Return of The Mount Hua – Chapter 862. Absence makes the heart grow fonder (2)

Editor: Hoamzz

Co-Translator: Xoxo

"Huu."

"Aigoo, Sangdanju-nim. Please don't do this. We can carry it."

"No, the path is so steep, one more person helping won't hurt."

"Aren't we supposed to be laborers?"

"Haha, this guy. Am I the one who plays and eats then?"

"That's not what I'm saying."

"It's fine. I feel better when I do this, so just let me."

"...If you say so..."

The worker looked at Hwang Jongwi with anxious eyes. However, Hwang Jongwi continued walking silently without the thought of putting down the luggage.

‘It’s steep.’

He had climbed this mountain several times, but each ascent still took his breath away. The high mountains and rugged cliffs seemed to reject human entry outright.

When he first climbed this mountain, swear came out of his mouth. But after a few trips, he felt quite happy even though it was equally difficult.

Because there were people he was happy to see at the summit.

But now, Hwang Jongwi's heart was heavier than when he first climbed the mountain.

'Mount Hua….’

He glanced towards the peak that was hidden by the clouds.

It felt especially far today.

"Hngg."

"We've arrived."

The laborers who reached the top were panting and wiping the sweat from their foreheads.

They have climbed more than a few dozen times, but no matter how many times they traverse the mountain, they can't get used to it.

"Now, now. Let's finish and rest."

"Yes."

The laborers carefully set down their luggage in front of the mountain gate.

Hwang Jongwi watched silently as they moved the luggage.

A person cannot live without food just because they're in Bongmun. No, on the contrary, food becomes even more essential. One can find food by roaming the vast mountains, but if one can't leave the sect, food becomes completely reliant on the outside world.

Therefore, the Eunha Merchant Guild carried food to Mount Hua once a month for its disciples to eat.

"Huu."

Hwang Jongwi also put down the luggage on his back.

"Thank you for your hard work, Sangdanju-nim."

"You don't have to do this, but thank you very much."

Compared to the amount they carried, what he carried wasn't much. However, the laborers were thrilled by the fact that the world-renowned leader of the Eunha Merchant Guild had climbed the mountain carrying luggage with them.

After putting down his luggage, Hwang Jongwi stood in front of the gate of Mount Hua in silence.

The door, which was always wide open to receive customers, was closed tightly as if it had never been that way.

Dust had collected even on the cleanly swept signboard.

Hwang Jongwi, who watched the scene for a moment, rubbed the gate lightly. White dust that had been piled up stuck to his fingertips.

"Merchant Leader Yu."

"Yes, Sangdanju-nim."

“Did the people who were moving the luggage never face the disciples of Mount Hua?”

"Yes, as far as I know, no one has ever seen them."

"…I see."

There was a bitter smile on Hwang Jongwi's lips.

- No, it's not like we entered Bongmun because we've committed crimes. We just do Bongmun because it's annoying to be sought after everywhere. But it’s not like I can’t come out of it, you know?

"...You say that, but."

How cruel of you.

“Do you usually leave your luggage here?”

"Yes. Since no one comes up here, we've been leaving the luggages in front of the gate so it's easy to carry around."

"I see."

“Once in a while, if there is an item they need, they hang a sign on the gate according to when people come. Then, we will deliver the items to them on our next visit.”

Hwang Jongwi nodded his head.

These were all known facts.

'A lot of herbal medicine and wooden swords have gone in.'

Both are concerning items.

Needing a lot of herbal medicine implies that many people are getting hurt, and ordering wooden swords means that even in this mountain full of trees, they wouldn't waste time carving their own swords.

Just by knowing that these two types of items were being delivered to Mount Hua, one could make guesses about what was happening inside.

"Huu."

Taking a step back, Hwang Jongwi saw the gate of Mount Hua and the wall that connected to it.

Bongmun is a funny thing.

With this low wall, it's impossible to cut off from the world and the sect. If one so desires, anyone could jump over this wall and meet those inside.

But that couldn't be done.

What completes Bongmun is not the low wall, but respect for the sect that declared Bongmun. Climbing over that wall is an act of ignoring the will of Mount Hua.

That's why even the renowned Hwang Jongwi could not cross that wall.

"By the way..."

"Yes, Sangdanju-nim."

"Do you have any clothes suitable for cleaning?"

"Clothes? Uh... I didn't specifically bring any for that purpose. However, I do have some for carrying loads."

"Bring it."

"Yes."

Though puzzled looks filled everyone's faces, nobody questioned Hwang Jongwi's words. This is because he is too high-ranking of a person to ask the reason for each of his actions.

"Here it is, Sangdanju-nim."

When a laborer hurriedly brought a cloth and held it out, Hwang Jongwi accepted and nodded.

"Thank you."

Then he folded the cloth and began to wipe Mount Hua's gate. As he cleaned, the dust cleared away, and the gate's original color gradually showed.

"Sa- Sangdanju-nim. We can do it. Please hand it over."

"No, that won't be necessary."

Hwang Jongwi shook his head slightly.

"This is something I have to do, so don't worry about it."

"Aigoo, Sangdanju-nim, for someone of your standing to do this..."

"I am not someone of high standing."

Hwang Jongwi said with a grin.

"Besides, no one anywhere in the world orders someone else to clean their friend’s house. I’m just doing this to ease my mind, so please do me a favor."

"……Yes, Sangdanju-nim."

The laborers finally stepped back.

Hwang Jongwi, who cleaned Mount Hua's gate, brought the luggage and climbed on it, and even cleaned the signboard. Before he knew it, sweat formed on his forehead.

After a while, Hwang Jongwi came down under his luggage, wiped his forehead, and looked up at the clean signboard.

