

## GREAT SAGE 2

### Chapter 2 - Cultivating by Eating Meat

"I lost it," Li Qingshan replied in a detached manner as if he had just been pulled out of a fantasy world to a cruel reality.

"Then go look! If you lose our ox, it'll be a miracle if your brother doesn't beat you to death when he comes home, you wastrel of a thing. If the ox is gone, you can go too!"

"That's my ox!" Li Qingshan strided out from the house. If he still did not leave, he would probably fail to hold himself back from teaching this woman a lesson. However, if he really did that, he would no longer be able to remain in the house. As such, he could only yield.

It was not until dusk did he return to the cowshed in exhaustion. His eyes shone as he looked around the empty cowshed before gloominess overcame him again.

Aside from letting the ox out to graze and cleaning, Li Qingshan's daily job was to lead the cattle to the landowner's home to help out so that he could cover the expenses of some necessities.

Without the ox, he could only work like the other farm hands today; this was work that even adults found tiring, let alone a growing child like him. He had not even eaten breakfast.

Compared to his exhaustion, the insults and scolding from the farm head only seemed like an insignificant daily matter. Falling into the straw head-first, he no longer wanted to think about anything else, but his belly began to rumble.

It was obvious. In an environment like this, any aspirations he had would have been worn away completely, only leaving behind the instincts needed for survival.

Just when Li Qingshan was bleary-eyed, the thud of something heavy hitting the ground sounded. He opened his eyes and came face to face with something strange with a pair of long, white tusks. He could not help but jump in fright. Only when his head cleared up did he see that it was a wild boar. It had died recently, so it still emitted warmth.

The black ox crouched down before the trough and 'smiled' at him. Li Qingshan could already distinguish the expressions of the black ox to some degree.

Night fell. In the house, the sister-in-law grumbled to Li Qingshan's elder brother, "That little bastard is completely hopeless. He actually managed to lose such a large ox. No, he must have sold it secretly. Nope, we have to split the property and break up the family. If this continues, he'll bring ruin upon us."

The elder brother was in his thirties. He had a large build and was known for being unreasonable and insolent in the village, but he was extremely submissive to his wife. "But if we do split, all that good land had been allocated to him before the village elders." He had used Li Qingshan's young age and inability to farm as an excuse to claim the land. He had no plans to return it, but if they planned on breaking up the family, they would be forced to.

"Hasn't caretaker Liu been constantly eyeing that piece of land? Just sell it to him. If that little bastard is bold enough, he would go to caretaker Liu for his share."

“But what if he doesn’t want to go forward with this?”

“Starve him for three days. Will disagreeing still be an issue then?”

As the two discussed, the sister-in-law suddenly sniffed. “Do you smell something?”

“How fragrant! Seems like someone is cooking meat!”

“There’s no festival right now, so what’re they cooking meat for? It seems... it seems to be near us.”

The two of them followed the smell and arrived inside the cowshed. All they saw was a propped up pot inside with a bonfire below. The pot bubbled as a delicious smell permeated the surroundings.

The fire flickered about in the darkness, projecting Li Qingshan’s shadow onto the walls.

The sister-in-law gulped. “Brat, where’d you steal the meat from?” Not only was she lazy, but she was even gluttonous as well. Looking at the pot of meat soup, she even forgot about how Li Qingshan had offended her. She went up and picked up the ladle, stirring the soup.

On the other hand, the elder brother had sharper eyes. He immediately spotted what Li Qingshan was sitting on and cried out, “A wild boar!”

Wild boars could be described as extremely dangerous amongst the creatures that roamed the mountains. Their hides were so thick and tough that they were difficult to wound even with blades. Even regular hunters would avoid them like the plague upon encountering them, so capturing one went without saying.

“When I was looking for the ox, I came across it at the foot of the mountain. It was injured, probably chased to its last breath by hunters,” Li Qingshan answered with the story he had prepared beforehand. He had to keep the black ox’s intelligence an absolute secret. Otherwise, once news of a daemon ox made its way out, who knows when the forces of heaven would come knocking.

The elder brother was half-convinced. He also began to smile. “Brother, you sure have a fool’s luck. Once I take this boar to the market, it’ll definitely fetch a good price. We’ll stow it away for when you get married.” He also took note of the black ox. Thinking to himself, Perhaps there is no need to be in such a hurry to break him off from the family. The ox can do some farm work, right?

Li Qingshan saw the sister-in-law stir the pot in a manner where she only wanted to try a piece of the meat. His good mood from cooking the meat immediately vanished. With a smack, he knocked away the sister-in-law’s hand. “Don’t fiddle around.”

