

## **Reaper of the Drifting Moon**

Light Novel: Volume 7 Episode 1

Manhwa: N/A

### Chapter 151

Soma smiled wider.

When something would catch his interest, he would smile more brightly.

Soma followed Pyo-wol with a smile. As he followed Pyo-wol, he got a lot of laughs.

Many were afraid of Soma and the children. The same was true for Yu Gi-cheon. Those who would catch a glimpse of the three would often have frightened expressions as if they were seeing a ghoul.

But Pyo-wol was different.

He was not afraid of children. It was actually the other way around.

It was the children who were afraid of Pyo-wol. However, Pyo-wol do not intentionally enforce fear upon them.

So the children found Pyo-wol kind. He was the only person who wouldn't tremble even if the children showed and acted their true selves.

Soma wondered how Pyo-wol would track down the assassin who was using poison.

Although he was abused at the Xiaoleiyin Temple and realized his potential, he never did learn how to track a person. For that reason, he was planning to learn tracking techniques from watching Pyo-wol. So his heart was pounding.

Pyo-wol and Soma went to the place called Gaoxian, where the first victim was found. Gaoxian is a county located in the southernmost part of Sichuan Province.

The first victim was a person named Ok Cheongwan of the Golden Fist Village<sup>1</sup>, a well-known scholar and warrior. He was a person who had never been outside Sichuan since he was born.

However, since he was born into a very prestigious family and was highly educated, many people came to receive instruction from him.

Although he learned the martial arts, he is known for his gentle personality. It is said that he spends most of his time reading books and doesn't want someone to hold resentment against him.

But one day, he was struck by qi deviation and lost his life. His family thought his death was strange, but could not determine the cause because it happened so suddenly.

Pyo-wol, who arrived in Gaoxian, did not even visit the Golden Fist Village.

He just looked around the county of Gaoxian. He would sometimes ask someone nearby about something, or waste time in a guest house or on the pier.

Soma couldn't comprehend Pyo-wol's actions.

After wasting such a day, Pyo-wol then went to the city where the second victim, the sect leader of the Star Palace, Jin Seungpyo, died.

Pyo-wol continued with the same behavior.

Soma wondered what Pyo-wol was doing. With his small head, he could not understand why Pyo-wol, who knew some kind of professional tracking skills, wasted his time on such useless things.

But he still followed Pyo-wol, thinking that there must be a reason for his actions.

Pyo-wol's action has absolutely nothing to do with tracking, even when they arrived in the Star Palace. He would seemingly waste his time drinking tea, standing in the middle of the street, or looking at the people passing by.

Soma who couldn't take it any longer and asked,

"Brother! What exactly are you doing?"

"Tracking."

"Isn't tracking supposed to be looking for something?"

"That's right."

"But why are we wasting time here without looking for traces?"

"Does it look that way to you?"

"Yeah! Isn't it?"

"It would be nice to be able to track someone with only fragmentary traces, but we can't find such an expert that way."

"Why? Because he is thoroughly hidden?"

"That's right."

At Pyo-wol's answer, Soma frowned.

He still couldn't understand Pyo-wol's methods.

Pyo-wol looked at the flowing river in front of him and said,

"The world is mixed with so many things, and these countless little things come together in harmony. Tracking starts with finding something that stands out and differs from the rest. Finding what doesn't fit, something that breaks harmony."

Except for the city where the owner of the first manor died, all the other cities did not have much exchanges with the outside world. This would mean that these places would experience little changes, like water trapped in a reservoir.

In such a place, even a small ripple can be seen immediately. What Pyo-wol paid attention to was specifically that small ripple.

It might be easy to say, but it was not easy for an outsider to catch such a ripple.

It required strong patience and tenacious observation.

Locals are usually very wary of foreigners, so they don't talk about what they know well. This makes it difficult to get information from such people.

Since Pyo-wol can't use the method of warmly approaching and gaining favor with them like the others, he has no choice but to observe his surroundings with his unique concentration and eyes.

He preferred the method of observing, grasping the atmosphere of the city, and removing the inconsistent ones one by one.

