

Chapter 12 - A Long Blade in Hand

Li Qingshan felt like the black ox was not telling him everything; it was as if it were hiding something. However, he could not be bothered thinking too much about it in his joy. He immediately began to practise again, sensing the uses of this true qi.

Indeed, he found a knack for it before long. Today, he practised the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength more smoothly than ever before. He was like an old machine that had been freshly lubricated. It was indescribably satisfying.

Additionally, his strength recovered much faster than before. At a glance, this seemed insignificant. However, normal people would never be bold enough to use their full strength in their attacks when they fought. They would always hold back a little. After all, if the opponent dodged the attack, they would seize up momentarily and leave a huge opening.

He did not have to worry about that. In the time that others would take to throw a punch, he could throw three punches at full strength. It would be impossible for them to match his power either.

After all these days of hard cultivation, he finally achieved a sliver of result. He could not help but feel overjoyed. He felt like he was another step closer to his objective.

However, when he remembered the danger and difficulties he went through last night, his face turned cold. "But I do want to know who gave me this blessing."

The black ox said seemingly carelessly, "Everything, whether good or bad, is brought on by man himself."

Li Qingshan's eyes lit up. This was what he had said when the witch had come for the boar's head. The little ghost was definitely haunting him for a reason. Upon closer thought, he immediately found some clues.

He had been born and raised in this tiny mountain village, so he did know a little about the few major matters that had happened in the village. In such a remote, little village, major matters barely ever happened in the first place.

One of these included the ruin of a family in the village due to a child's death a few years ago.

Back then, Li Qingshan was a child as well. He even knew the child, Xiao Mao. He had never thought the child would actually die because of this, and this was also the reason why Li Qingshan had 'turned back to normal' after drinking the purging water, afraid of revealing any surprising aspects anymore. It was also when he had developed his great abhorrence towards the local witch.

The death of Xiao Mao's mother was very fishy. She had died all of a sudden one night for no particular reason.

Originally, Li Qingshan had believed she was unable to endure the grief of the loss of her son. However, looking at it now, she had clearly been killed by the yin qi. He suddenly stood up; a cold light flashed through his eyes. "I see. I can't spare her!"

The black ox said, "Then go kill her!"

"It's not that simple." Li Qingshan sat down with his legs crossed and sank into his thoughts.

The local witch was not a ruffian like patch-haired Liu. Not only did she possess great status in the village, but she even had some renown in the local region as well. Non-locals would often come to the village for her fortunes.

He could only flee the village after killing her. It was even possible that he would be reported to the government and be deemed as a fugitive. He had no evidence or witnesses either, so he could not jump to the conclusion that she was behind everything. Most importantly, since she could control the little ghost, who knows whether she had other things that she could use against him.

The black ox did not chip in from the side, but it approved of him very much. If Li Qingshan wanted to use his might from yesterday and confronted the witch in a rash manner, all of the painstaking effort he had gone through would have gone to waste.

Rarely was anything perfect in the world. Courageous people would often be rash and careless, while clever people would often be hesitant, lacking resolve and courage. To have the courage of a swordsman and the heart and patience of a zitherist—now that was rare.

Li Qingshan made up his mind and made his way over to the village.

"Oh, it's Erlang. Have you eaten? If you haven't, you can come to my house." At the entrance, an old man plowed a vegetable garden with his hoe. He greeted Li Qingshan warmly as soon as he saw him.

What happened yesterday in caretaker Liu's courtyard had already spread across the entire village. The unrecognised second son of the Li family had already become someone famous. Both the young and old felt some respect towards this young man.

Li Qingshan responded to all the greetings he received. He passed through most of the village until he eventually arrived before a small yard that had a few willow trees planted in front. A small, old man in rags leaned against the tree. He was already as drunk as a fiddler despite it being the morning, which surprisingly, made him seem a little like a great hermit beyond worldly affairs.

