Chapter 71 : Chapter 71

Chapter 71 : Token

Just before the situation ended.

Crackle-

Seol Ye-rin froze all the masked men.

I tried not to reveal that we were from the Ice Palace as much as possible, but since the situation turned out like this, it seemed unavoidable.

“Young Palace Head.”

“Young Palace Head?”

Since it came to this, I decided to modify the plan.

It would be one thing if the Mount Hua thugs died, but didn't they survive?

I heard the Orthodox Factions live and die for justification.

If so,

‘I must change it.’

The perception of the Orthodox Sects regarding the Ice Palace.

“...Did you come from the North Sea Ice Palace to invade the Murim?”

As if he finally understood, the person who appeared to be the Zhongnan Elder muttered dejectedly.

The tide of battle was reversed.

He probably never imagined that all the disciples he brought would be frozen.

“Name?”

I needed to at least know his name.

“...Byeok Ra-jung. An Elder of Zhongnan. What is your name?”

“Hyeokryeon Yeom. You aren't going to say something like Zhongnan will take revenge if you die, are you?”

Shing-

I said that and drew my sword.

“No way.”

The Zhongnan Sect Elder, Byeok Ra-jung, also raised his sword.

He sensed it, that this life-and-death duel could be his last.

I held the Flame Extreme Sword and took the starting stance of the Seven Severing Demon Sword.

Flare-

Flames soared and disturbed Byeok Ra-jung’s vision.

“I will kill you, escape this place and make it known that the Ice Palace has invaded the Murim.”

“Invasion...”

What did we do?

Rather, didn't Zhongnan attack first?

“I will change that perception.”

My sword extended.

The Extreme Yang Qi operated by the Iron Venerable's Iron Blood Divine Art breathed true qi into the bubbling spring acupoint.

“Heavenly River Boundless!”

The best sword strike that could be unfolded with the Heavenly River Thirty-Six Swords stretched out toward me.

I smiled while staring straight at that sword.

After unfolding the Seven Severing Demon Sword, I decided to use the demon sword forms I had learned in my head.

“Iron Flame Mad Soul.”

The flame, sturdy as steel, began to run wild.

The moment the sword flying from thirty-six directions touched the flame, it melted down.

“Melting the sword...”

The moment Byeok Ra-jung was astonished seeing the sword flowing down in an instant,

Cough-

My flame swallowed Byeok Ra-jung’s heart.

Gulp-

The Mount Hua thugs who saw that swallowed dry saliva.

It was because they saw a Zhongnan Elder lose in an instant.

The Mount Hua Sect's third-generation disciple, Un-sang, looked at Yu So-dong and the other Mount Hua Sect disciples, then raised his body.

The influence of the Zhongnan Sect was significant in making the disciples of the Mount Hua Sect, who dominated Shaanxi Province, turn into street thugs like this.

Even when they first entered the sect, the Mount Hua Sect’s situation wasn't that bad.

Although they didn't know the exact circumstances, there was an atmosphere of trying to gather money from all directions.

However, around the time Un-so entered, the donations that came in every month began to stop, and the merchant guilds and shops that received Mount Hua’s protection withdrew their requests for protection.

Mount Hua, which was already living in poverty, faced even more difficulties.

As a result, a situation arose where junior disciples younger than themselves ate grass to fill their stomachs and fell ill.

Not many people knew this fact.

That is why Un-sang and the others came here.

Yu So-dong also knew there were many deficiencies, but he took the money under the guise of protection fees in an ugly manner.

Because they had to eat. Instead, before entering the inn, they used to patrol and chase away the surrounding hoodlums or gangsters.

The number of inns or shops paying protection fees had already decreased significantly.

However, some people of Mount Hua still protected this place.

If it was their last pride, it was pride.

But if they were pushed back even in this by Zhongnan now, it would be a disgrace for Mount Hua.

The problem was that Zhongnan's forces were formidable.

They never dreamed that even an Elder had been deployed.

"Thank you for helping us, Master."

"Hmm?"

"...Thanks to you, we were able to survive."

I observed the Mount Hua thugs and Yu So-dong.

It was because I was curious about the Mount Hua Sect's perception of the Ice Palace.

"...You aren't afraid?"

"Pardon?"

"As you can see, we came from the Ice Palace."

"Is that okay?"

"...The fact that you saved us regardless of your origin does not change."

"...Thanks to the guests, it seems the inn was able to avoid collapsing completely."

The Mount Hua disciples did not exclude the Ice Palace.

The moment I looked back at Seol Ye-rin at that appearance,

“How... Did this happen?”

A middle-aged man with a plum blossom embroidered on his chest appeared in front of the Yulin Inn.

***

The Mount Hua Sect Elder, Baek San, looked around the Yulin Inn.

His coming here was connected to the crisis of Mount Hua.

Since Mount Hua is a prestigious Taoist sect, it does not directly run businesses.

So they are always poor.

At least their livelihood circulated by receiving donations under the name of protection fees for protecting and guarding those who donated and business places.

It wasn't abundant, but it wasn't lacking either.

However, over the past few years, the number of business places refusing protection began to increase.

At first one place, then two places, then four places...

He only found out recently.

That the Zhongnan Sect was behind it.

But when he found out, Mount Hua was already in a mess.

It was a huge mistake to miss the timing to stop the Zhongnan Sect's mischief because of internal troubles.

There must be money.

Even just to feed and raise the disciples.

That damn money.

This is the reason why he patrols the inns in Yulin City he has connections with, visiting businesses and complaining.

Above all, this is a place he ends up visiting anytime.

If one lives after entering Mount Hua, there are bound to be one or two people buried in one's heart.

‘Un-so.’

To Baek San, that was Yu So-dong.

Because it was the Sect Leader and himself who led his expulsion.

He heard that after leaving Mount Hua, he ran an inn right here in Yulin City.

And some of Yu So-dong's senior and junior brothers were volunteering to go to that inn.

“Ng?”

Suddenly, the sound of metal clashing was heard by Baek San’s ears.

It is a fight!

The direction was the Yulin Inn.

Baek San hurriedly headed there.

‘Isn't that person... Zhongnan’s Heavenly Sword?’

Baek San, who discovered the frozen masked men and the fallen Zhongnan Elder, stared at the man and woman standing next to the third-generation disciples.

Hot and cold energies were spewing out from the two people simultaneously.

“Elder!”

The Mount Hua disciples discovered Baek San and shouted.

“I came because it was noisy during patrol, but what is going on here?”

“Elder?”

“I am the Mount Hua Sect Elder, Plum Blossom Sword Baek San.”

Baek San said while clasping his hands.

Seol Ye-rin turned her gaze to me at Baek San’s introduction.

Asking with her eyes what I was going to do now.

“I am Hyeokryeon Yeom. I am in charge of escorting the Young Palace Head.”

“Young Palace Head...?”

Seol Ye-rin realized at my words that there was no need to hide her identity anymore.

“I am Seol Ye-rin.”

She worried whether she could tour the Central Plains after revealing her identity as the North Sea Ice Palace’s Young Palace Head, but.

‘He will take care of it.’

Seol Ye-rin trusted me.

“The Ice Palace’s Young Palace Head...?”

Baek San’s movement stopped.

The Murim’s perception of the North Sea Ice Palace was quite bad.

However,

“Elder, thanks to the two people... we were able to survive.”

“...Is that true?”

“You can tell by looking, can't you?”

The situation of the inn was truly miserable.

To the point where it could no longer operate for the time being.

Naturally, Baek San’s gaze turned toward Yu So-dong.

“...You must have suffered a lot.”

“...No.”

The inn can be fixed.

But people cannot be brought back to life.

Yu So-dong and the Mount Hua disciples survived here today.

“Thank you for protecting the disciples.”

Baek San knew about the rumors regarding the Ice Palace, but decided to trust only what he saw with his own eyes.

“...Is it okay for you to thank us like this?”

“Isn't it a fact that you protected the disciples?”

“That is true, but.”

“So, I would like to invite you to Mount Hua to repay the favor.”

“.....?”

I looked back at Seol Ye-rin at Baek San’s unexpected proposal.

I told him she was the Ice Palace’s Young Palace Head, but I didn't expect him to invite us to Mount Hua.

-What will you do?

-Didn't you want to visit the Five Great Mountains of the Central Plains once?

-How did you...

-You were looking at the mountains a lot. I didn't know you liked hiking.

If it was such a person, I thought she would want to see the Five Great Mountains called the famous mountains of the Central Plains.

-And didn't you say you would change the perception of the Ice Palace?

It means let's go.

I didn't know Seol Ye-rin would talk like this.

“Good, it seems like it will be a good opportunity.”

The destination was changed to Mount Hua.

***

Yu So-dong could not believe the fact that he was returning to the Mount Hua Sect.

‘I thought I would never be able to return to Mount Hua after being expelled and running an inn in Yulin City.’

Yu So-dong was expelled five years ago.

To the public, and to himself, he said it was because he didn't pay money, but in fact, the essence was different.

‘Master.’

Mount Hua disciple Yu So-dong, expelled five years ago.

He was a disciple of a scholar Taoist whom people in Mount Hua did not know well.

“Your feelings seem complicated.”

Baek San spoke to Yu So-dong, who was lost in thought.

Yu So-dong remained silent for a moment before carefully opening his mouth.

“...Is it really okay for me to enter?”

Has there ever been a person who brought back an expelled disciple?

“Yes, since I am bringing you, the Sect Leader will not oppose it either. Furthermore.”

-Didn't they encounter the Ice Palace people first?

Ice Palace people.

He refers to the people of the North Sea Ice Palace.

To be honest, Yu So-dong didn't have much of a reaction even though figures from the North Sea Ice Palace visited the inn as guests.

Since Yu So-dong hadn't recovered from the incident before his expulsion in the first place, he was indifferent to all worldly affairs.

So, he probably had no interest in what the guests did.

How deliciously they ate the food Yu So-dong made and whether they paid properly was more important to Yu So-dong.

And... the person who prevented the inn from being destroyed was no different from someone to whom he owed a great debt.

“With what intention is the Elder taking those people to Mount Hua?”

He had a feeling it wasn't simply because they saved his senior brothers.

“Listen well, Un-so. Currently, there is a very high possibility that we will fight with Zhongnan.”

“So?”

“If the Ice Palace has already become enemies with Zhongnan, wouldn't it be one method to borrow their power to deal with Zhongnan?”

“...Are you saying to think that you are taking them because they have utility value?”

Yu So-dong frowned.

If that was the case, it meant Mount Hua was taking Seol Ye-rin, Hyeokryeon Yeom, and the other North Sea martial artists to Mount Hua to use them.

“They are people we met for the first time. It is true that we owe them a debt, but we do not know with what intent they visited the Murim. The Sect Leader will figure out if they really just came to tour or if they came with some plan.”

Furthermore,

Baek San stared at the carriage the Ice Palace Young Palace Head was riding.

‘If Mount Hua can keep the Ice Palace Young Palace Head.’

Mount Hua might be able to demand many things from the Ice Palace.

“...I understand.”

“Junior brother is still full of curiosity.”

“Senior brothers.”

“If you just return to Mount Hua, Master will compensate you, so don't worry too much. Junior brother is returning to Mount Hua to receive the inn repair costs, right?”

At his senior brother's one word, Yu So-dong shut his mouth.

He thought they had reconciled a bit.

‘As expected, people don't change easily.’

As if they had forgotten all the words they said to Yu So-dong at the inn, the senior brothers were looking down on him.

“I think we need to eat briefly here before moving.”

The Ice Palace carriage stopped.

Yu So-dong nodded and approached them.

The road from Yulin City to Mount Hua was farther than he thought.

“I intend to prepare a meal.”

When Yu So-dong approached the Ice Palace carriage and spoke, Tae Un-seo, who was sitting in the coachman's seat, stood up.

“Shall I show off my skills?”

“Are you a chef?”

At Yu So-dong’s words, Tae Un-seo’s eyes flashed.

“Correct.”

“Warrior Tae, let's do it together.”

“Thanks.”

Tae Un-seo did not refuse Yu So-dong’s help.

“Hmm, have we stopped now?”

At that moment, the carriage door opened and the Divine Physician came out.

Baek San, who was watching the Ice Palace carriage, was surprised when an old man appeared from inside.

Because he didn't know until now that not only the Young Palace Head was riding.

“No...”

And even,

“Divine Physician... Elder?”

Baek San, who realized that the old man riding in the carriage was the Divine Physician, rushed toward the Divine Physician.

“Elder, why are you coming out of that carriage?”

“Hmm? It is Elder Baek. Hearing that the destination changed to Mount Hua, did Elder Baek invite the Ice Palace to Mount Hua? Thanks to you, I will see the Sect Leader for the first time in a while.”

I intervened seeing the conversation the two were sharing.

“Did you two know each other?”

At my question,

Rummage rummage.

The Divine Physician, who was rummaging through his bosom, held out a token to me.

“The owner of this token is none other than Plum Blossom Sword, Baek San.”

In other words, the Mount Hua Sect Elder, Plum Blossom Sword Baek San, had a history of receiving help from the Divine Physician.

“Ho, Elder Divine Physician. Then can I have this token too?”

The Divine Physician responded to my question.

“Of course.”

At that appearance, Baek San’s eyes began to tremble.

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Chapter 72 : Mount Hua

I never thought I would be able to use the Divine Physician's token right away like this.

The Mount Hua Elder, Baek San, looked visibly flustered.

“Elder Divine Physician, why give that to an Ice Palace escort...”

“Isn't it because there's a reason to give it?”

“Ah, I apologize.”

“I heard that if I hand over this token, you will grant any one request I desire... is that true?”

Baek San was silent for a moment before continuing.

“That is correct. It is the second token I offered to you because I owed you a debt, no, because Mount Hua owed a debt to the Divine Physician. You have received this token twice, Elder Divine Physician.”

“Doesn't that mean the connection between you, who met me that much and me is tough? The first time you were indebted to me was over ten years ago...? Goodness. I have aged quite a bit now too.”

“Haha, time flies really fast.”

According to the Divine Physician, the first time was about ten-odd years ago when the Divine Physician had just entered the Jianghu and saved Baek San when he was in critical condition.

Then what was the second time?

Mount Hua owed a debt?

I looked at Baek San with puzzlement.

“Do you perhaps have anything you want to ask?”

