

Chapter 1224

Is this okay? (4)

«Hey, you damn bastards! Is this what you do with your conscience? You'll face divine punishment!»

«Wow... I've heard enough divine punishment talk from Sapas in my lifetime.»

Jo Geol dragged the cursing thug mercilessly.

«Let go! Let me go! Aaaaah!»

«Sahyeong! This guy's resisting, isn't he?»

Yoon Jong peered into the pitch-black cave. Despite the bright daylight outside, the darkness inside was chillingly impenetrable.

«Hmm. Naturally, anyone would be scared being trapped in this dark cave. Can you blame them?»

«... What should we do?»

«What to do? You're asking such an obvious question.»

Yoon Jong smiled and replied.

«Compassion should be exercised for both humans and animals. Should we hate ourselves for a moment of mistake, even though humans are inherently good creatures?»

Jo Geol looked at Yoon Jong as if he understood something from his words.

«Then...»

Yoon Jong nodded with an incredibly gentle expression, as if Jo Geol's unspoken thoughts were correct.

«Yeah. Put them in the cave right away.»

«... Sahyeong, something doesn't seem to add up.»

«That's right. Those who follow Tao should show compassion even to the smallest creatures. But aren't those Sapas just beasts, not even worthy of being called animals?»

Yoon Jong asserted with a gentle expression.

«So there's no reason to hesitate.»

«...»

Before Jo Geol could react, Hye Yeon kicked the thugs and pushed them into the cave.

Watching them being shoved into the pitch-black cave while chanting 'Amitabha', a fundamental question arose: 'What Buddhism is, truly?'

«You damn bastards!»

«Aaaargh!»

Sapaeryeon's members pushed into the cave kicked and screamed wildly.

Jo Geol shuddered involuntarily.

Among Sapaeryeon, the Black Ghost's were infamous for their viciousness. But he never imagined they would become so ferocious even with broken dantians and severed tendons.

«Well, being that vicious, they must have truly turned into snakes.»

Unless they were exceptionally venomous, they wouldn't be able to kill ordinary commoners like swatting flies.

«Do you think Sapaeryeon will just sit still?»

«You will soon become offerings to beasts, torn limb from limb! You cruel bastards!»

«Oh, really?»

Jo Geol chuckled and grabbed a rock the size of a house that had been placed nearby.

«Huh?»

«Well, then, curse us until we become like that.»

Rumble!

The rock Jo Geol held began to block the entrance of the cave. The faces of those trapped inside turned pale.

«Wait, wait...»

«No, stop!»

«What are you crazy guys doing!»

Rumble!

The entrance was almost closed. With their tendons severed, these thugs had no way to move the rock. It was clear they would soon perish, unable to move in the pitch-black darkness.

At this point, they changed their attitude.

«P-please spare us!»

«We were wrong! We won't do it again!»

«P-please!»

But...

Thud!

The rock finally sealed the cave completely.

«Aaaargh!»

«You bastards are worse than Sapa!»

«I'll curse you even if I become a ghost! Aaaargh!»

Those left in the pitch-black darkness screamed in despair until their voices could no longer come out.

«Let's go back.»

«Yes.»

Yoon Jong, Jo Geol, and Hye Yeon turned away from the cave after silently watching the rock sealing it. Before they could take a few steps, a slightly solemn voice came from Hye Yeon.

«Dojang.»

«Yes?»

«They will die, won't they?»

Yoon Jong's expression hardened slightly. Hye Yeon shook his head.

«No, Dojang. It's not about blaming this decision as wrong. They deserve punishment. With such cruelty, they must have taken countless lives until now. So it's only natural.»

«...»

«Amitabha... However, it's true that my heart still feels uneasy.»

«... You seemed quite enthusiastic about pushing them in, though?»

«Well, what do you mean, Jo Geol Dojang?»

«No, it's just... well...»

«Heh heh heh! Misunderstanding, misunderstanding!»

Yoon Jong chuckled as he glanced at Hye Yeon's gradually reddening head.

«To be honest, I don't feel as relieved as I thought I would. I even feel a bit uneasy knowing that if they were a bit stronger, it wouldn't be like this. It honestly felt like tormenting the weak.»

«Amitabha. Indeed.»

«But... well. I don't think there's a need to hesitate. The punishment we've given them is just stripping them of martial arts and hunger.»

«Yes? But they...»

Hye Yeon looked back with a puzzled expression. With their tendons severed, they couldn't move the rock or break the cave wall. So, their only remaining fate would be to suffer and die inside...

Yoon Jong said,

«While I can't personally help them out of there, there are others who can, aren't there?»

«...Are you referring to the villagers?»

«Yes. Although the rock is large, if everyone joins forces, it shouldn't be too difficult to roll it aside. So, if the villagers are willing, they can rescue them at any time.»

Hye Yeon nodded as if understanding. Indeed, with the villagers working together, the rock could be easily moved.

«But will they actually rescue them?»

«That's irrelevant.»

«...What do you mean?»

Yoon Jong chuckled softly.

