Former Mastermind To Chaebol Son-in-Law

Chapter 7

I'm Going to Hand It Over to the Executive Director

It was the time when everyone was getting off work.

Kang In-hyuk was sitting in the back seat of a luxury sedan with Tae Ju-ha.

After about thirty minutes of silence, they arrived at their destination, seongbuk-dong.

As she got out of the car, Tae Ju-ha stood beside In-hyuk and spoke.

"I'll respect your preferences as much as possible (?), but please don't show it in front of the family."

"What do you mean by that?"

At his question, Tae Ju-ha's eyes changed subtly.

While In-hyuk tilted his head in confusion, something crossed his mind.

"..... If it's about matters at home, didn't I say that I was coming because of business?"

"You never know. So, be careful, please."

"Haa... Just think whatever you like."

Tired of explaining, In-hyuk followed her into the yard where a two-story mansion stood.

It was the residence of Chairman Tae Gun-seung of Taeshin Group, where only the chairman himself, his eldest son Tae Seok-hyun and his wife, and his grandson Tae Yeo-jun lived.

In the living room, Tae Seok-hyun's wife, Lee Sun-hye, and son, Tae Yeo-jun, were sitting.

They only glanced at Tae Ju-ha, staying quiet. Since she was the child of her husband's outside marriage, it was only natural they disliked her.

Thus, no one greeted In-hyuk or Tae Ju-ha first.

Then, Tae Seok-hyun emerged from Chairman Tae Gun-seung's study and spoke for the first time.

"Ju-ha, you're here?"

"..... Yes."

The greeting toward In-hyuk was nothing more than a fleeting glance from Tae Seok-hyun.

'So, this is what it was like inside.'

When In-hyuk worked as a bodyguard, he rarely came inside the mansion.

His only visit was when Tae Seokho claimed both the chairman's position and the house.

Back then, Tae Seok-hyun's family wasn't present, so the atmosphere was even colder than now.

After a short while, Tae Seok-hyun's eldest daughter Tae Su-jin and her husband Ha Do-kyung entered.

"Oh, Ju-ha and my brother-in-law are already here?"

"You're here? Unni."

Among the Taeshin family, only Tae Su-jin and her husband treated Tae Ju-ha with any decency.

After exchanging greetings, Tae Su-jin approached her brother Tae Yeo-jun, who sat with a sullen face.

"Aren't you going to say hi when your nuna and brother-in-law arrive?"

"What did I do?"

The siblings, two years apart, were not on good terms.

While the two bickered, the study door opened again, and the owner and patriarch of Taeshin Group, Tae Gun-seung, emerged with his personal secretary and bodyguard, Song Tae-ho, by his side.

"The second son's family isn't here yet?"

"They were parking a little while ago, so they'll be up soon."

At Tae Su-jin's reply, Tae Gun-seung nodded.

"In that case, everyone, please take your seats."

Everyone moved to the long dining table in front of the kitchen where the food was prepared.

Kang In-hyuk and Tae Ju-ha's seats were at the very end.

Until then, chairman Tae Gun-seung hadn't spoken a single word to the two of them, as if to say that was exactly where their standing ended.

'This is no different at all.'

Even though it was supposed to be a meal, the air was so heavy it felt as though someone would start giving a business briefing at any moment.

Not long after, as Tae Su-jin had predicted, Tae Seokho, his wife Choi Tae-eun, and their son Tae Seung-hyun arrived.

"Sorry we're late, father."

"Just sit down."

Three seats remained open on the left side.

Five people sat on each side of Chairman Tae Gun-seung, who occupied the center.

Lastly, a housekeeper brought out hot rice and soup to be set before each person.

"Let's eat."

As the meal began, only the sounds of cutlery and soup-filled the silence.

Soon, chairman Tae Gun-seung's gaze fell to his grandsons, Tae Yeo-jun and Tae Seung-hyun, who sat near the middle.

"When do you two plan to get married? I heard Yeo-jun's mother keeps trying to set him up."

Everyone's spoons stopped mid-air.