Since paying off debts was better the sooner it was done, Baek San asked.

“I will tell you that when we arrive at Mount Hua.”

“...Yes, understood.”

With this, Baek San had no choice but to constantly be mindful of me.

-Kukuk, what do you plan to do at Mount Hua?

The Sword Venerable asked.

‘It's simple. The goal is to change the perception that you, Sword Venerable,and the Demon Queen have built up.’

I won't be able to clear the karma accumulated by the North Sea Martial Gods all at once.

However,

‘The Nine Sects One Gang and the Five Great Clans.’

Ten sects and gangs, and five clans.

If just about eight of the total fifteen Orthodox factions change their perception, the Ice Palace might be able to confront the Demonic Cult with even the Orthodox Sects on its back.

‘The biggest obstacle is...’

It is indeed my birth.

If the news that I am the youngest son of the Demonic Cult Leader is revealed, it is certain that the Orthodox bastards will look at me with colored glasses.

“Then I will head back now. Let's go, So-dong.”

“Yes, Elder.”

I smirked while watching Baek San move toward the Mount Hua Sect party with Yu So-dong.

“What do you plan to do after going to Mount Hua?”

The Divine Physician asked as if he was really curious.

“I thought of something I can do thanks to your token, Elder.”

“Hmm?”

“The situation is already hostile with Zhongnan. I should at least gain Mount Hua.”

If nothing else, I understood human physiology too well.

Humans had an instinct to distance themselves from beings that were not beneficial to them.

The Mount Hua Sect will definitely welcome the Ice Palace.

Why?

‘Because they are hostile with Zhongnan, and it looks like if they touch the Ice Palace just a little, it will self-destruct along with Zhongnan on its own.’

Then at that time, it was clear that Mount Hua, which had become impoverished due to Zhongnan, could regain its past glory.

Instead, the moment that happens.

‘Mount Hua will be in the same boat as the Ice Palace.’

I was aiming for that.

Growl-

“Oh my.”

A growling sound came from Cheon Deung-jin’s stomach.

“Let's eat first.”

We came out for a tour but weren't eating properly.

I thought I would treat Cheon Deung-jin and Seol Ye-rin to very delicious food when we stopped by Mount Hua.

***

Shaanxi Province, Huayin County.

As much as the Mount Hua Sect, one of the great sects of Shaanxi, was coiled up on Mount Hua.

Huayin County, the village right below Mount Hua, was bustling with crowds.

“It's the Plum Blossom Sword and the Mount Hua Five Swords.”

“What is that carriage?”

Such residents of Huayin County examined the carriage and Mount Hua martial artists entering Huayin County.

Although the population was small, if a large group passed through the street, eyes were bound to be drawn.

“Let's have Mount Hua climb up tomorrow and rest in Huayin County for today.”

I nodded at the Plum Blossom Sword, Baek San’s message.

Since we were together for nearly seven days, the two of us could now roughly figure out what each other was like.

When the Divine Physician directly nailed down that he was on his way to the Southern Barbarians (Namman) with the Ice Palace’s Young Palace Head, Baek San also seemed to believe it.

Then, a few days ago, he also talked about the worries he had.

What was the story?

‘Zhongnan’s pressure is becoming stronger day by day.’

It was exactly what I had predicted.

If we give help to Mount Hua here, Mount Hua will turn friendly toward the Ice Palace.

‘There must be the opposite case too.’

The moment we harm Zhongnan, someone will recall the nightmare of the North Sea Martial Gods again.

I must make sure that part cannot be remembered as much as possible.

Therefore, the one stepping up this time will be me, not Seol Ye-rin.

“Ugh. Did we finally arrive?”

Riding a carriage for seven days is also hard work.

Leaving the carriage at an inn in Huayin County and securing lodging, they heard the news that the Mount Hua martial artists would continue to climb Mount Hua.

“I will remain.”

Only Yu So-dong remained with us.

“...Then I will see you tomorrow.”

We finished seeing off the Plum Blossom Sword and the Mount Hua thugs as they left for Mount Hua.

“Is it really okay to send them ahead like that?”

Plum Blossom Sword Baek San will arrive at Mount Hua and report to the Sect Leader.

That the Ice Palace’s Young Palace Head has arrived in Huayin County.

What choice will the Mount Hua Sect Leader make then?

“It will be fine. Still, just in case, go around in groups of threes and fives.”

With those words, I looked for Seol Ye-rin.

Seol Ye-rin’s eyes were sparkling upon seeing an organized market street for the first time.

“Would you like to look around the market street a bit?”

“I think that's a good idea.”

“Can I join too?”

Cheon Deung-jin’s sparkling eyes also didn't look ordinary.

“Of course. Since we are going, let's all go together!”

Seol Ye-rin readily agreed.

I started walking the market street taking those two and even the Divine Physician.

Tae Un-seo, Wi Ji-yeong, Eun Bin and Baek Mu-yong kept their distance.

Yu So-dong followed the two groups with a bit more distance.

It was partly because it was difficult for seven people to flock around as the market street wasn't big.

And because we looked like outsiders, we didn't want to raise wariness.

“Buy Tanghulu!”

Turning the corner of the market street, a girl was selling Tanghulu, red glossy hawthorn fruits skewered and hardened with sugar.

The fragrant and sweet smell tickled Seol Ye-rin’s nose, exhausted from the seven-day forced march in the carriage.

“What is that?”

Seol Ye-rin stared at the Tanghulu with eyes full of curiosity.

It was a color and sweetness that could not be experienced in the Ice Palace.

“It is a snack of the Central Plains called Tanghulu (Sugar Fruit).”

Cheon Deung-jin explained.

“They sold something similar near the Potala Palace, but the Central Plains definitely seems to make it better.”

Cheon Deung-jin also had no opportunity to encounter Central Plains food since she lived in the Western Regions.

“Shall we try one each?”

The girl at the street stall held out the Tanghulu without yielding, even though she flinched for a moment at the three people's extraordinary appearance and attire.

“Hawthorn fruit Tanghulu has a taste that makes affection strong, and tangerine Tanghulu has a taste that boosts energy!”

Seol Ye-rin pointed to the red shining hawthorn Tanghulu skewer.

“Please give me the hawthorn fruit one.”

“Me too.”

“Here it is! You are so pretty!”

The girl at the street stall was very good at social life.

The girl handed the two reddest skewers to me.

After finishing the payment, I handed one skewer to Seol Ye-rin.

Seol Ye-rin carefully bit into the Tanghulu.

Crunch!

As the thinly coated sugar broke, a sweet and sour taste spread filling her mouth.

“It's delicious!”

Cheon Deung-jin’s eyes also sparkled at the sight of Seol Ye-rin eating the Tanghulu.

“Here it is.”

“But why are there two? What about yours, Mister?”

“Ah, I...”

“Eat this.”

Seol Ye-rin held out the Tanghulu she was eating to me.

I made a troubled expression but had no choice but to bite one Tanghulu.

Crunch!

“Mmm, the taste is quite good.”

Cheon Deung-jin also bit one Tanghulu.

However, for some reason, Cheon Deung-jin felt like she could taste bitterness melted into the sweetness.

“Shall I give one to the Elder Divine Physician too?”

“I'm fine.”

The Holy Hand Divine Physician clicked his tongue and said a word from behind.

“How could this old man interfere with the affection of young people?”

Seeing such a Divine Physician, I bought a tangerine Tanghulu and handed it to him.

“They say you can regain energy, so why don't you try it?”

The Divine Physician also probably hadn't relieved his travel fatigue due to the long journey.

It didn't seem bad to refresh his mood with one sweet Tanghulu like this.

As expected, the Divine Physician did not refuse my proposal.

Crunch-

The moment he ate like that.

“Mmm.”

Certainly, the sweetness spread throughout his mouth.

“...It reminds me of my granddaughter.”

“I will make sure your granddaughter also eats Tanghulu.”

A promise was a promise.

“Thank you.”

While I was smiling watching them eyeing the delicious food sold in the market street rather than looking around the market street itself.

Rumble-

From far away, the Mount Hua Sect disciples were closely watching their appearance.

Mount Hua's second-generation disciples, Cheong Pung and Cheong Geol, were watching my group.

Although Elder Baek San and the Mount Hua thugs who went up to Mount Hua didn't know, today happened to be the day Mount Hua disciples went out to Huayin County.

"Geol-a, it's the first time in my life I've seen such a pretty woman."

Cheong Pung spoke.

"Are you going to approach even though there are men on both sides?"

Cheong Geol looked back at Cheong Pung with an indifferent expression.

"The fact that such a beauty appeared in Huayin County and we happened to come down to Huayin County means it is destiny to be with that woman."

"You already decided."

"I don't know which sect she is from, but I don't think we will be inferior?"

"That is a natural statement."

The Great Mount Hua Sect that dominates Shaanxi Province.

A situation where they have established themselves to some extent as second-generation disciples, not third-generation disciples.

However.

It seemed they didn't even have any thoughts about the fact that they thought nothing of Taoists coveting women.

This attitude of the disciples was the reality of the current Murim, the Mount Hua Sect that pursues the Righteous Path.

"Then shall we go and at least try talking to her?"

"That much is possible."

"Let's just figure out which sect's young mistress she is."

The two disciples of Mount Hua began to approach Seol Ye-rin.

Chapter 73 : Chapter 73

Chapter 73 : Sect Leader

While eating Tanghulu and exploring the market street.

“...Aren't those Mount Hua disciples?”

From far away, men wearing Mount Hua martial uniforms appeared.

“Wait, aren't they coming this way?”

The Divine Physician also discovered them and his expression hardened.

“Why are they coming to us?”

Seol Ye-rin, who was eating Tanghulu, also turned her gaze to the Mount Hua martial artists.

“We came because a scent of flowers drifted our way.”

As if elegant young masters had appeared, two people stood in front of Seol Ye-rin.

Cheon Deung-jin observed me for a fleeting moment and then stood in front of Seol Ye-rin.

Because she thought others would recognize her as a man right now.

As a result, naturally,

“Who are you?”

“Who is it?”

It looked like I and Cheon Deung-jin were stepping forward to protect Seol Ye-rin.

“...I am Mount Hua’s Cheong Geol.”

“I am Cheong Pung.”

Those wearing Mount Hua martial uniforms introduced themselves politely.

“We introduced our sect, so how about your sect?”

Sharp gazes passed by me and Cheon Deung-jin.

Cheon Deung-jin looked back at me.

In fact, neither of us was from the Ice Palace.

At the moment when we were stuck for words.

“Nice to meet you. I am Seol Ye-rin, the Young Palace Head of the North Sea Ice Palace. Do the young masters of Mount Hua have any business with me?”

Flinch.

“North Sea... Ice Palace?”

“What business does the North Sea Ice Palace’s Young Palace Head have in Huayin County...”

The faces of the Mount Hua second-generation disciples who heard Seol Ye-rin’s words became serious.

-Senior brother, what do we do?

-Calm down. We have spoken to quite a few beauties, but isn't this the first time we've heard such an answer?

-If it's the Ice Palace... rumor has it they freeze people alive.

-Hey, there is no way such a beauty would do such a thing.

“The Young Palace Head asked what business you have.”

Whoosh-

Killing intent enough to give goosebumps on their backs was conveyed to the two people.

At the sudden killing intent, the two people’s expressions hardened.

“For barbarians, you are confident, aren't you?”

“You seem to think this is the Ice Palace?”

The two were seen placing their hands on their sword hilts.

An explosive situation.

“We are here at Mount Hua’s invitation, but it seems it hasn't been conveyed to you two.”

Cheon Deung-jin spoke.

“Invitation?”

“Elder Baek San has gone up to Mount Hua. I don't think your seniority is higher than the Elder, so I hope we don't cause unnecessary friction.”

At that one word, Cheong Pung and Cheong Geol clasped their hands.

“We apologize for not recognizing Mount Hua’s guests!”

From the moment Baek San was mentioned, the gazes of the two began to change.

Baek San’s status felt great anew.

-Ho, is it because it is certainly a huge sect? The discipline is better established than other sects.

-It feels completely different from the third-generation disciples.

Perhaps sensing the difference too, the Sword Venerable and the Demon Queen each spat out a word.

“Then we will see you at Mount Hua!!”

Dash.

Seeing the three people running away quickly, the girl selling Tanghulu spoke.

“For some reason... the Plum Blossom gluttons are running away.”

“Plum Blossom gluttons?”

“They are guys who often come down and covet free meals in the market street like gluttons, claiming they are Mount Hua disciples.”

“Coveting free meals, are you talking about Mount Hua?”

“Everyone keeps it quiet, but Mount Hua is no longer the Mount Hua of the past. Cultivating the Dao is good, but wouldn't one need to be able to make a living to maintain the status of a prestigious Orthodox sect? Right now, Mount Hua is lacking too, too, too much in that part.”

We were able to acquire surprisingly much information about the Mount Hua Sect in the market street.

***

The Mount Hua Sect Leader, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in (Taoist Hyeon Cheon), stroked his beard at Baek San's report.

"You brought the North Sea Ice Palace's Young Palace Head to Mount Hua..."

He also conveyed the story about the third-generation disciples who almost died in Yulin City.

"Did you say the Zhongnan Elder, Byeok Ra-jung, died?"

"Yes, I confirmed his death."

"Don't you know well what will happen if Zhongnan finds out about this fact?"

"That is why I brought them, Sect Leader."

"Are you saying you will use the Ice Palace as a shield?"

Baek San shook his head.

"That is not it. Let's strike Zhongnan together."

"Together?"

"The Divine Physician is with them."

At the word Divine Physician, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in's eyes flashed.

"The Divine Physician...?"

"Yes."

"Why is the Divine Physician moving with the Ice Palace?"

"I do not know that well either."

"Good. Then let's say we join forces with the Ice Palace and fight Zhongnan and win. How will you handle the Alliance's reaction?"

Consolidating power in Shaanxi Province by borrowing the power of the Outer Regions.

And by striking out the Zhongnan Sect, which is also part of the Nine Sects One Gang.

Naturally, solidarity was bound to decrease.

Perhaps the Ice Palace was aiming for that and visiting Mount Hua.

Baek San, who pondered for a moment at the Sect Leader's reaction, opened his mouth.

"If we do not receive the Ice Palace's help, what do you plan to do about the attack that half-destroyed the Yulin Inn?"