«Considering Chung Myung's personality, those people shouldn't be living creatures at this pont.»

Hye Yeon nodded in agreement. It was quite perplexing for Chung Myung to give such instructions. While he assessed Chung Myung as surprisingly cruel, he hadn't seen him show mercy in matters related to Sapa or other evildoers.

«Nevertheless, there must be a reason why he chose such a cumbersome method. We don't have the right to condemn them. The ones who have the right to condemn them are probably the villagers who almost lost their lives at their hands.»

«Ah...»

«That's why Chung Myung entrusted the villagers with their fate. Even if they are released in the future, it's likely that the villagers have already been compensated enough to avoid retaliation.»

«Was it really necessary to go to such lengths?»

Yoon Jong shook his head at Hye Yeon's words.

«These are the people who said they had to lick the enemy's feet because they lacked power. Even if we say to them that we, who have the power, have avenged their grudges, do you think they will truly be deeply satisfied?»

Hye Yeon nodded, understanding the meaning behind his words.

«Chung Myung Siju... There are times when he seems to think deeply.»

Yoon Jong laughed. At that moment, Jo Geol approached them with a serious expression.

«Sahyeong, come to your senses. Do you really think Chung Myung thought like that?»

«Huh?»

«I think he was just annoyed and decided not to kill them.»

«...»

«Seriously, what's the point of killing them? It would just end with a little swing!»

«...»

«If you're going to kill them anyway, make them reflect properly before they die. They committed a crime, so it shouldn't be easy for them to die!»

For a moment Yoon Jong found Jo Geol's point quite convincing and closed his eyes.

They say through the eyes of a dog, only a dog can be seen, and through the eyes of a Buddha, only a Buddha can be seen.

As they took a few more steps, Jo Geol cautiously spoke up.

«Sahyeong.»

«Hmm?»

«Did you see earlier?»

It was an abrupt question, but Yoon Jong understood what Jo Geol was talking about.

«You mean the villagers' reaction just now.»

«Yes.»

Jo Geol hesitated for a moment, unsure of what to say.

«I don't know how to put it... But honestly, it's just...»

«I understand what you mean.»

Yoon Jong let out a short sigh. Perhaps Jo Geol was quite shocked.

They wielded their swords only to aid the weak and punish the wicked. It was meant to make the world a better place through their righteousness.

But the weak fear their swords too. To those who cannot wield a sword, whether it's in the hands of an evil sect or an orthodox sect, it simply looks like a sword.

«It's a problem we need to understand.»

«But...»

«People can't always reveal their true feelings. Trusting and guessing is all we can do.»

«...»

«Even if the powerless fear the slightest hint of malice hidden within goodness, can we say that it's wrong? Wouldn't it be natural?»

Jo Geol took a deep breath. He couldn't blame them, as Yoon Jong had said.

«I don't mean to say they're wrong. It's just... I feel a bit sorry for them. If they have to endure fear even as we strive to do something good... then what does that make us?»

At that moment, Jo Geol's ears caught Yoon Jong's resolute voice.

«Don't misunderstand, Geol-ah.»

«Yes?»

«Righteousness itself holds no value.»

«...»

«We're not striving to create a world filled with righteous people.»

Jo Geol's eyes were momentarily filled with doubt. But Yoon Jong's following words naturally dispelled that doubt.

«Righteousness only holds meaning when there are those willing to help. A truly good world isn't one where everyone helps each other. It's a world where everyone can live without necessarily helping each other.»

«Ah...»

«Righteousness without accompanying force is merely a good intention. In other words, righteous deed can only be realized through force. However, Geol-ah, a world that can only be achieved through force is not a good place. Someday, the world our descendants will live in should only know a romanticized version of the past, where the word 'righteousness' is just a memory.»

Yoon Jong glanced down at the sword hanging at his waist.

«The day Hwasan truly becomes Hwasan again will be the day this sword falls from the waist of Hwasan's martial artists. It's a world where we no longer need to wield swords to protect others. It's a world where we no longer need swords to guard anyone.»

Jo Geol's expression as he looked at Yoon Jong was as if he had been hit in the back of the head.

Yoon Jong smiled faintly.

«If I were born into such a world, I could have lived peacefully in a quiet hermitage, reciting Taoist scriptures. In such a world, perhaps these villagers would have shared a meal with me and offered me a smile.»

«... «

«There's no need to blame them. It's because we're still lacking.»

«...Sahyeong.»

Jo Geol opened her mouth as if she was struggling deeply, scratched the back of his head and said.

“Talking with Sahyeong sometimes makes me feel like a fool.”

“It shouldn’t happen just sometimes...”

“What?”

“Nothing.”

Yoon Jong chuckled and quickened his pace, prompting Jo Geol to follow closely behind.

“Sahyeon! Let’s go together, Sahyeong!”

Watching the two running, Hye Yeon smiled warmly.

‘A world without righteousness...’

Well, who knows. Will such a day ever come? But if it does, the world will be a much better place to live in than it is now.

“Amitabha.”

The quiet sound of a buddhist sutra spread through the tranquil mountains.