Return of The Mount Hua – Chapter 860. Mount Hua will become stronger (5)

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Plum Blossom Island was teeming with countless merchants, creating a perpetual hubbub day in and day out.

When Mount Hua first formed Plum Blossom Island, it was not small in scale. But as time passed, it continued to grow, and now, it was so large that even significant merchant groups couldn’t compare in size.

It's a matter of course.

Plum Blossom Island nearly monopolized the logistics between Gangbuk and Gangnam.

Whether the Righteous Faction and Evil Faction are at war or drawing lines and growl at each other, people must eat to live, and must wear clothing to go out.

Merchants from Gangbuk who want to ship goods to Gangnam, and merchants from Gangnam who want to purchase goods from Gangbuk, all of them used Plum Blossom Island as their top priority, and the traffic has become too much for even 10 ships.

"Why did we ever bother with banditry when it’s so easy to make money this way?”

"…Will this last forever?"

“The problem with you, First Elder, is that you’re too pessimistic.”

“Even caterpillars have to eat leaves, you know. Nokrim’s reputation is no joke these days.”

“Don’t starve to death in search of dignity, but do your job well.”

"Hngg."

“How are the preparations?”

"…It's almost over. But is this really something we should do? We’re Nokrim. But for Nokrim to provide escort to merchants...”

"There's nothing we can't do if it's worth the money. Isn’t that why we received toll fees in the first place?”

“Still, our roots are...”

"You have to change to survive."

Im Sobyong grinned.

As the Evil Sect bastards become more and more rampant, it is becoming increasingly common for even those crossing Plum Blossom Island to suffer damage. Large merchant groups could afford escorts, but smaller ones couldn’t.

Thus they’re preparing to gather merchants to cross through Plum Blossom Island and organize them into groups by ship, then have Nokrim apply an escort service for these groups.

“If this is done, money will come in again. These days, the number of people who can’t even play bandit has increased, so why miss out on the opportunity to make money by working with those who play around?”

“…Won’t dissatisfaction increase?”

“If we set a good example and take care of a couple of things, it will be gone.”

Hearing those calm words, the First Elder swallowed dry saliva.

On the outside, he may be laughing out loud, but when he looks at him like this, he realizes once again that this person is truly the Nokrim King.

"Then Plum Blossom Island will reach a more solid footing.”

“This is a temporary gain until the Evil Tyrant Alliance starts acting up.”

“Then what? Just eat as much as we can before then. Do you know how much money we make per day now?”

“That’s why there’s dissatisfaction. We do all the work but only get a portion of the earnings.”

"Tsk, tsk. How foolish. If we had done this solely by ourselves, would the merchants have wandered around Plum Blossom Island? There are names of Mount Hua and Heavenly Comrade Alliance, so merchants believe in us. No, even before that, if we took Plum Blossom Island ourselves, the pirates and Myriad Man Manor would not have stood by.”

The First Elder sighed deeply.

"I’m aware. I’m aware, still... don’t we make money too easily? Even if we eat a little more than now...”

"First Elder."

Im Sobyong's voice turned cold for a moment. The First Elder straightened his body.

"I, I apologize. Nokrim King."

"Do you know why people die?"

“…I’m not sure.”

"Because they’re greedy beyond their means. Like the ones who will sink to the riverbed today.”

“…….”

"I want to believe that First Elder is not such an idiot."

“O- Of course, Your Majesty.”

“You’re a bandit too, so I guess it is only natural to be a bit greedy. However… There are some things in this world that one shouldn’t touch.”

A cold sweat ran down the back of the First Elder.

“…I understand.”

"It's better to do everything in moderation, in moderation."

Im Sobyong‘s face returned to its usual cheerful demeanor.

"But…."

His gaze turned to one side.

Through the window, he could see the flowing river and Plum Blossom Island.

“…Like you said, First Elder, we don’t know how long we can keep this up.”

The situation was increasingly worsening.

Plum blossom trees that grew on Plum Blossom Island oddly caught his eye.

“It is not Plum Blossom Island because of plum blossoms, but Plum Blossom Island because there are people like plum blossoms…”

A faint longing flashed through his eyes for a moment. He sighed softly and said.

“Anyway, hurry up and move. If Plum Blossom Island is a mess when Dojang comes out of Bongmun, the ones sinking in the middle of the river will be none other than you and me, First Elder.”