From a while ago, businesses that maintained Mount Hua's protection were directly attacked.

Although they were said to be those wearing black clothes, anyone could see their techniques were of the Zhongnan Sect.

But no one could speak it out loud. Because Mount Hua didn't have as much power as before.

They knew Zhongnan was continuously expanding its territory, but this was the first time they had attacked directly like this.

Furthermore, they intended to completely destroy the inn run by So-dong, an expelled disciple.

Mount Hua's precious third-generation disciples might have all lost their lives on the spot.

Everyone knows it is something an Orthodox sect should absolutely never do.

"We must respond."

"Even if we respond, I think there is a high possibility that Mount Hua will not achieve what it wants."

"...San-ah, don't you also know that everyone is staking their life and death for survival in this era?"

Just keeping the Saphaeryeon in check as they expanded their territory was taking all the Murim Alliance's strength.

And Mount Hua had to be in pain until recently.

The people involved in this were the Sect Leader, Baek San, and Yu So-dong.

"Even so, you should have embraced Un-so. It is Mount Hua, isn't it?"

“He was a child better suited for commerce than martial arts. We couldn't guide that child.”

“That child almost died.”

“.....”

Hyeon Cheon-jin-in sighed.

How did it come to this?

‘It is clear that the tension has decreased.’

In the era of great peace where external pressure completely disappeared, they were trying to kill each other.

‘Ice Palace...’

History informed us that the Ice Palace revealed itself in the Central Plains in a hundred-year cycle.

The fact that Ice Palace people are roaming the Central Plains again means clearly a hundred years have passed.

The Sect Leader, who had heard about the North Sea Martial Gods of a hundred years ago, asked Baek San again.

“Who did you say the Young Palace Head was?”

“Seol Ye-rin. The North Sea Ice Palace Lord’s only daughter.”

“Only daughter?”

“That is correct.”

“Hmm, then how about this method?”

Listening to Baek San, the North Sea Ice Palace’s Young Palace Head said she came to tour the Central Plains.

Originally, isn't it better to travel with a man than for a woman to travel alone, and doesn't affection grow if a man and a woman travel together?

Yin and Yang are always meaningful when they are one.

“What... method is it?”

“Instead of resolving the Zhongnan matter together, let's assign one Mount Hua martial artist who can stick around with the Young Palace Head.”

Baek San read the Sect Leader’s thoughts but couldn't firmly oppose it.

Because they weren't in a position to be picky.

He also felt how much their prestige could rise if Mount Hua carried the Ice Palace on its back.

Winter, where one couldn't even think of blooming plum blossom scent.

They were suffering from a cold winter where the plum blossoms withered.

***

The next day.

The group, who enjoyed the market street well and returned to their lodging to fully relieve their travel fatigue, began to climb Mount Hua.

I heard the Mount Hua Sect is located around the middle of Mount Hua.

Mount Hua, where five peaks soar, was very difficult to climb.

Enjoying the scenery lined with strange rocks and bizarre stones along with cliffs that seemed to be cut sheer between the five peaks shrouded in a sea of clouds, the group was able to climb to the middle of Mount Hua.

[Mount Hua Sect]

A signboard with a flashing brushstroke written in one stroke welcomed the group.

“...It has been a long time.”

Yu So-dong, who climbed Mount Hua together, examined various aspects of Mount Hua.

Seeing Yu So-dong’s appearance, I asked.

“What kind of person is the Mount Hua Sect Leader?”

“Pardon?”

“We will face the Sect Leader once we enter Mount Hua now, so I thought it would be good to know even a little more about the Mount Hua Sect Leader.”

“The Sect Leader is a Taoist to the bone.”

“Taoist?”

“Yes. Shall I call him a hopeful optimist who thinks that whether the disciples are dying or living because they have no living expenses, they will be able to live well if they cultivate the Dao and learn martial arts?”

Living a life cut off from the secular world would not be easy in reality.

“You mean he is an upright person?”

The feeling I got from hearing Yu So-dong was like that.

“Ah, I am not too sure about that either.”

“The conclusion is we have to meet him to know.”

Confirmed.

Still, there was a big difference between meeting him knowing the circumstances and meeting him without knowing.

“Anyway, it is a magnificent view.”

Seol Ye-rin admired quietly.

It was a completely different feeling from the snowy mountains seen in the Ice Palace.

Thinking it was good to have come seeing that appearance, we entered the Mount Hua Sect.

Then,

“Nice to meet you.”

There was a person waiting for us as soon as we crossed the main gate.

“The, the expelled disciple of the Mount Hua Sect, Yu So-dong, greets the Mount Hua Sect Leader, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in.”

Yu So-dong, who entered the Mount Hua Sect first, discovered the Sect Leader and bowed.

Behind the Sect Leader, the disciples of Mount Hua were lined up.

“It has been a long time.”

“For the Divine Physician to visit Mount Hua like this, it is an earth-shattering event.”

“Haha, is that so?”

“This person is...?”

“I am Seol Ye-rin, the Young Palace Head of the North Sea Ice Palace.”

“I am Hyeokryeon Yeom, the Small Snow Squad Captain in charge of escorting the Young Palace Head.”

Hyeon Cheon-jin-in’s expression hardened upon confirming the Young Palace Head’s escorts flocking in.

Because the martial prowess of each member of the group was as powerful as the masters of Mount Hua.

“This... it seems the Ice Palace’s status has become great while we haven't seen each other.”

“You flatter us.”

“I heard the news that you saved the third-generation disciples from Zhongnan. Let me say thank you first.”

“No, it was something we naturally had to save.”

“Thank you for thinking so. Ah, anyway, let's go inside first.”

Hyeon Cheon-jin-in stretched his arm forward to guide us as if telling the direction to my group.

While they walked forward, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in stayed in that spot for a moment.

Hyeon Cheon-jin-in, who stood while everyone went forward, spoke to Yu So-dong, who did not get up while clasping his hands.

“And So-dong-ah, you follow too. Either way, you are my martial nephew, so wouldn't it be okay to accept at least a cup of tea from your martial uncle?”

***

Following Hyeon Cheon-jin-in’s guidance, we arrived at the Sect Leader's office and took our seats.

Seol Ye-rin checked here and there in the Mount Hua Sect with her two eyes as if fascinated.

“Why are you doing that?”

“I was surprised that the Sect Leader's office is more frugal than I thought.”

It certainly is an atmosphere that looks a bit poorer than the Palace Lord’s Hall.

“It seems the Ice Palace has good financial circumstances?”

“It improved a bit this time.”

“Did you discover gold, silver, and treasures or something?”

“Since we sold North Sea Cold Iron to the Central Plains, you will probably soon be able to see martial artists carrying Cold Iron swords.”

I slipped in as the atmosphere of the Sect Leader asking and Seol Ye-rin answering continued.

“I hope you will now talk in earnest about the reason why Elder Baek wanted to invite us to Mount Hua.”

At my question piercing the essence, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in pondered for a moment and then brought up the story.

The moment the Ice Palace group, including me, focused on the Sect Leader’s mouth to see what story would come out of the mouth of a Taoist far from the secular world.

“In our Mount Hua, there was a Taoist who realized the true Dao.”

It is a story out of nowhere.

“He didn't know how to learn martial arts and had no talent, but he knew the heavenly secrets, fortune, and all paths of the Dao, and was a person who knew everything about Mount Hua.”

Yu So-dong, who came in late at the Sect Leader’s words, paused.

The Sect Leader continued speaking.

“Then, eight years ago, someone set fire to the pavilion where all of Mount Hua’s secret manuals were stored. Nothing remained and it became a pile of ashes. The secret manuals Mount Hua had realized until now, and above all, the precious Daoist scriptures of the ancestors. It was truly despair. At that time, that person stepped forward.”

“It was Taoist Un-hae (Un-hae-jin-in), who was a Scholar Taoist.”

Baek San took over the speech.

“He is the Eldest Senior Brother to me and the Sect Leader. You could say he was a person who knew everything in the world.”

“And for three years, he restored the scriptures without rest and revived the secret manuals. Because it was all in his head. And five years ago. He finally finished that work. And he went outside with his disciple and collapsed just like that. Carrying him on a small body, he cried loudly. That was Un-so, no, that child So-dong.”

Our group’s gaze turned to So-dong.

“From then on, his health rapidly deteriorated. We searched everywhere and emptied everything we had to save him, buying all kinds of medicinal herbs. But he only got worse. Then suddenly that child disappeared. Everyone couldn't pay attention, and then soon... he passed away. And just two days later, that child brought one item, do you know what it was?”

The Sect Leader said with a smile.

“It was none other than a Great Cycle Pill. To save his master, after searching everywhere, he stole what a certain merchant guild had. And we are still paying back that debt.”

Having spoken up to here, the Sect Leader caught his breath for a moment and continued.

“Do you know why I am telling this story?”

“I do not know.”

I said honestly.

“It means it was a tragedy that would not have happened if the Zhongnan Sect hadn't touched us. We even suspected that it might be them who burned the pavilion. So I ask.”

Hyeon Cheon-jin-in looked at me with eyes full of light.

“Can you join forces with Mount Hua and drive away the Zhongnan Sect?”

A very secular story popped out.

Chapter 74 : Chapter 74

Chapter 74 : New Recruit

“Can you join forces with Mount Hua and drive away the Zhongnan Sect?”

What I wanted to say was being said beforehand at Mount Hua.

Including the backstory regarding Yu So-dong.

It was a very secular, very human story of a Taoist filled with resentment and anger.

And even the opportunity that led to the current Mount Hua.

-Kukuk, you are lucky.

-For an Orthodox sect to reach out to the Ice Palace first like this. A lot of time has passed indeed.

The Demon Queen seemed unable to understand the words of joining forces with Mount Hua at all.

“That was also something we wanted to ask of Mount Hua.”

The Ice Palace also couldn't speak directly about the current situation.

So, for now, we had to put forward conditions that each other could offer and judge whether we could grant them.

“Is that true?”

“Instead.”

‘Just, one thing.’

There was one more thing to ask of Mount Hua.

“Elder Baek.”

“Yes?”

“The token.”

At the word token, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in’s eyes flashed.

“Betting on Elder Baek’s neck, I hope Mount Hua will also do its best to change the perception of the Ice Palace in the Central Plains.”

Elder Baek unknowingly stepped forward to receive the token.

“If you agree to this matter, the Ice Palace will help check Zhongnan together with Mount Hua.”

Seol Ye-rin’s voice wrapped around Baek San.

“Then will you tell us what we need to do?”

Crackle-

“Although what we are confident in is freezing things.”

At Seol Ye-rin’s overflowing confidence, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in nodded.

***

At the time when my group was meeting with the Mount Hua Sect Leader.

Mount Hua’s expelled disciple, Yu So-dong, had secretly slipped out of that place and was sitting down.

The painful story about his master's death.

The story after being kicked out by the Taoist.

His head became complicated.

‘It is impossible to revive the inn.’

After his master died, he received help and ran the inn, but only lethargy remained.

However, to think that Mount Hua, which his master loved, was in this state.

He came to his senses.

Money, he must earn money.

As someone who cannot emit the plum blossom scent, he must gather money to embroider flowers on Mount Hua more fiercely than anyone else.

‘I thought I was the only one who could raise the failing Mount Hua.’

Although he was the head disciple of the most renowned Scholar Taoist, he couldn't save his master, nor could he utilize his talent well for Mount Hua.

When he was educated by his master, his master used to always tell him that if he ever had to descend the mountain, he must do business.

That he had the head for it.

However, he spent time guarding a secluded inn in an alienated place for quite a long time.

He shouldn't have done that.

“I heard you ruined the inn and came back?”

Mount Hua’s third-generation disciples flocked to the lodging where Yu So-dong was staying.

“Senior brothers.”

“Who is your senior brother?”

He thought they had changed a bit, but upon returning to Mount Hua, it seemed Senior Brother Un-sang and the other senior brothers had returned to their original selves.

“Say whatever you want. I am tired of talking anymore.”

Yu So-dong left those words and came outside.

“That, that bastard!”

Yu So-dong, who came outside, began to walk aimlessly.

It clearly felt like he returned home, but now it felt like someone else's house.

Then.

“If we leave Mount Hua, it's faster to go directly to Hubei!”

“Isn't it better to go via Sichuan?”

“To see Dongting Lake, we have to go down to Hunan through Hubei!”

He discovered the Ice Palace escorts gathered together.

“What are you doing here?”

“Ah, hello.”

It was Wi Ji-yeong, Baek Mu-yong, and Tae Un-seo who were having a conversation.

“We were discussing the next schedule.”

“By next schedule, what schedule do you mean?”

“Thanks to the Elder’s invitation, we were able to stop by Mount Hua, but actually, we are out on a tour. The Young Palace Head said she wanted to see Dongting Lake.”

“Then wouldn't the path going down to Hunan through Hubei be good?”

“See!”

Wi Ji-yeong, elated by Yu So-dong’s support, put her hands on her waist.

Baek Mu-yong muttered as if regretting it for no reason.

“Ahem, I thought it would be okay to go via Sichuan.”

“If you wanted to eat Sichuan cuisine, I will make it for you.”

When Tae Un-seo added a word.

“Ah, no. I think it would be okay to just go via Hubei.”

Baek Mu-yong expressed disapproval.

“A tour... I envy you. If such a large group moves, the expenses won't be easy, but does the Ice Palace have a lot of money?”

“Pardon?”

At Yu So-dong’s question, Wi Ji-yeong looked around.

“This is a secret.”

“Hmm?”

“Our Young Master is very rich.”

“Rich...? Not the Young Palace Head?”

“Yes.”

“Wi Ji-yeong, you shouldn't boast about money.”

“Ah.”

At Baek Mu-yong’s pointing out, Wi Ji-yeong shut her mouth.

“Please pretend you didn't hear what was just said.”

Yu So-dong, who pondered for a moment, looked at Tae Un-seo who was sharpening a kitchen knife.

“By the way, is that young hero a chef?”

“That's right. Since we are traveling, there are quite a lot of occasions where we have to cook and eat.”

“What about you, Young Mistress?”

“I was originally the Young Master’s maid.”

Yu So-dong had witnessed all three people using martial arts.

A maid origin who handles daggers well.

An escort who cuts enemies and cooks with a kitchen knife.

