Return of The Mount Hua – Chapter 858. Mount Hua will become stronger (3)

Editor: Hoamzz

Co-Translator: Xoxo

Time is fair.

To the elderly who regretfully find each passing day painfully short, to the middle-aged who endure the long day with a yawn, and to the children who run around the village finding the day too short, time flows justly for all.

And it was the same for merchants who traversed the Yangtze River.

"Oh…."

Ma Cheol looked at the scene in front of his eyes in surprise.

"My goodness... What is this…."

"Why do you look so surprised?"

"Why, why is there a city here?"

"Huh? What do you mean?"

Ma Cheol looked around bewildered. The merchant group following him stared at him with puzzled faces.

"As you all know, aren't I from Kugang?"

"Yes, you were so excited about visiting your hometown. Before you joined our merchant group, you worked in Kugang."

"Exactly. It's only been five years since I left Gugang... and back then, this place was nothing but barren land."

"What? No way…."

"Hey, dude! Would I eat expensive food and talk nonsense? I'm telling you it's true!"

"Well, in that case..."

The group member cautiously glanced at Ma Cheol's face and looked forward.

He answered so, but inside he was thinking something completely different.

‘You should say something that makes sense.’

What was visible was unmistakably a large city. But does it make sense that such a city really sprung up in just five years?

No, from what he heard, it's been less than three years since merchants started frequently coming to this place. If that's the case, then a city of that size was created in just three years. Even a three-year-old wouldn't buy that story.

"Let's just go and see."

"Yes, Merchant-nim."

But what can they do? Even if their boss tells them that Meju (메주/Fermented soybean) was made with red bean paste, they must believe it.

"Hoho, unbelievable."

Ma Cheol shook his head as if he couldn't believe it no matter how much he looked at it and led the merchant group toward the city he could see in front of him.

“…….”

As they entered the outskirts of the city, Ma Cheol was speechless.

When he entered the city, it was different from what he had seen from afar. He was drawn to the sight of large buildings lined up on either side of a large road.

'Isn't this even more bustling than Kugang?'

The buildings, of course, were all brand-new. After all, until recently, this place had been barren.

What surprised him was that all the buildings were large and that the number of people rushing between them seemed to be greater than the number of people traveling through the Yangtze River.

Besides...

"Get me a drink, quick! I'm parched after a long journey!"

"Yes, yes! Coming right away!"

"How much longer for the noodles?"

"Aigoo, we're on it! Just a moment! Please wait a little longer!"

The inn was jam-packed with people. It was astonishing how so many people had gathered here.

And this complex and vibrant city didn't even give Ma Cheol the time to relax and appreciate.

Before he could even open his eyes, two people came out of nowhere and grabbed his left and right sides.

"Aigoo, merchant-nim! Thank you for coming! This way! Come this way! Come this way! I'll show you to the best inn on Plum Blossom Island!"

"Oho! You're scamming again! How dare you claim that mere Sinpung Inn as the best inn on Plum Blossom Island! Not while Yonghwa Inn is around!"

"What, you punk? Are you talking about the inn that failed to catch the tired old cook who ran away last week? Merchant-nim, don't listen to that nonsense! If you go there, you will end up eating tasteless food! When it comes to food, our Sinpung Inn is the best!"

"This guy is talking nonsense again! Haven't you heard that our inn has hired the former chef of Hwapyeong, the best restaurant?! Compared to the food made by the Hwapyeong Restaurant chef, the food at Sinpung Inn is no better than dog food! Merchant-nim, come this way! There's exactly one room left in our inn now!"

"If you have just one room, how can all these people sleep, you punk!"

"Oh my gosh! I said it one by mistake when it is two rooms!"

Caught between them, Ma Cheol felt as if his soul had left his body.

He thought about scolding them for their rude behavior, but a quick look revealed that the merchant group ahead was going through the same. And so was the one that followed them in.

'Is this a daily occurrence here?'

What kind of innkeepers come all the way to the main road to solicit customers?

"But this guy?”

"You wanna settle it today?"

As the innkeepers who came out to solicit raised their sleeves as if ready to pounce at each other at any moment, Ma Cheol shouted in panic.

