Former Mastermind To Chaebol Son-in-Law

Chapter 11

I'm Trying to Muster Some Strength

It was the last Friday of April.

Kang In-hyuk was driving with Tae Ju-ha by his side.

After about ten minutes of silence, she, sitting in the passenger seat, spoke first.

"To think the driver is uneasy driving. I didn't know you were so sensitive about safety."

"I just don't want to entrust my life to someone else."

"Did someone actually try to turn the steering wheel and kill you or something?"

"I'm just trying to prevent something like that from happening."

Their destination at the moment was the house of KQ Group's Chairman Kang Cheon-gyu, located in Hanam, Gyeonggi Province.

Chairman Kang Cheon-gyu was holding a commemorative party for the publication of his autobiography, and members of the Taeshin family had been invited to attend.

In the original future, Tae Ju-ha had gone alone, without Kang In-hyuk.

But on the day he had gone to meet Go Mi-ah, she had asked In-hyuk to come with her to the celebration party.

'I definitely haven't changed much... Where and how did things start to go awry?'

A bigger problem was that a situation awaited In-hyuk where he couldn't refuse.

'Besides, if this woman doesn't die, the chances of my survival go up as well...'

As he recalled, today was the day Tae Ju-ha would die.

On the surface, it was a traffic accident involving a truck.

A drunk driver crashed into Tae Ju-ha's car at the time, resulting in her death.

The case had simply ended, as there was no subject to prosecute.

The Taeshin Group family didn't pursue it further, and before long, things went on as if nothing had happened.

Even as a bodyguard at the time, In-hyuk hadn't heard much about it.

As things grew quiet again, Tae Ju-ha pouted and spoke.

"Your return rates have been pretty good lately, haven't they? Did you get your hands on a good information line or something?"

"That's right."

"Looking at the stock picks, the risk seems a bit high... Aren't your clients worried?"

She had a curious air.

"Everyone kicks up a fuss at first, but they shut up once they see the profits. They'll probably get noisy again if they see another chance."

"... Have you always spoken so harshly?"

Since meeting In-hyuk again after a year, Tae Ju-ha had sensed his demeanor had grown rough.

"I felt that people looked down on me for always speaking gently."

"Still, I don't think you should talk to clients like that."

"I know the time and place, so there's no need to worry. More than that, did the chairman really say I should attend too?"

It was the reason In-hyuk had been able to come with her, contrary to the original future.

"Why? Are you worried I lied because I wanted you to come with me?"

She seemed a bit more prickly than usual.

In-hyuk let out a shallow sigh at her words.

"No, not at all."

The origin of Chairman Tae Gun-seung's change was a mystery once again as his simple reply brought back uncertainty.

While they were chatting, they arrived near Chairman Kang Cheon-gyu's house.

There was a long line of cars, as many people were attending the event.

After waiting for a while, In-hyuk and Tae Ju-ha were finally able to get out.

For such an important occasion, both were dressed impeccably—in a stylish suit and a neat dress.

After confirming their identity at the entrance, they were allowed inside.

"You don't seriously plan on driving us back yourself, do you?"

"Is that a problem?"

"If you talk with people here, there's no way you won't have champagne or wine."

Frankly, even though the event was nominally a book launch, most attended to manage their economic and political networks.

It was no different for Tae Ju-ha, who was now running an investment company.

Each attendee was a valuable client—or could become one—so she had to network busily.

"Any other day, maybe, but today, I don't feel like drinking."

"At an event like this, you'll end up drinking no matter what."

"I'll handle it myself."

At In-hyuk's firm reply, Tae Ju-ha shook her head.

"Fine, do as you like."

"That's what I intend to do."

"Yes, suit yourself."

Inside, there were even more people than there had been cars lined up outside.

Since it was the autobiography party of KQ Group's Chairman Kang Cheon-gyu, businessmen, politicians, and celebrities—anyone who might make the news—were present.

Tae Ju-ha tapped In-hyuk's shoulder lightly.

"They're all here."

Through the entrance of the garden they'd just passed, chairman Tae Gun-seung of Taeshin Group and his family walked in.

The two went straight over to them.

"You arrived early."

"We just got here, too."

"Good. Kang, you're probably not used to these kinds of events, so help him out a lot."

Tae Gun-seung glanced at In-hyuk. Catching his eye, In-hyuk bowed his head.

"Thank you for inviting me."

"KQ's Chairman Kang invited our family, so of course you should attend with us."

Almost a year had passed since he married Tae Ju-ha, but he'd never been truly treated as family.

But Tae Gun-seung was showing a different attitude now.

"... Thank you."

While they exchanged greetings, a middle-aged man strode over quickly.

"Hello! Chairman! How have you been?"

A solid build in a luxurious brown suit, wearing black horn-rimmed glasses befitting an author—this was Kang Cheon-gyu, chairman of KQ Group.

"It's been a while, chairman Kang."

Now past ninety, Tae Gun-seung and Kang Cheon-gyu's late father, Kang Gil-seok, had been close friends.

Their longstanding relationship gave the atmosphere a friendly feel.

"Thank you so much for coming. And why the formalities—calling me Chairman Kang? Please, be comfortable like before."

"It's already been five years since that guy Gil-seok passed, and you've established yourself firmly as chairman since then. It's only right for me to treat you accordingly now. Besides, it doesn't look good to be overly informal in public."

Kang Cheon-gyu scratched his neck awkwardly.

"I'm honored to be recognized by you, chairman."

"You're leading KQ Group well—it's only right."