The sister-in-law backed away while clutching her hand. She wailed, “Look at your younger brother. I said that he would harass a woman like me while you’re not home, and you didn’t even believe me. Now that it has all happened right before you, you’ve clearly witnessed it all.”

Harass you? Li Qingshan only felt his stomach lurch. If your surname is Pan, I guess I could be worse off.

The elder brother’s face immediately sank. “Is this how a brother-in-law’s supposed to act?”

Li Qingshan lowered his head. "I have my plans for this meat. I'm not young anymore. It's time for us to separate." This was something he had been considering while cooking the meat. He no longer wanted to yield in the face of constant abuse just to keep a roof over his head.

The elder brother never anticipated Li Qingshan to mention this matter before he could even bring it up. He was stunned at first before anger overcame him. A simple farmer like him was not a person who could hold back his anger. He clenched his fist and made his way up, planning to beat up Li Qingshan and drag away the wild boar before making any further decisions.

Sensing his hostility, Li Qingshan stood up as well. He was stern, but he felt rather afraid inside. His body had yet to develop completely, and after a day of tiresome work, he had not eaten. How was he supposed to face off against an adult man? He glanced at the black ox, but the bull only watched on like it was all a show, displaying no intention of helping out.

Just as he felt pained inside as he prepared himself for a beating, the elder brother stopped in his tracks and looked at Li Qingshan's right hand.

His large, rough hands held a similarly crude knife. Since it was filled with impurities, it would still seem dull even if the blade was polished with care.

This was a knife that Li Qingshan had bought from the market with the money he had pinched and scraped together through the years. It had many uses. Earlier, he had used it to cut the meat.

Li Qingshan immediately understood that his elder brother was nervous. He was not nervous about himself but the knife. Before this moment, he had never realised that the low quality knife in his hands actually had the power to deter people.

Li Qingshan was only the average student in his past life. While he had been involved in a few fights before, they were merely disputes with fellow students. Even in his two lives combined, he had never pointed a weapon at someone.

Understanding this, Li Qingshan tightened his grip on the knife and purposefully waved it around like a wild beast baring its fangs; he did this despite being afraid of using it.

The elder brother immediately took a step back, and the sister-in-law stopped wailing about. In the end, the two of them actually backed out of the cowshed in great disappointment. They cursed him outside before returning to the house to discuss their 'grand plan'.

Li Qingshan turned a deaf ear to it all. He even forgot about the smell of the meat. He only stared at his knife in a daze, which reflected a blurry face back at him. This piece of cheap junk that had cost him a few pieces of silver had just saved him from a physical beating. It had protected him from a series of humiliation and had protected his spoils.

While this was a principle that was as clear as day, he made him feel enlightened.

The black ox crouched before the trough and smiled at him.

The fire swayed, and a huge figure stood with a knife on the wall. At that moment, a youth had understood the exact value of strength.

Quite a while later, Li Qingshan sat back down and scratched his cheek in embarrassment as he looked at the pot. "Just how much longer does the meat need to cook for?" He had always been a person who liked meat with his meals. The past few years had really been tough for him. When their parents were still with them, he could get a few mouthfuls whenever there were festivities. Ever since their passing, he could only forget about it. The amount of meat they had was not even enough to feed the sister-in-law alone.

Even if a bottle of immortal pills were placed before him right now, it would not make him care as much as the pot of meat.

The boar was rather large. The pot of meat took half the night to cook.

The rising flames, the permeating fragrance, the hissing sounds, and the absorbed teenager formed an extremely simple and primitive scene despite the absence of a sentimental and poetic nature.

In the end, there was not even a grain of salt, let alone other seasonings, but Li Qingshan wolfed it down so fast that he almost swallowed his tongue. Without the slightest care about how fatty or lean the pieces were, several pounds of meat entered his belly. Finally, he even polished off the meat soup completely.

If someone were to ask Li Qingshan right now what happiness was, he would definitely reply that happiness was a pot of meat soup.

1. The latter sentence is a reference to one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature, *Water Margin*. Within the story, there is a character by the name of Wu Song. His elder brother, Wu Dalang (Essentially translates to Wu the Elder), ends up marrying a beauty, Pan Jinlian, despite his own dwarf stature and unimpressive appearance. Before long, Pan Jinlian commits adultery with a local merchant by the name of Ximen Qing. Wu Dalang ends up finding the two of them in bed, before being injured by a kick to the abdomen. Pan Jinlian and Ximen Qing end up poisoning Wu Dalang to his death before bribing the coroner for a quick cremation and keeping his silence about Wu Dalang's true cause of death, as well as the magistrate. You can keep reading about it here, but in short, the author's implying that while the sister-in-law's a two-sided bitch, she's still better off than the treacherous Pan Jinlian, but she's still being compared to Pan Jinlian at the end of the day.