Even a build that looks like he could block with his body to protect the Young Palace Head.

Furthermore.

‘The bald Vice Captain was a master of stealth.’

Yu So-dong, who pondered for a moment, spoke.

“Do you perhaps not need a waiter who is good at cleaning, laundry, and other things?”

“Pardon?”

At Yu So-dong’s one word, the three people who were listening quietly opened their eyes wide.

***

At the time when my group was having a conversation with the Sect Leader at Mount Hua.

Shaanxi Province, Mount Zhongnan.

The Zhongnan Sect Leader, Jeon Si-hwan, realized the fact that the Elder, Byeok Ra-jung, who went to occupy Yulin City, had been out of contact for a few days.

And,

Flutter-

A carrier pigeon flew in.

Jeon Si-hwan, who checked that carrier pigeon, hardened his expression.

“...Annihilation?”

It doesn't make sense.

Judging that Mount Hua couldn't possibly have that much potential left, he read further down the carrier pigeon.

“Ah.”

As expected.

“Ice Palace.”

It says they discovered disciples turned into ice statues.

It is news that they were defeated by the North Sea Ice Palace.

The inn is also in a semi-destroyed state.

They couldn't catch Mount Hua, but instead, they harvested something else.

“The Ice Palace has infiltrated Shaanxi.”

The moment this fact is conveyed to the Murim Alliance, Shaanxi will turn into a strategic key point, and they will receive various support from the Alliance.

“Right now, even that support is a necessary situation.”

Thinking that the Orthodox-Unorthodox Great War with the Saphaeryeon might break out, too much of the sect's money was invested into the Alliance.

In return, the sect members living in the Alliance were affluent, but the sects that were not had to tighten their belts.

“Wait.”

Thinking about it, it seemed if he wove this well, he could make the Zhongnan Sect the sole hegemon of Shaanxi.

The fact that the personnel including the Zhongnan Elder were caught attacking the Yulin Inn meant he also had to consider the opposite case.

“It will be a fight of who attacks the opponent faster, General Manager!”

“Yes, Sect Leader!”

“Right now, dispatch martial artists to Mount Hua!”

“Pardon? To Mount Hua?”

“It is war! We must somehow drive the narrative that the Ice Palace joined forces with Mount Hua and struck Zhongnan!”

The Zhongnan Sect began to get busy.

***

The talk went smoothly.

I, Seol Ye-rin, Cheon Deung-jin, and the Divine Physician shared a bit more conversation regarding Zhongnan and came out of the Sect Leader's office.

“It seems we deviated from the originally intended purpose of the tour, but.”

“I support the Third Young Master’s opinion. Since we are going to the Southern Barbarians anyway, wouldn't it be good to create sects friendly to the Ice Palace?”

“Since it was a bit awkward to talk about Potala Palace, I didn't mention it.”

“You did well. Because there is no need to necessarily inform them that the Outer Region Murim is coming deep into the Central Plains.”

I, who was listening to the three people’s conversation, spoke.

“I think there are pros and cons. We cannot say that Mount Hua turned to our side due to this matter because, in the end, Mount Hua is a sect representing the Jianghu.”

“That is true.”

“They will be able to discard us anytime if they have justification. And the fact that we arrived in Shaanxi will now be conveyed to the Murim Alliance too.”

It is true that the burden of risk has increased.

Because if rumors spread that the North Sea Ice Palace Young Palace Head is touring the Jianghu, there was a possibility that those holding grudges against the Ice Palace and those wanting to see the Young Palace Head would flock in.

“Even so, the Captain must have thought this method was the safest, right?”

“Of course. We will be visiting places where Orthodox sects are a bit more in the future, and at that time, we became able to sell Mount Hua’s name, haven't we?”

While traveling without hiding our identity, if we wanted to travel confidently, we needed to make many friendly sects.

“Is Zhongnan... completely excluded?”

“I think we already crossed an irreversible river.”

“That is true, but.”

“Where did the Small Snow Squad go?”

At my one word,

“It is over there.”

Eun Bin, who was in stealth, revealed himself.

Eun Bin was protecting the Young Palace Head as if he was Seol Ye-rin’s personal escort.

“Guide us. It seems we need to discuss the future schedule.”

“Captain. However, a special matter has arisen.”

“Special matter?”

Moving while receiving Eun Bin’s report, we could discover Yu So-dong with the Small Snow Squad.

“Why is the owner of Yulin Inn here?”

“That...”

“Hello, Young Palace Head. I am Mount Hua’s expelled disciple, Yu So-dong.”

“Ah, yes.”

At Yu So-dong’s appearance suddenly introducing himself to the Young Palace Head, everyone tilted their heads.

“I want to enlist in the Small Snow Squad.”

“……Yes?”

Naturally, Seol Ye-rin’s gaze turned to me.

And I turned my gaze to Wi Ji-yeong.

“That... Young Palace Head. Do you perhaps not need a person who is good at cleaning and laundry?”

“...Did you volunteer to enlist even knowing we are from the Ice Palace?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

Because of what?

My gaze turned to Wi Ji-yeong.

-I'm sorry. When I told Young Hero Yu that the Young Master has a lot of money...

I, having heard Wi Ji-yeong’s telepathic message, began to examine Yu So-dong.

I don't know well about Yu So-dong except that he is from the Mount Hua Sect disciples, can run an inn, and is bright with calculations.

However,

‘If I take Yu So-dong along, I can show off my friendship with Mount Hua.’

The problem is the fact that the Small Snow Squad is a unit escorting the Young Palace Head, Seol Ye-rin.

I couldn't accept him as a Small Snow Squad member simply because he was good at cleaning and laundry.

I, who slowly approached Yu So-dong, began to examine Yu So-dong’s muscles and bones.

“Hmm?”

Then I discovered a peculiar point.

“Are you perhaps not free in the operation of your inner qi?”

“Pardon? How did you...”

“...Do you often hear that you are weak usually?”

“...That is correct.”

Why didn't I recognize this from the beginning?

‘Elders, did you know?’

-Hmm?

-Are you asking if we knew he was a child suffering from Severed Meridians?

The Demon Queen seemed to have known.

‘Yes.’

-It is the Three Yin Severed Meridians. I thought you had noticed. Kukuk, did you not know?

I felt that my observational skills were still very lacking.

I, having confirmed that Yu So-dong had the Three Yin Severed Meridians, looked back at Seol Ye-rin.

“New recruit, may I hire him, Young Palace Head?”

“That is up to the Captain’s discretion.”

“Are, are you really doing that for me!”

At Yu So-dong’s appearance making a moved expression, I smiled.

I didn't expect to meet a possessor of the Three Yin Severed Meridians in a place like this.

Although he wouldn't be able to unfold martial arts properly right now.

‘If the Severed Meridians is cured, he will be reborn as an excellent recruit.’

A talent to be in charge of the Small Snow Squad’s cleaning and laundry had newly entered.

Chapter 75 : Chapter 75

Chapter 75 : Potential Power

“Hey, did you hear?”

“What?”

“I heard that Mount Hua joined forces with the Ice Palace and brutally killed the Zhongnan Sect disciples!”

An inn in Shaanxi.

People eating at the inn began to whisper among themselves.

“What?”

“Are you saying Ice Palace people are roaming Shaanxi right now?”

Bad rumors about Mount Hua began to spread in Shaanxi.

Then.

“Eh, it seems you guys know something is wrong?”

“Hmm? Aren't you... Azure Wind Guest?”

Azure Wind Guest.

It was the alias of a martial artist active in Shaanxi Province.

“I have quite the information network, you see. What I heard was completely different?”

“Oh, are you saying there was a hidden truth?”

“I am curious!”

“Eyy, for free?”

“Waiter! Bring one bowl of wheat noodles here!”

“Yes!”

The people who ordered a bowl of wheat noodles pricked up their ears and focused on Azure Wind Guest's mouth.

“From what I heard. The incident happened at the Yulin Inn.”

The full story of the rumor began to spread through Azure Wind Guest's mouth.

"There is probably no one who doesn't know how poor Mount Hua is right now, and that they are on the verge of collapsing because they showed no interest in material desires while cultivating the Dao."

"Right, right."

"They say Mount Hua, which is far from business, opened something called Yulin Inn to earn some money."

"Why Yulin of all places..."

"I heard they couldn't do business in Xi'an because Zhongnan controls it."

"Oh my!"

"Here are the wheat noodles!"

Slurp!

Azure Wind Guest took a big mouthful of the wheat noodles the waiter brought and continued the story.

"So? How did Mount Hua get involved with the Ice Palace?"

"I heard Mount Hua tried to make money even in the outskirts, and recently heard the news that the Moyong Merchant Guild made a lot of money through trade with the Ice Palace."

"I heard the news that Cold Iron started circulating in the Central Plains."

"So they put an inn in the outskirts and tried to invite Ice Palace people."

"Is that allowed?"

"What is the problem with earning money through people from the Outer Regions?"

"That is true."

"So?"

Azure Wind Guest lowered his voice.

"So I heard they made a big decision and tried to sell the Purple Cloud Pill."

“Purple Cloud Pill? Isn't that Mount Hua’s spiritual pill?!”

“Yes, they tried to continue Mount Hua’s lineage even if they had to do that.”

“No way!”

“That's exactly it! I heard Zhongnan noticed that and attacked the Yulin Inn!”

“Then...”

“The Ice Palace suffered a mishap while coming to buy that.”

“Then are you saying Zhongnan is spreading false rumors right now?”

“Correct!”

“For what reason?”

“Because that way Mount Hua will be ruined!”

“Ah!”

People began to whisper among themselves as if they finally understood.

Usually, the crowd tends to side with the weak.

If Mount Hua had been the sect with a bit more power in Shaanxi, public opinion would have been different.

However,

‘If I blow wind like this, the rumor will be distorted and spread like a footless horse going a thousand li.’

“Now, then it's a secret that I told you this, understood?”

“Of course!”

Originally, there were no secrets in the world.

Azure Wind Guest, no, the Small Snow Squad Vice Captain, Eun Bin, hoped the rumor would spread quickly throughout Shaanxi.

Only then.

‘I can escort the Young Palace Head to Dongting Lake.’

For Eun Bin, this level of disguise was nothing if it was to see the Young Palace Head smiling.

***

“The rumor... is spreading as if it has wings.”

The Mount Hua Sect Elder, Baek San, reported to the Mount Hua Sect Leader, Hyeon Cheon-jin-in.

“Is this... really what information warfare is?”

“I was surprised when they suddenly demanded the Purple Cloud Pill, but I didn't know they would use such a method.”

The day after Mount Hua decided to support the Ice Palace,

Hyeokryeon Yeom came to the two people, gave a tremendous amount of money, and demanded the Purple Cloud Pill.

Considering Mount Hua’s current finances, it was an amount where the Purple Cloud Pill wasn't even an issue.

“...It seems joining hands with the Ice Palace was a good choice even if it wasn't for the token.”

“I had the thought that the Divine Physician isn't with the Ice Palace Young Palace Head for nothing.”

“Don't they say the Moyong Clan’s power is becoming stronger because of the trade with the Ice Palace too?”

“I thought maybe we really could become the hegemon of Shaanxi Province.”

“Will it be possible?”

“If Zhongnan gets entangled here, I think it is fully possible.”

If the rumor about the Yulin Inn spread, it was clear Zhongnan would be grinding their teeth at Mount Hua.

Since they are guys with fiery tempers, it was clear they would come to take revenge on Mount Hua.

“They probably won't invade the main mountain. If you were the Zhongnan Sect Leader, when do you think you would aim for?”

“Ah, I finished talking about that with the Small Snow Squad Captain too.”

“Hmm? Has it been decided?”

“Yes. He confidently said it would be the day the Ice Palace, having purchased the Purple Cloud Pill, leaves Mount Hua.”

Zhongnan cannot openly attack Mount Hua as they are both part of the Nine Great Sects.

Then naturally, the target they aim for becomes the Ice Palace.

In other words.

“When Zhongnan attacks the Ice Palace, the Ice Palace side including the Small Snow Squad Captain wins the battle against Zhongnan. He said we just have to side with the Ice Palace, not Zhongnan.”

“Will things really proceed that easily?”

“I do not know yet. That is just the plan, since not everything will happen according to plan.”

The existence of variables.

If only they could control those variables, as Hyeokryeon Yeom said, the hegemon of Shaanxi might become Mount Hua.

***

It was a variable.

“Hup.”

Clearly, Yu So-dong intended to get a job as a servant in charge of cleaning and laundry.

‘Why am I learning martial arts?’

-Listen well. The Small Snow Squad is an escort unit escorting the Young Palace Head. No matter if you volunteered with the intention of doing work lifting luggage like a porter, you must learn basic martial arts.

Work that requires using the body difficultly, in other words, martial arts, was the field Yu So-dong was least confident in.

However,

-Here, eat this.

-What is this?

-It is a pill that can make your martial arts into that of an ordinary person.

-Was there... such a pill?

-It is an enlistment gift.

-Thank you.

There was no one who would refuse when offered a chance to become strong for free.

Yu So-dong put the pill Hyeokryeon Yeom gave him into his mouth.

Then.

Whoosh-

“Cough!”

A tremendous amount of energy began to enter his body.

‘Wh, what is this?’

“Focus on circulating qi!”

There was a reason he told him to eat the pill while sitting in a lotus position.

Yu So-dong began to circulate the Six Harmonies Qigong.

As he tried to guide the pill’s energy to the qi center according to the principles of the Six Harmonies,

Thud-

It was blocked.

‘Oh no.’

It was always like this.

The reason Yu So-dong’s martial arts lagged behind others.

That reason was precisely because the circulation of inner qi wasn't free like this.

“I'm piercing it.”

‘Pardon?’

Hyeokryeon Yeom’s hand touched his back.

Then,

Whoosh-!

An incredibly hot energy began to flow along the acupoints.

‘Gah!’

“Hold onto your consciousness tight.”

Hyeokryeon Yeom advanced while burning Yu So-dong’s acupoints using Extreme Yang Qi.

Three Yin Severed Meridians.

It refers to a state where problems arise in qi and blood circulation because the Yin Qi is excessively strong among the acupoints constituting the body, blocking specific acupoints.

It is a constitution that does not occur well in men, but Yu So-dong was born with the Three Yin Severed Meridians.

