

### Chapter 16 - White Bone and White Silver

The two other scoundrels paled and became immobilised with fright, but the items in the porcelain jar immediately blinded their eyes. Pieces of glistening silver filled the jar. They had never seen so much money in their lives. Even caretaker Liu and a few village elders who were on their last legs were visibly moved.

Li Qingshan pushed them away, and they almost flew into a rage. No matter how cowardly people were, they would be tempted by wealth and could become vicious for it. However, when they saw it was Li Qingshan, they were afraid of doing anything.

Li Qingshan was in no mood to care about their thoughts. He placed the jar aside. A tiny skeleton laid below the jar. Blood and flesh had already rotted off from the skeleton completely, revealing a greyish-white colour. Who knows how long it had been buried there.

Xiao An finally nodded, and Li Qingshan sighed gently. He looked around and tipped out all of the silver in the porcelain jar before storing the skeleton inside.

The silver pieces rolled onto the floor and formed quite a pile.

With that, everyone's eyes became glued to the pile. They even stopped caring about the remains.

Caretaker Liu was someone experienced and knowledgeable, having gone out and seen the world. He roughly estimated that there were several hundred taels of silver there. Even he became green with greed, let alone the others.

In a tiny mountain village like this, that was truly a tremendous sum.

Li Qingshan had never expected the witch to have managed to extort so much silver over the years either. As the saying went, wealth tempts people. He was not an otherworldly immortal who had transcendent worldly affairs, so he was also affected by the sum. After all, there were plenty of aspects where he would have to spend money in the future!

Just in terms of meat, he did not want to continue relying on the black ox. Since the black ox wanted him to be independent, he wanted to show it just how independent he could be. Moreover, he wanted to change up his tastes. Maybe he could go to the market and buy some good alcohol as well.

However, he also understood the principle of 'The wages of avarice is death'. If he took all of the silver with him, these people would be afraid of saying anything due to fearing his might, but they would definitely resent him, which would bury quite a large seed of misfortune. Even the death of the witch might not be able to pacify them.

"Village head Li, you are the person of the highest prestige and respect in this village. Let's hear if you have any plans regarding this silver." Li Qingshan wiped off the blood from his steel blade and stowed it back into the sheathe. He seemed to be letting village head Li take charge, but he stressed the words 'highest prestige and respect' when he mentioned it.

"I'm flattered, but it's all thanks to Erlang for removing such a great menace from the village. You should be the one who decides what happens to this silver." The village head had just played a disgraceful role

a few days ago, so he felt like Li Qingshan's words were filled with intimidation. How could he ever agree to his suggestion?

Li Qingshan looked around, and all those he saw nodded in a hurry. "You decide, Erlang!" Only then did he nod slowly. He did not mind sharing some silver in exchange for peace, but if there really were someone ignorant enough to decide what to do with his spoils of battle, then they would have to ask whether the blade in his hand agreed to it or not.

Every single person in the crowd was much older than Li Qingshan, yet they had to follow the arrangements of a fifteen year old. However, none of them felt unhappy with that. The current Li Qingshan was no longer the Li Qingshan of the past. His viciousness and decisiveness that came with drawing the blade and committing murder had stunned them.

Li Qingshan sat down to split the silver. He pressed one hand on the porcelain jar that held the white skeleton as he leaned on his blade with the other hand. The adults and old people all lowered their heads and listened to him closely.

However, the first person to receive a share of silver surprised all of them slightly.

"Uncle Fugui, the witch destroyed your family, so you deserve compensation. You better take this silver. Don't drown yourself in alcohol anymore. Only then can you console the dead." Li Qingshan used the sheath of the blade and parted some silver from the edge of the pile.

"H- how can I accept that!" Li Fugui had never expected Li Qingshan to say that. He was at a loss as for what to do.

"Take it!" Li Qingshan actually did this more to thank and praise him for his courage of standing forward and trying to bear the blame for the murder.

Li Fugui accepted the silver in gratitude and bewilderment.

Next, Li Qingshan called over the two scoundrels. "This is for you." He glanced at the dead scoundrel on the ground. "And him too. Take him back and bury him. Work and earn a living properly in the future. Don't continue doing underhanded things like stealing, or you'll probably end up suffering the same fate."

The two scoundrels were both surprised and overjoyed as they collected their silver. When Li Qingshan mentioned their companion, they became rather pale, but they did not seem particularly anguished. Who knows whether they could purposefully shell out money to have their companion buried.

In the end, Li Qingshan clasped his fist at caretaker Liu, village head Li, and the group of village elders. "In the past few days, I have offended you all. Please take this silver as an apology. I hope you can forgive me for my ignorance. However, if there are any more people who disrespect the old, harass the weak, or other fellow villagers..." That was how he put it, but he did not seem apologetic at all. Towards the end, he even became stern.

"That'll never happen! That'll never happen!" These people said together.

Li Qingshan nodded and split out a pile of silver for them to share between themselves.

“What about the other villagers?” Village head Li received his own share of silver and looked at the large pile that remained. Since even a victim like Li Fugui had received a share, there were plenty of other victims in the village. It could be said that every family had given the witch offerings before.

Li Qingshan glanced at him. “Does anyone have any objections?” He sympathised with the villagers who had been deceived, but he had no plans on compensating others for their stupidity. If he had not killed the witch in such a swift manner, it might have even been possible for their fear towards the witch to impel them to turn against him.

Moreover, how was he supposed to split it? Who was supposed to receive more and who was supposed to receive less? It was impossible to be fair, and in the end, it was very possible that not only would he receive no benefits from this at all, he would even become resented by many instead.

The village head had realised this as well. He wanted this youth, who was at the height of his influence, to hit a stumbling block. At the end of the day, what did the interests of the village have anything to do with him? Instead, the person right before him threatened his authority in the village more and more. Who knows, maybe a few years later, when Li Qingshan truly became an adult, he might even end up losing his position as village head.

However, he never expected Li Qingshan to be so meticulous with his thoughts despite his age. The glance that seemed to have pierced through his thoughts made him tremble with fear, afraid to say anything more.

Li Qingshan wrapped up the remaining silver. “Then please explain this matter to the other villagers. If any of you run your tongue carelessly and it reaches my ears, hmph!”

Everyone agreed to that. They were standing right in front of a weapon, and they had all received benefit from this incident as well, so none of them would just blabber.

Under village head Li’s lead, everyone arrived outside and provided an explanation to the villagers, commending Li Qingshan tremendously for eliminating a menace. Some of the devout believers of the witch originally refused to accept it, but when the skeletons were carried out one by one, all of them shut up. There were so many remains buried in her backyard, so how could she be any good?

No one was willing to offend a strong and vicious character like Li Qingshan for the sake of a dead person, not to mention the group of ‘respected and authoritative’ elders.

Li Qingshan did not make an appearance himself. Instead, he picked up the bronze bell in the witch’s severed hand. He could vaguely sense the spiritual nature that made it different from regular items. He asked Xiao An, “Did she use this to control you?”

Xiao An nodded and gazed at the bell extremely nervously.

Li Qingshan grabbed the bell and twisted it, deforming its shape. All of its special effects vanished immediately. Afterwards, he arrived at the entrance and threw it away as hard as he could. He turned around and smiled. “You’re free!”