Return of The Mount Hua – Chapter 1003. Once again (3)

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“Huff, huff…. Huff.... Huff!”

The sky is yellow.

Namgung Dan realized that the saying "the sky is yellow" was not just a metaphorical phrase. The sky he was seeing right now was genuinely yellow.

No, it's not just the sky.

“Huuk…. Huuk....”

His sight was turning yellow. To be precise, it felt like the color of the world was gradually fading away.

“Keuu….”

At that moment, Namgung Dan’s foot stumbled over a rock. His body falls forward without even being able to resist.

No, he was about to.

“Eucha!”

However, before his body could even tilt halfway, someone rushing to his side grabbed his shoulder and straightened him up.

“…….”

Namgung Dan blankly stared at the person beside him. Yoon Jong, was it?

He smiled broadly, as if narrowly avoiding a major accident, and said.

"It seems you still have some energy left, but it’s too early to be falling. Now, let's cheer up and keep running."

“…...”

"Hm? Is there a problem?"

"…uck."

"Yes?"

Namgung Dan’s feet are stretched forward weakly.

Tok. *Tok*. *Tok*. *Tok*.

And then he started running forward again, creaking like a puppet whose strings had been pulled wrongly.

'Why did it turn out like this?'

Yes, it all started very simply...

* * *

“A bet?”

"Yes."

Chung Myung said with a bright smile.

“You say you want to be treated well, but just asking for treatment without any persuasion seems a bit unconvincing. And so, let’s check if you deserve to be treated well.”

“…...”

"If you win, I’ll spit out all the money I've received, and I won’t lift a finger from then on."

“Really?”

“Instead, if we win, you’ll have to do as I say without complaining. Simple, right?"

Namgung Dan looked at Chung Myung with a cautious face.

"But, Dojang..."

"Aah."

Chung Myung waved his hand as if he knew what Namgung Dan was going to say. He looked as if chasing away annoying flies.

"I know what you’re going to say. I have a conscience too, you know. Would I really ask you to fight me?"

“The- Then?”

"The kids will do it."

Chung Myung pointed to the Five Swords behind him.

“And if we do something like spar, the outcome is very obvious, so let’s do something fair. Something fair.”

"…Fair?"

"Yes."

Chung Myung clapped his hands with a snap and continued.

"Running."

“…...”

For a moment, Namgung Dan's face became dumbfounded, but Chung Myung continued speaking calmly.

"The rules are simple. Your side starts running first, and our kids will chase after you. Whoever gets caught is out. If by sunset even one person hasn't been caught, then your side wins."

“No, that’s….”

"Instead!"

Before Namgung Dan could say anything, Chung Myung cut off his word.

"But to make it even fairer, our side will wear ankle weights, each weighing twenty geun (approximately 20 kg or 44 lbs) on each limb."

At those words, the faces of Namgung Family’s swordsmen became cruelly distorted.

“…Are you ignoring us now?”

"Hm? Was it a bit too much? Then, let’s wrap around thirty more geun (approximately 30 kg or 66 lbs) on our bodies as well."

"Dojang!"

Namgung Dan couldn't help but shout out loud.

"Oh, why are you shouting?"

Chung Myung picked his ear with his little finger and blew on it.

"If you’re scared, you don’t have to do it."

"We will do it!"

“Da- Dan-ah!”

"Hyung-nim!"

Grinding his teeth, Namgung Dan made a declaration.

“Instead, be sure to keep that promise!”

Chung Myung grinned.

"You took the words right out of my mouth. Just make sure *you* keep your words."

The swordsmen of Namgung Family looked at Namgung Dan and spoke with concern.

"Are you sure about this?"

"This…."

"Stop!"

Namgung Dan cut off everyone else's words.

"No matter how much it is said that Namgung's strength is not Lightness Art, what excuse would there be for being caught up by those wearing ankle weights? Especially when it's a game where all of us need to be caught to lose?"

"….."

"Will you really stand to be ignored this much?"

The faces of Namgung swordsmen turned cold.

Namgung Dan, who watched them harden their resolve, gritted his teeth and glared at Chung Myung.

'There's a limit to arrogance.'

If he had asked them to compete with swords, he wouldn't have been so angry. But they had chosen to compete in endurance and internal strength, not swordsmanship.

Isn't this the field in which the prestigious Namgung Family is most confident?

"I know Dojang is a great person, but this time you were too arrogant."

"Kuh, the world is indeed vast. There's someone to tell me I'm arrogant."

"….."

"But shouldn't such words be saved until after you've won?"

Namgung Dan, who saw Chung Myung's sly face, gritted his teeth and nodded.

* * *

'It was like that…'

The premonition that something might have gone wrong first hit him when they lined up at the starting line.

He ended up hearing the sound of Mount Hua Righteous Sword, who was walking with iron angkle weight on both arms and legs, asking Mount Hua Chivalrous Sword.

- How should we do this?

- Screw them.

- Got it.

It was an odd feeling.

He doesn't know about Mount Hua Chivalrous Sword, but Mount Hua Righteous Sword is not someone who would ignore them. But from the moment he heard him casually having that conversation, something like an ominous premonition passed through his heart.

But Namgung Dan tried to push that thought away. No matter the circumstance, catching up to them while carrying over eighty geun (approximately 80 kg or 176 lbs) in weight seemed impossible.

