

## Chapter 1222

Is this okay? (2)

Twitch. Twitch.

Seob Pyeong convulsed strangely, his face buried in the ground. Other men looked on in bewilderment, staring at Seob Pyeong's back in dismay.

Sometimes in life, there are moments like this. When you see with your eyes, but it takes time for your mind to process the situation. It's those times when the mind fails to comprehend the abrupt changes in the situation.

Of course, it was only natural for them. In the middle of this remote mountain village, someone suddenly barged in and kicked Seob Pyeong away. It would be even more astonishing if they didn't lose their composure.

Normally, Cheonumaeng's side should say something, but the problem was that even Cheonumaeng's party was not in a position to speak.

The only thought dominating their minds at the moment was one.

They knew it, of course. Regardless of what happened, when you couldn't hold back anymore and kicked the ground, at least Jo Geol, Yoon Jong, and Baek Cheon had no right to say anything.

Yet, for a moment, Baek Cheon couldn't help but speak.

«Well... um...»

He glanced back and forth between convulsing Seob Pyeong and growling Chung Myung, before finally finding his voice.

«Is this... okay...?»

«...»

A brief silence fell.

Then, unexpectedly, the one who shouldn't answer spoke up.

«What?»

Baek Cheon hesitated for a moment, wondering if he was missing something or getting confused by Chung Myung's casual response.

«Oh, nothing. I know I don't have the right to say anything, but... still... We're in Gangnam, after all.»

«What's the problem? Those guys explained everything.»

«Huh?»

Chung Myung pointed to the fallen figure.

«This is a remote area.»

«Oh.»

«It'll take at least a few days for the news to spread.»

«...»

«We'll be in Haenam within three days.»

Chung Myung replied harshly.

«What if Sapaeryeon finds out by then?»

...Listening to it, it seemed to make sense...

«But if they come after us...»

«Oh, Sasuk.»

Chung Myung clicked his tongue.

«Those Sapa bastards aren't going to come chasing after us all the way to Haenam just to seek revenge for these little rascals. If they had any sense of loyalty, they wouldn't be Sapa.»

«...»

«And if they do come after us, that's what we'll tell them to do. Just toss them all into the sea and be done with it!»

Ah... So that's your true intention. Understood.

At that moment, Jo Geol smiled and stepped forward.

«Well, what can we do now that things have turned out like this, Sasuk?»

And Yoon Jong also pulled out his sword with a mysterious expression.

«Since it's happened, we might as well handle it well.»

Baek Cheon looked blankly at the two advancing figures. They conversed casually, as if they had forgotten about Baek Cheon's presence altogether.

«How do we handle it well, though, Sahyeong?»

«What a foolish question. Think about it. If someone among them goes back and spills everything about us, it'll be very troublesome.»

«I see. That definitely can't happen.»

«So, there's no other choice. We have to clean up neatly to ensure nobody talks.»

«That sounds a bit ruthless, doesn't it?»

«If you're afraid of condemning evil, more people will suffer. Righteousness isn't about satisfying my small conscience.»

«Indeed, you're right.»

Jo Geol grinned as he raised his sword. At that moment, Namgung Dowi, who had been observing the situation a few steps behind them, stealthily moved behind Sapaeryeon's members.

«...It would be better if we could also conceal the fact that they arrived here,»

he said with a grim expression that didn't quite suit his status as a son of the prestigious Namgung family.

«If they disappear without a trace, one might think they got greedy for the grain and fled as a group. Isn't that right, Hyeong-nim?»

Tang Pae moved up the hill unnoticed and entered from the opposite side of Namgung Dowi, helping surround Sapaeryeon's members.

«...That's a wise idea. Don't worry. Erasing traces is our family's specialty. We can clean up neatly without leaving a single hair behind,»

Tang Pae said, retrieving a small vial from his sleeve and smiling. While he might have appeared exceedingly amiable at first glance, to those who could guess the contents of the vial, he would seem far from it.

Of course, those who didn't know the identity of the vial wouldn't find him particularly pleasant either, especially as they watched the faces of those surrounded turn pale.

«So, we need to handle this as quietly as possible,»

Namgung Dowi added.

«It's better if the villagers don't suffer any harm, and treating it as a disappearance rather than a death would be preferable, right?»

«It shouldn't be too difficult.»

«Then let's make sure to clean up neatly and erase any traces.»

«As quietly as possible.»

The sinister orthodox martial artists began to press the vulnerable Sapaeryeon's members with grim expressions. Overwhelmed by their intense pressure, Sapas looked around bewilderedly and cautiously.

«Who are you?»

«Us?»

«Daring to interrupt the event of Sapaeryeon and still expect to go unscathed...»

«That idiot really lacks brains, huh? We've already caused a disturbance, and yet he still wants to make sure. Can't he assess the situation?»

«Tsk tsk. Pathetic. Why would anyone with a brain join the evil faction?»

«What about Nokrim King?»

«...Let's make an exception for him.»

Threatening with the name of Sapaeryeon was usually an effective method anywhere in Gangho. What was unfortunate was that these individuals, who happened to encounter Cheonumaeng and attempted to use Sapaeryeon's name to intimidate them, were threatening those among the few in the world who couldn't be swayed by this name.

