

Chapter 1034

We won't be by his side. (4)

The boat approached the riverbank slowly.

Yoon Jong, who stood on the bank of the river, felt it once again.

Truly bizarre. No matter what conversation they were having or what situation they were in, when that man appeared, everything would be turned upside down.

Whether he had seen him at Hwasan's main gate, or at the foot of the Hundred Thousand Mountains, or when he had met him at Black Dragon Fortress or Maehwado, it had always been the same.

He had thought it was because they always met in dramatic situations, but he now understood it clearly. Jang Ilso simply had the power to change the atmosphere with his mere presence.

In the midst of a strange stillness that might suddenly erupt at any moment, Jang Ilso slowly raised his hand. His hand, hidden in his wide sleeves, was revealed, and a multicolored rings dazzled Yoon Jong's eyes.

«This...»

Jang Ilso, covering his mouth with his hand, widened his eyes.

«Was it an inappropriate moment for me to intervene?»

It was not an especially unusual statement. However, it made Yoon Jong feel more uncomfortable.

The fact that such an ordinary statement came from Jang Ilso was as discomfoting as a monk insulting Buddha. Jang Ilso, who had disembarked from the ferry, walked leisurely toward them.

Splash.

The sound of his footstep on shallow water pierced everyone's ears.

Jang Ilso, stopping at a reasonable distance, lightly bowed to Hyun Jong and then opened his mouth.

«If you're having a private conversation... I could step back and come back later, you know. I'm someone with that much tact.»

He smiled as if he was mocking.

Baek Cheon, who was about to snap, tried to respond, but Chung Myung's calm voice was faster.

«If you're someone with tact, you wouldn't have thrust your face into this situation alone, would you?»

«Hmm?»

Chung Myung smirked, revealing his sarcasm.

«Or perhaps you got tired of that arrogant face and want to separate it from your body that badly?»

«Haha.»

Jang Ilso chuckled briefly.

«Don't get too angry. We're pretty familiar with each other, aren't we?»

Ogeom gritted their teeth. But Chung Myung remained cold and simply glared.

«Sorry, but it would be nice if you could understand my position a little. Just breathing the same air as someone like you is quite unpleasant.»

«That's a little disappointing.»

«So, let's put your nonsense aside and tell us what you want.»

Jang Ilso's smile deepened. In that tense atmosphere, everyone unknowingly bit their lips. Against the backdrop of the dark night, Jang Ilso's red silhouette was quite remarkable. It was more intense than any appearance they had seen of him so far.

«Do you know the situation?»

«Thanks to someone's kind explanation,» Chung Myung replied.

In response, Jang Ilso exaggeratedly shrugged his shoulders.

«It seems to be quite a headache.»

Chung Myung fell silent, but Baek Cheon couldn't contain his rising anger.

«You talk big, but did you come all the way here because you couldn't handle the Demonic Cult? It seems like in the end Sapaeryeon isn't anything special .»

Ogeom looked at Baek Cheon with surprise. Although the anger they held towards Jang Ilso might not be different, they couldn't muster the courage to be openly scornful.

But Baek Cheon didn't seem to be cowed by Jang Ilso's presence. No, it was possible that he was pushing back because he felt pressed. Baek Cheon was that kind of person.

«Tsk tsk.»

Jang Ilso, with a displeased expression, looked at Baek Cheon and then turned his gaze towards Chung Myung.

«The kids from Hwasan don't have good manners. They interrupt adults while they're talking. Shouldn't they be a little more disciplined?»

«I'm not quite sure.»

«Hmm?»

“I'd rather have them show courtesy to a passing dog than to you.”

«...»

«Hmm, sounds like I'm not even as good as a dog.»

«You understand well.»

Jang Ilso raised the corner of his mouth and laughed.

Baek Cheon instinctively tightened his grip on his sword, but Jang Ilso simply shrugged, as if it didn't matter.

«The noble sect members use such high-sounding words. Treating me with such reverence. It's quite moving, really.»

«...»

«To be honest, it's a bit heartwarming, isn't it?»

«Just a load of crap.»

The smiles on both of their faces deepened. However, their eyes were like sharp blades, glaring at each other.

«Can't handle Magyo...»

Recalling Baek Cheon's words from earlier, Jang Ilso let out an exaggerated sigh and lowered his gaze.

«Well... it's not entirely wrong. It's the truth. But...»

He looked at Chung Myung with cold eyes, and beyond him, at Baek Cheon.

«You need to understand. When I can't handle the Demonic Cult, it's not just us who will burn in that fire. The fire will... consume the entire Central Plains. It will burn across the Yangtze, Henan, and Shaanxi.»

«Stop babbling, get to the point. What do you want?»

In response to Chung Myung's question, the smile on Jang Ilso's lips deepened.

«I don't need much. Just a sword should suffice.»

«A sword?»

Jang Ilso slowly nodded his head.

«It's hard to explain. It seems my usual sword doesn't work well against those guys.»

Chung Myung's expression stiffened slightly.

«Well, there's not much else to do, is there? Even if it's unfamiliar in your hand and risky, we have to borrow a good sword. We'll stick it into that crazy guy's throat... the Bishop or someone like that»

Jang Ilso raised his eyebrows and stared at Chung Myung with sharp eyes.

«A sword that's as sharp as it gets.»

Chung Myung's face was now chilling.

From the beginning, he had anticipated that Jang Ilso would seek salvation.

‘Because they are an evil faction.’

An ordinary Magyo might be manageable. But if, as Jang Ilso said, the Bishop had truly appeared, and if that bishop was the ‘real’ bishop that Chung Myung knew, then the Sapa bastards wouldn't be able to defeat him.