While the two chatted, In-hyuk looked at the people standing behind Tae Gun-seung: Tae Seok-hyun, his wife Lee Sun-hye, and their son Tae Yeo-jun.

In particular, Lee Sun-hye met In-hyuk's gaze and shot him a chillingly cold look, as if to kill.

'Come to think of it, there was less of a reaction than I expected. Did he only tell her mother?'

He'd met Tae Yeo-jun at a club several days before. Since Tae Seok-hyun and Lee Sun-hye had stayed quiet, he decided not to dwell on it.

But her current demeanor showed she was quietly keeping watch for the right opportunity.

'So she's not as careless as I thought.'

She was being cautious because of Chairman Tae Gun-seung's unusually attentive treatment of In-hyuk, whom he usually ignored.

As In-hyuk was glancing at Tae Yeo-jun, he noticed a man standing further behind.

Someone he hadn't seen earlier because the entire Taeshin family entered at once.

And he was someone In-hyuk could never forget, even after returning to this past.

'... Baek Si-hwan?'

The man who had betrayed him at the end and driven him to his death.

'I heard he was overseas on assignment as the exclusive bodyguard to Taeshin Electronics' Executive Director Hwang Won-jun.'

Ever since returning to the past, In-hyuk had approached him cautiously.

Besides Baek Si-hwan, there might be others in Taeshin Group connected to that "Organization".

Since nothing had been uncovered about the mysterious 'Organization' Baek Si-hwan had mentioned, it was important not to expose himself first.

When their eyes met, Baek Si-hwan nodded slightly with a look of unfamiliarity.

'So he has no idea about me?'

In the original timeline, as part of the security team and as a former UID special forces comrade, Baek Si-hwan should have known him.

But now, Kang In-hyuk was the Taeshin Group's son-in-law.

Since the person who should have been there had disappeared, Baek Si-hwan had no connection to him.

Meanwhile, Tae Gun-seung was chatting with Chairman Kang and moving away.

The rest of the family lingered quietly to wait for their own opportunity.

When they were a bit farther, Lee Sun-hye approached In-hyuk.

"Department Head Kang, it seems you've been causing quite a commotion lately. For the company and the household's sake, shouldn't you restrain yourself a bit? Things can't continue going this well forever, can they?"

Recently, In-hyuk had the best performance at Taeshin Asset Management.

Of course, the clients he'd managed weren't high profile enough to yield huge profits.

But while the average return of an investment management company was around 20%, he'd far surpassed that in a short period of time.

"I'm sorry. I hadn't thought it would trouble you, mother-in-law. Still, I do have a position in the company. I felt I'd been lacking results lately, so I'm just trying to muster a bit of strength."

At that moment, Lee Sun-hye's brow twitched as she tried to maintain a calm smile.

"So you think just having the chairman's attention will get you somewhere?"

"Oh, is that so? I didn't realize. To think I'd have the chairman's attention... I should be thankful."

"...."

His shameless reply only sharpened Lee Sun-hye's glare.

As the air between them quickly grew cold, Tae Seok-hyun, who had been silent, spoke up.

"There are people around, so let's not overdo it."

No matter how politely she'd phrased it, the fact In-hyuk replied as if ignoring her left Lee Sun-hye annoyed.

"Shouldn't you say something to him, too?"

"I think he got the message. Besides, if this gets to Father's ears, it won't be good for either of us."

"But—!"

Everyone in these circles knew that Tae Ju-ha, Tae Seok-hyun's youngest daughter, was illegitimate.

Of course, few looked kindly on an illegitimate child, but with the Taeshin name in front, no one could disrespect her.

Still, publicly, Lee Sun-hye, as the eldest daughter-in-law of the Taeshin family, had chosen to embrace her husband's child.

Displaying a cold attitude here would only cast a shadow on Chairman Kang Cheon-gyu's event.

"Chairman! As you said, everyone, have a good time. And Yeo-jun, especially, refrain from unnecessary actions."

"Father! Why are you telling me—!"

"Do you really have to ask?"

He'd thought only Lee Sun-hye knew about the club incident, but it seemed it had reached Tae Seok-hyun's ears as well.

Tae Yeo-jun glared resentfully at his father and fell silent.

"You two, be quiet and behave."

"... Yes, understood. Then, please excuse us."

Beside him, Tae Ju-ha replied on both their behalves and pulled In-hyuk away.

"Why are you acting like this?"

"Like what?"

"You provoked her on purpose just now."

He hadn't called Lee Sun-hye stepmother on purpose.

But just now, by calling her "Mother-in-law," he had only irritated her more.

"She was the one who started it. I have no obligation to keep putting up with it, do I?"

"Phew—! Judging by their reactions, something happened between that person and Director Yeo-jun, didn't it?"

Currently, Tae Yeo-jun held the position of Head of Overseas Business at Taeshin Electronics.

"A few days ago, director Tae picked a fight with me at a club. KSE Fund's Kwon Seung-hyun and Moon Jae-min from Moon Trading were there, too."

Tae Ju-ha knew well about In-hyuk's relationship with them.

It was clear he hadn't meant it in a positive sense.

"And then?"

"They were so openly picking a fight that I just handled them appropriately and left."

For an instant, Tae Ju-ha almost raised her voice, but lowered it instead.

"Handled them? More importantly, you should have told me if something like that happened!"

In-hyuk gazed at her with an unruffled expression.

"And why should I have done that?"

"... What?"

"I'm not a three-year-old, and we're not a real married couple. There's no reason I have to report every little thing to you, CEO Tae."

"...."

At a loss for words, Tae Ju-ha stood there quietly.