"D- Don't fight. We're going to check out the dock first..."

"Hng? If you go today, it will be at least three days before you can board a ship."

"Do- Does it really take that long?"

"Aigoo, Merchant-nim. Is this your first time to Plum Blossom Island?"

"Tha- That’s right."

The innkeeper nodded as if it made sense.

"Then it is only natural you don’t know. It's normal to wait for three or four days on Plum Blossom Island. Otherwise, why would all the merchants stay in the inn and rest?"

"Ah..."

"If you're lucky, it's three days. If you're unlucky, it could be up to ten days."

"T- Ten days? Does it take that long? Are you talking about when there's a heavy rain or a storm?"

"No, no. No matter whether it rains, windy or snows, the ships of Plum Blossom Island never stop. Even if they ship regularly, you have to wait up to ten days when it's crowded. So, it’s better to find accommodation first.”

"…I, I will check it out with my own eyes first."

"Well, it's meaningless, you know."

"This, this mannerless punk. Aigoo, Merchant-nim. Of course, you have to check it for yourself. If you come back, you might get swindled somewhere else... No, don't lose money and come directly to our Yonghwa Inn."

Ma Cheol l nodded with a bewildered face.

"But... may I ask one thing?"

"Yes? Feel free to ask."

"This is by the river, isn't it?"

"That's right?"

"That… There's such a bustling area by the river... That... Aren't there any attacks by the water fortress?"

"What? Water fortress?"

The innkeepers looked at each other as if they had never been growling at each other, then burst into laughter.

"Hahahahaha! Water fortress?"

"Haha! Man, it's been ages since I've heard that."

Ma Cheol blinked his eyes without knowing what was going on.

"Did I say something... strange?"

"It's not strange. It's just a question we haven't heard in a long time. You don't have to worry. Since the establishment of Plum Blossom Island, there hasn't been a case where the water fortress has approached."

"Sometimes they pass by the river, but they have never attacked. They have enough sense not to dare attack a place guarded by the Heavenly Comrade Alliance!"

"This is the safest place in the Yangtze River. That's why so many merchants visit Plum Blossom Island every day."

Ma Cheol nodded his head slowly.

He had heard as much before coming here, but seeing it with his own eyes was vastly different from imagining it.

"I, I get it for now. We'll start with the dock."

"Yeah. Have a good look."

"Yonghwa Inn! Yonghwa Inn!"

Even after fending off the two innkeepers, had to suffer more from several newly attached innkeepers. Only after shooing them all away could he finally proceed.

"Hoho. What kind of place is this…."

As he was able to walk comfortably without being bothered, he began to see his surroundings more clearly.

There's nothing missing.

Inns, guesthouses, markets, and even a restaurant.

"Is that a gambling house?"

"…Really, nothing is lacking."

It looks closer to Hangzhou or Suzhou than to Kugang. The only difference is that it is a practical place compared to a place just for entertainment.

As they passed the inn-lined street and approached the dock, there were large warehouses lined up on either side. Past those, he could see a crowd of people and carts.

"That seems to be the place."

“Let’s go first.”

Ma Cheol approached the dock and talked to a merchant standing nearby.

"Um…."

"Yes?"

"I just arrived. Where should I line up to make a reservation?"

The merchant, who had been in line before him, glanced at Ma Cheol and gestured with his chin to stand behind him.

"Line up here."

"Ah, thank you. Guys, put the cart over here."

"Yes!"

After lining up, Ma Cheol looked around again. The dock was filled with people, and there

were five large ships docked at the dock. Plus, laborers were busy loading goods onto the ships.

The phrase 'bustling with activity' was fitting for this moment.

"Incredible."

"…There are five ships. Those large ones."

“Even though there are five ships like that, we have to wait for more than four days. How much goods are coming to this dock?”

“All the goods on the Yangtze River are unloaded here, so it can’t be helped, can it? It's a hundred times better than being robbed by a pirate. Still, we are fortunate. There are so many people who can’t help but risk crossing the river themself because they’re too far away from here.”

"That's right, Merchant-nim."

Ma Cheol still felt awkward and let out a forced laugh.