So, no matter what martial arts he learned, the Yin Qi would have blocked the inner power.

However.

‘Argh!’

If accompanied by pain, the Yin Qi could be blown away entirely.

Yu So-dong felt like his eyes were rolling back.

And. If those pierced acupoints.

-Wooong!

Are recovered with the energy of the Purple Cloud Pill.

Whoosh-

“Young Hero Yu is no different from having met a miraculous encounter.”

Through body reformation, he could be reborn with a constitution most suitable for learning martial arts.

Thud.

Toward Yu So-dong, who couldn't perform qi circulation breathing and rolled his eyes back just like that, this time Seol Ye-rin approached.

“Since we accepted him as a new recruit, we must work him properly.”

Hyeokryeon Yeom took his hand off, and Seol Ye-rin infused Extreme Yin Qi to guide the Purple Cloud Pill’s energy to the qi center.

It is guiding the energy to circulate smoothly throughout the whole body while quickly cooling the acupoints.

“Even though he is a child of Mount Hua?”

“He is an Ice Palace person now.”

“Will he follow the Third Young Master that much?”

“Well.”

We will have to talk more in the future about that, but.

‘In my experience, he has no choice but to be completely captivated.’

In his past life, his master, who was an Archmage, once allowed those who couldn't use magic to use magic.

At that time, Hyeokryeon Yeom cannot forget the eyes of those who came to use magic.

Because only Hyeokryeon Yeom couldn't use magic.

Just like that, Yu So-dong too.

Moreover, even the fact that he is a disciple of a Scholar Taoist who explores enlightenment and explores knowledge resembles his past life too much.

So Hyeokryeon Yeom found a reason to reach out to Yu So-dong.

Furthermore, there was also the Sect Leader’s request.

It was just before he was about to leave after discussing matters regarding Zhongnan.

“May I ask you one favor?”

“Yes, please speak, Sect Leader.”

“Un-so, that child is not a child to grow on the cliffs of Mount Hua. If there is an opportunity, I want you to definitely take that child.”

“Why is that?”

“My senior brother wanted to look around the world. But his health wasn't good so he couldn't, and he passed away from overworking. The day senior brother passed away, he made one request. Asking if a bird that needs to see the world and look at distant places could become a plum blossom tree. That is why.”

The Sect Leader smiled quietly.

“He wouldn't go to see the world just because of expulsion. That poor child.”

‘Until now, even if he learned martial arts, he probably didn't feel the sensation properly.’

But now it would be different.

Hyeokryeon Yeom became curious about what reaction Yu So-dong would show when he woke up.

***

“Vice Captain.”

“What is it?”

“Is it even a matter of using a Purple Cloud Pill for a new recruit?”

Baek Mu-yong grumbled.

“Is it okay that you taught us the Iron Venerable’s martial arts without any price?”

“Ahem, that is...”

It is the martial art of one of the Ten Venerables under the Heavens, no less.

Hyeokryeon Yeom gave such martial arts without hesitation for the Small Snow Squad.

“Would you be able to give so generously for your subordinates like that?”

Should I say he has a big heart?

Should I say he is overflowing with composure unlike his age?

“Both the Young Palace Head and the Captain seem amazing.”

“Let's just think we served a good liege and follow. Since it's also thanks to them we can live comfortably like this.”

“Here.”

“Thanks.”

Wi Ji-yeong handed one Tanghulu each to Baek Mu-yong and Eun Bin.

“Where is Tae Un-seo?”

“He went to cook saying the new recruit would be hungry when he wakes up.”

“It must be painful as soon as he wakes up.”

“He has to endure it. Since he is a new recruit.”

“Help him so he can adapt well.”

“Yes. Ah, and I saw something on the way back from buying Tanghulu.”

Wi Ji-yeong told the two people the information she gathered.

“Those who appear to be Zhongnan Sect martial artists were spread all over Huayin County.”

“Ah, really?”

Everything was really flowing according to Hyeokryeon Yeom’s prediction.

“Is it tomorrow?”

The moment Hyeokryeon Yeom’s group descends Mount Hua.

It seemed Zhongnan finished preparations to attack the group.

“Let's prepare too.”

“Yes, Vice Captain.”

Because the battle with Zhongnan would be, in a way, the first battle to outwardly show the Ice Palace’s potential power.

Chapter 76 : Chapter 76

Chapter 76 : Flame Ghost

Shaanxi, Mount Hua.

"Phew, I finally arrived."

A person arrived at Mount Hua to monitor the Young Palace Head's party.

Chasing after the Young Palace Head's party was easier than expected.

It was because rumors were widespread as soon as they entered Shaanxi.

"I didn't expect them to be moving while openly revealing they are from the Ice Palace."

North Sea Ice Palace, Five Families.

Han Seol-bi of the Cold Blood Han Family began chasing the Young Palace Head's party under the orders of the Ice Palace Lord, Seol Baek-ho.

How envious she was of the news that Seol Ye-rin, who had held her engagement ceremony, had left for a tour of the Central Plains.

She quickly volunteered at the news that the General Manager, Seol Su-hyeok, was looking for someone to chase after Seol Ye-rin.

Since she was confident in her movement arts, and there was no one who could move faster than Han Seol-bi, Seol Su-hyeok sent Han Seol-bi to the Central Plains as a monitor.

"It is a bit of a shame that I have to monitor secretly, though."

Still, Han Seol-bi smiled with satisfaction at the fact that she could know everything Seol Ye-rin saw and ate.

Han Seol-bi, who was about to climb Mount Hua with the information that they were currently inside the Mount Hua Sect, stiffened her expression.

'What the, why are there so many ambushes here?'

She didn't know who they were targeting, but quite a large number of people were ambushing below Mount Hua.

'Did they unfold a Heaven and Earth Dragnet or something?'

She could guess who it was immediately.

"When on earth are they coming down?"

"Intelligence came in that they are departing today. They will depart soon."

"You said we shouldn't touch the Mount Hua Sect, right?"

"Right, now be quiet. We must not be caught."

They were sloppy enough to speak aloud without using telepathy while lying in ambush.

Thinking of it as the difference from the people of the North Sea who fought against the cold all year round, Han Seol-bi avoided the ambush and began to climb Mount Hua.

How far had she climbed?

She saw the signboard of the Mount Hua Sect.

"Thank you for everything."

"No, rather, we were the ones who received help."

She saw Seol Ye-rin and the Small Snow Squad exchanging greetings with the martial artists of the Mount Hua Sect.

There was also one carriage, and she saw an old man and another woman boarding it.

"Then, I ask you to take care in the future as well."

"Yes, I will see you again next time."

The party members who finished their greetings began to head down.

"I wish you luck in war."

Creak-

As the gate of the Mount Hua Sect closed,

Whoosh-

The atmosphere covering Mount Hua changed completely.

'What, these ambushers. Were they targeting the Young Palace Head?'

If they went down like this, they would be attacked immediately.

Grind.

Han Seol-bi began to worry about whether she should tell them this fact or not.

However, if she told them, the fact that the Palace Lord sent her to monitor Han Seol-bi would be exposed.

Let's just watch for now.

'If it's really urgent, Unnie will freeze them all.'

Han Seol-bi knew.

That if Seol Ye-rin got angry, she could cover Mount Hua with snow.

***

'One, two, three, four, five... a lot came.'

There are really many.

I sufficiently expected that they would ambush us.

But the numbers are quite high.

-Everyone focus. There are quite a lot of ambushers.

I unfolded Voice Projection with Qi.

At the same time, telepathy was transmitted to the Small Snow Squad members.

-Based on the carriage, Baek Mu-yong takes the front, Tae Un-seo takes the left, and Wi Ji-yeong takes the right.

-I will handle the surprise attack.

For once, Eun Bin decided to go on a sneak attack instead of protecting the Young Palace Head.

-What should I do?

Cheon Deung-jin spoke to me.

-For now, Divine Physician sir and Miss Cheon, please wait inside the carriage with the Young Palace Head.

The bastards were more likely to target Seol Ye-rin than the Small Snow Squad.

So the moment the carriage overturned might be the moment Seol Ye-rin would have to step forward herself.

-Will it really be okay?

-I'll try to hold out as much as possible.

I couldn't set fire to Mount Hua.

This time, intercepting the martial artists of Zhongnan without using Flame Butterfly would be the main combat method.

Just in time, I thought of a martial art specialized for surprise attacks.

-W-What should I do!

The new member who decided to be with us going forward, Yu So-dong, sent telepathy.

-Protect the carriage. In a direction that clearly unfolds the martial arts of Mount Hua.

-Yes, understood!

Just by having a martial artist of the Mount Hua Sect in the carriage, Zhongnan would not be able to easily approach the carriage.

I know there is a high possibility that they will attack as if it doesn't matter if they kill one or two martial artists of the Mount Hua Sect during the fierce battle, but even so, their gazes will be stolen by Yu So-dong.

"Now, then."

I, who was walking beside the carriage, climbed onto the carriage and shouted.

"They're coming!"

Swoosh!

With that shout, the Zhongnan martial artists lying in ambush began to rush toward the carriage holding swords.

Swish-

Wi Ji-yeong's dagger cut through the empty air.

"Urk-"

The dagger stuck accurately into the neck of the rushing martial artist.

"They noticed!"

Slash-

"If you come close, you'll have to give up an arm!"

Tae Un-seo, who cut off a masked person's arm in an instant, began to swing his kitchen knife while throwing the arm, spurting a blood fountain here and there.

Boom!

Baek Mu-yong, who shot out a sword wind by swinging his giant sword, stopped the carriage and stepped down.

"Zhongnan bastards, you attack as if you were waiting!"

"Kill them!"

Thud-

The man giving orders collapsed just like that.

Eun Bin, who appeared behind the man, covered his bald head with a mask and began to move secretly again.

Then a melee broke out.

Those trying to kill and those trying to block collided.

I quickly scanned the surroundings.

I am moving to find the enemies' leader.

I knew too well that I had to catch the enemy general in a melee like this.

'Break the spirit.'

Flare-

Flames rise up.

Not by shooting out the Fire Art Sword, but through a sword where flames rise.

This time, a sword strike that hasn't been seen before unfolds from my hand.

The swordsmanship I learned from the Elder of the Demonic Cult, the Five Star Demon Lord, in the past.

'Five Star Demon Sword.'

A sword that can break the opponent's spirit when man-to-man combat unfolded.

Five Star Demon Sword First Form Meteor White Mile Shot!

The moment I swung the sword, the sword light flashed like a meteor and fell down.

The bundle of sword qi I shot out falls a hundred miles away.

Crash!

"Argh!"

"K-Kill that guy first!"

The Zhongnan martial artists were appalled at my sword strike and began to point at me.

Five Star Demon Sword Second Form Flying Star Crossing Galaxy!

Those who were aiming for me and rushing in had no choice but to swing their swords at the empty air.

With only an afterimage remaining,

I, who disappeared in an instant, swung the sword madly.

Sizzle- Sizzle- Sizzle-

Whatever touched the sword burned just like that along with the flames.

"M-Monster..."

Everyone froze at that overwhelming spectacle.

Five Star Demon Sword Third Form Star Shadow Imperial Secret!

I began to indiscriminately slaughter the Zhongnan martial artists who were in an ambush.

A demon sword that I had never once taken out in the Ice Palace.

The me who tried to hide that I was from the Demonic Cult as much as possible was no more.

'To face Hyeokryeon Geuk in the future.'

I intended to become stronger while meeting the strong in the Central Plains.

To do that.

'I will show you clearly.'

What kind of person the live-in son-in-law of the North Sea Ice Palace Lord is.

Flare!

The Zhongnan martial artists I cut began to be incinerated.

***

'W-What on earth is this...'

The Light Splitting Sword of the Zhongnan Sect, Nak I-san, who received the order to capture the Young Palace Head of the Ice Palace by ambushing at Mount Hua, was watching the Sword Ghost.

The moment a ghostly light flashed.

The martial artists of Zhongnan were suffering death by fire.

'A martial artist who infused fire arts into the sword.'

Should he retreat?

He hadn't even been able to approach the carriage the Young Palace Head of the Ice Palace was riding in yet.

Just the number of Zhongnan disciples currently deployed to Mount Hua was almost more than half.

If all the disciples died here, it could become difficult for the Zhongnan Sect in the future.

However,

'If he retreated here.'

Rumors would spread in the Murim.

The rumor that Zhongnan, which attempted revenge on the Ice Palace by unfolding a Heaven and Earth Dragnet, was annihilated by just a few people.

'It is a disgrace.'

If he just caught that Sword Ghost.

Thinking that there might still be a chance of victory, Nak I-san stepped forward.

"Sword Ghost! Over here!"

"The Elder is stepping up!"

"That idiot!"

Perhaps forgetting that they were in ambush, the disciples cheered up the Light Splitting Sword.

Well, it would be difficult to hide that Zhongnan had been ambushed anyway.

Without caring much, the Light Splitting Sword rushed toward the Sword Ghost.

Since he witnessed the opponent's strength with his own two eyes, he swung his sword with full power.

The Light Splitting Sword Art unfolded by the master of the fast sword, the Light Splitting Sword.

Sword light flashes and stretches out toward the Sword Ghost's chest.

"It'll be over if I catch you."

Whoosh-

He was definitely confident in his fast sword.

How many times in his life had he swung his sword at someone and missed?

The Light Splitting Sword, Nak I-san, whose instances of missing an opponent could be counted on one hand.

'He missed.'

He ended up missing the opponent.

Incredibly fast movement arts.

The Sword Ghost wasn't just fast with his sword.

Flare-

On top of that,

'This heat is... what on earth!'

The heat felt as he got closer to the guy.

The Light Splitting Sword, who realized why fire was catching on the bodies of the disciples touching the guy's sword, tried to quickly raise his sword to block the Sword Ghost's sword.

"Too late."

The guy's voice was heard.

Ten Thousand Flames Shaking Heavens.

That moment.

The entire sky burned red.

When the Light Splitting Sword witnessed the sight of countless flames covering the sky and swung his sword toward the flames.

Slash-

'Huh?'

The world was turning upside down.

In the feeling as if time had slowed down.

The Light Splitting Sword saw his own body with its head separated and realized.

'He lost.'

That thought was the last thought the Light Splitting Sword had while alive.

Roaring flare!

Followed by the pain of his neck burning.