The assassin, who was also a master of manipulating poison, hid himself thoroughly. It's impossible to find him through simple means.

It was like searching for a tree in the woods, or finding a needle in the sand.

So what Pyo-wol had to do was find the exact forest or sandy beach where the assassin hid. Only then will their pursuit begin. And Pyo-wol has already found the forest where the assassin had supposedly hidden himself.

"All three cities face rivers, and these rivers are connected. The average speed of the river is about 20 li per hour. So the transportation of tea or other cargo is reduced by two or three days. Furthermore, with the direction in which the river flows..."

"Ah! So the assassin moved by boat. He would ride a boat and assassinate his targets whenever he would arrive at his destination..."

"That's right. And the three cities had one thing in common that day, the one called Xuanwu Merchant Group. They got down to each city and brought tea. Then they would depart for the next city."

"So is the assassin using the group called Xuanwu Merchant Group?"

"There's a nine out of ten chance."

At Pyo-wol's answer, Soma felt goosebumps all over his body.

It was easy to explain, but it was by no means easy to come up with such a reasoning. It was also a method that Soma didn't know how Pyo-wol came up with.

No other person in Jianghu would be able to find the Xuanwu Merchant Group that the assassin used to travel so quickly.

It was a method that only the assassin Pyo-wol could do. Because he himself was an assassin to the core, he was more accustomed to the physiology of an assassin more than anyone else.

He clearly knew the ways of an assassin.

This makes it impossible for any assassin to completely hide his existence before him.

Soma said,

"Then we should track down the Xuanwu Merchant Group immediately."

"The final destination of the Xuanwu Merchant Group was Chengdu."

"Then we can just run the shortest distance without having to follow the river."

Soma grinned.

Going by boat will definitely be fast, but it's not always the case. This is because rivers tend to twist and bend, and the speed of a boat is limited.

In some cases, it may be faster to use the land route.

Since they already knew the destination of the Xuanwu Merchant Group, it was possible to catch up with them even if they went by land. Moreover, both Pyo-wol and Soma were masters of martial arts, so they have some good footwork. Their mobility would be superior to others.

Since the two traveled by land, they were able to narrow the distance with Xuanwu Merchant Group faster than expected.

The Xuanwu Merchant Group was staying at a guest house at the entrance of Chengdu.

When Pyo-wol and Soma visited, the atmosphere of the Xuanwu Merchant Group was chaotic. This is because as the merchant group was approaching Chengdu, one of the porters drowned and disappeared.

If he had fallen into the water, he would most likely have died already.

Even though he is just a menial worker, his death still gave the people a great shock. People were not able to concentrate on their work easily, and they had a bewildered expression on their faces.

In particular, the psychological damage of those who entered at the same time with the dead worker was great. Probably because it was rare to see someone close to them die.

The name of the missing worker was Tae Yongha.

The moment he heard his name, Pyo-wol was convinced.

"It's him."

He observed them for a while, but there was no particularly suspicious person among the people in the Xuanwu Merchant Group.

If so, Tae Yongha, who was presumed to have died from drowning, was the most likely suspect.

Soma tilted his head,

"Did he really drown and die?"

"It's very unlikely. An assassin drowning in the water is the same as a fish drowning."

Assassins would usually be taught how to swim since water is often used to approach the target. As such, it was rare for an assassin to drown in the water.

"Then why did he disguise himself as dead? Did he want to hide his body after completing his mission?"

"If that was the case, it would have been a much easier way to get out of Sichuan with the Xuanwu Merchant Group. The fact that he disappeared and hid himself means that he is about to kill another one."

"Is he after an influential person?"

"Maybe."

"Who is such a big shot in Chengdu?"

Soma frowned.

"He has used the Xuanwu Merchant Group so far to travel and kill his targets, which would mean that he had already gathered information about his target in advance. If he had enough information about his target again this time, he wouldn't have left the county under the guise of his death. So maybe he's gathering information about his new target in Chengdu. What do you think is easiest way for an outsider to gather information in Chengdu?"

"The Hao clan?"

"That's right. Under normal circumstances, he would have never visited the Hao clan. But if by any chance he doesn't have enough time, he would turn to them."