The general manager, who followed, took a deep breath and spoke with a sympathetic expression after looking at the back of Hwang Jongwi.

"Sodanju…. No, Sangdanju-nim."

"Hm?"

The title of Sangdanju still doesn’t stick well in people’s mouths. That's understandable, How many years Hwang Jongwi has been called Sodanju?

Hwang Mun-yak passed away quietly, and Hwang Jongwi, who took over the Eunha Merchant Guild, managed it quite excellently. So much so that everyone watching was amazed.

However, there were times when the back of Hwang Jongwi looked too lonely.

'It is only natural.'

How could he not be lonely when he lost his father, whom he depended on the most, and the people he trusted the most went into seclusion with the gate locked?

"Should I try calling them?"

"Let it be."

Despite his sympathy, Hwang Jongwi shook his head.

"But Sangdanju-nim, this is not entirely a personal matter."

"That's why we shouldn't."

"Yes?"

Hwang Jongwi sighed quietly.

In fact, the situation at the Eunha Merchant Guild is not so smooth. Thanks to Hwang Jongwi's excellent management, there are no major outward issues, but the business that was expanding vigorously until Hwang Mun-yak's death has recently hit a snag.

No, even if Hwang Mun-yak was alive, it would be the same. It's a turbulent period for everyone.

"Have you heard from the Yuryong Sect yet?"

"Yes. Teaching disciples comes first, they said..."

The biggest hit was taken by none other than the Eunha Merchant Guild. No matter how much the Non-Aggression Pact of Gangnam applies only to the Ten Great Sect and the Five Great Family, who would dare to move expensive goods into Gangnam controlled by the Evil Tyrant Alliance?

They couldn't help but cringe even more, especially since the Yuryong Sect could be said to be a friend of Mount Hua. In the end, Eunha Courier Service only transported goods to places other than Gangnam, but Yuryong Sect has not been very cooperative with them recently.

As the number of couriers sent in shifts gradually decreased, they were unable to receive requests these days due to lack of manpower.

"I think it's a little too much."

"…I don't blame them. We were merely traders to them. Wasn't it just a transactional relationship to begin with?"

"But still..."

"If it weren't for Mount Hua, we wouldn't be able to commission them. Let them return to their place, don't hold a grudge."

"…Yes."

Hwang Jongwi opened his mouth again.

"Any news from the Northern Sea?"

“None. They said they would contact us once preparations are complete... But it's been a year since we sent goods to Mount Hua, and we've received no contact."

"Hmm."

"Should we try sending someone to..."

"Let it be. Their resentment for Jungwon hasn't vanished. Rushing them could lead to failure."

"... But even the merchant convoy that went to Yunnan to fetch tea has had issues with the people there and hasn't been able to bring the teas back. The three biggest revenue streams for the merchant guild are all blocked. Sangdanju-nim, we are holding on with the profit we have earned for now, but.....”

"I'm aware."

Hwang Jongwi sighed.

It was once thought that the presence of Mount Hua gave wings to the Eunha Merchant Guild. They had enough ability, but were not able to expand due to bad luck, but they found a good friend who they could walk with.

But seeing how things turned out, what he thought was his own capability was just the halo effect of Mount Hua.

'My father was right.'

He felt like he understood why Hwang Mun-yak had so much respect and caution for Mount Hua. Hwang Mun-yak saw further into the depths that his son couldn't see.

After feeling the full weight of the situation, his thoughts on Mount Hua deepened even more.

Because he knew how beneficial Mount Hua is?

No.

Hwang Jong realized that he had not fully understood Mount Hua's value. How Mount Hua had treated the Eunha Merchant Guild with such humility all this time.

They never looked down on anyone despite providing so much benefit. They treated them with respect and smiles without losing manners, as colleagues, as friends.

"People only realize someone's worth after they lose them."

"…Sangdanju-nim."

Hwang Jongwi, who had been staring at the gate of Mount Hua in silence, shook his head.

"Let's go back. Dojang said they wouldn't go over three years, so he should be coming out soon. If we don't want to get scolded for loafing around, should we even have time to rest?"

"……Yes."

"Let's go. We should do what we can."

While speaking, Hwang Jongwi kept looking back.

'Dojang.'

I kept missing you.

The scene of Chung Myung, who suddenly stormed in while shouting, kicking the door, and loudly demanding alcohol.

Back then, it just felt rude... but now he understands. Chung Myung acted that way because they considered each other friends with no need for distance.

‘It wasn’t rude, it was just informal.’

Now he completely understands the smile Hwang Mun-yak would make whenever Chung

Myung visited, after carrying so much on his shoulders.

"Hey, General Manager."

"Yes, Sangdanju-nim."

"Get me a few more bottles of liquor. Something good."

"What? Didn't you already have more than ten bottles for Dojang when Mount Hua came out of Bongmun? All of them are rare liquors from Jungwon…"

"That liquor is for Dojang to drink."

"…Then this time…?"

Before answering, Hwang Jongwi looked back at the gate that was now a bit farther away.

"It's the liquor for me sitting in front of him."

"……."

"Please."

"As you wish, Sangdanju-nim."

Hwang Jongwi nodded slowly.

'Dojang.'

The void left was immensely large, but Hwang Jongwi did not want to rush Chung Myung.

Hwang Jongwi knows. He knows that the Chung Myung of the past filled their deficiencies. And now it's their turn to fill the void left by Chung Myung.

'Please achieve great merit and return. We will prepare as much celebration liquor as needed.'

After staring at the tightly closed gate for quite some time, Hwang Jongwi reluctantly turned his body and began to descend the mountain.

|Note

RIP Hwang Mun-yak. ㅠ.ㅠ