His vision went black.

"E-Elder!"

"The Elder..."

The martial artists of Zhongnan witnessed the death of the Light Splitting Sword and lamented.

"F-Flame Ghost..."

Someone muttered.

Did that one word become a ripple?

Thud, Thu-ud.

Looking at the appearance of the Flame Ghost wielding flames, the martial artists of Zhongnan dropped their swords one by one.

They had completely lost their will to fight.

It was the moment the Flame Ghost burned Zhongnan.

Chapter 77 : Chapter 77

Chapter 77 : Dragon's Pond and Tiger's Den

Han Seol-bi, who was watching the battle, covered her mouth.

'G-Ghost.'

She didn't know Hyeokryeon Yeom handled the sword that well.

In the Ice Palace, he seemed to handle flames mainly rather than using a sword.

Because he had an Extreme Yang Body, the flames he could handle were close to sorcery.

However.

'This time, rather than setting fire, he cut everything down with the sword.'

Thanks to that, Mount Hua did not burn.

The worry was Han Seol-bi's great miscalculation.

Zhongnan succumbed just like that.

Then.

"What is going on here!"

Martial artists wearing the martial arts uniforms of Mount Hua poured down in a swarm.

Very timely, at that.

"What has Zhongnan... done at Mount Hua!"

At the voice of the Mount Hua Sect expert ringing loudly, Han Seol-bi's expression stiffened.

"It seems Zhongnan was trying to catch us."

"Ha, we have committed a great discourtesy to the benefactors of Mount Hua. We apologize."

"...An Elder of Mount Hua apologizing to the Ice Palace?"

The martial artists of Zhongnan watching that scene witnessed with their own two eyes that the facts they knew until now and Mount Hua's attitude were different.

"We will leave the rest to you."

"Yes. We will talk well to Zhongnan."

"Yes, then. Move out!"

"Yes, Captain!"

Hyeokryeon Yeom, who was called Captain, moved leading the carriage.

The Young Palace Head Seol Ye-rin and the people aboard the carriage did not even show their faces outside the carriage until the end.

'Are they... going just like that?'

Han Seol-bi began to follow the carriage while still in a concealed state.

Mount Hua was being covered with the smell of burning and the scent of blood.

***

"It was easier than I thought."

As I boarded the carriage, Seol Ye-rin spoke with an expression that said the excitement had died down.

"Did you want to step forward?"

"It's good to be helpful, after all."

"Did Miss Cheon want that too?"

"……Yes."

"What about you, Elder?"

"Are you trying to make an old man like me work too?"

"It was a joke."

There was no need for the Divine Physician to step forward anyway.

"By the way, you were stronger than I thought."

"Did you see?"

"With such a rampage going on, I couldn't help but see."

I looked back at Seol Ye-rin.

"Did you see?"

"Yes, I saw it for the first time. That side of the Third Young Master."

I scratched my head.

I didn't reveal demonic qi.

Even so, the madness part must have been completely different from when I fought in the Ice Palace.

In my past life, when I learned demonic arts in the Demonic Cult, I fought while pouring out demonic qi.

If I did that here now, it would be like announcing 'I am a demonic practitioner,' so I restrained myself.

Instead, I spewed out Extreme Yang Qi, and it certainly helped in combat.

"It's a bit embarrassing."

"No, it was the best."

"I think that's enough praise, rather than that, why don't you tell us where we are going now?"

At the Divine Physician's grumbling, I answered.

"We plan to cross over to Hubei right away like this. We kept our promise with Mount Hua."

Now it was Mount Hua's turn to keep their promise.

"Will they support the Ice Palace?"

"They will."

Whether it was the Sect Leader or Baek San, they would know that if they didn't repay the favor, I would set fire to Mount Hua.

"Then are we going to Hubei now?"

"Yeah, I'm thinking of going down to Hunan via Hubei."

"I understand."

"It's another long carriage ride."

"This time, I'll try to arrive a bit faster."

The moment I muttered that.

Creak-

Another carriage blocked the path our carriage was going down.

"What's going on?"

"Young Master... I think you should come out and see."

When I went outside at Wi Ji-yeong's call.

"Save..."

A fallen man was reaching out along with a carriage.

***

Deung Ga-so, an escort of the Geumgang Escort Agency who was setting out on an escort mission from Shaanxi to Hubei, was moved by the party who gave him water and even gave him a ride in their carriage.

"We are helping you since we are on our way to Hubei anyway."

"Thank, thank you."

"Where did all the porters and escorts go, and you are left alone?"

Grind-

Deung Ga-so, who ground his teeth for a moment at the words of the man who helped him, answered.

"The introduction is late. I am Deung Ga-so, an escort of the Geumgang Escort Agency."

"Ah, yes. I am Hyeokryeon Yeom."

"I am a physician."

"I am Cheon Deung-jin."

"I am Seol Ye-rin."

"Yes, nice to meet you."

While talking with Seol Ye-rin, I asked Deung Ga-so.

"How did you end up in that state?"

Deung Ga-so told his story.

He had escort goods to deliver to Mount Hua, and masked men rushed in targeting those goods.

"You mean the ones who targeted the escort goods at Mount Hua were masked men?"

"Yes. Their swords were so fast, it was hard to escape alive."

"Did you protect the escort goods?"

Shake shake.

"I couldn't protect them."

"Did Zhongnan take them?"

"No, there was someone else targeting the escort goods."

"If there was someone else..."

"It was incredible speed. While the porters and other escorts were being killed by the masked men, he snatched the goods and ran away."

"Then you wouldn't even know what the escort goods were?"

"Yes. Since I don't know well where they sent it to Mount Hua from either... for now, I am thankful just to be alive."

"Where are you going?"

"The Geumgang Escort Agency is an escort agency under the Murim Alliance."

At those words, my expression stiffened.

"Then the place Geumgang Escort Agency is going to now is..."

"The destination is the Murim Alliance. Thank you so much for giving me a ride. Ah, by any chance, where is your destination?"

At the escort Deung Ga-so's question, I answered briefly.

"...Dongting Lake. We are on our way to Yueyang Tower."

"Dongting Lake, that's nice. But there is no mark on the carriage? May I ask which sect or clan you are from?"

Deung Ga-so expected them to be martial artists of Mount Hua naturally since it was a carriage coming down from Mount Hua, but after seeing the faces of the people riding in the carriage, he tilted his head.

"Uh..."

"Hmm..."

As Seol Ye-rin and Cheon Deung-jin hesitated, I brought it up.

"It is a carriage from the Ice Palace."

"...Yes?"

"I am saying this carriage Escort Deung is riding right now is a carriage of the Ice Palace."

"If it's the Ice Palace... are you talking about the North Sea Ice Palace I know?"

"Yes, that's correct."

Deung Ga-so, who looked at us with unbelievable eyes for a moment, recognized reality and asked us.

"Um... have I been kidnapped?"

He barked up the wrong tree properly.

***

'Geumgang Escort Agency.'

I didn't expect to hear the name of an escort agency I heard in the past here.

A name I can't forget because it's familiar.

An incident that became such a hot topic that rumors even reached the Demonic Cult.

'The incident where the Divine Thief stole the escort goods requested by the Ten Venerables under the Heavens.'

After that, it is an incident I knew because the Divine Thief defected to the Demonic Cult carrying the escort goods.

I knew the identity of the escort goods that even the escort Deung Ga-so didn't know.

'The Diamond Gauntlet of the Fighting Venerable.'

I don't know why the Diamond Gauntlet was being delivered to Mount Hua.

However, it is certain that it is the Diamond Gauntlet, a divine object used by the Fighting Venerable, who was one of the Ten Venerables under the Heavens.

I saw with my own eyes the Fist Demon of the Demonic Cult wearing that Diamond Gauntlet.

'In other words, it hasn't been long since the Divine Thief stole the Diamond Gauntlet.'

This was practically an opportunity.

First, I told Deung Ga-so what happened at Mount Hua.

Hearing the story, Deung Ga-so perked up his ears.

"Then is the Ice Palace in the same boat as Mount Hua?"

"Well, you could say so."

"That... is it true that the Ice Palace is trading with the Moyong Clan Merchant Guild?"

"If you are talking about the Cold Iron, that is correct."

"If it is alright, could you perhaps use us as well?"

Asking to use an escort agency that had their escort goods snatched like this? One couldn't help but think that immediately.

"That... even if we look like this, if it's Geumgang Escort Agency, not only Hubei, but many people from other regions also use..."

Perhaps because it showed on my face, Deung Ga-so added.

His voice becomes as small as a rat's tail.

It means he lacks confidence.

"Then may I use it right away?"

"Yes? Do you mean right now?"

"Yes, I would appreciate it if you consider it as putting in a request in advance."

At this point, Deung Ga-so became more curious.

About what kind of request the Ice Palace would put in.

"What request is it?"

"Elder, do you have any paper to write on?"

"Here it is."

Paper came out from Cheon Deung-jin.

"Ah, thank you."

Scritch scritch scritch-

I, who wrote down a few characters, folded the paper and held it out to Deung Ga-so.

"You just need to deliver this to the Escort Agency Leader."

"Yes?"

"Didn't you say it's an escort goods transport request? By any chance, can you not deliver letters?"

"Ah, it's not that, but."

He is crazy curious.

However, he couldn't ask about the escort goods.

"Thank you for using us."

Deung Ga-so could only say that.

Because delivering the news that he failed the escort goods transport to the Escort Agency Leader was the first priority for now.

"Captain."

When I was talking with Deung Ga-so.

"Hm?"

"I think you should come out and see."

"Why?"

Baek Mu-yong called me from outside.

"How should we go from here?"

When I came out of the carriage.

The Yangtze River filled my view.

***

Yangtze River Waterway Keep.

They are water bandits who use the vast waterways of the Yangtze River as their base.

Among them, the Black Dragon Keep, which controlled the border of Shaanxi and Hubei, was looking for a merchant ship with eyes targeting prey today as well.

"Boss, why did the Chief Boss tell us to check the merchant ships coming into Hubei?"

"Well. Did he perhaps obtain some information?"

"Isn't it that treasures are crossing over to Hubei?"

The Boss of the Black Dragon Keep, Cruel Blade Kang Su-seon, knew well that the harvest when the Chief Boss's order fell was higher than other times.

"Do you see any merchant ships?"

"Hmm? Boss, look over there. A carriage is visible on the riverbank!"

"A carriage?"

The Black Dragon Keep Boss's eyes flashed.

"Oh, women are also visible!"

The subordinates who checked the faces of the people who got off the carriage and were sightseeing the Yangtze River cheered.

Just in time, there was no crest on the carriage either.

"They seem to be beauties!"

"Everyone calm down, to them, we will also look like a merchant ship. We are friendly enough."

"Heheh, they will board not knowing this is a dragon's pond and tiger's den, right?"

"Oho, as expected, a learned guy is different. The knowledgeable youngest, try wagging your tongue again!"

"Yes, Boss!"

The water bandits of the Black Dragon Keep began to approach the riverbank with smiles all over their faces.

Chapter 78 : Chapter 78

Chapter 78 : Yangtze River

Hyeokryeon Yeom watched the approaching merchant ship.

Although it looked like a merchant ship to anyone.

'That is a Yangtze River Waterway Keep ship.'

It was said that the water bandits dominating the Yangtze River made the opponent let their guard down and robbed them of valuable things.

"A ship is approaching!"

"Can't we get a ride on that?"

If they crossed the Yangtze River, Hubei was right there.

'Get a ride.'

People showed their faces one by one from the ship.

Their gazes turning toward Seol Ye-rin and Wi Ji-yeong were clearly visible even from afar.

Then.

Grin-

I saw the corners of their mouths going up without them realizing it.

Something was unpleasant.

"I don't think there is a need to get a ride."

"Yes?"

"I-It seems to be a Waterway Keep's ship. Everyone hide, if they show interest in us, it is certain they will attack!"

It seemed the Geumgang Escort Agency's escort, Deung Ga-so, also recognized them.

Looking at their excited expressions, it seemed likely they would pull all sorts of tricks to get us on the ship, just as Deung Ga-so said.

That too.

'Is experience, though.'

I wanted to shake off this unpleasant feeling.

"Small Snow Squad Captain, your expression doesn't look good."

At that time, Seol Ye-rin spoke to me.

It seems my expression crumpled without me realizing it.

"Ah, the Waterway Keep bastards look a bit disgusting. So, I was thinking."

I whispered to Seol Ye-rin.

"……?"

The Small Snow Squad looked at me with questionable eyes.

Seol Ye-rin nodded.

"Hm? The Young Palace Head is stepping forward?"

Wi Ji-yeong asked with a puzzled expression.

"What did you talk about?"

The Divine Physician also had a curious expression.

"Will it... be okay?"

Cheon Deung-jin stared at Seol Ye-rin's back as if she heard my words.

"You'll know if you watch."

I put a smile on my lips.

That moment.

"Hello there!"

A man's voice was heard from the ship.

A man with quite a large build, who looked like he was saying 'I am a water bandit' to anyone who saw him, revealed himself.

"Seeing as you intend to cross the Yangtze River, if you pay the fare, I will give you a ride!"

"Get on quickly!"

"I will take you for a cheap price!"

"She is a beauty!"

I saw them all looking at Seol Ye-rin with flashing eyes.

"Everyone quiet! Can't you see they are unable to speak!"

At that time, Seol Ye-rin stepped forward.

"Hello."

"Oho, is the young lady the representative of the party?"

"Yes, that's right."

"I will give you a ride for a cheap price. Will you get on?"

"We will get on. But I have no intention of paying money."

"Huh?"

"It is a great honor to meet the water bandits of the Yangtze River Waterway Keep I've only heard about."

The Black Dragon Keep Boss, Cruel Blade Kang Su-seon, frowned.

"Guys, we're busted!"

"Get them on quickly!"

Seeing the water bandits throw their bodies toward the Yangtze River upon hearing the Boss's words, Seol Ye-rin muttered.

"It would be better not to fall into the water."

"Haha! What is that bitch saying! Are you saying that knowing how strong we are in the Yangtze River!"

"Catch them quickly before they run away!"

"What do we do? The water bandits are attacking!"

As Deung Ga-so made a fuss.

" Shouldn't we prepare for battle?"

The Small Snow Squad rookie, Yu So-dong, agreed.

