

Chapter 28 - The Promise of 'South'

The man was surprised. He only saw the spiritual ginseng levitating in the air. He panicked and used his movement technique, reaching towards the spiritual ginseng, but it directly flew off the cliff. He could only watch as it vanished into the darkness. He was so depressed that he wanted to spit blood.

"No, I have to get the spiritual ginseng. I'll get father to send people over to search the mountains when I get back."

The man only thought it was a wondrous property of the spiritual ginseng, but if his eyes had been awakened, he would have seen the spiritual ginseng being firmly clutched in a pair of small, pale-white hands. He had stalked his prey, but he was unaware of being stalked himself. A ghost he could not see had remained hidden in the dark the entire time.

At the bottom of the cliff, Xiao An used everything he had to hold onto the spiritual ginseng, drifting towards the Drawn Reins village along with the night wind. He was so happy that he wanted to explode in joy. It was all due to the nurturing he had experienced when he resided in the scholar wood tablet that he possessed the strength to grab something so heavy.

In the courtyard, Li Qingshan yawned. His eyes suddenly lit up when he saw Xiao An drift over from afar. "Little ghost, where did you run off to?"

Xiao An bit his lip sternly, suppressing the joy he felt inside as he laid the spiritual ginseng in his hands in front of Li Qingshan.

"Hmm? What's this? Ginseng?" Li Qingshan took the spiritual ginseng and sniffed it gently. A strange, faint fragrance entered his nose, and he immediately felt his mind shudder. The true qi in his body seemed to become much livelier.

Li Qingshan suddenly thought of something. "This is... the spiritual ginseng!" He experienced quite a lot of disbelief. The spiritual herb that had turned two villages against each other as absolute enemies and claimed several dozen lives was currently in his hands.

The black ox chewed the grass lazily. "Why else do you think the little ghost runs off every night?"

Li Qingshan checked Xiao An. As expected, he was exhausted, but he also felt endless joy. He even used his small hand to point at his mouth as if he were telling Li Qingshan to eat it.

For the past few days, Xiao An would leave when it was dusk and only return when it was close to dawn, no longer communicating with him as much as before. Li Qingshan had thought the little ghost yearned for freedom and wanted to leave him. Only now did he understand that all of it was his sake.

"This kid!" Li Qingshan felt his nose tingle, as he was on the verge of crying. "Why didn't you say so earlier!"

Xiao An smiled bashfully before pointing at his mouth again.

Even though Li Qingshan had a heart of stone, he could not help but be touched as he faced this pure gaze without the slightest hint of selfishness. He asked the black ox, "Xiao An should be able to use the spiritual ginseng as well, right?"

The black ox said, "The spiritual ginseng is a rare, innate object of nature. The spiritual qi it contains is beneficial even to ghosts. However, if you use it for yourself, you can easily achieve the strength of an ox. Can you bring yourself to share it?"

Li Qingshan said, "Why can't I? The spiritual ginseng came from Xiao An in the first place, so Xiao An should use it. I can just slowly practise my ability." The way he approached matters had not changed due to the temptation of the spiritual ginseng.

Xiao An immediately retreated and waved his hands.

"Enough. I will appreciate your kind intentions, so just take it."

All Xiao An did was shake his head. In the end, he turned into a wisp and dove into the wooden tablet.

"Oi, get out here. If you don't want it, I'm going to throw it away."

The black ox suddenly called out, "Since he wants you to have it, why must you be so persistent and act like a little girl? Won't you be able to find something that's a hundred or a thousand times better than the spiritual ginseng for him?"

Li Qingshan shuddered inside and nodded. "Brother ox is right. I've been obstinate. Alright, come out. I'll use the spiritual ginseng." Xiao An immediately flew out.

"However, you do deserve a share of this. I can't use it all for myself. If you decline again, I'm going to get angry."

Only then did Xiao An agree.

Li Qingshan waved the spiritual ginseng in his hand. "Brother ox, how do I use this?" Xiao An was a ghost, so he was unable to eat anything.