"…That's a terrible thing to say."

“We couldn’t even handle him before but now….”

Im Sobyong shook his head as if he didn't want to imagine.

"It's terrible. Ugh, so terrible."

But the First Elder did not miss the fleeting smile that brushed past the lips of the complaining Im Sobyong.

“Honestly, we are in a good situation. Compared to the guys who are running around until their feet get sweaty.”

"That's definitely the case.”

"So let's not make a big deal out of it. If that yangban hears us whine, he'll probably stick a poisonous needle into our foreheads."

However, a moment later, anger shadowed the First Elder's face.

"…Those people have been getting too arrogant lately."

"First Elder."

"I'm not just talking about my own feelings. The kids are becoming increasingly discontent."

"Ugh."

Im Sobyong seemed to have a headache and pressed his forehead with his fan.

“Tell them to hold back as much as possible.”

"But……."

"I know. I'm telling you because I know."

"……Yes, Nokrim King."

The First Elder bowed his head deeply.

"Then."

"Alright, go on."

After he left, Im Sobyong looked out the window again with a stiff face.

'Is this slowly reaching its limit?'

On the surface, everything seemed to be going well. But Im Sobyong, who was in the midst of it all, felt the internal cracks more keenly than anyone else.

'Mount Hua's absence is too great.'

Im Sobyong and Tang Gun-ak are trying their best to block it. However, if this situation continues a little longer, the Heavenly Comrade Alliance will eventually begin to collapse from within.

If it wasn't for Mount Hua in the first place, there's no way that Nokrim would be standing with the Tang Family.

"You're too slow. Tsk."

A sigh came out of Im Sobyong's mouth, who was looking at the thin plum tree.

"Please hurry up a little, Dojang. I'm also at my limit."

It was a voice too small to reach far away Shaanxi.

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"Reporting, sir."

Tang Gun-ak, seated at the head of the table, silently nodded his head.

Originally, the place where he is reported should naturally be Gaju's office located in Sichuan Tang Family, but now he was in a large room in a manor rather than Sichuan Tang Family.

Tang Gun-ak, sitting at the head table, stared ahead with his stern face.

Those who knew him would realize just from his expression that he had grown more serious.

"There's another clash between the Evil Sect and the Righteous Sect in Liu’an (육안(六安))."

Tang Gun-ak's forehead slightly furrowed at the report.

"Again…."

"Yes. It appears that it might escalate more this time."

Tang Gun-ak slowly tapped his fingers on the table. Although there was no significant change in his facial expression, the noise represented Tang Gun-ak's uncomfortable state of mind.

Tang Pae, who was observing his mood, let out a small sigh.

"Since Liu’an is in Anhui, originally Namgung Family should’ve been the ones to mediate, but…"

Namgung Family was still locked up behind closed doors, completely withdrawn.

They didn't really declare Bongmun, but it's no different from Bongmun. The only difference was that Namgung Family did not reject visitors from outside. Their external activities were close to non-existent.

If it were in the past, there would have been no way for an Evil Sect to clash with the Righteous Sect in Anhui, where the Namgung Family is located, or even near Hefei.

But the world has changed far too much since then.

“Looking for those who don’t exist won’t provide answers.”

"That's right."

“Send someone to mediate.”

"… The situation is highly volatile. It seems unlikely that words alone can resolve it."

"Then send the troops to suppress it by force."

"Yes, understood."

A sigh came out of Tang Pae's mouth once again.

No matter how little external activity they do, Anhui is clearly the domain of the Namgung Family. Sending armed forces to such a place to attempt to suppress it is bound to be burdensome.

But now is not the time to discuss such matters one by one.

‘Everything is happening too quickly.'

The world has changed so much.

Above all, what has clearly changed is that a considerable number of Evil Sects, which were mostly located in Gangnam in the past, have flocked to Gangbuk.

The Evil Sects who crossed over to Gangbuk and settled there clashed not only with the existing Righteous Sects but also with the existing Evil Sects who had been living cautiously among Righteous Sects."

To claim territory in someone else’s domain, at the very least, you should have the decency to respect existing orders. But if they did, would they be Evil Sect?

"…We should have stopped it sooner."

"It couldn't be helped."

Tang Gun-ak shook his head with a solemn look.