"There is no need to worry too much."

Eun Bin calmed the two down.

When Deung Ga-so looked to the side, everyone except the two had calm expressions.

"Why is everyone so..."

"You will know soon."

Snap, the moment Wi Ji-yeong finished those words.

"We will borrow that ship for a bit."

Splash.

Seol Ye-rin put her hand into the Yangtze River.

Then,

Crack crack crack crack-

"W-What!"

"T-The river is freezing!"

"S-Save me...!"

Crack-!

The Yangtze River froze in an instant.

"I-Ice Art..."

It wasn't just the Yangtze River that froze.

The ship the water bandits rode on also completely froze along with the water bandits riding inside.

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Deung Ga-so swallowed dry saliva.

He knew they were people from the Ice Palace, but he didn't think they were people who had mastered such incredible martial arts.

'The Young Palace Head of the Ice Palace.'

All the personnel of the Black Dragon Keep were cleaned up with a single hand gesture from the Young Palace Head.

Deung Ga-so, who walked on the ice and got on the ship, got goosebumps seeing the water bandits turned into ice statues while alive.

"Physician sir. Is the Young Palace Head perhaps one of the Ten Venerables under the Heavens?"

"Well. People from the Outer Regions cannot become one of the Ten Venerables under the Heavens, so I don't know well."

"Captain, by the way, how do we start this?"

"Everything completely froze over!"

Unlike Deung Ga-so, the Small Snow Squad was pondering how to start the ship without much of an impression.

"By any chance... is this kind of thing daily life in the North Sea?"

This time, he approached Cheon Deung-jin and asked.

"Umm, I did see many ice statues standing."

"I see."

As expected, the North Sea seemed to be a dangerous neighborhood.

'Wait.'

Did I just readily accept the escort goods of such a person?

Although he wrote it as if it were flying, he couldn't check the content of the letter the Ice Palace martial artist delivered.

At the thought that perhaps the content might shake the Murim, Deung Ga-so swallowed dry saliva.

"Can your Captain also use this kind of Ice Art?"

Scurry, this time he approached Tae Un-seo and asked.

"The opposite."

Tae Un-seo spoke coldly.

Because Deung Ga-so kept acting annoyingly when they had to start the ship.

"Opposite?"

"The Captain uses Fire Arts."

"Fire Arts?"

"Baek Mu-yong, bring up the carriage."

"Yes!! Haaap!"

Baek Mu-yong pushed the carriage on the ground straight in.

-Neigh!

The horses were startled and slipped, but Baek Mu-yong's immense strength pushed the carriage along with the horses.

Just as the carriage with added acceleration was about to board the ship.

"I got it."

Energy emitted from Cheon Deung-jin wrapped around the carriage.

"...Was that young master also a martial artist?"

Deung Ga-so was surprised at the sight of Cheon Deung-jin, who looked frail on the outside, easily boarding the carriage.

"Young Master Cheon... did learn martial arts."

But the Small Snow Squad was also looking at Cheon Deung-jin with fascinated expressions, as if seeing Cheon Deung-jin use martial arts for the first time.

Cheon Deung-jin, who accepted Extreme Yin Qi into his body following Extreme Yang Qi, had a constitution very sensitive to energy, and his strength was being able to control energy in detail.

The martial arts of the Potala Palace were especially based on Buddhist power, and he was handling the warm energy very well.

"Even if getting the carriage up is one thing..."

Isn't the problem from now on?

The frozen solid Yangtze River and the ship.

Both of these had to be melted for the ship to start.

At that time.

"Flame Butterfly."

At my murmur standing at the prow.

Red butterflies began to flutter.

"That is..."

"That is the Captain's specialty."

The red butterflies flew fluttering and landed on the stern of the ship and the frozen Yangtze River.

Then,

Boom!

With a huge explosion sound,

"Aaaah!"

"Hold on tight!"

"You should have told us in advance!"

Along with the explosion, the ice began to break apart.

At the same time, the ship began to advance forward madly.

"Good output!"

"Unfurl the sails!"

When Baek Mu-yong unfurled the sails,

Whoosh!

Riding the wind, the ship began to shoot forward.

"It's refreshing!"

"Oh my god..."

Deung Ga-so looked back at the rapidly changing scenery with an unbelievable expression.

Because in all his life, it was the first time he saw people snatch a ship off the Yangtze River Waterway Keep and drive the ship away.

***

"It must have belonged to the Black Dragon Keep."

A large black ink dragon drawn inside the ship has its mouth open.

"Can you handle the aftermath?"

Deung Ga-so was asking again, having so many worries.

"What aftermath are you talking about?"

"Didn't you snatch a ship from the Black Dragon Keep? There are a total of eighteen waterway keeps in the Yangtze River. It is the same as destroying one of them, so it is certain the Water King will be angry."

"If it is the Water King..."

"I am talking about the Chief Boss who rules the Yangtze River Eighteen Waterway Keeps."

"It doesn't matter. Bastards who only do water banditry in the water can never beat the Young Palace Head."

Didn't you see, the sight of freezing the entire Yangtze River.

"B-Blech-"

Facing the river wind and getting closer to Hubei, I saw the rookie, Yu So-dong, throwing up his insides from the side.

"It is the first time I see a martial artist getting seasick."

"It is because I am still a novice."

"Yes, what-vice?"

"Novice. It hasn't been long since I learned martial arts."

Yu So-dong, who regained his senses after eating the Purple Cloud Pill, now had a constitution that could easily learn any martial art.

The first thing I taught Yu So-dong was the Iron Blood Divine Art of the Iron Venerable, one of the Ten Venerables under the Heavens.

I intended to teach him inner arts after making his body hard first.

"Tsk tsk."

Watching the Divine Physician clicking his tongue and patting Yu So-dong's back, I approached Seol Ye-rin.

Seol Ye-rin, standing at the prow, was facing the wind with her hair fluttering.

"You look like you're having fun?"

"Thanks to you, I'm boating and it feels good."

"Would it be different from boating on Dongting Lake?"

"I want to try that too. The Central Plains really seems vast."

"It is."

It was the first time for me to tour the Central Plains like this too.

It's to the point where I regret my past of only training martial arts in the Demonic Cult all the time.

I feel like I now know how enjoyable and fun it is to experience many things while wandering the Jianghu.

The scenery seen while advancing through the vast river water taking on an ochre color as if embracing all the soil under the heavens was so wide it was hard to gauge the end of the land, evoking the illusion of floating on the swaying Yellow Sea.

"I started wanting to experience a bit more diverse things."

"If you go to Namman, you will be able to see scenery different from this again."

Seol Ye-rin looked back at me.

"Seeing unique scenery is good too, but the fact that I can see this scenery together with the Third Young Master feels better."

Seol Ye-rin's smiling appearance reflected in the river water looked truly beautiful.

It really felt like an engagement trip.

"Captain! Young Palace Head! I think we are almost at Hubei!"

"Yeah, seems so."

Hubei.

The land where the Murim Alliance is located.

That place was getting closer and closer.

***

At that time.

The stern of the ship.

Unlike the people comfortably watching the blue waves of the Yangtze River from the ship.

'I'm envious! I'm envious!'

The monitor attached by Seol Baek-ho, Han Seol-bi, was following them to the stern of the ship using the Wall Lizard Art.

With tears streaming down as the wind brushed her eyes.

Chapter 79 : Chapter 79

Chapter 79 : Lecher

Hubei Province, Yichang.

"I think it would be better to walk from here."

Coming down the Yangtze River, canyons were prevalent.

Thinking it would be much better to move by carriage than by boat, they docked nearby and unloaded the carriage.

It was also a problem if they continued to ride the Black Dragon Keep's ship and got caught by another Waterway Keep, so the party quickly chose the land route.

"You said you were going to Dongting Lake, right? Then you should go to Yueyang."

"May I ask you to guide us?"

"Umm, I have to go to Wuhan."

If it's Wuhan, it's where the Murim Alliance is located.

"Captain, what should we do?"

At Baek Mu-yong's question, Hyeokryeon Yeom asked for the Young Palace Head, Seol Ye-rin's opinion.

"If we go to Wuhan, I think we will be taking a detour."

"One of the Three Great Towers, Yellow Crane Tower, is in Wuhan, right?"

"That's correct."

"If it's okay, could we see Yellow Crane Tower first before going?"

"Yes, then we will stop by Wuhan."

"She says so."

"Yes!"

Deung Ga-so of Geumgang Escort Agency took the reins.

Thanks to that, Baek Mu-yong became free.

"Rookie, follow me."

"Eh!"

Baek Mu-yong's rookie training began.

Yu So-dong, who had been constantly seasick on the ship, became energetic again as soon as he stepped on land, and while moving, he began to learn about the mindset of a Small Snow Squad member from Baek Mu-yong.

"By the way, Elder. Is it okay to take a detour like this?"

Inside the carriage.

Seol Ye-rin, excited at the thought of seeing Dongting Lake, asked the Divine Physician.

"Of course. Although I am worried about my granddaughter, she isn't in a critical condition where she might die today or tomorrow, so it is fine to tour the Central Plains while sightseeing like this."

"I will make sure we can head straight to Namman after seeing Dongting Lake."

"Thank you for your consideration, Young Palace Head."

"No, not at all. Ah, are you okay, Jin? Not going back to Potala Palace right away?"

"Yes, it is my first time touring the Jianghu too, so I am following along very happily."

Seol Ye-rin held Cheon Deung-jin's hands as if she was very thankful.

"Right, I think I am so happy that I can go around together like this instead of seeing it alone. Let's eat lots of delicious things in Wuhan."

Seol Ye-rin, who was waiting for the day she would die in the Ice Palace until just a while ago, was so happy and joyful with this life now.

Glance-

All of this is thanks to Hyeokryeon Yeom.

Thinking so, Seol Ye-rin looked at Hyeokryeon Yeom, who was unfolding movement arts while escorting the carriage.

He runs around like that every time, yet he doesn't seem tired; although he came into the carriage and talked in between, it seemed Hyeokryeon Yeom was more comfortable unfolding movement arts like that.

"Ah, Young Palace Head! Do you intend to sightsee Yichang as well?"

"Yes?"

"Since we came all the way to Yichang, I thought it would also be a way to try Yichang's specialty, Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Bun, at least once before crossing over to Wuhan!"

Grrrl-

–Come to think of it, I was getting hungry.

–Since I satisfied my hunger by catching fish and grilling them over a fire on the Yangtze River, I was quite hungry.

"What does everyone think?"

"It doesn't matter."

"I like it."

"Big approval!!!!"

Tae Un-seo's shout was heard from outside.

It seems he was very hungry.

Thus, the party's destination was decided.

***

At the point when Hyeokryeon Yeom's party entered Yichang.

Yichang's marketplace.

"Hwi! Hwi!"

"Oh my goodness, she must have lost him again."

"How many times is this already?"

"What kind of senile bastard takes children like this?"

"What are martial artists doing, not searching quickly?"

"She said she reported to the Murim Alliance too, right?"

"Right, it doesn't take long from Wuhan to here, is dispatching a search party that difficult, tsk tsk."

A person who appeared to be a child's mother was seen running around the marketplace.

"Hey, mother. Don't waste your strength in vain and come here and eat some rice!"

They called the woman running around the marketplace from a nearby inn, but things like food did not enter the woman's eyes.

"Would food enter the eyes of a parent who lost a child? Contact the Boseon Sect quickly."

"Aren't the martial artists of the Boseon Sect utterly useless?"

"Of all times, all the martial artists crossed over to Wuhan at a time like this."

"Whoever it is, I wish the guy who kidnapped the child falls backward and breaks his nose! Smash!"

Crash.

"Oh my, you startled me!"

"A-Are you... okay?"

A customer of the inn who tried to help up the fallen man tried to extend a hand seeing the frail man.

Then.

"Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Bun. Give me one."

The man who entered as if running into the inn quickly got up and took a seat in the corner of the inn.

"Ah, yes..."

As the waiter brought water.

"As quickly as possible!"

He urged the waiter.

"Yes, I will relay it."

Han Seol-bi, who entered the inn and ordered one Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Bun, sighed deeply in secret.

Fortunately, it seemed her cross-dressing wasn't caught.

She arrived in Yichang hanging onto the Black Dragon Keep's ship.

While feeling like her belly skin was sticking to her back, Han Seol-bi, hearing Deung Ga-so's story, decided to quit monitoring or whatever and come to the inn faster than the Young Palace Head's party to eat first.

Since she rushed here unfolding movement arts like crazy immediately after making the decision, it seemed there would be enough time to eat.

"Here, the food you ordered is served."

The Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Bun came out.

The dumpling skin was not thick while taking on a soft white color, and the figure gathered plumply at the top so the filling wouldn't burst out was truly art!

Ah-

However, Han Seol-bi was busy stuffing her stomach hurriedly without time to appreciate the beautiful figure of the Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Bun.

Because she had to eat quickly and hide again.

Since the destination of the Young Palace Head's party was practically decided as here anyway, Han Seol-bi did her best with the meal.

"Well, that's a man who eats very well."

Han Seol-bi picked up the dumplings in an instant, enough for the customers inside the inn to watch closely.

"Check!"

"Yes!"

Just as she was about to pay.

"This is exactly the famous restaurant of Yichang!"

Whoosh-

Han Seol-bi, hearing Deung Ga-so's voice, disappeared in an instant without even receiving the change from the waiter.

"Customer!!"

When the waiter tried to give the change, it was already too late.

"Waiter! Here are customers!"

Rumble-

"Ah, yes!"

As soon as the customer with a huge appetite left, ten customers barged in.

"Please grab two tables for us!"

"Understood!"

Small Snow Squad's Eun Bin, Baek Mu-yong, Wi Ji-yeong, Tae Un-seo, and Yu So-dong sat at one table.

The Divine Physician, Seol Ye-rin, Cheon Deung-jin, Hyeokryeon Yeom, and Deung Ga-so sat at one table.

"We ask for Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Buns!"

"Yes? Yes."

"Give us a bottle of Bamboo Leaf Green Liquor too!"

"Understood!"

Thinking there were many orders for Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Buns today, the waiter began to move quickly.

"It is an inn that is managed truly neatly."

Perhaps due to occupational disease, the rookie, Yu So-dong, looked around the inn and spoke.

"Rookie. You must not forget that you are not a waiter anymore."

