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The Desolate Era

Book 3: Comprehending The Way by the Pond Chapter 9: Riverside Tribe

A grief that had been suppressed for so long but which was given sudden release....how powerful it was! Ji Ning stood there quietly, looking at the agonized Blacktooth, not saying a single word.

"Since you already know, young master, then I won't lie any more. Young master, come with me." Blacktooth rose and walked out of the room.

Ning and Autumn Leaf followed behind him.

Blacktooth led the way in front, all the way towards the very back of the tribe. In the very back of the tribe, there was a small door in the wooden fence. Through the wooden door...there was a cemetery far past it. Many of the erected tombs were newly made. Clearly, this was a freshly built cemetery.

"Young master?" Autumn Leaf looked towards Ning, her eyes filled with a hint of unease.

Ning held his breath as well. He understood where Blacktooth was taking him.

"Right here." Blacktooth pointed at a seemingly ordinary grave. In front of this grave, there was a large stone, which had just a few words carved into it: 'Daughter, Miwa. Erected by Father, Blacktooth.'

"Spring Grass." Ning quietly stood there, looking at the grave.

In his life, he had rarely experienced the sensation of heartbreak. Compared to those strong, powerful emotions, Ning preferred calm, quiet, warm emotions. The feeling of seeing someone every morning, and affection for each other slowly growing deeper.

Calm and peaceful was real!

To treat someone as part of your own life. At least in this life, from when he was an infant until now, the amount of time Spring Grass had spent with him was most likely even greater than his parents had. Ning hadn't realized it when she was alive, but now that he knew she was dead, he felt as though a piece of his heart had been chopped off.

It hurt very much!

"Blacktooth." Ning stood there, looking at the tombstone. Slowly, he said, "Tell me everything. Tell me everything which happened after Spring Grass returned."

Blacktooth nodded.

"At first, on the way back, she was actually quite sad. Sad that she had to part with you, young master." Blacktooth sighed. "But after she arrived at the tribe and saw her two brothers, Miwa clearly became much happier. She'd often spend time with her two little brothers...the days passed in happiness, and at that time, Miwa had looked forward to young master one day coming to visit her."

"Only!"

Blacktooth's voice sunk. "One day, Serpentwing arrived. It was like a nightmare, causing countless members of our tribe to die, one of which was my son, Waterfront."

"The death of Waterfront, her little brother, hurt Miwa very much."

Ning remembered that beast skin letter which discussed some of the events Miwa had experienced upon returning to the Blacktooth Tribe. Many were stories regarding her and her two little brothers. Clearly, Miwa truly doted on her two little brothers. This caused Ning to quietly come to the decision that he would have to help out Spring Grass' sole surviving brother, as a way to help console Miwa's soul in heaven.

"Serpentwing's attack caused the entire Blacktooth Tribe to fall into an abyss of fear and pain! The tribesmen were afraid, afraid that Serpentwing could attack again. Some of the tribesmen even fled the tribe and joined other, larger tribes."

"Everyone in the tribe was in a state of panic." Blacktooth continued, "Many tribesmen would leave. Actually, after Serpentwing's attack, our tribe's population became less than a thousand. With so many tribesmen fleeing...if this continued, the Blacktooth Tribe would have fallen apart soon."

Ning nodded.

"I had undergone countless difficulties in order to build the tribe. Naturally, I didn't want it to fall apart just like that." Blacktooth said. "Spring Grass felt sympathy for me, so she put down her embarrassment and wrote a letter and asked the tribesmen to deliver it to West Prefecture City to give it to you, young master. She wanted to ask you, young master, to help my Blacktooth Tribe."

"Only, we quickly received the news that you, young master, were out adventuring." Blacktooth shook his head.

Ning ground his teeth.

Right.

He had gone adventuring long before Serpentwing had reached the peak of the Xiantian stage. Naturally, they wouldn't have been able to find him.

"The tribesmen suggested that our Blacktooth Tribe should consider go asking for the protection of that extremely large tribe, the 'Riverside Tribe'." Blacktooth said in a dark voice. "As long as we could receive the protection of the Riverside Tribe and be permitted to temporarily reside within Riverside City, everything would be fine."

"Riverside City?" Ning murmured to himself.

As one of the hegemonies of the Swallow Mountain area, the Ji clan naturally had to control the many tribes within this territory. No tribe's population was permitted to expand beyond fifty thousand! Once they expanded beyond fifty thousand, they might become a threat to the Ji clan's rule. Thus, if that happened, the Ji clan would definitely use some brutal, ruthless methods to overawe the surrounding tribes.

Thus, a fifty thousand man tribe was considered an extremely large tribe. The Riverside Tribe was one such tribe! Because the tribe was large, the walls of the tribe were made from enormous rocks, like a

small city. Although it couldn't compare to a large city like the West Prefecture City which held hundreds of thousands of citizens, it was still an extremely powerful tribe amongst the countless tribes.

Generally speaking, tribes that were able to erect such a city had a Xiantian lifeform guarding them.

"Riverside City had two powerful Xiantian lifeforms. Diremonsters wouldn't dare go there." Blacktooth said. "Our Blacktooth Tribe only had a few hundred people. As long as we could enter Riverside City! Once Serpentwing was dealt with, everything would then return to normal."

"We went to pay our respects to a powerful figure within Riverside City, River He, and offered treasures, wanting him to accept our Blacktooth Tribe hide within for a time." Blacktooth ground his teeth. "But that River He was very picky. He didn't have any interest in those treasures we offered. But he took an interest in Miwa."

