**Return of The Mount Hua** – Chapter 776. If you fall behind, you'll die! (6)

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*Tok*!

The sound of the severed head being thrown into the sandbank was grotesquely frightening.

It wasn't particularly loud, but it was clearly heard by everyone fighting in this wide place.

"Cha- Chaeju…”

"Ugh...."

Chaeju is dead.

Not by the hand of the one who was rampaging like crazy just a moment ago, but by someone else's hand. The implications were all too clear.

'We, we can't win.'

'Damn it, we shouldn't have come to this place.'

Basically, whether it's a stronghold or a water fortress, the backbone of newly formed such groups consist of those with mediocre skills, those who don't fit in elsewhere, or those who have committed crimes and fled.

There is no such thing as loyalty to such people, so with Chaeju dead, there was no will to fight any longer. Only fear and confusion spread.

The pirates' eyes were filled with despondency and despair.

Thinking that the atmosphere was ripe, Chung Myung grinned and stepped forward.

"We're all gonna die....."

"Drop your weapons. I will spare those who surrender."

“…….”

Chung Myung looked back with his eyes wide open.

Before he knew it, Baek Cheon was stepping forward and shouting.

"Those who resist should be prepared to give up their lives! I won't warn you twice! Drop your weapons!"

The pirates trembled and looked at each other at the sound of a stern shout.

In fact, Chaeju's death was merely symbolic. Regardless of his life or death, the outcome was already determined. They never had a chance of winning.

Realizing this, they quickly threw their weapons and fell flat on the ground.

"What? Are we sparing them again?"

"Just kill them all! What good would it do to spare these bastards?"

Then, an absurd situation arose where the bandits were vehemently insisting that they should kill all the pirates. (Literal meaning of ‘pirate’ is water bandit.)

If it were Chung Myung, he would have scrutinized such bandits first, but Baek Cheon was someone who knew what minimal courtesy was due to those who had helped them

"I want to avoid unnecessary killing."

"Hmm..... Well, you're a Taoist after all.”

The bandits nodded and backed down as if they were convinced.

Initially, they were just here to provide support, and they didn't make a significant contribution to this battle that warranted raising their voices. After all, most of the credit goes to Chung Myung, who was waving around next to Baek Cheon.

"Drop your weapons, you bastards!"

"Huh? Are they resisting?"

Most surrendered immediately, but there were some who fought to the end.

If it were Mount Hua's disciples who surrounded them, they might have tried somehow to subdue them without killing them. But those surrounding them now are bandits from Nokrim. They could not be so merciful as to save those who resisted.

"Arghhh!"

"Kkeuk!"

In an instant, those pierced by the dao collapsed as they died. Only after seeing that, those who had been holding their weapons until the end hurriedly surrendered.

"Hmm."

Baek Cheon's mouth hardened as he watched the scene.

Really, it was too easy.

It was undoubtedly difficult for them, but it took less than a day to take down two water fortresses since Chung Myung appeared and to subdue them.

'It's disappointing.'

This simple task.....

No, thinking about it coldly, it's not a simple task. If all this had actually been simple, would there be any reason for other sects to just sit back and watch?

It's the other way around.

It's not that this task was simple, it’s simple because it’s Chung Myung.

Looking back, all they went through were nothing but tough and complex situations.

They fought with Southern Edge Sect, made friends with the Sichuan Tang Family, visited Namman Yasugung Clan, and fought with the Magyo in the North Sea.

'It was all possible because of him.’

He thought he understood that enough already. But looking back, Mount Hua’s disciples, including Baek Cheon,  have underestimated Chung Myung's ability while focusing only on his martial prowess.

"Why are you so sullen?”

"Huh?"

At the sudden voice, Baek Cheon looked back. Chung Myung was looking at him with a puzzled face.

"We won."

"....Ah, we did."

At Baek Cheon's hesitant answer, Chung Myung chuckled.

'He must have realized it.'

Increasing one's skill is a good thing, and it's of utmost importance.

But what's most important in real combat is creating a situation where one can fully utilize the skills they have developed. Five Swords' biggest mistake this time wasn't rushing out to the Yangtze River or hastily moving and handing over the advantage to the enemy.

It's that they got dragged into a situation where they couldn't fully utilize their skills.