"Ah, yes!"

Baek Mu-yong took care of Yu So-dong diligently.

Being a former Squad Leader played a part.

Even when in the Ice Wolf Squad, Baek Mu-yong had been in charge of rookie training.

"Sniff sniff, a delicious smell is wafting."

Tae Un-seo also held his chopsticks and kept looking at the kitchen.

"Don't think about cooking here and just think about eating, okay?"

Wi Ji-yeong scolded Tae Un-seo.

Eun Bin examined the customers around them to see if there was anyone targeting the Young Palace Head by any chance.

"...They are outsiders."

"Are they martial artists?"

"The woman wearing a veil looks like a child from a noble family."

"How about asking them?"

"Hey, don't even think about stepping forward. You'll get in trouble getting involved with martial artists."

Perhaps because it was around the marketplace, the voices of merchants chattering could be heard too well.

"It seems... something happened."

"I heard on the way here, apparently a child went missing."

"A child?"

While I was also waiting for the dumplings because I was hungry, Cheon Deung-jin talked about a child going missing.

'A child missing in Yichang?'

Something was on the tip of my tongue.

"Food is served!"

While thinking about what that memory was, the food came out.

My gaze ended up being stolen by the fragrant scent of the Red Chili Oil Beef Steamed Bun.

***

'It was delicious.'

At that time, Han Seol-bi was listening to the story downstairs while concealed on the second-floor pavilion of the inn.

'A child went missing.'

Stories about kidnapping and martial artists were heard a lot.

If it's Hubei Province, it's the region where the Murim Alliance is located, so it was strange that they didn't mobilize martial artists.

Thinking that the Young Palace Head's party wouldn't move while eating anyway, Han Seol-bi began to move.

She had to write in a letter that she arrived in Yichang and send what happened so far to the Palace Lord as well.

At the thought that the kidnapped child might be trembling somewhere, memories of the past surfaced.

-Mother, Mother!

Those who kidnap children must disappear from the world.

Thinking so, Han Seol-bi began to look for the woman who was looking for her child before she entered the inn a while ago.

"Where did she go?"

"Hwi! Hwi!"

The woman's voice is heard.

Han Seol-bi headed in the direction the voice came from.

"Found her."

The woman who was in the marketplace of Yichang had gone outside Yichang before she knew it and was looking for the child.

'To come to such a far place.'

Like that, it seemed the woman would enter the canyon near Yichang.

Thinking that if she took a wrong step in the steep canyon, not only the child would be a problem, but the woman could also suffer an unfortunate event, Han Seol-bi began to unfold movement arts toward the woman.

***

At that time, Yichang inn.

"Ah, I remembered."

I finished eating the dumplings and recalled the information about the story of the missing child in Yichang that I didn't remember a while ago.

In Hubei Province, Yichang, there exists a Lecher who enjoys Plucking Yin to Nourish Yang.

That Lecher kidnapped children, then lured the children's mothers, and committed the act of killing them after Plucking Yin to Nourish Yang.

Since it was a story about a demonic practitioner, it is a story that was widespread in the Demonic Cult.

'I thought, what kind of unfilial son of a bitch demonic practitioner exists like that.'

Probably judging by the time period, the time I heard the rumor and the current time overlapped.

If such a thing is happening right now in Yichang.

"I'll go out for a moment. Keep eating."

"Third Young Master?"

"Where are you going?"

When I raised my body, Seol Ye-rin and Cheon Deung-jin reacted.

"Maybe because I ate something spicy, I want to eat something sweet. I'll go buy some Tanghulu."

"Please get mine too."

"Me too."

I smiled at the two and left the inn.

"The time it takes to buy Tanghulu sold in the marketplace and return..."

Even if I take it long, one quarter of an hour.

I intended to look for exactly one quarter of an hour.

Chapter 80 : Chapter 80

Chapter 80 : Alcohol Tolerance

The Yichang Lecher, Red Ghost, licked his lips upon seeing the mother of the kidnapped child approaching the cave.

"Although she isn't a martial artist, she is already the tenth woman I've done Plucking Yin to Nourish Yang in this way."

At this rate, it seemed he could gather enough inner qi to leave Yichang.

Before crossing over to Wuhan, Hubei to perform Plucking Yin to Nourish Yang, Yichang was practically a rehearsal.

As a demonic practitioner, committing crimes in the front yard of the Murim Alliance was practically a huge achievement.

'This is the last sacrifice.'

Stupid Murim Alliance bastards. Just because the Murim Tournament opened, they didn't even think to come from Wuhan to Yichang once.

In fact, the Red Ghost was thinking it would be nice if a martial artist came at least once and fought him.

Because if he luckily won, he could experience a tremendous increase in inner qi.

"Hwi! Hwi!"

Grin.

I'll let you meet him soon.

The moment the Red Ghost's mouth filled with a smile.

"You dirty lecher bastard."

Some woman's voice was heard.

Thwack-

In an instant, immense pain was felt in his stomach.

Palm?

When he lowered his gaze to look at his stomach, he saw a small palm print stamped on his stomach.

The external injury wasn't a big problem.

The problem was,

'Internal Heavy Hand Technique?'

His qi and blood were completely overturned.

"Y-You impudent!"

Han Seol-bi wrapped both hands with the White Hand Demonic Art and rushed at the Lecher.

At first, she thought he was a simple kidnapper.

Does he intend to make money by kidnapping children? She chased the woman thinking that.

But as she chased, the thought that occurred to her later was the fact that such stories had spread quite a lot in the marketplace.

'If he intended to demand money, he would have demanded money long ago.'

But the story that he didn't demand money meant that ultimately, money wasn't the goal.

'Then is killing the child the goal?'

If children's corpses continued to appear, stories that the child died as soon as the news of the disappearance was heard in the marketplace should have come out.

But no one stopped the woman from looking for the child.

Meaning there were missing people, but no dead people.

'Those who have experienced it would know, but sometimes death is better than disappearing.'

Just like now.

"Hwi!"

Han Seol-bi stared at the child caught in the view of the woman who seemed to have lost her mind.

The child was already dead.

"How dare you..."

Putting in the emotions of all mothers in the world grieving over the loss of a child.

"Die."

Han Seol-bi's White Hand touched the Red Ghost.

...Squish.

'Squish?'

Normally, if hit by the White Hand twice, the five viscera and six bowels should have ruptured.

The flabby belly fat blocked the White Hand.

"How dare yoooou!!"

Grab.

Swoosh!

The Red Ghost, who snatched Han Seol-bi's arm, lifted Han Seol-bi up to the sky just like that.

'If she falls like this...'

Because the impact would be immense, Han Seol-bi tried to attempt a fall break.

Bang!

"Cough!"

Before she could even unfold the fall break, she allowed the Lecher's fist to her abdomen in mid-air.

"Dam... nit."

Her vision blurs.

At times like this, being weak is really annoying.

'She let her guard down.'

A situation where she really didn't expect a strong demonic practitioner to be in a place like this.

At this rate...

The mother of the kidnapped child, and Han Seol-bi herself too.

'Are we dying?'

She thought, perhaps this is the last moment of life.

"S-Save..."

Seeing the child's mother trembling in fear.

Han Seol-bi smiled.

"It will be... okay."

The last moment before her vision went black.

'Hyeokryeon Yeom?'

Why does Unnie's fiancé's face come to mind?

Crack-

"Aaaargh!"

Following that, it seemed she heard the Lecher's scream too.

***

The given time is only one quarter of an hour.

I climbed the highest pavilion in Yichang with the intention of finding the Lecher within one quarter of an hour.

Whoosh-

Even if it's the highest pavilion, it's a three-story pavilion.

I wonder if I can find anything by looking around from such a pavilion.

Still, I wanted to try looking.

I close my eyes and spread my qi.

Hot-

The wind that was blowing fiercely began to change into a warm wind.

The warmth spreading centered on me encroaches on Yichang.

If I follow the marketplace I passed by a while ago.

Flinch-

I opened my eyes.

"Demonic Qi, found it."

The Lecher is also a demonic practitioner.

Then I thought the one harboring demonic qi would be somewhere here in Yichang.

For me, who was a demonic practitioner from birth, finding demonic qi was a very easy task.

Like that.

"It's here!"

A situation where half a quarter of an hour had passed.

The canyon cave I arrived at by unfolding movement arts in an instant.

Arriving there, I could spot Han Seol-bi just before being slammed into the ground.

Without time to think about anything, I.

Crack-

Threw a kick.

The sound of something splitting was heard.

"Aaaargh!"

Along with the demonic practitioner's scream.

Tap-

"Goodbye."

Roaring flare-

"Urk-"

Fire began to catch on the Lecher's whole body.

I, who finished handling everything in an instant, together with the fallen woman and the children said to be missing.

"Why on earth are you here."

Took Han Seol-bi and came out of the cave.

"T-Thank you."

The woman took the missing child and went down to the village again.

And I.

"I know you're awake, so get up."

Could face Han Seol-bi.

"It wasn't... a dream."

"What a dream, rather than that, Han Seol-bi. You, why are you here?"

At my question, Han Seol-bi's expression stiffened.

"Can't I... be here! I followed to see Unnie, so what!"

Han Seol-bi had a promise with the North Sea Ice Palace Lord, Seol Baek-ho.

In case the tailing was caught, never say she tailed them and gloss over it.

I noticed immediately.

"Did the Palace Lord send you?"

Hiccup-

Han Seol-bi started hiccuping, which she didn't usually do.

"I don't know."

"I won't tell Miss Seol, so it would be better to speak honestly."

"I don't know at all."

It's the tactic of feigning ignorance.

"Really? Then you don't know why you chased this Lecher either?"

"……Because she was looking for him so desperately."

At that one word, I sighed.

It's a story that she was tailing us, but seeing the woman looking for the child desperately, she couldn't pretend not to see and looked for the Lecher.

"You really are something too."

"...It's agreed not to tell Unnie?"

I nodded.

As I talked about various things with Han Seol-bi, another half quarter of an hour had already passed.

"I will pretend not to know until the end, so if you are going to report to the Palace Lord, I hope you report leaving out unnecessary details."

Leaving those words, I unfolded movement arts again and started moving.

As I left, Han Seol-bi sighed.

She felt she couldn't act normally in front of Hyeokryeon Yeom for some reason.

Rather than that.

'Is this, okay?'

Han Seol-bi was gazing endlessly... at the back of the receding Hyeokryeon Yeom.

The face of Hyeokryeon Yeom, who appeared like a superman riding a white horse when she was almost done in by the Lecher just a while ago, still remained in her memory.

Her face felt hot for no reason.

***

I bought Tanghulu and returned.

Cheon Deung-jin looked back at me, who returned in exactly one quarter of an hour after finishing the meal.

I did return quickly, but there was something slightly bothering.

'His clothes are slightly singed.'

Cheon Deung-jin couldn't know what I did and returned in just one quarter of an hour.

However, Cheon Deung-jin was the only one who recognized that I was using Extreme Yang Qi somewhere.

"So, the next schedule?"

But he didn't show it.

I naturally turned my gaze toward Deung Ga-so.

"Let's cross over to Wuhan now. I heard while eating, apparently an event is being held in Wuhan right now."

"Event?"

As I expressed doubt at the word event, Deung Ga-so answered.

"They say a Murim Tournament is unfolding in Wuhan."

***

Murim Tournament.

An event hosted by the Murim Alliance.

It is a tournament where promising righteous faction prodigies gather at the Murim Alliance to compete for supremacy.

"Come, come, it is the last day for participant registration!"

Thanks to that, Wuhan was teeming with people.

Those trying to heighten their status by participating in the Murim Tournament.

Those who came to watch the Murim Tournament.

And,

"We finally arrived."

Those trying to sightsee Yellow Crane Tower are completely unrelated to the Murim Tournament.

My party visited Yellow Crane Tower as soon as we crossed over from Yichang to Wuhan.

We began to climb the five-story pavilion shining brilliantly in gold.

The Yangtze River seen from Yellow Crane Tower was truly a magnificent sight.

"It is certainly worthy of being called one of the Three Great Towers of the Central Plains."

"Can we loosen the reins and drink tonight, Captain?"

Baek Mu-yong made a happy expression at the thought of being able to drink after a long time.

"Alcohol at Yellow Crane Tower..."

"Does the Divine Physician sir intend to drink too?"

"If everyone is drinking together, I think drinking enough to wet the throat is good too."

"Alcohol..."

At that time, Cheon Deung-jin muttered.

"Have you tried drinking?"

As Seol Ye-rin asked at those words,

"Yes, I have."

"Really? Because I have never drunk before."

At those words, everyone's gazes turned to Seol Ye-rin.

"Then you can try drinking today!"

Wi Ji-yeong approached Seol Ye-rin affectionately.

I looked at such Seol Ye-rin pitifully.

Her body condition wouldn't have allowed her to drink.

Truly, everything experienced in this Central Plains tour was a first for Seol Ye-rin.

'Will she be okay?'

-Keke, since she possesses an Extreme Yin Body, nothing will happen just because she drank alcohol.

-That's right, I also poured it like water after recovering.

At the Sword Venerable and Demon Queen's words, I nodded.

"What is your alcohol tolerance, Captain?"

At that time, Eun Bin asked me.

"Well. I've never been drunk before so I don't know well."

To an Extreme Yang Body, alcohol was practically water.

"Is that true?"

At Tae Un-seo's question, Wi Ji-yeong nodded.

"I did see everyone who drank with the Young Master crawl back home. I do want to see the Young Master crawl at least once."

At those words, Seol Ye-rin's eyes sparkled.

"That, I might look forward to a little."

"I hope the Young Master (Seol Ye-rin) is careful. Usually, you can get drunk when drinking for the first time."

"I'll have to drink to know that, I might drink well too, right?"

She probably will drink well.

Since the Demon Queen said she drank like water.

"I bought alcohol!"

Like that, my party climbed Yellow Crane Tower and began to enjoy the elegant lifestyle while drinking the alcohol Yu So-dong bought.

Like that, the night in Wuhan deepened.

And the next morning.

"...Ugh."

Blink, blink.

Seol Ye-rin, who opened her eyes, stared to the side as if she couldn't believe it at all.

Gulp.

She swallowed dry saliva.

'What... on earth happened?'

...When she opened her eyes, she was in Hyeokryeon Yeom's embrace.