

Tales of Herding Gods

Chapter 16: The Little Girl In The Temple

Bright eyes stared at the jade pendant. Even though Qin Mu was only eleven or twelve years old, he already understood many things.

Another time that Qin Mu went with Granny Si to help deliver a baby, unlike the other tragic outcome, it went smoothly. The sight of the loving family warmed his heart.

This led Qin Mu to ask how he'd been born and where his parents were. However, Granny Si wasn't able to answer him. She could only tell him that she had found him in the river and that the jade pendant had been bundled up with him.

This was the reason why Qin Mu treasured this jade pendant. He hoped that he could one day find his parents with it and ask them why they abandoned him.

After some time, Qin Mu put the jade pendant back around his neck where he usually wore it. His expression became peaceful as he stored this bizarre incident deep in his heart along with the mystery of the pendant. Granny Si, who had kept her distance behind him until that point, returned to their house just before he did.

The next day, Old Ma, Blind, Cripple, and Mute continued hunting beasts to refine the blood of the four spirits for Qin Mu. These four dangerous men had essentially swept the area around the village clean, a radius of several hundred miles to be precise, so they had to travel further to capture the spirit beasts that provided blood for refinement.

Village chief had trouble moving around on his own, Apothecary frequently had to go out to gather herbs, Butcher was always bitter and went crazy from time to time, and Deaf was only interested in calligraphy and paintings.

Therefore, Granny Si was the only person who could keep Qin Mu company while he cultivated.

However, Granny Si wasn't always in the village either. As a tailor and a midwife, the neighboring villages often requested clothes from her or asked her to help deliver a baby.

Early this morning, Granny Si left the village, and Apothecary went to gather herbs. Butcher and Deaf carried Village Chief over to the village's entrance and placed him

there. Then they both went their separate ways, one sharpening his knives and the other painting.

Overcome with boredom, Qin Mu went to the riverbank. Ever since his cow had turned into a woman and gotten herself stabbed to death by Cripple, his chores had diminished tremendously.

Standing by the river, he took a deep breath, his chest swelling with air. He then circulated his vital qi and his chest slowly returned to normal size.

He had yet to exhale. Instead, he used his vital qi to nourish his lungs, making them exceptionally tough. Then he compressed the air in his lungs, forcing it to shrink by ten times.

Qin Mu continued to breathe in and his chest still didn't expand. The moment he reached his limit, however, he rushed forward, bursting forth like an arrow shot from a bow!

Qin Mu sprinted across the river like a hurricane, splitting the water into two waves that erupted outward in his wake.

Then, all of a sudden, gleaming metal flashed above the river. Qin Mu had taken out his Pig Slaughtering Knife as he ran. It shimmered through the air, flashing like dragons swimming through the air.

This was Butcher's Pig Slaughtering knife skill! Like its creator, this knife skill felt bitter and possessed a wild, domineering aura that refused to bow to the heavens and the earth. The knife shone as it swung back and forth, capable of crushing everything in its path.

Without warning, the glimmer of metal disappeared as Qin Mu returned the Pig Slaughtering Knife to its usual place in the sheath on his back.

Transitioning to Old Ma's fist skill, he directed his vital qi to his arms and hands. Clenching a hand into a fist, Qin Mu began to resemble the Yangtze river traversing a plateau, rushing through the sky, and gushing into the sea like a never-ending torrent of water.

Thunderclap Eight Strikes First Form, Spring Thunder On The Lonely East Sea!

Throwing punch after punch, a scene of a raging river flowing into the thunderous waves of an enormous sea appeared inside of Qin Mu's mind. An essence similar to that took shape in his fist skill as well.

However, the moment it did, his fist suddenly opened up mid-punch, his fingers and palm trembling uncontrollably. The air in front of his palm compressed rapidly, then exploded outward, disrupting the surface of the river and sending water all around him.

“It still isn’t complete,” Qin Mu thought as he ran. “I still can’t achieve thunder in palm.”

Disappointment weighed upon Qin Mu. The lowest level of Old Ma’s Thunderclap Eight Strikes required the practitioner to achieve thunder in palm. Every punch needed to burst forth the booming thunder that possessed astonishing power and could seize a person’s soul.

It would then become a divine art capable of being trained to the highest level where one could control thunder and lightning with their hands, a level that Qin Mu was nowhere near reaching.

As Qin Mu continued sprinting, he grabbed a bamboo staff from its place strapped to his back. Stabbing the area around him, he wasn’t displaying an ordinary staff skill. The skill that Blind taught him was actually a spear skill. His bamboo staff resembled a great spear that churned the water of the river like a raging dragon. Every swirl, every poke, every flick, and every thrust would be accompanied by a burst of water.

Once he was satisfied, Qin Mu traded his bamboo staff for a huge iron hammer, replacing the latter’s position on his back with the former. Then he performed a series of strikes as a display of the hammer skill that Mute the Blacksmith had taught him. This hammer skill was simple and crude, but it possessed several tons of power. Each strike was extremely heavy which, along with Qin Mu’s agile running, embodied two extremes of martial ability!

After sprinting and practicing each of his skills for a considerable amount of time, Qin Mu finally felt that his vital qi was beginning to run low. His body started to feel exhausted, his strength nearly depleted. Looking at his surroundings, he discovered that he had gone dozens of miles downstream, which was quite far from Disabled Elderly Village.

“I actually ran this far without realizing it?” he thought.