The black ox said, "Go find a needle and extract a droplet of ginseng juice."

Li Qingshan abided, finding a needle before stabbing it into the spiritual ginseng. The spiritual ginseng trembled in his hand, but he obviously would not become soft-hearted against a plant. A droplet of ginseng juice oozed out, gathering on the tip of the needle.

The black ox said, "Alright, drip it onto his forehead!"

"Forehead? Xiao An, raise your head!"

Xiao An raised his head in a hurry, and the droplet of ginseng juice dripped from the needle, landing between his eyebrows. His body trembled like a ripple of water as the ginseng juice suddenly shone resplendently in his body.

Xiao An shut his eyes firmly. His expression was sometimes of pain and sometimes of joy. He only calmed down after the light had subsided, and he slowly opened his eyes. There was now something extra in his eyes. Two tear streaks ran down his face.

“What’s wrong?”

The black ox said, “He must have remembered something.”

“Really? Xiao An, do you remember who you are and where your home is?” Li Qingshan knelt on one knee in a hurry and looked into his eyes.

Xiao An hesitated for quite a while before pointing in a direction. The south.

Li Qingshan asked rapidly, “Your home’s to the south? Which city is it? Is it far from here?”

However, Xiao An was unable to answer these questions. He only shook his head in confusion.

Suddenly, Li Qingshan drew his hunting blade and began carving the scholar wood tablet. Wood shavings fell down, and the word ‘south’ immediately appeared on the blank side. He lifted it up in front of Xiao An.

Under the moonlight, a young man knelt on the ground on one knee and promised seriously to a child. “No matter how many dangers, difficulties, obstacles, and hardships there are, there will be a day when I send you home.”

The child stared at his figure blankly, never able to forget this, just like the red mole that had formed between his eyebrows where the droplet had landed.

Li Qingshan hung the wooden tablet on his waist again before asking Xiao An whether he felt any differences. He wondered whether the spiritual ginseng was useful or not.

Xiao An leapt into the air and flew around the courtyard like a whirlwind. He lifted up Li Qingshan’s hunting blade and swung it about in the yard.

If it were someone else, all they would be able to see was a blade dancing about by itself, moving as if it possessed its own consciousness.

Not only had Xiao An become much faster, but he could even carry heavier objects. He had become stronger. If he launched a sneak attack or an ambush, even masters within the jianghu would be doomed.

“Brother ox, am I supposed to use it like that as well?”

“That would be too big of a waste. The best way to ingest the ginseng is to combine it with other spiritual herbs and refine it into a pill, but you don’t have that option. You can treat the spiritual ginseng like ordinary ginseng and soak it in alcohol. That way, the spiritual ginseng won’t wither, but its spiritual qi will permeate the alcohol, turning it into spiritual alcohol. You’ll be able to absorb its effects slowly. Oh also, you can’t mix it with any other medicines.”

“That’s a good idea!” Li Qingshan knew it was impossible for him to digest the spiritual ginseng in a single stroke. If he did try, it would either lack great effect, or he would just explode. “However, for a treasure like this, I just don’t feel safe unless I carry it on me.”

When he said that, a wine gourd flew towards Li Qingshan. He caught it. "Thanks, brother ox!" He placed the spiritual ginseng inside the gourd, filled it up with strong alcohol, before hanging it on his waist.

He crossed his arms, standing with his powerful body and the large gourd by his side. He was still young, but he gave off an uninhibited, heroic air.

"Xiao An, don't you think I look more and more like a person of the jianghu?"

Xiao An smiled as well, but then his expression changed. He became worried. However, he could not speak, so he panicked slightly. Suddenly, he thought of something, crouched down on the ground and began drawing.

Li Qingshan went up to take a look. Xiao An had actually written a line of pretty words. He did not understand calligraphy, but he could tell that Xiao An's words were dignified, delicate, and elegant, much better than his own handwriting.