'And this is also my mistake.'

Watching this situation unfold, he felt the meaning of what Hyun Jong said to the bone.

The existence of Chung Myung was a great fortune for them, but conversely, it was also a big obstacle.

- No, this yangban! If you have a plan, speak and act upon it! Or at least move with common sense. you fly by yourself, poke this side, and poke that side! If you turn it upside down every time, what about the people who follow you!

- You're so noisy, punk!

Tang Bo also grumbled at times.

Even Tang Bo who could be considered an elder of the Tang Family struggled to follow Chung Myung through the battlefield. How much harder would it be for the disciples of Mount Hua who were not only inferior in skill to Tang Bo, but also lacked experience?

Learning is meaningful only when it is understood. If one is dragged around without understanding, it doesn't lead to learning but rather creates inertia.

It is Chung Myung's favorite method to identify the enemy and adapt the best strategy according to the situation at the scene. Baek Cheon also moved in that way because he saw and felt something in his own way, but unfortunately, Baek Cheon and the other Five Swords are not Chung Myung.

This situation occurs when they imitate Chung Myung's method of finding the flow sensibly

through numerous battles with only one’s head.

It would have been much better if Baek Cheon had been careful in his own way. This time, excessive motivation seems to have caused problems.

Chung Myung didn't blame the Five Swords because he understood the whole process.

‘Failure is a pain in the neck, but... ultimately, it was beneficial.’

As long as you survive without dying, all experience must be an asset. This failure will be blood and flesh for them.

And it was a failure they desperately needed.

‘In the future, they'll need to lead and fight.’

Chung Myung's eyes slightly dimmed.

So far, they have been able to fight on their own. But from now on, the scale of the battle they will face will only grow. And in the absence of Chung Myung, there will be more situations when they will lead others and fight.

If they had experienced failure too late, the damage would have been unimaginable, so it was fortunate they could experience and reflect on it now.

"Hey, Sasuk."

"Hm?"

"Every task needs to be properly completed. It's not over yet, is it?"

“…….”

Baek Cheon, who was staring intently at Chung Myung, nodded.

"You're right."

And said, looking back at the water fortress.

"We have to finish cleaning up."

He immediately called the disciples of Mount Hua.

"First of all, rescue the commoners who have been caught by the water fortress. There may

be people who have become weak, so Soso will take care of their condition immediately."

"Yes, Sasuk!"

"Also, check if there are any missing disciples from the Yuryong Sect here. They might be prisoners. Sang-ah should interrogate the pirates to check if there are hostages in other locations."

"Understood, Sahyung."

"Good."

Baek Cheon nodded at the swift replies.

'They've been doing great.'

They always achieved results beyond their actual skill level. They seemed to have started to believe that all of it was because of their own skills.

They pretended to be humble, but they weren't truly humble.

"The biggest mistake is neither losing nor making mistakes. It's in not learning anything from those losses and mistakes."

"……."

"I'll reflect on myself first. So, you all should also remember what you've learned from this matter."

"Yes."

As the Saje nodded with serious eyes, a light smile bloomed around Baek Cheon's mouth.

"Oh, you're acting cool."

"……."

Although it disappeared faster than when it bloomed because of the grumpy voice that was heard soon after.

* * *

"Huuu."

Dark-Haired Ghost, which had swam for a long time to a place where the island could hardly be seen, walked ashore.

The island they had left was now barely visible, reduced to a mere dot.

"Has the battle ended?"

One of the followers, who had come out following him, asked while glancing behind.

"I suppose so."

"Then Turbid Current Blue Snake must be dead, too."

Dark-Haired Ghost twisted the corners of his mouth and laughed, wiping his soaked face with his sleeve.

"That idiot. I bet he never doubted until the end."

"How could he have doubted it. Isn't it true that you provided him with the expensive Hundred Thunder Cannon and the ship?"

"....It's regrettable when I think about it."

These are things that they need to spend a lot of money on, such as the Hundred Thunder Cannon and the ship. It was exceedingly regrettable that such items had sunk to the bottom of the river.

But it didn't matter. After all, they weren't his to begin with.

"I don't know. I guess it was bound to end up like this."

Dark-Haired Ghost clicked his tongue and shook his head.

