

Chapter 17 - The Umbral Yin Ghost Control Technique

Xiao An was both happy and confused.

Li Qingshan searched through the witch's house again. Xiao An stuck right behind him before suddenly extending his small hand and tugging at Li Qingshan's trousers, pointing at a particular place.

Li Qingshan found a secret compartment in the wall. It contained a stack of paper, consisting completely of silver notes. He could vaguely recall that there were also private banks in this world, but this was the first time he had seen proper silver notes.

The witch must have buried the pieces of silver when she was still fit. Afterwards, as her strength declined with her age, it became impossible for her to continue digging. As a result, she had exchanged her earnings in the past few years for these convenient silver notes. There were roughly several hundred taels in the secret compartments. She was so wealthy, yet she had actually fallen out with him over a single boar's head, consequently dying in the end.

Li Qingshan finally found what he was looking for at the very bottom of the secret compartment. It was a single leaf out of a book, covered in tiny writing. He glanced through it roughly, and it was a technique to refine souls and control ghosts. The edge of the page was uneven like it had been ripped out of a book.

Li Qingshan practised the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength and had barely managed to witness the path of cultivation, so he was curious about other techniques as well. He had never thought that the witch's strange techniques would actually come from a single page of a book. If she had possessed the entire book, he probably would have lost his life here today.

However, if the witch had the entire book, it was unlikely for her to hole up in the Crouching Ox village for half her life. The witch was not a part of the village originally, having suddenly settled down here several decades ago. No one knew her origins. As for how she had obtained this page, Li Qingshan was at a loss as well.

However, below the page was another silver note. It actually amounted to a thousand taels. The silver note was extremely yellowed; evidently, it had quite some age to it. She had definitely received it before coming to the village. It also made the witch's origins even more confusing.

Li Qingshan asked Xiao An, "Do you recognise this?" He felt like this might have some connection to Xiao An's origins.

Xiao An remained dull and silent, neither shaking or nodding his head.

Li Qingshan knew that the question had already exceeded the limits of what the child could answer. Obviously, Li Qingshan kindly accepted everything in the secret compartment without holding back at all. When he was about to leave, he felt Xiao An tug his trousers again.

Li Qingshan looked back and saw him with a face filled with confusion; he was just like a lost child. He was indescribably pitiful. Li Qingshan's heart softened. He squatted down and asked gently, "You don't have anywhere to go?"

Xiao An nodded and Li Qingshan said, "Then you can keep me company!" As he said that, he opened the porcelain jar. He knew that Xiao An was afraid of moving about under the sunlight.

Xiao An smiled bashfully and flew into the jar.

Li Qingshan returned to his house with the jar. After burying the jar behind his house, he made a small burial mound.

The black ox returned and asked, "You've succeeded?"

Li Qingshan replied, "What's so difficult about dealing with an old hag?" Afterwards, he showed the ox his spoils of battle this time. He took out the page, gave it to the black ox to take a look, and asked, "Is this also an ability? Can I practise it?"

"It's an incomplete piece of paper, so obviously it's nothing much. However, this page originates from an ability called the Umbral Yin Ghost Control technique. Who knows how she got her hands on this. However, practising something incomplete like that probably won't bring about any benefits. Haven't you ever heard of biting off more than you can chew? You better achieve something with the Strength of Nine Oxen and Two Tigers first!" The black ox glanced at him and stated the origins of the page.

"Then which one is better, the Strength of Nine Oxen and Two Tigers or the Umbral Yin Ghost Control technique?"

"If it were the original version of the Strength of Nine Oxen and Two Tigers, that'll be difficult to say. Although the Umbral Yin Ghost Control technique does not focus on personal cultivation, it can amass a great deal of ghosts to overpower opponents with numbers. It's an ability for battle. If you can't defeat the caster in a single stroke, it's extremely easy for you to be swallowed up by a sea of ghosts."

"Then what about the strength of the ox demon and tiger demon that I cultivate?"

"It obviously outclasses it."

With that, Li Qingshan settled down and no longer hesitated. He casually stowed the page away.

His other spoils were nothing more than silver. Originally, Li Qingshan thought the black ox would not care about these worldly objects of white and yellow, but he never expected the black ox to firmly say after hearing him, "Good. Compared to that piece of torn paper, this is what matters!"

He looked down on an ability, yet he placed great focus on the silver. Even for Li Qingshan, who had undergone the black ox's teachings of eating meat and drinking alcohol, he could not help but feel shocked at a time like this. Brother ox sure was grounded to the secular world.

The black ox could tell what he was thinking. "Haven't you heard of the four words, wealth, companionship, method, and environment? They're the crucial requirements to cultivation, and wealth ranks first amongst them."

Li Qingshan nodded. "No matter what I do, I need a financial foundation." If the ox had not been providing the most important element so far, food, he would have no way to cultivate even if he possessed the secrets to a divine art right in his hands. "Though, I don't think I'll be able to spend too much money!" A sum of over one thousand taels of silver was a tremendous amount. If he only bought alcohol and meat, it could last a very long time.

The black ox said, "You've always been asking me just how long you'll need before you'll be able to achieve something with the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength."

"Yeah, but you always refuse to tell me."

"I can tell you now. At the rate you're cultivating currently, if nothing unexpected happens, it'll probably take you ten years before you reach the first layer of the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength, giving you the strength of an ox!"

"Ten years!" Li Qingshan's mouth hung open in surprise.

"And that's towards the shorter side of things. If you come across a bottleneck, it'll be even more difficult to say. The stronger the ability, the harder it is to practise. Do you really think daoist abilities are a peasant's tricks, where you can achieve something just by some slight practise then proceed to dominate the world? You'd better wake up!"

Li Qingshan felt like a cold bucket of water had been poured over him. All of his joy from killing the witch vanished. "In other words, if I want to complete the Strength of Nine Oxen and Two Tigers, I'll need one hundred and ten years at the very least?" He could not imagine how he might turn out to be after a hundred and ten years.

"Wrong. Abilities get more difficult the further you practise. It's nothing surprising if you don't complete it even in a couple hundred years. However, you don't have to worry too much. With each layer you achieve, your body will be consolidated, and your lifespan will obviously increase."

"Then what am I supposed to do!?" Li Qingshan personally believed he had extraordinary willpower, able to endure practise everyday without stopping. However, if he had to last like this for a few hundred years, he felt like he would go crazy just from the thought of it.

The black ox was just about done with its psychological blows. It donned a smug expression of 'Kid, do you know how powerful it is now?' Then the ox said, "If you want to reduce this time, the simplest method happens to fall on the word, wealth."

Despite Li Qingshan's strange expression, a list flew into his hands. The list stated several dozen medicines. "What's this?"

"To be used to make soup and alcohol. It's all tricks that even mortals know. It doesn't matter if you're missing any medicines from the list as long as you're not missing the most crucial one."

"Ginseng!" Li Qingshan already saw the medicine listed at the very top.

This was probably the most common and most easily obtainable spiritual medicine in the world. It was known as the King of Herbs, able to replenish vitality tremendously. In Chinese medicine, there was a soup of revival that would allow people on the brink of death to regain enough of their strength to leave behind their wills. In reality, it was ginseng soup.

"It's exactly ginseng."