At this, Tae Yeo-jun quietly set his spoon down and looked embarrassed.

"I think I haven't met the right person yet."

"A man must have a partner to feel secure."

Then Tae Gun-seung locked eyes with Tae Seung-hyun.

"For me, work is still the priority. But it's not that I haven't thought about it at all. Once I finish the project I'm in charge of in Taiwan, I plan to make time."

"That doesn't sound bad."

The two gave answers with different nuances.

As the meal resumed, Kang In-hyuk could feel the gazes of both Tae Gun-seung and Tae Seokho.

'Tae Seokho is understandable, but what's with the chairman staring like that?'

After finishing the meal, coffee and tea preferences were served.

"I heard Ju-ha achieved quite a performance at the New York branch of Taeshin Asset Management. You were appointed as the CEO today, right?"

He was asking as if he'd just heard, even though he clearly knew already.

At this, Tae Ju-ha quietly set her teacup down.

"It's thanks to meeting good investors there."

"You're doing well. But being CEO is very different from being a branch manager. Remember, the livelihoods of all the employees at Taeshin Asset Management depend on your shoulders."

"I'm thinking of it that way."

Even in the midst of this, Tae Gun-seung's gaze occasionally settled on In-hyuk, then shifted to Tae Seok-hyun.

"Seok-hyun."

"Yes, father."

"With Ju-ha as CEO now, Kang will have to work under her... Isn't that quite awkward? I heard he performed well at Taeshin Trading too."

For an instant, several hands paused.

Even when Kang In-hyuk had transferred from Taeshin Trading to Taeshin Asset Management, Tae Gun-seung hadn't commented.

Suddenly bringing this up now was odd.

Tae Seok-hyun, who had sent In-hyuk to Asset Management, replied.

"I didn't want to do that either, but Kang wanted the transfer. Isn't that right, Kang?"

Memories from that time briefly surfaced for In-hyuk.

Even in his original memory, there was a dinner like this, but he hadn't received this particular question back then.

Cautiously, In-hyuk opened his mouth to speak.

"... That's right."

But Tae Gun-seung wasn't easily convinced.

"Wasn't it a different situation when Ju-ha went to New York? If it was a similar position, maybe, but for a married couple to work in the same company as CEO and team leader, people might talk."

What was his true intention?

Everyone was puzzled, and Tae Seokho knew it wasn't the time to dwell on it.

"If that's what you want, father, I'll move Kang back to Taeshin Trading."

Lee Sun-hye's face hardened slightly at those words.

Before she was Tae Seok-hyun's wife, she was the youngest daughter of the former chairman of WS Group and the younger sister of the current chairman.

In fact, part of the reason In-hyuk had been sent to Taeshin Asset Management was because of her.

She disliked the idea of Tae Ju-ha—the stepdaughter her husband brought home—being at the heart of Taeshin Group and had kept her limited to the subsidiaries.

Now, with her father-in-law Tae Gun-seung focusing on her husband, In-hyuk, unpleasantness welled up inside her.

"That's not a bad idea, but shouldn't we at least hear what Kang thinks?"

Everyone's eyes shifted toward In-hyuk.

It was a very burdensome situation. Especially with Lee Sun-hye's piercing stare, even a strong-willed person would feel intimidated.

"I'd like to stay at Taeshin Asset Management as I am."

Then Tae Gun-seung pressed the issue.

"Are you sure you won't be uncomfortable?"

"My work and private life are separate, so it's fine."

"But now, with Ju-ha as CEO, it might be awkward. Rumors will spread regardless, and you'll have to deal with prejudice."

Still, Tae Gun-seung's intentions were difficult to grasp.

"Not really. I'm satisfied with my current work."

"Huh... well, if you insist that strongly, there's nothing I can do."

A few people seemed to sigh in relief.

At that moment, Tae Gun-seung looked at Tae Ju-ha and spoke.

"Ju-ha, how much of Taeshin Asset Management's shares do you have right now?"

At the abrupt question, Tae Ju-ha hesitated for a moment.