Qin Mu continued to survey his surroundings until he noticed an island in the middle of the river. The violent water of the river surged around it. The sight intrigued him, and he immediately rushed over to it.

A few moments later, Qin Mu stepped onto the island, finally reaching dry land.

This island wasn’t very big. Considering its position in the middle of the river, it resembled a small hill lush with vegetation, about a thousand yards in diameter and around a hundred and thirty yards tall.

On this island was a dense forest in which only the sound of water could be heard. Deep within that forest, not far from where Qin Mu was, was a dilapidated, ancient temple.

Walking into the forest and toward the temple, Qin Mu could see that the structure was in shambles and had cobwebs everywhere. It clearly hadn't been maintained for a long time. However, it could still serve as a good spot to take a break in.

Qin Mu stopped in front of the temple. One of the doors that made up its entrance had collapsed, revealing a dim light within. He could see that a towering Buddha statue covered in gilded leaves stood inside of the temple, radiating a golden glow.

However, since no one had been here for a very long time, most of the gold on the leaves had peeled off to reveal copper enamel. Peculiar, squiggly writing could be seen on the copper. It looked as if the writing could be drawings of tadpoles.

Gigantic, thick chains wrapped around the Buddha's body, restraining it to where it was. Following the length of the chains with his gaze, Qin Mu saw that they extended from the small temple, stretched all the way to the shore of this island, and plunged deep into the raging river.

"How strange... Why are these chains tying down this giant Buddha?" Qin Mu thought to himself. "Grandpa Blind said there was some rule about lighting incense before entering a temple. Since I don't have any incense, I can only rest just outside the entrance."

Qin Mu cleared his throat, bowed, and paid his respects.

"This little one is from Disabled Elderly Village which is located near the river. I have come across your temple and would like to rest my legs here for the time being. If I have alarmed the owner of this land, I am deeply sorry."

He hesitated a moment before continuing to recite a prayer that Blind had taught him.

"Since I was young, this little one has weak kidneys and frail body. My primordial yang has long since dispersed. If a goddess sister is present in this temple, please don't hurt me."

Blind was an old and experienced wanderer, so Qin Mu firmly believed his words. There shouldn't have been any problem with reciting the prayer just like Blind had taught him.

After finishing his prayer, Qin Mu sat down on the stone steps to the temple. He removed the iron boots from his feet and the iron weights from his calves then began to recover his stamina using his breathing technique.

He had been wearing both the boots and the weights the entire time he sprinted across the river. This set had been forged by Mute the Blacksmith and weighed much more than his previous set had.

Suddenly, gentle laughter echoed from behind Qin Mu.

“You said something pretty interesting,” a feminine voice said. “Hm... I guess I won’t eat you anymore. Oh well!”

Qin Mu immediately turned around to see who had spoken.

Sitting on the palm of the Buddha, laughing at him, was a little girl that looked to be around his age. She was barefoot and wore a simple dress. Her hair had been done up in three braids. Two thin ones came down to dangle in front of her chest, and the third, thicker one hung behind her.

Her legs hung over the edge of the Buddha’s hand, swinging back and forth. The golden bracelets around her ankles jingled with each movement, complimenting her laughter and making it sound even more beautiful like the sunshine of early spring.

Qin Mu quickly got to his feet and said, “How may I address goddess sister...”

“What goddess sister?” The girl jumped down from the Buddha’s hand and gave him a wide smile, revealing her small canine teeth. “My name is Xian Qing’er and I live nearby. I’ve never seen a goddess sister, though. What is your name?”

Seeing the girl’s beautiful smile, Qin Mu figured she couldn’t be bad and sighed in relief. “My name is Qin Mu, which means the boy who herds cows. Qin is my surname. The elders in the village would always let me herd the cows.”

“Oh?” Xian Qing’er walked to behind the remaining temple door and pulled it open so she could get a closer look at him. She then looked behind him and giggled. “Where’s your cow then?”

Qin Mu hesitated for a moment before saying, “It transformed into a woman, so there no longer is a cow.”

“Such an interesting thing can still happen?” Xian Qing’er asked in astonishment, then became excited. “How did it transform? Can you transform?”

Qin Mu shook his head. “I am currently unable to, but my granny can.”

“I thought you knew!” Xian Qing’er replied in disappointment. “What other interesting things have you seen? Quickly! Come in and tell me all about them!”

Just as Qin Mu moved his leg to step forward and enter the temple, his gaze went past Xian Qing'er and noticed a few white bones sticking out from behind the Buddha statue. A bad feeling suddenly appeared in his heart, his leg came to a stop in mid-air, and he hesitantly said, "Grandpa Blind told me to always light incense and pay respects to the Buddha before entering a temple. Since I don't have any incense with me, it's best for me to stay out here."

"Just come in!" Xian Qing'er smiled sweetly.

"I think it would be better for me to stay outside." Qin Mu blinked his eyes and moved his foot back, giving her a smile that was much more sincere than the ones that Cripple would wear. "Why don't you come out instead? Then I'll be able to tell you about some fun, interesting stuff."

Xian Qing'er's gaze wavered slightly, and she bit her lips and giggled. "I know some shameful things that only a boy and a girl can do. Come in and I'll teach you about them."

Compared to her bright, youthful demeanor from before, her sweet breath and charming breath now seemed slightly seductive.

Qin Mu's face turned red, and he took short, ragged breaths.

"I've had weak kidneys since I was young..." he said stubbornly.

"Get in here right now!" A guttural roar came out from the little girl's mouth.