Considering the resources put into creating that fortress, it was no different than pouring raw money into the riverbed. He couldn't understand why they would do such a thing with their level of intellect.

"As long as I get paid."

"Right."

Upon hearing a voice that was not his subordinate's, Dark-Haired Ghost with black hair turned his head swiftly. A man was walking out from the forest that stretched from the riverbank.

Dark-Haired Ghost, who was staring at the man with a slightly wary eye, quietly opened its mouth.

"There was no need for you to come out to meet me...."

"It seemed like things were moving more urgently than expected, so I came to see."

"There's nothing to worry about. We've taken care of it as instructed."

"It seems that way."

The scholar-like man who faced Dark-Haired Ghost nodded with a cold face.

"Do you need to check?"

"Is there any need to?"

He took something out from his sleeve and extended it to Dark-Haired Ghost.

"Here it is."

Dark-Haired Ghost carefully received the paper that the man had handed over and spread it open.

"This is a confirmation slip issued by Jungwon Bank. I sent the money to the place you designated. If you add up the advance payment I gave you the other day, it should be exactly the agreed amount."

"......It's confirmed."

The nodding Dark-Haired Ghost folded the paper well and tucked it into his bosom.

"You could have received it directly."

"You don't know what's going to happen in the world, do you? You have no choice but to be careful of everything for a small fish like me. I hope you understand."

"I can't say I don't understand. As you say, one should be cautious in all matters."

The man nodded lightly, then continued speaking.

Then, our deal is done."

"Yes, thank you."

"Now what will you do?"

"As promised, I will wash my hands of this and will not set foot in Kangho. I plan to take the money and flee to a distant country, or settle down in a decent place and live out the rest of my life."

"Quite persuasive."

“People won’t believe me when I say something, but it’s good to be certain.”

"That's why I chose you."

A faint smile appeared at the corner of Dark-Haired Ghost.

"It was no big deal to deceive those fools, and I feel like I've received an excessive amount."

"It was well worth it."

“By any chance… May I ask why you did this?”

The man of scholarly elegance raised his index finger to his lips.

"Loose lips cause trouble. There are things in this world that are better not known."

"......I'll forget. No, I've forgotten."

"Good. You've worked hard. Farewell."

"Yes. Farewell....."

It was that moment.

*Swaeaeaek*!

Dozens of short swords rained down from the forest with incredible speed, and it was precisely stuck in the necks of those standing by the shore.

"Kkeureuk!"

"Kkeuk!"

Their eyes bulged as they clutched their throats and shook violently before collapsing.

“…….”

Dark-Haired Ghost looked down at his chest with a blank face. A short sword was buried in his chest, almost to the hilt.

Slowly raising his head, he opened his mouth in a trembling voice as he looked at the man standing in front of him.

"Why…."

"Didn't you say it yourself?"

The man of scholarly elegance replied in a flat voice.

"It's better to be certain of everything. But why should I leave your mouth behind?"

"......the, the money is already....."

"That's a separate matter. Oh, of course, there's no doubt about it. The money has been sent. And you don't need to worry about your family who will come looking for it. I swear on my name that I won't touch them. Your family will live out the rest of their lives in peace."

“…….”

Dark-Haired Ghost crumpled down on the spot. Sitting on his knees, he breathed heavily.

"Why, Why did you have to....."

"This matter is far more important than you think. No one should know. Yes, none. So, the price was not as exorbitant as you worried. Considering the price of your life."

“…….”

"Get some rest now.”

*Thump*.

The man spoke in a calm voice as Dark-Haired Ghost hat collapsed in desperation.

"Cut off the head and bury it separately. Throw the body in the river."

"Yes, General!"

man

Ho Gamyeong, known by the title of Myriad Man Manor General, looked at the distant island with a slightly complex gaze.

"Harvesting. Harvesting.....”

Soon a twisted smile appeared on his thin lips

"If you sow the seeds, you have to harvest. Thanks to those Mount Hua guys, things will be much easier."

Ho Gamyeong turned around without hesitation.

"Let's go back before we get caught. Hurry up."

"Yes!"

And so, a moment's time passed.

There was no trace left on the clean riverbank..

Only the indifferent river flowed steadily.

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