

Chapter 1221

Is this okay? (1)

Jo Geol turned his bloodshot eyes to the side. Yoon Jong's hand was tightly gripping his shoulder. Normally, Jo Geol would have immediately shouted, but this time, he couldn't say a word.

Was it because he knew not to make a big deal out of it? No, that wasn't it. It was because Yoon Jong's gaze, fixed ahead without even acknowledging him, was terrifyingly cold.

Crack.

The sound of Yoon Jong grinding his teeth faintly echoed. He spoke through clenched teeth.

«... Wait.»

«...»

Jo Geol bit his lip tightly and glanced back at the village without a word.

«Oh, Father! Father!»

A villager standing behind the fallen one, hurriedly grabbed his chest in panic. Blood seeped from the wide-open wound.

«Father!»

Although the faces of the villagers turned pale, none of them dared to protest or curse aloud.

The blade in the man's hand was too menacing.

«... Are you insane?»

The person who protested on behalf of the villagers was his fellow companion.

The rugged looking man wiped the blood splattered on his face with his sleeve and chuckled.

«Do I look crazy?»

«... What were you thinking?»

«What was I thinking? Our orders were to distribute the grain and properly convey the grace of Ryeonju. There were no further instructions. So technically, I didn't disobey any orders.»

«Are you calling that nonsense an order?»

The man's face turned pale with anger.

«What do you think you've just done, Akbung? Do you think the higher-ups will let you off if they find out?»

«How would they find out?»

«... What?»

«How would they find out?»

The man known as Akbung grinned slyly.

«Whether a village in these remote mountains disappears or not, how would those wealthy higher-ups know about it?»

«We completed the mission. But whatever happened afterward isn't our fault, right?»

The narrow gaze of the man named Munsa Pung narrowed further. He understood what this guy was getting at.

«Do you really think...?»

«No, just think about it. They sent us, a bunch of nobodies, to this remote little village.»

While being called nobodies wasn't pleasant, it wasn't entirely false.

«If we return empty-handed, do you think those higher-ups will even care whether we distributed the grain properly or not?»

«Damn it, there's nowhere even decent to sell the grain!»

«If you have the intention to sell, isn't there always a place? Besides, there's no need to sell. Isn't rice more valuable than money in Gangnam now? Just taking the grain should be enough to get by with most things.»

«...»

«It's not like we've done anything wrong by tightening the belt a bit, right? The ones at fault are those who don't even provide proper compensation and exploit people.»

Munsa Pung regained his composure. His face had eased considerably.

«Will it hold up in the end...?»

«Stop with the nonsense. If someone blabs, the higher-ups might find out. But... even after we leave, there could still be trouble in the village.»

«Whether it's remnants of Nokrim attacking the village or sudden disaster striking. Isn't that right, boys?»

The eyes of those behind the carriage grew sharp at his words.

«And where are we heading next, supposedly?»

«Well?»

«If it's Hyeong Yang, it's a decent-sized city. There should be places to have fun. Handle things properly, gather the grain, and let's make some profit! Let's enjoy ourselves for once and loosen up a bit!»

That seemed to seal the deal. A strange enthusiasm began to emanate from those following. Observing this, Munsa Pung finished his thoughts with a troubled expression.

«Hmm... I do feel uneasy...»

«Stop with the nonsense. Since when did you become such a coward? Just the mention of Maninbang and you wet yourself.»

«Have you finished?»

«What's Maninbang? We're the Black Ghost! If it weren't for those brats from Demonic Cult, the boss wouldn't have been taken down so easily, would he?»

«...»

«Even watching Sapaeryeon's brats causing trouble by sheer luck is enough to turn your stomach. Do you want to become obedient puppies too?»

«Tsk.»

As the man grimaced as if swallowing bitter water, Akbung, who had been persistently questioning, changed his tone subtly.

«It's not that big of a deal. As long as we don't get caught, we're fine. Right?»

«... We need to make sure the aftermath is handled properly.»

«Heh heh. That's my specialty.»

Thinking the decision was made, Akbung raised his voice.

«Hey, boys! Since we're already here, let's move a little faster! That way, you'll have more time to enjoy yourselves!»

No response was needed. Just with those words, they knew what they had to do. Those behind the carriage rushed out and surrounded the villagers, leaving no space to escape, determined not to let anyone slip away.

Munsa Pung chuckled.

«No wonder you meticulously counted the number of people.»

«Heh heh. Certainty is a good thing. Certainty is.»

Watching the situation unfold, Jo Geol growled as if chewing on his words.

«... Sahyeong.»

«Wait.»

«Sahyeong.»

«I said wait.»

Yoon Jong bit his lip. He bit down so hard that his lip turned white and began to bleed.

As much as he wanted to rush forward and crush them right away, this wasn't just any place — it was Gangnam. The lives of many would be at stake due to their reckless actions.

«Don't... intervene.»

«Sahyeong!»

Jo Geol looked at Yoon Jong with pleading eyes. But Yoon Jong's gaze, once again, didn't turn towards Jo Geol. It landed on Baek Cheon's back ahead.