"He wanted Miwa to become his woman, and in exchange, he would help the Blacktooth Tribe this time. You know how haughty Miwa is. Of course she didn't accept. She immediately left!" A ferocious look flashed through Blacktooth's eyes. "That River He actually sent his subordinates to go capture Miwa, wanting to forcibly take her back."

"However, Miwa was very powerful, and she used very high class sword techniques as well. She beat Jiang He's servants half to death...Miwa had also said at the time, 'My master is the young master of the Ji clan. Jiang He, don't go too far!'"

"That Jiang He just laughed loudly and said, 'Even if you are the maidservant of young master Ji, you are just a female servant. If you were able to successfully ask your young master for help, then you wouldn't come here asking me for help. What's more, how could the maidservant of a young master of the Ji clan end up in such a small tribe?'" Blacktooth ground his teeth. "This Jiang He added another sentence... 'If you become my woman, I will protect the Blacktooth Tribe! Otherwise, just wait for death.' After this, we left Riverside City."

Autumn Leaf, hearing this, was enraged. "How could Sister Spring Grass possibly agree to him!"

"Spring Grass wouldn't agree." Ning shook his head while looking at Blacktooth.

"Right. Spring Grass was completely unwilling." Blacktooth shook his head in pain. "But seeing how panicked the tribesmen were and how members of the tribe often fled, and seeing how agonized I was....for the sake of me, her father, after agonizing for three days, she still agreed."

"How could Sister Spring Grass be so stupid!!!" Autumn Leaf was frantic.

Ning shut his eyes.

He could imagine the mental struggle which Spring Grass had gone through during those three days. For the sake of her father, was it worth it?

"Miwa became River He's woman." Blacktooth's voice was trembling slightly. "But when Miwa was completely unprepared, River He suddenly launched a sneak attack, smashing Miwa's dantian with a palm strike and dispersing all of the ki in her body while mocking her.... 'You stupid woman, there are countless tribes which want to be protected by my Riverside Tribe. Just because you became my woman, I have to help you? Hahaha, what a dreamer!'"

“Detestable!!!” Autumn Leaf was so angry that she was shaking.

Ning ground his teeth.

Spring Grass. Oh, Spring Grass!

Why did you trust that bastard? Why did you have to sacrifice yourself for your father? Why?

“The Serpentwing affair quickly calmed down. The Ji clan imprisoned Serpentwing within Serpentwing Lake, causing Serpentwing to not dare to come out at all.” Blacktooth said. “Once this news came out from the Ji clan, all the tribes quickly settled down. The hearts of our Blacktooth Tribe’s tribesmen calmed down as well, and some of the tribesmen who had fled actually returned.”

“I was worried about Miwa, so I went to look for her.” Blacktooth said in a low voice. “Only when I went looking for her did I find out the situation had changed. After using all sorts of methods, I finally managed to have a private meeting with Miwa. As soon as Miwa saw me, Miwa began to cry, cry so hard!”

Ning shut his eyes.

He could imagine Spring Grass’s agony, regret, and heartbreak.

“She said that this was her own mistake. It was her own stupidity, and that it wasn’t the fault of myself, her father. She had willingly done this.” Blacktooth said in agony. “She also said...she didn’t want you, young master, to learn of this. She didn’t want to make you feel heartbroken, which is why she concocted this story of her marrying a travelling merchant, which she left for you in that letter she gave you.”

“After giving me the letter, Miwa died. She took poison.” Blacktooth said softly. “I knew how much agony my daughter was in. Death was perhaps a type of release. Actually, when she died, she was murmuring your name. She didn’t want you to know why she died.”

Ning gently nodded.

Understood.

He understood.

After having been with each other for so long, how could he not understand what Spring Grass was thinking?

She wanted that happy, cheerful Spring Grass to live on in Ning’s heart....she didn’t want Ning to learn of the humiliations she had suffered!

“Every single woman has a man who is destined for her. As soon as I saw him, I knew that he was the one. When I see him smile, I feel happy. When I see him frown, I worry. When I see him training hard with the sword, I stand there and watch. Just looking at him is a gift given by heaven...”

“I really am very happy, very happy. Spring Grass is just a maidservant. For you, young master, to come to the Blacktooth Tribe to visit Spring Grass means at least...Spring Grass has a small place of her own in your heart, young master...Spring Grass is very happy, very happy, truly, very happy.”

Ning opened his eyes, tears faintly visible within them.

He quietly walked towards the tombstone, sitting down in front of him. Holding a bamboo tube in his hands, he said softly, "Spring Grass, in the past, you always poured wine for me. It is my turn to pour wine for you." The wine within the bamboo tube dripped onto the ground in front of the tombstone.

"I know. I understand. I know that you are forever the happy Spring Grass, forever happy!"

"Your stupidity truly is adorable."

Ning laughed, but his eyes were filled with tears. "I know what happened to you, but I don't look upon you. How could a little brother look down on his big sister? Although sometimes his big sister might be a bit stupid...you will always be the big sister of Ji Ning."

Hearing the words, 'big sister', the nearby Autumn Leaf's lips trembled, and she let out a whimper.

"Sis, you were too tired. Sleep, sleep, have a good sleep." Ning said softly. "Those people who took advantage of you, sis, those people who caused you to be heartbroken...I won't spare any of them. Not one."

"Let's go."

Ning put down the bamboo tube and rose. "Let's go to the Riverside Tribe. I am going to meet this River He!"