Li Qingshan knew that this was no hermit. He was an ordinary farmer and Xiao Mao's father. His name was Li Fugui. He was actually still in his thirties, but he seemed like he was in his fifties or sixties already. Ever since his wife passed away, he had basically stopped doing farmwork. He would drink away his sorrows everyday and act in a deranged manner.

Seeing Li Qingshan approach him, Li Fugui slurred, "Come, drink, drink." The stink of alcohol assaulted Li Qingshan's nose.

Li Qingshan frowned and grabbed Li Fugui, dragging him into the courtyard. Without a single word, Li Qingshan scooped up a ladle of water and poured it into his mouth, which choked him into a coughing fit. He leaned over the threshold of the door and vomited.

Li Qingshan studied the courtyard and the house. It was a mess everywhere. Spider webs covered all the window lattices. It was truly run-down. In the past, Li Fugui's family had been renowned in the village for

their wealth, and the amount of fertile farmland in their possession was second to only caretaker Liu's family. He had lived up to the name his parents had given to him¹. The whole family lived happily.

However, who could help that the world was unpredictable? It had all been reduced to this after sudden misfortune, which made Li Qingshan sigh emotionally. The mere happiness of ordinary people was just too fragile. However, with his unswerving determination and great ambitions, he despised people who sank into depravity and dejection and let themselves go the most. As a result, he was not particularly kind to people like this either.

Li Fugui was furious. "W- w- what are you doing?"

"Uncle Li, are you sober?"

Li Fugui saw Li Qingshan's hostile gaze and shivered all over. He was not blind or deaf. He knew exactly what Li Qingshan had done in the village over the past few days. He was a real person of misfortune.

"W- what's the matter?"

"Do you know how Xiao Mao's mother died?" Li Qingshan got straight to the point.

"I don't know, I know nothing." Li Fugui paled from fright as soon as he heard that, making his way out quickly.

Li Qingshan grabbed his skinny wrist. "Is this what your wife would have wanted you to become?"

Li Fugui halted. "Erlang, it's not that I don't want to tell you. That's trouble that you can't afford to get involved with. Do you want to just lose your life for nothing?"

"I don't want trouble either, but the trouble has already come knocking. If I have to live like you, I would much rather lose my life. I just want you to tell me what happened in the past."

Li Fugui was startled by that. "What? It has already come knocking?" After quite a while of hesitance, he exhaled deeply and began narrating.

"After Xiao Mao's mother shouted abuses in the streets outside the witch's home, she came home and went to sleep. She was unable to get up the next day. Her body became cold and blue. So many strange things happened that night, a- and I saw..."

"What did you see?"

"A child!"

Li Qingshan finally confirmed that the murderer really was the witch.

Moreover, the witch had even said to Li Fugui sinisterly that not only did Xiao Mao miss his mother, but he also missed his father as well. It scared Li Fugui into giving a huge offering.

Li Qingshan slammed the wall with his hand. "She has gone too far. Haven't you ever considered avenging your wife?"

Li Fugui reddened from frustration due to the contempt in Li Qingshan's voice. He rushed into the house and pulled out a long, wrapped package from the bottom of a great big wooden box.

He opened the package and inside was a blade, a well-made blade of steel.

Li Qingshan drew the blade from its sheath and a certain coldness flooded out. The blade reflected his face perfectly.

The hilt was around a foot long, slightly curved and wrapped in black silk. It felt extremely pleasant in his hand. The single-edged blade was around two feet long and four inches wide. Compared to Li Qingshan's knife that was only a foot long and had been made with shoddy craftsmanship, this blade was far superior.

The back of the blade was very thick, and it felt heavy in his hand. It was fantastic for hacking and chopping. He casually swung it and the whistling of air rang out. He could not help but praise it, "Good blade!" He had never seen such a good blade on the market. If it were sold, it probably would have cost quite a bit of fertile farmland.

1. Li Fugui—Li is his surname and Fugui is his given name. Fugui also means wealthy. It's a rather crude name.