'This is when one uses the term ‘The blue sea turned into mulberry fields’.'

Who would have thought that the world would change so much in just five years? No, not five years. It's only been three years...…

It was then.

"What are you doing? Why are you cutting in line?"

"Yes?"

Suddenly, a group of men rushed in, glaring at Ma Cheol and berating him.

"What do you mean cutting in line? We've just lined up properly."

“I was just leaving my luggage and going to run some errands, and here you took our spot? Stop your nonsense and move aside now! Unless you want trouble!"

“No, what nonsense is that!”

"What? Nonsense? These guys?”

The merchant lunged forward and grabbed Ma Cheol by the collar.

"If the reception ended before I got there due to late queueing, I will have to wait another day. Do you know how much money I'll lose then?! How dare you try to get away with it?"

"Then, then you should have guarded your spot, shouldn't you? Anyway, I won't move!"

A merchant should never lose in a fight.

Knowing this, Ma Cheol raised his voice as well. The merchant who had grabbed him by the collar looked even more furious.

"Fine. If you want to come out like this. You should try dying today."

As their argument grew, those watching from the side clicked their tongues.

"There! Hey! Over there!"

"…Yes?"

"Why are you yelling so much? Where do you think this is?"

"Where is this you say....."

The merchant who grabbed Ma Cheol's collar tilted his head. His face suggested he didn't understand what was being said.

Then the goat beard merchant who intervened looked at the two groups in turn with a knowing look.

"Neither of you seem to know much about Plum Blossom Island. Are you first-timers?"

"……."

"……."

When both groups blinked, the goat bearded merchant clicked his tongue and shook his head.

"If you cause trouble, you'll be kicked out, and won't be able to load goods for a month. You didn't forget that this is Plum Blossom Island, did you? Unless you plan on risking your life by being banished, keep it down. If the two of you fight and harm comes to us, I won't let it go. Do you understand?"

Ma Cheol blinked his eyes in bewilderment.

"So, if we cause a commotion, we can't load goods?"

"I told you so."

"N- No. Does that even make sense? After all, this is a place where they get paid to carry goods?"

"…What?"

"Hoho, look at this."

"This is why the little ones are."

The merchants around him widened their eyes \and clicked their tongues, and Ma Cheol blushed with embarrassment.

"So, is this your first time?"

"....Yes. We are a small merchant group, and since the former leader fell ill and had to quit abruptly..... I had to go on this trip hastily."

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. That's why you don't know anything. Look, this is Plum Blossom Island. If you apply common sense from other places here, you're in big trouble. The law of Plum Blossom Island is very simple. Don't cause accidents. Don't cause disturbances. And settle your accounts clearly."

"……."

"Most important of all, don't cause accidents! Do you know how many merchant groups have gone bankrupt because they broke that rule?"

"……."

"Don't do anything stupid and stay quiet..... Oh, damn! It's too late!"

"Huh?"

It was then.

Rumble.

The front suddenly became noisy, and the merchants retreated left and right. As the path opened up among the merchants, a group of men walked along, staring fiercely.

A giant of at least seven feet tall.

A jagged, bristly beard.

Fierce eyes.

The upper body, neatly exposed because the top had been thrown away, had bulging muscles that looked like they were about to explode. Heavy sweat was flowing down the curves of his muscles as if he had been carrying the luggage all this time.

"Uh…."

Just as Ma Cheol, who was intimidated by the overwhelming figure, shrank his neck, those who walked out looked in his direction with all the annoyance in the world on their faces.

Ma Cheol's heart sank at that moment.

"This…!"

The man who looked Ma Cheol and his group up and down had bloodshot eyes.

At the same time, Ma Cheol's face turned pale.

'N- Now we're dead.'

Aigo, why did we come here.....

As if he couldn't hold back his rage, the man's large body trembled. Then, he opened his mouth like a roaring tiger.

"What's the matter? Customer-nim?"

"……."

"Is there anything uncomfortable?"

"…Yes?"

The world's kindest voice flowed from a face that looked like it would eat someone.

"That, that is....."

No.

What the hell is going on here?

What on earth.....

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