"... Probably 2.45%."

It was just barely enough to maintain her CEO post at an unlisted company.

"If you want to truly have a voice, you need to hold power. I'll give you another 3%."

"A-ah, father!"

"Father!"

Startled, Tae Seok-hyun and Lee Sun-hye quickly objected.

"Why? Are you unhappy that I'm giving her my shares?"

"There are already plenty of rumors about Ju-ha's appointment at Taeshin Asset Management, given her age and experience. If you give her even more shares, it'll just fuel more talk."

Not entirely untrue, but the nuance of the words didn't fully align with their true intent.

"Yeo-jun is a headquarters director at HQ, and Su-jin and Seung-hyun are also representatives. What's the problem?"

They all received enough shares to secure their positions.

In contrast, Tae Ju-ha had received far less and only on condition that she manage the CEO position.

"That's..."

"I've already decided to give them. Don't make a fuss."

"....."

With the subtle atmosphere hanging in the air, everyone fell silent.

Only after finishing dessert did the gathering disperse.

People left one by one and got into the cars they came in.

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Kang In-hyuk returned home with Tae Ju-ha.

At some point, someone must have switched the rooms the two used.

Despite the calm on the outside, both were filled with tangled thoughts.

'Aside from the question I got, today went exactly as I remembered.'

During the dinner, chairman Tae Gun-seung gave Tae Ju-ha 3% of the unlisted Taeshin Asset Management shares.

With that, her holding exceeded 5%.

That's all In-hyuk remembered as well. Not long after, Tae Ju-ha dies in a car accident.

The only change was that In-hyuk now knew something he hadn't before.

'With this share transfer, Tae Seokho now has even more reason to kill her.'

The problem was, after her death, he himself could be threatened too.

In-hyuk stood up and went into the living room. Just then, Tae Ju-ha came out of her room, dressed for a trip to the pharmacy.

"Where are you going?"

"... I think I have indigestion so I'm going to the pharmacy."

Though she looked indifferent, today's dinner must have been deeply uncomfortable.

"If you have a moment, I'd like to talk."

"Is it important?"

In-hyuk decided to just be direct.

"It's about the H&T Fund materials you're holding."

Instantly, her face darkened.

"... How do you know about that?"

"Your uncle ordered me to bring the H&T Fund files to him."

"Executive Director Tae Seokho? How did...!"

"There's a photo of you in New York receiving materials from someone connected to the H&T Fund."

Tae Ju-ha's expression grew even more conflicted.

In-hyuk quietly sighed and went on.

"It seems that Executive Director Tae Seokho is closely involved in the H&T Fund. Why were you investigating it? Do you hold a grudge against him?"

Given the situation, if anyone deserved Tae Ju-ha's grudge, it was her biological father Tae Seok-hyun and his wife Lee Sun-hye, not Tae Seokho.

"Why should I have to explain that to you?"

"Looking at the situation, the H&T Fund seems extremely important to Executive Director Tae Seokho. If he learns you're holding it, can't you imagine what might happen?"

Tae Ju-ha had married Kang In-hyuk knowing he was her father Tae Seok-hyun's loyal subordinate.

Now, suddenly, he was confessing that he'd been given an order by Tae Seokho.

It was confusing.

"What kind of relationship do you have with Executive Director Tae Seokho that he'd commission something like that?"

"He wants to use me for his own purposes, but I haven't accepted yet."

"Then—are you saying you'll just take the H&T Fund materials from me and hand them over to Executive Director Tae Seokho?"

In-hyuk could fully guess what she was thinking.

"I have no intention of joining hands with Executive Director Tae Seokho."

More precisely, the problem was Tae Ju-ha's death and, subsequently, his own.

Since the reason for these deaths was still unknown, he planned to cut off anything related to her cause first.

Yet, her expression grew more unreadable, heaped with suspicion.

"Then why did you bring up the H&T Fund materials?"

"I'm going to take them from you and hand them over to Executive Director Tae Seokho."

At that, Tae Ju-ha's face twisted with irritation.