The reason why they did not stop the Evil Sects when they crossed over to Gangbuk, even though they knew something like this would happen, is very simple.

"How can we stop them when they, too, are trying to survive? Even if they are Evil Sects, they are still human."

"…True, but…"

If they had come to invade Gangbuk, of course they would have stopped them. However, the Evil Sects who have now migrated did not come over to attack Gangbuk. These are people who crossed the river just to survive.

Evil Tyrant Alliance, which swept through Gangnam, forced submission only.

Either get down on their knees and come under the control of the Evil Tyrant Alliance, or else perish.

Most of the Evil Sects chose to kneel down and submit, while a few resisted and died a gruesome death.

And some of the others chose neither side and instead fled to Gangbuk.

“I understand the situation, but… then shouldn't they at least keep quiet?"

But Tang Gun-ak again shook his head slowly.

In the first place, martial artists are incapable of producing even a single grain of rice on their own. If they can't seize territory and collect the money flowing within that territory, they are no different from a beggar with a knife.

Therefore, the Evil Sects that moved to Gangbuk had no choice but to try to secure their territory somehow in order to survive.

“In any case, we must make sure that no harm is done to commoners.”

"I will."

“Anything else?”

Tang Pae took a look at Tang Gun-ak and opened his mouth.

"...Gaju-nim. Over the past month alone, we have been involved in more than seven major and minor disturbances.”

"We did."

"This is a lot more frequent compared to just a couple of times a year in the past. It is quite overwhelming for us to handle all of this."

"I'm aware."

The places where Evil Sects have settled down the most are Hubei and Anhui.

The two places were the least prosperous for the Evil Sects in the past. Because it was managed by the world-renowned Wudang and Namgung Family.

However, now that these two schools have closed their doors, these places ironically became the most suitable for the Evil Sects. There are plenty of resources, but no one to claim them.

It’s not easy for subsidiary sects and small to medium-sized sects to deal with them alone.

That's why the Tang Family has to run from place to place to mediate.

"How long do we have to keep doing this..."

"It's for the reputation of the alliance."

"I know, Gaju-nim. However, dissatisfaction within the family is growing. It's called alliance, but Yasugung Palace and Ice Palace don't even show their noses in Jungwon, so we are handling all the actual work, aren't we?"

"……."

"Mount Hua did the work and we're taking care of the aftermath. At best, the Nokrim are helping.…. There are open complaints that we shouldn't have come to the Yangtze if we were going to be saddled with such thankless tasks."

While talking, Tang Pae clenched his lips tightly.

"And... I, too, feel the same way. How many years has it been since we visited Sichuan? Why only us..."

"Enough."

"Gaju-nim."

"If I were only interested in gains, I wouldn't be here in the first place. Do you want to become like them?"

"……No."

"And."

Tang Gun-ak said with a stern face.

"The one who's having the hardest time right now isn't us. It's Mount Hua."

"……."

"Let's endure a bit longer."

"…Understood, Gaju-nim."

"Good. Go now."

"Yes."

As soon as Tang Pae went outside, a deep sigh escaped Tang Gun-ak's mouth.

'It's not easy.'

The world was squeezing them more and more.

The Evil Tyrant Alliance, which has completed the Gangnam Unification, has begun internal maintenance, and once the maintenance is completed, they can move into Gangbuk at any time. Knowing that fact, the confusion in Gangbuk is growing. The feelings of those facing the inevitable war will all be similar.

In this situation, the large sects that should have taken a role in stabilizing Gangbuk had all closed their doors, leaving a huge void.

And it wasn't easy for even the Tang Family to handle that void.

Moreover...

Even problems that could have been easily solved in the past now become big issues. There are growing voices of dissatisfaction coming from within the Tang Family.

Tang Gun-ak lightly rubbed his eyes.

'Has it been a thousand days already? Do we need more time?'

Tang Gun-ak's face was smeared with exhaustion. He couldn't help but realize once again what the limits of his vessel were. If he couldn't even manage internal dissatisfaction perfectly, how could he handle Heavenly Comrade Alliance?

He sighed deeply and cast his gaze towards the far north.

'Dojang.'

Tang Gun-ak murmured in a low voice.

"Please hurry a little more. Just a bit."

In a place that will soon be filled with the scent of plum blossoms... There had been no news yet.

|Note