

Chapter 1109

It sends shivers down my spine sometimes. (4)

«Ahhh!»

Jo Geol stretched vigorously as he woke up.

«Refreshing!»

How long has it been since he had overslept like this?

Ever since that devil entered their lives, the word ‘oversleep’ had been entirely absent from the vocabulary of the third generation disciples. And considering they could barely maintain the term ‘night’s sleep,’ did ‘oversleep’ even make sense?

But today! On this historic day, even that darn bastard couldn’t stop them.

Jo Geol, having adjusted his clothes, strode out of the room with confident steps.

«Up already?»

«Have you recovered from your cough, Sahyeong!»

«Yeah.»

Yoon Jong smiled widely at Jo Geol, his face glowing with an unusual radiance. Normally, his face seemed like it would crumble if touched too hard...

«...It’s truly amazing. Just by sleeping deeply, one’s body feels this rejuvenated.»

«Yeah, right. If my body stays like this, I might even take on Chung Myung.»

«No, that’s going too far.»

Yoon Jong chuckled as he tilted his head like something had crossed his mind.

«No, wait. So then...»

«Yes?»

«...Does this mean everyone else has been living like this?»

For a moment, both of them exchanged blank looks.

«Does that mean this was my original physical state?»

«Isn’t it?»

«Insane! Other people knew about this good feeling, why was I the only one unaware?»

Yoon Jong wiped away the moisture forming around his eyes.

«It’s not that you didn’t know, it’s that you forgot. And soon, you’ll forget again. As long as there’s a demon living in Hwasan...»

Jo Geol cleared his throat.

«Anyway, I feel full of energy. If I had been told to rest for a day, I might have felt guilty and sneaked out for practice, but just for half a day, it seems alright.»

«I’m feeling the same way.»

Yoon Jong smiled and walked towards the training grounds. The sun was already high, indicating it was time for practice.

«The people from Tang clan must have gone through a lot.»

«Well, they did, but...»

Yoon Jong shrugged.

«Don't underestimate prestigious sects. It might have been sudden and startling, but there's a reason why they're prestigious. Their essence is different — they wouldn't have been any less in their original training.»

«You don't say...»

«Hmm?»

Yoon Jong glanced back. Suddenly, Tang Soso, who had approached unnoticed, was smiling meaningfully.

«If that was the case, I wouldn't have been so shocked when I first entered Hwasan.»

«.....»

«It's true that our training is different, but the intensity differs too. There's not a single faction in the world that trains as insanely as Hwasan.»

«I-Is that so?»

«Even if other factions wanted to train like this, they couldn't.»

«Why?»

«Because people can't endure it.»

Yoon Jong tilted his head with a puzzled expression.

«But didn't we endure it?»

«Look at the way you're talking, Sahyeong.»

Tang Soso looked at Yoon Jong as if he was spouting nonsense.

«No, search the world. Do you think there's a single faction that administers elixirs like Hwasan?»

«.....»

«Hwasan's Jasodan is an elixir that rivals Shaolin's Daehwandan. In fact, in some aspects, it is even more remarkable than Daehwandan. You're aware of that, right?»

«Y-Yes.»

It was an exceptional elixir of Yakseon [Medicine Immortal].

«Even Shaolin doesn't give Daehwandan to just anyone. They carefully select and only hand out one pill each to those whose talents have been proven, you know?»

«That's true.»

Tang Soso raised her eyebrows significantly.

“But Hwasan consumes it as if it's just some medicine.”

“.....”

“Moreover, I bet the number of elixirs monk Hye Yeon took at Hwasan is more than in Shaolin, don't you think so?”

Both of them nodded absentmindedly.

By that logic, Hye Yeon was also bald, only using Shaolin's martial arts techniques — but in reality, one should consider him a disciple of Hwasan since one should be loyal to whoever gives more, right?

“It's because of such deeds that we endure this. If it was another sect, there would have already been numerous protests. When young, the body can't endure the training, and when older, the ingrained habits from prior training make it hard to switch. It's also difficult at an age where control is challenging.”

“That's true.....”

Training a ten-year-old versus a thirty-year-old cannot be the same. Naturally, there would be resistance.

‘Unless they're dealing with someone like Chung Myung.’

Rebelling means death. No, it's better off dying. Besides, there's no courage to flee.

It's because of individuals like him, the entire Hwasan is in turmoil, both within the walls and beyond, including Namgung, Tangga and Nokrim...

“Anyway, just because you want to do something doesn't mean you can. That's why my older and younger siblings might be facing a near death experience right now.”

“...I see.”

“Some people view Chung Myung Sahyeong as the core of Hwasan, but in my opinion, the Jasodan is just as crucial.”

“...Isn't that the same thing?”

“What? What do you mean?”

“Because Chung Myung created the Jasodan.”

Tang Soso paused for a moment, contemplating, and then nodded.

“I see...”

At that moment, Jo Geol, who seemed lost in thought, spoke up.

“Soso-ya.”

“Yes?”

“Then, here's something strange. Why don't the other factions distribute elixirs as freely?”

Tang Soso looked at Jo Geol as if saying, ‘Why is such a thoughtless person here?’ Jo Geol shrank back under that gaze.

“Well, isn't Sahyeong from a merchant family?”

“W-What does that have to do with this?”

“Do you think elixirs are something that can be easily crafted when one simply desires? To create elixirs, at the very least, you need the core essence of rare substances, and an elixir that may be found perhaps once in several decades.”

“I-Is that so?”

“Even the Tang clan's Cheondogdan requires hard-to-find poisons that are almost impossible to come by. What makes Jasodan remarkable is that it's crafted from ingredients that people can gather just by setting their minds to it.”

