ilso stood his ground without yielding an inch to Danjagang.

In the face of an attack that could bring down even a mountain, Jang Ilso clung to Danjagang with unwavering determination.

It was truly a precarious tightrope walk.

No, it was a feat so perilous that it could hardly be expressed with such words.

Even Hwasan's disciples, who harbored nothing but hatred towards Jang Ilso, felt their hearts sink every time it seemed that the fierce demonic energy would touch or graze Jang Ilso at a close distance.

Dozens of exchanges occurred in the blink of an eye. Within that time, if he made a single mistake, that terrible demonic energy would hit him directly from a close range, and at that moment, Jang Ilso's body would be blown away.

And Jang Ilso, more than anyone else, was acutely aware of this fact. However, he continued to press on Danjagang without showing any sign of fear.

As if...

«That... that... Chung Myung...»

At the sobbing words uttered by Jo Geol, Baek Cheon unknowingly nodded his head. The combat style that Jang Ilso was displaying right now resembled the way they knew Chung Myung would fight.

'Who else in the world would be capable to do such a thing?'

Even Baek Cheon, who had learned constantly by watching Chung Myung, dared not attempt such an outrageous feat. The reason Baek Cheon could not attempt such a style was not because he was weak. It was because even if he knew how to do it, it did not mean he could do it.

Getting so close and avoiding an opponent's attacks in a situation where invisible attacks were pouring in was a matter of sensory perception before it was martial arts. And no matter how much a person hones their senses, they cannot surpass their innate limits.

In the practice of martial arts, Baek Cheon actually had an advantage over Chung Myung, in terms unfolding his swordsmanship in line with traditional theory. But no matter how hard Baek Cheon tried, he couldn't replicate the animalistic sense that Chung Myung possessed.

However, now Jang Ilso was facing Danjagang just like that.

Yoon Jong, who had been absentmindedly watching, finally spoke.

“Isn’t this... isn’t this too dangerous?”

The acrobatics on that thin line, which seemed to squeeze the hearts of the viewers, ultimately led to the words of concern from Hwasan’s disciples for Jang Ilso.

They knew.

If the same feat could be achieved, Jang Ilso might be even better than Chung Myung right now. But strangely, as they watched this spectacle, their hearts didn’t calm down. It felt like Jang Ilso’s head could explode and his brain could splatter at any moment.

“Is that really possible?”

Cold sweat formed, and his whole body became sticky.

“If Jang Ilso gets hit like this...”

Right at that moment, a chilling voice echoed in their ears.

«Shouting as soon as anything comes to mind. You naive kids from the orthodox faction.»

Baek Cheon reflexively turned his head to look at the person who opened his mouth.

The military commander of Sapaeryeon, Ho Gamyong.

He spoke without taking his eyes off the battle between Jang Ilso and Danjagang.

«If you don’t know, shut up and watch. You’re not in a position to judge with that feeble mouth of yours.»

Baek Cheon was momentarily taken aback, but his heart quickly calmed. It wasn’t because of Ho Gamyong’s presence but because of the expression on his face.

As far as Baek Cheon knew, Ho Gamyong was a being as important to Jang Ilso as his limbs.

Even before Sapaeryeon was established... No, it was said that even before the name Maninbang came into existence, the names of Jang Ilso and Ho Gamyong had already spread together.

So, for Ho Gamyong, Jang Ilso was an irreplaceable existence. But how could such a person maintain a composed expression while his lord was performing absurdly dangerous tightrope act?

At that moment, Ho Gamyong shifted his gaze to the disciples of Hwasan and stared at them coldly.

He didn’t particularly want to engage with them, but...

«Do you deem Hwasan Geomhyeop more reliable?»

Baek Cheon didn’t answer, but Ho Gamyong continued as if he didn’t need a response.

«That’s probably because you’ve witnessed victories and miracles that Hwasan Geomhyeop has achieved over time.»

Baek Cheon was about to argue, but he bit his lip and kept silent.

The reasons they trust Chung Myung isn't just that. But certainly, if Chung Myung hadn't shown them a series of victories in battles that seemed impossible for him to win, they wouldn't be blindly trusting him like this.

«How many years have you watched him? Five years? Ten?»

«...»

«Know this well, you naive kids of the orthodox faction.»

Ho Gamyong stated with a snap of his words.

«Over the course of more than twenty years, Paegun Jang Ilso has always trampled on those stronger than himself. If there had been even a single defeat among them, the name Jang Ilso would have been forgotten like the name of any common beggar.»

«...»

«He survived because he didn't lose, and he conquered because he didn't lose. Whether the opponent is strong or weak, it doesn't matter.»

For a moment, Baek Cheon felt a chill down his spine.

Of course, they also trust Chung Myung excessively. But Ho Gamyong's trust in Jang Ilso was on a different level from theirs.

'Isn't it closer to Demonic Cult?'

It looks more like faith, than trust. Without questioning the reasons and circumstances, they simply believe.

But... when he thought about it, isn't it likely to be the case?

They, too, would likely become fanatical about Chung Myung in terms of winning if they continued to watch him achieve victories like he is doing it now for ten more years.

Just as Ho Gamyong, who had watched everything, believed in Jang Ilso so blindly.

Then, as if driving a final wedge, Ho Gamyong said,

«At least I can't imagine Paegun being defeated in any way.»