If it were Pyo-wol, he would never have visited the Hao clan and exposed his actions under any circumstances.

However, if it's a person's first time in Chengdu, where they don't have enough information and time, they might turn to the Hao clan.

'Moreover, he doesn't know that someone is tracking him.'

So far, the assassin has never failed in killing his targets nor exposing himself. If so, there's a chance that he would slowly lower down his guard.

What Pyo-wol expected was his carelessness.

The Hao clan's branch already knew.

The place where Pyo-wol paid the most attention while staying in Chengdu was the Hao clan. It was because Hong Yushin, the chief inspector of the Hao clan, was diligent in trying to collect information about him.

However, Hong Yushin left Chengdu while Pyo-wol was at the Xiaoleiyin Temple.

The position of the Hao clan's Chief Inspector was never an idle position. It was a place where he had to enforce the rules while walking around the Hao clan's branches spread across Jianghu.

It was rather unusual for a person in charge of such an important responsibility to stay in Chengdu for a long time.

After Hong Yushin left, the new branch manager, Do Il-chul, was in charge of leading the Chengdu branch.

Pyo-wol and Soma went to the Hao clan's Chengdu branch. The Hao clan's Chengdu branch had moved its base several times.

However, Guian would always know about the location of the Chengdu branch and would report it to Pyo-wol.

Pyo-wol quietly infiltrated Do Il-chul's residence with Soma.

"Brother?"

Soma looked at Pyo-wol with a frown on his forehead.

Do Il-chul had already stopped breathing. He was leaning his back against the chair so naturally that he seemed to have been just asleep.

Pyo-wol touched Do Il-chul's neck.

"He's still warm. It hasn't been a long time since he died."

The Hao clan's warriors who were outside had yet to notice Do Il-chul's death. They will not know of Do Il-chul's death not until tomorrow morning.

Furthermore, they would think that Do Il-chul just died suddenly after falling asleep from exhaustion. So they would declare Do Il-chul's death as natural.

Pyo-wol looked at Do Il-chul's residence.

He, too, had killed the branch head of Chengdu. And he got Chengdu's Directory of Martial Artist from him.

Pyo-wol looked and found a secret space in the closet. But the secret space was empty.

It is unknown what kind of booklet the assassin took.

Pyo-wol decided that there was nothing more to be obtained here.

"Let's go."

"Okay, brother!"

The two came out as quietly as they came in.

Although they were one step late and did not catch the assassin, Pyo-wol was not disappointed.

Chengdu was nothing more than his inner courtyard. He had a surveillance network built by Guian and a brothel operated by Eunyo.



"You go to Guian and check if there has been any suspicious activity lately."

"Okay."

Soma replied then disappeared.

Pyo-wol, who was left alone, looked at the streets of Chengdu.

The assassin must be hiding somewhere in the area.

For the first time, he thought it was fun.

Pyo-wol began to think from the point of view of an assassin.

'What the assassin most needs right now is a safe hiding place, a place that can be accessed naturally without anyone's suspicion. A place where the target can be easily monitored.'

If he knew the assassin's target, he would be able to narrow down his options a little more, but if you wished for that, his title as an assassin would be reduced to nothing.

Chengdu was a huge city.

Many people lived here.

Since there are so many places to hide, it would be easy for the unknown assassin to blend in and hide his presence. This would make it even more difficult to find him.

The snake, which is the assassin, had completely hid itself in the grass, called Chengdu.

But Pyo-wol knew very well what he had to do to bring out the perfectly hidden snake.

Stir the grass to startle the snake.<sup>2</sup>

If he taps on the grass, the startled snake tends to move in some way.

**SoundlessWind21's Notes:**

Start of Volume 7.

1. Golden Fist Village. Raws: 금권장(金拳莊)
  - 金 jīn, jìn – gold, money, metals in general
  - 拳 quán – fist, various forms of boxing
  - 莊 zhuāng – village, hamlet, villa
2. Stir the grass to startle the snake. Raws: 타초경사(打草驚蛇).
  - Meaning: Chinese idiom. Punishment for someone can serve as a warning to others.

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