“Ah...”

Finally understanding everything, Jo Geol nodded.

«Although the effects of the past Hwasan’s Jasodan might have been more than the effects of the current Jasodan we have, it would take the effort of creating hundreds of the current Jasodan to produce just one from that time, wouldn’t it?»

«So, in conclusion...»

«Hmm?»

Jo Geol smiled bitterly.

«It seems like the people of our generation are pushing themselves to their limits, almost to the brink of exhaustion.»

«...That might be true, but...»

If you cut off words from both ends and eat them, that’s the kind of meaning it carries.

«Hehehe. That’s quite an amusing sight to see... Shall we go take a look?»

Yoon Jong furrowed his brow at Jo Geol’s words.

«It might not be appropriate to speak this way in front of Soso... But why do you harbor so much resentment towards Tang clan? Haven’t you been born in Sichuan?»

«It’s because I’m from Sichuan.»

«Why?»

Jo Geol turns to Yoon Jong, clicking his tongue.

«Do you like Southern Edge because you are from Shaanxi?»

«...No way.»

«It’s somewhat similar. Growing up, constantly seeing and fearing the Tang clan, it became a habit without me realizing it, creating a subconscious antipathy. I’m only now trying to overcome it.»

Yoon Jong shook his head lightly.

‘You can’t fix that in a lifetime.’

Just by looking at Soso, he’s shrinking. How could he possibly overcome the Tang clan?

No... Is Soso scarier than her family?

Jo Geol giggled while Yoon Jong shook his head, and Soso, with a complex and subtle expression, entered the training ground. And then...

«Ugh... It’s cold.»

«Why is it so chilly so suddenly?»

All three shivered simultaneously.

«...Is it already winter?»

The three entered the training ground, slipping through Hwasan’s disciples already lined up.

Upon spotting a familiar figure from behind, they instinctively stepped forward.

«Sasuk.»

«Uh... Yeah?»

«Why is the atmosphere like this?»

«Uh... Well.»

Baek Cheon seemed like he was about to say something but then gestured forward.

«See for yourself.»

«What?»

The three looked at what Baek Cheon was pointing at. All three were equally astonished, their mouths gaping without knowing who would speak first.

«Uh...»

«Wow...»

«Hmm...»

There was nothing particularly unusual. It was just the Tangga lined up in front of them, as usual during their daily training sessions.

If there is one minor difference...

«Oh my, Older brother...»

Tang Soso trembled.

At the forefront stood Sichuan Tang's Young Lord Tang Pae, his face black and blue. It was so vividly colored that anyone might think it was intentionally painted on.

«Wha...what's with...»

The swollen faces of the Tangga were grotesque beyond comparison. However, nobody could muster a laugh upon seeing those faces.

It was because icy stares leaked through the swollen, almost button-like eyes, filled with chilling determination.

«Hwasan...»

«Damn brats...»

«I'll kill them all.»

Jo Geol flinched and staggered backward.

Excuse me? We didn't seem to be the ones who made those people over there like that. So why are we getting slapped in the face for something we didn't do...

«Traitors...»

«Rotten Shaanxi seedlings.»

Wow... even facing a devastating defeat, one wouldn't look at them with such eyes.

«Ahem.»

Baek Cheon coughed loudly.

«It seems like the Lord of the family was quite angry.»

«...Seems like it.»

«Even if someone's angry, putting people in that state...»

Tang Soso immediately countered.

«It's alright. Sichuan Tang's medical techniques are excellent. He just beat them up enough to be easily fixed.»

«...»

At times like this, you definitely learn where Tang Soso's boldness comes from.

«Everyone's here?»

At that moment, Chung Myung, who had stood behind, strolled out leisurely. Then, he glanced swiftly between the members of Tangga and Hwasan as they faced each other.

«Oh... Originally, there was something else scheduled for this afternoon.»

As the words considering separate plans were about to burst forth, the Tangga's members' gazes turned sharply towards Chung Myung. If looks could kill, he would have been a corpse by now.

«... Well, um... It seems a bit... difficult.»

Chung Myung glanced away discreetly, gazing into the distant sky.

'...I was relieved that our bloodline wasn't involved.'

After all, they were relatives, so where else would they go?

Chung Myung subtly looked behind. Tang Gunak stood firmly, arms crossed, glaring at him with burning eyes.

'I will absolutely not say a word, and I will never encroach upon your exclusive authority regarding training. However, this situation of suggesting the possibility of different training right now is very uncomfortable,' he seemed to say, emitting a strong sense of dissatisfaction.

«Uh, well... Haha. Wouldn't it be a shame if we just fought once and called it quits?»

As the words ended, the disciples from Hwasan urgently shook their heads.

It's as if they are incredibly, unbelievably, perfectly fine. As if there wasn't even an ounce of regret.

Of course, Chung Myung pretended not to notice.

«Well, there's no other choice. Today, just like yesterday, we'll have a match... The winning side will take half a day off tomorrow, how about that?»

«Wait, Chung Myung. This doesn't seem right.»

«Don't you see the murderous intent in their eyes?»

In the eyes of Hwasan's disciples, they saw Chung Myung, who looked uncharacteristically shy, and Tang Gunak, who smiled happily as if he was finally enjoying the situation.

«Well, let's begin...»

«Kill them!»

«Annihilate them all!»

«Bury them! Those dog-like bastards!»

Before the words could even finish, the members of Tangga drew out razor-sharp daggers from their sleeves and lunged forward.

«Hyah, hiiiieek!»

«Dod-dodge!»

As hidden weapons fell from the sky like rain, the disciples of Hwasan realized that something had gone severely wrong.