Eighty geun was practically the weight of an average person. Was catching up to someone while carrying another person on your back even conceivable?

Thus, Namgung Dan didn't worry. He just thought it was an opportunity to flatten the nose of Mount Hua Chivalrous Sword. And this is an opportunity to properly inform Namgung Dowi, who is not opening his mouth despite seeing all of this, what is right.

That thought had not changed since they had just set off. The same thing happened a little later when Mount Hua's disciples started chasing them. Because Five Swords was unable to close the distance that Namgung had initially opened and merely followed behind.

But then…

After a while, Namgung Dan realized. Why did Mount Hua Chivalrous Sword put in a condition that it would last until the sunset?

Half an hour into the chase, those pursuing began to speed up.

Being caught by those wearing eighty geun of weights? This wasn't something their pride could allow.

Namgung Family's swordsmen, who felt a sense of crisis, ran at their wits' end.

And from that moment, hell began.

- Oh, you're too slow.

- Aigoo, let's go quickly.

- Did you eat boiled slugs?

Those crazy Mount Hua cubs got close to their backs and started poking them in the back.

They were going crazy and jumping around.

How could they be sane when these people, who were carrying the weight of a person, clung to their backs and calmly spoke to them as they ran at full speed?

- No, you can't give up already!

- You can still do more!

- Cheer up!

They'd rather get mocked and cursed, these damned.

With the consideration (?) of Mount Hua disciples, Namgung literally ran until their legs fell off. This was no longer about competition but a matter of pride.

However, after an hour had passed, people began to foam at the mouth and collapse.

“

.”

"Ah, hey. Another one down."

“E- Eup!”

"Argh! Don't vomit!"

What made them go crazy and jump up and down the most was that Mount Hua's disciples who were following behind were fine and showed no signs of difficulty.

Namgung Dan forcibly lifted his head, which was as heavy as a piece of iron, shaking. People were seen scattered here and there.

Total annihilation. A clean sweep.

The proud descendants of Namgung, who survived the war with water fortress until the very end, were now lying around the courtyard like sick chickens.

'How, how could this be…'

Namgung Dan extended his legs, staggering back as he tilted his head.

They are Namgung Family.

They pride themselves on the purity of their internal strength, believing it to be second to none in the world. And their perseverance, having endured intense training since childhood, must be incomparable to that of other sects.

Why then, did this result come to pass?

“U- Uugh….”

A surge of nausea overwhelmed him. Instinctively, Namgung Dan covered his mouth with both hands.

No matter how bad it is, he can't show such disgusting behavior.

'I- I feel like dying…'

It was no longer about seeing the sky as yellow or whatever. Each step felt as if his limbs were moving independently, and every time his feet hit the ground, his body felt like it was bending in half and then straightening out again.

Then, a voice clucking its tongue came from behind.

"It looks like this is the end here too?"

"No. Don't you think he can go a little further?"

"Then let's make a bet, Sahyung. Whether he can last another moment or not. I'll bet he can't."

"…I'll also bet on him not lasting."

"Ei. What is that!"

"When betting, one must judge coldly."

Those words almost severed Namgung Dan's last bit of will.

Yet, he still ran and ran. He had a reason to keep going.

"Cheer up!"

With each step, as his vision blurred and shifted, he saw a familiar face.

'So…. Soso....'

Seeing her clicking her tongue while looking at him scrambled Namgung Dan's thoughts.

'How… How could Soso…'

The Tang Soso he knew had nothing to do with martial arts. Wasn't the image he saw every time he interacted with Tang Family like that of a woman from a prestigious family wearing a fancy court dress?

Yet, here she was, casually following along, throwing support from beside him with an unfazed expression.

'Crazy….'

Thud.

In the end, Namgung Dan's body could not hold out any longer and collided with the ground.

He fell down, face down in the dirt, and gasped violently. Air rushed in harshly, bringing with it clouds of dust, yet he couldn’t muster the courage to turn his head.

It felt like his whole body had been chopped into pieces with a large bat. This wasn’t a situation that could be explained by mere fatigue or suffering. Had there ever been a time in his life when training alone had reduced him to such a state?

“No, you couldn’t last two hours?"

"…I wasn’t even running that fast."

“Soso. What happened?"

“Why, why are you doing this to me! Tang Family isn’t like this!”

The voice chattering next to him did not reach Namgung Dan's clouded mind.

His mind felt like it was submerged in water. He thought if he closed his eyes now, he might sleep forever.

Yet…

It was an extremely bizarre incident, but even in the midst of it all, Namgung Dan could hear it clearly. The sound of someone's footsteps trudging towards him.

Tok. *Tok*. *Tok*. *Tok*.

He pushed his eyelids up with difficulty.

“Eucha.”

After clearly feeling someone nudge him with a foot and turn him around, the blue sky filled his eyes. The sun was high in the sky.

Out of a corner of that bright blue sky, someone's face suddenly loomed over him.

A face smeared with malice...

“There.”

“…...”

“Should we start with an extra hundred pounds?”

“…...”

“Crying?”

“…….”

“Sasuk, is he crying?”

“Stop it, you bastard!”

“You inhumane!”

“Hey, cover it! Cover it for him! Hurry!”

This place… this place is a den of demons.

|Note