‘Sasuk.’

The decision was made by Baek Cheon, not Yoon Jong. Even amidst the silence, the sound of grinding teeth and the rustling of swords pierced through his ears.

And then, below, Akbung began to stir a commotion.

«That's right, they should've given us appropriate tasks. If we had been ordered to raid a village and bring back some money after looting enough, I would have been more than willing to carry it out faithfully. But telling a dog to graze on grass? Ridiculous.»

Even Munsa Pung couldn't refute his words.

Originally, they were people satisfied with receiving a fair share, fighting, and living their lives. They wouldn't have joined the evil faction if they were content with just that.

They became Sapa because they were people who couldn't survive through such means. But now, expecting them to live like righteous bastards? Was that even reasonable?

‘This is the fault of those above.’

The man, having rationalized internally, spoke as if spitting out the words.

«Just in case, don't use the sword too much.»

«Huh?»

«It would be suspicious if there were too few bodies. Tear them apart with your hands. Make it look like they were attacked by wild animals.»

«Heh heh. Clever.»

Upon hearing this, Akbung chuckled and sheathed his sword. It was a bit of a hassle, but commoners who didn't know martial arts could easily be torn apart barehanded.

«P-please, sirs... Why are you doing this...»

The villagers, unable to muster the courage to escape and forced to watch the situation unfold, trembled with pale faces. And among the crowd, those with a bit of wit quickly realized what action they needed to take.

«P-please spare us!»

The man who had prostrated himself on the ground cried out in desperation.

«We received it! We received the grain you gave us! But we were foolish and tried to hide it, and it got lost!»

«Oh?»

Munsa Pung's man, Seob Pyeong, stared intently at the middle-aged man prostrated before him.

«I will say it! Even if someone asks, even if a knife is at my throat, I will say it! Then, wouldn't you lords also be more honorable?»

«You're an interesting fellow.»

Seob Pyeong chuckled.

«But what do we do now? We've already killed this old man.»

«What's the big deal about an old man who doesn't have many days left? If we bury him properly, no one will know how he died!»

«Well...»

Seob Pyeong looked at the man in surprise.

«Um, if not that, then we'll throw him off a cliff! Then, no one will know he was killed by a sword!»

Seob Pyeong looked at the man with admiration. If they followed what the man was saying, they could really make things easier for themselves.

«Is that possible?»

«Of c-course. Lords! How could we ever tell a lie? We know better than anyone what we ignorant worms must do to survive!»

«And you don't want revenge?»

«W-why would we seek revenge for the life of such an old man?»

«... If you guys start talking, we might get annoyed.»

«Sir, we may be ignorant fools, but we understand how the world works. If we casually speak out and offend you, how can we expect to keep our lives?»

«You're surprisingly clever for someone in this rural area.»

Seob Pyeong clicked his tongue.

Even if this incident were to be exposed, it was unlikely that everyone who had come here would die. No matter how cruel Maninbang was, Sapaeryeon was short of manpower at the moment. And if even one of them survived, this village would surely face retaliation. So it was better to keep quiet and endure.

«Indeed... if that's all it takes, we'll be fine.»

«But, you know...»

Seob Pyeong smirked.

«No matter how you look at it, you're excessively clever.»

«M-me, sir?»

Seob Pyeong's gaze grew dark.

«I'd rather put up with a bit of inconvenience than keep someone like you alive and be worried. Even the task of killing all of you would be just a little bothersome for me.»

«T-these damn dogs...!»

Fury filled the middle-aged man's eyes.

«I'll curse you even in hell! You worthless Sapa bastards!»

«Orya!»

With bloodshot eyes, Seob Pyeong lunged towards the middle-aged man, his fists flying with deadly force. From his hands, sharp red energy surged out.

«No...!»

Finally, Yoon Jong, Jo Geol, and Namgung Dowi couldn't bear it any longer and joined in the attack.

But in that moment, what they witnessed was Baek Cheon charging towards Seob Pyeong in a straight line, even faster than them.

‘Sasuk!’

As Baek Cheon surged forward, his eyes shook with regret.

‘No, don't!’

Due him hesitating until the very last moment, it was too late for intervention. If they didn't act now, they couldn't prevent the middle-aged man from being fatally injured.

‘Damn it!’

They should have either acted or held back decisively, but their hesitation could cost them both. In the midst of Baek Cheon's erupting rage, just as he was about to unleash his fury!

«But these damned Sapa bastards!»

Kwaaaaah!

Seob Pyeong, who was charging towards the middle-aged man, was suddenly sent flying backward even faster than his own speed. Spraying blood, Seob Pyeong crashed to the ground, immediately convulsing in spasms.

Baek Cheon stared blankly at the scene. Amidst the billowing dust clouds, a figure with a face even more sinister than the Sapa's was glaring back at them.

«Just had to go and see for yourself, huh? This guy really wanted to kick the bucket.»

...Oh, right... Now that I think about it, I couldn't hold back, but there's no way you could hold back either.

Heh heh...

Heh heh heh...