Baek Cheon, whose body was swayed by that strong and blind belief, unconsciously turned to look at Jang Ilso.

The giant who had climbed to the top of evil factions with his own two hands.

A few strands of broken hair fluttered in all directions.

Jang Ilso had become a complete mess, spurting out his blood as he charged forward. His shoulders had long been discolored black due to the pressure emitted by demonic energy.

A body that appeared to be completely battered.

However, the glint in his eyes visible through his messy hair was different from the beginning of the battle, far more intense.

Crack!

Danjagang's hand slashed at Jang Ilso's wrist, tearing off a chunk of flesh, leaving a wound so deep that even the bone was visible.

Tearing flesh from the body like that should have caused excruciating pain, but Jang Ilso showed no reaction and continued to relentlessly target Danjagang's head.

‘This guy’s insane.’

Chung Myung, supporting Jang Ilso from the back, suddenly burst into laughter.

He didn’t try to provoke anyone, he was sincerely laughing at the absurdity of the current situation.

That’s how exceptional the sight, shown by Jang Ilso to Chung Myung, was.

‘Is this how I appear when someone watches over me from behind?’

When he did it himself, he couldn’t tell. People can’t see their own actions objectively. It was an experience no one else could have.

So it was Chung Myung’s first and only experience observing his own fight through the eyes of a third party.

‘..I managed to survive until the end.’

He said that while thinking of himself performing such deeds. Now, it seemed he understood why those who witnessed his fight all felt a certain detachment. Even the enemies he faced likely felt the same way.

Of course, Jang Ilso was not flawless.

He was a swordsman, while Jang Ilso was a martial artist [권사(拳士) — a martial artist/fighter/someone who specializes in combat]. Regardless of their similarities, there was a fundamental difference. That difference continually pushed Jang Ilso to the brink of death. However, that didn’t seem to matter. Chung Myung was the one supporting him. The fact that Chung Myung had never supported anyone else didn’t matter either. He understood it. He had always understood it with his senses, how that person had always stood behind his back to protect him.

Yes, the scene he was witnessing now...

It was the same view Tang Bo saw a hundred years ago.

Breathing and synchronizing. You should feel every breath, every movement, even the slightest muscle twitch as if it’s within your grasp. You need to merge seamlessly with the person in front of you, already anticipating their actions before they even occur.

‘You’ve mastered this damned thing well, you cursed bastard!’

Having to protect that wretched Jang Ilso to such an extent wasn’t exactly pleasing, but somehow, it didn’t make Chung Myung’s mood as bad as he had thought.

Thanks to it, he was now able to engrave the spectacle that he could never have known alone into his eyes.

Pa-a-a-a-at!

Chung Myung’s sword extended swiftly. Right after that, Danjagang and Jang Ilso fiercely reached out towards each other. In an instant, Chung Myung’s sword, which had advanced ahead, preemptively blocked Danjagang’s attack direction, cutting into his flesh in an unexpected attack.

Thrusting through everything with a single sword, an extreme piercing technique. This was more akin to martial arts than swordsmanship.

— Different hidden weapons [암기(暗器)]? Well, if you need it, you can use it. I just like this, that's all. Why? Do you have a problem with that?

‘You idiot!’

Chung Myung only realized it once he stood behind. For killing an opponent, refined hidden weapon techniques were much more useful. If it could be combined with Tangga's poison, the priority was to just somehow hit the body of the opponent with a hidden weapon.

However, with that alone, you cannot protect the one standing in front. To defend against the enemy, power must be applied, and to threaten the enemy, it must be visible to their eyes.

The paradoxical notion that a bido [비도(飛刀) — throwing knife, flying knife] should be thrown into the enemy's eyes, but released more covertly and swiftly than any other weapon, was absurd. That was perfected within this paradox known as twelve throwing knives, the Twelve Flying Daggers of Tangga.

Eudeuk.

Chung Myung bit his lip until it bled.

‘Why do I realize everything so late, you idiot...?’

Even on the battlefield, where he had been unbearably lonely, there were countless others behind him. If not for them, Chung Myung wouldn't have been able to cut off Heavenly Demon's head. He would be nothing more than a cold, lifeless corpse strewn on the battlefield.

In that moment, Danjagang let out a terrifying cry as he raised his arm. Jang Ilso couldn't just stand by and watch that big movement. In an instant, he advanced and, without even blinking, drove twelve fists into Danjagang's upper body.

«Grrgh...»

Blood spurted from Danjagang's mouth once more. But even as he spat blood, Danjagang's eyes became even more intense with a deep crimson glare.

«The se... The Second Coming of The Heavenly Demon.»

In an instant, Jang Ilso's gaze shot rapidly upward. Unlike the swordsman's attack, an impact of martial artist's attack could be withstood with self-defense skills. This difference was dragging Jang Ilso down to the depths of hell at this moment.

«Ten... Thousand Demons... Pay Homage!»

An enormous mass of demonic energy, spewed from Danjagang's fingertips, fell simultaneously over Jang Ilso's and Chung Myung's heads.

At that moment!

— Taoist hyeong!

‘Right!’

As if he already knew, Chung Myung swiftly moved forward.

‘Is this how it's done?’

Chung Myung's sword shot out like a lightning, flying towards Danjagang's neck like swift flying dagger.