Demonic Arts[magong] transcending the realm of unorthodox martial arts [邪功 — sagong — evil arts] could easily tear Sapa to shreds.

What represented orthodoxy was righteousness, and what represented the unorthodox was desire. What represented Magyo was none other than malice [악의(惡意)].

Malice aimed not at the Sapa but at humanity.

Even Chung Myung found it difficult to understand the principles, but in any case, Demonic Arts could overwhelm ordinary martial arts and render their abilities useless. They had learned this fact through numerous battles in the past. However...

‘Without having faced them directly, he deduced all this through limited information...’

He didn’t want to admit it, but Jang Ilso was truly a scary individual. What was even scarier was not just his understanding of everything, but the unwavering determination to cross this river without a hint of doubt about his own thoughts.

«A sharp sword...»

Chung Myung voiced his thoughts, which had been occupied by contemplation.

«Stupid Sapa may not understand it, but the renowned sword also demands qualification from the wielder.»

«Hmm?»

«You are not worthy of wielding such sword.»

«Well, we’ll see.»

Jang Ilso chuckled but then abruptly cut short his laughter.

«Let’s put aside these absurd analogies, Hwasan Geomhyeop.»

«...»

«I need you to cut that crazy monster’s head. The longer we delay, the worse the situation becomes. It’s better to make the decision quickly.»

«Do you really think I would join hands with someone like you?»

«No. No, not at all, Hwasan Geomhyeop.»

Jang Ilso shook his head.

«This isn’t about joining hands. You go your way, and I go mine in facing the Bishop.»

«...»

«You haven’t forgotten, have you? You owe me your life once.»

Chung Myung coldly sharpened his gaze. Jang Ilso’s shoulders seemed to tremble as if restraining laughter.

«Why? Do you consider the debt owed to a petty Sapa like myself as non-existent?»

Chung Myung glared at Jang Ilso with chilling eyes.

«Is that so?»

«Hmm?»

When Jang Ilso smirked, Chung Myung casually continued,

«What would happen if I say I have no debt to repay pay you back? Would you kneel and beg?»

«Kneel? Hahaha!»

Suddenly, Jang Ilso burst into maniacal laughter.

His laughter, mixed with internal strength, echoed along the Yangtze River. Ogeom staggered as if they had been hit by a powerful force.

«Kneel? Me, Jang Ilso? Hahaha!»

Jang Ilso laughed as if he was going to shed tears. His extravagant jewelry jingled loudly. It was a strangely eerie sight.

After laughing at seemingly absurd situation for some time, Jang Ilso gazed intently at Chung Myung. His eyes were piercing.

Slightly reddened, his eyes shone brilliantly against his bloodless white skin.

«Sure. You want me, this Jang Ilso, to kneel and beg, right?»

«...»

«That's right.»

Chung Myung's face hardened. However, Jang Ilso continued to smile deeply and leisurely.

«If that is what you desire, I can do that for you.»

Step by step, Jang Ilso approached Chung Myung.

«Kneel.»

Another step.

«Bow my head and touch the ground.»

The distance between Chung Myung and Jang Ilso became dangerously close.

«If you need more...»

Finally, as Jang Ilso leaned closer to Chung Myung, he whispered in a voice filled with an eerie fervor.

«I will even lick your shoes if that's what it takes. And beg for help. Please. Please. Please.»

Baek Cheon, who had been staring at this spectacle in fascination, took an unconscious step back. He felt his entire body shudder.

He understood in his head that all of this was a typical Jang Ilso exaggeration, but understanding didn't mean he could accept it. Just listening to that voice was enough to send a chilling sensation through his entire body, as though a cold snake was slithering down his spine.

'What on earth is this bastard...'

In the final step, Jang Ilso moved closer to Chung Myung and looked down at his face.

«If you want, I can do whatever you desire. Is that enough for you?»

At that moment, Chung Myung reached out and grabbed Jang Ilso's collar, pulling him down. Jang Ilso's body bent, and their eyes met on the same level.

Growling, Chung Myung stared into Jang Ilso's eyes.

«Listen well, you damned bastard.»

«...»

«I'm fine with debts and such. Even if you didn't ask, I would've gone there on my own. So remember one thing clearly. Neither me nor Hwasan are doing this for your tiny matters.»

Thud!

Chung Myung pushed Jang Ilso's chest. Jang Ilso staggered back a couple of steps, smirking.

«Of course, you will go.»

«Get yourself ready properly. You'll have to work hard to deal with us.»

«Of course...»

Jang Ilso was about to nod in agreement when he suddenly stopped. He looked at Chung Myung with a puzzled expression.

«Us?»

«Yeah, us.»

«...»

«You said you need it, a sword to cut the bishop's throat.»

«...Right.»

«These guys...»

Chung Myung gestured with his chin to the people standing behind him.

“It's the sword.”

His voice pierced through Baek Cheon's ears, and he found himself clenching his fists without realizing it.

“It doesn't look particularly sharp, though.”

“You can look forward to it”

Cheong Myung revealed his teeth in a wide smile.

“I personally forged it. Not only the Bishop's throat, but someday it will be sharp enough to cut your throat too.”

“That sounds promising.”

Jang Ilso looked at Ogeom with a curious expression, and after a moment, as if he had completed his business, he turned slowly.

“We depart at dawn.”

“...”

“Then... let's meet again. The children of the Righteous Sect.”

Jang Ilso walked away from them at a leisurely pace, in the same manner he came here.