«Well... I think we've reached a conclusion, haven't we?»

All eyes turned to one person. Taking in their collective gaze, Baek Cheon let out a deep sigh.

«Um... Well...»

Ultimately, Baek Cheon shook his head and gestured vaguely towards Akbung.

«Deal with him.»

«Yes!»

As the words trailed off ominously, the evil orthodox party surrounding the carriage rushed towards the vulnerable Sapas like a pack of wolves.

Baek Cheon shuddered involuntarily.

There was no need to watch over them. It was a little too late for hesitation, but it was rather an acknowledgment that the forces gathered here were excessive for dealing with such ruffians.

Even if just one of them stepped forward, it would be more than enough to sweep all Sapaeryeon's bastards away, but with so many of them present, what more could be said? Baek Cheon, his gaze shifting away from the carriage, looked at the fallen villager. Tang Soso was already applying first aid to his wounds. With a slightly stiffened expression, Baek Cheon approached her and asked,

«How is he?»

«The injuries don't seem as severe as I anticipated, so there shouldn't be any threat to his life. However, he is quite exhausted...»

«Father. Please, save our father! Please!»

A woman, who had been by the villager's side without a moment's rest, rose at the plea. Baek Cheon sighed, about to offer some comfort when a voice from behind interrupted.

«Um...»

Baek Cheon glanced back at the voice. The middle-aged man who had been cowering before the thugs earlier was now directing his supplications towards Baek Cheon.

Unconsciously, Baek Cheon furrowed, recalling that amidst the chaos earlier, he had distinctly heard the man's words.

'Didn't he say: What's the big deal about an old man who doesn't have many days left?'

Baek Cheon recalled that disdainful remark. Of course, he understood. It wouldn't have been easy to speak up with a knife at his throat.

But how could Baek Cheon view someone who had disparaged a fellow villager, who had lived together with them, with favor?

«Um, s-sir. If it's not too much of an intrusion, may I ask who you are?»

«We're currently tending to the wounded...»

«Sir, why bother with insignificant folks like us... It's not something worthy of your noble hands.»

... Was that an appropriate thing to say considering the injured? Baek Cheon, slightly annoyed by his effort to please everyone, responded somewhat bluntly without realizing it,

«Are you worried that we might be like those scoundrels?»

«Oh, sir! Your words are too gracious! We, we are just ignorant and uneducated... We don't know how to treat noble gentlemen...»

Baek Cheon, on the verge of reprimanding the pitiful man, sighed instead.

Upon reflection, what wrong had these people done? It was the bandits roaming the streets with swords in broad daylight who were at fault.

«We cannot reveal our identities, but rest assured, we mean no harm.»

«T-then, perhaps...»

The man's eyes darted nervously. Then, cautiously choosing his words, he spoke,

«Um... perhaps from Gangbuk...»

Baek Cheon remained silent, causing the middle-aged man's face to go pale.

«S-so, what about now...?»

Baek Cheon bit his lip slightly.

‘What is he getting at?’

Certainly, Cheonumaeng's group had helped them. Though it might be difficult for them to understand, how much risk had this decision entailed?

Yet instead of expressing gratitude, they seemed more concerned about potential retaliation from Sapaeryeon looming in the future. If it weren't for them, these people would have already been cold corpses.

No matter how worried they were, shouldn't the proper etiquette be to express gratitude first? Or at least, shouldn't they first inquire about the condition of their neighbor who had been bleeding and collapsed?

A sense of frustration, difficult to put into words, surged within Baek Cheon. He felt like screaming in anger. But instead of losing his temper, Baek Cheon explained as politely as possible.

«... We will ensure that no harm comes to the village. We'll handle the aftermath as best as we can.»

«Yes?»

«If we move the carriage to a suitable spot below the mountain and erase any traces of people, Sapaeryeon will likely think they fled with grain, not that they were attacked by someone. So please don't worry too much.»

«W-will you really do that for us? We're causing so much trouble...»

«Of course, we'll do that.»

«Oh, sir! Thank you so much. Uh, then what can we offer in return for this...»

«... We're not expecting anything in return.»

«... Yes?»

Baek Cheon bit his lip for a moment. Instead of wasting time with such talk, he was expecting the words questioning how was the condition of a person Tang Soso was tending to, who was bleeding and collapsed earlier. Anger rose to his throat, only to barely recede again.

«You won't owe us anything. Please don't worry. You can help yourselves to the grain over there. Just be careful, as Sapaeryeon may come back to check later.»

«T-thank you. Thank you so much, sir!»

«Is that all now?»

Upon hearing those words, the man didn't reply but turned his head to assess the situation near the carriage.

Only after confirming the sight of Ogeom and the Lords subduing the bandits like capturing rats did he turn his gaze to the fallen villager and Tang Soso.

Just as Baek Cheon was about to remark if he now noticed the wounded person, the man's mouth fell open, and his face contorted in an indescribable expression. In an instant, he howled like a beast and rushed towards them.

«Father! Aaaaaah! Father!»

Baek Cheon's eyes widened in shock.