

Chapter 33 - A Battle at the Peak

If they were alone, the current Li Qingshan possessed the confidence to defeat or even kill Jun Yang within ten moves.

“Hmph, you’ll wish you had accepted my offer immediately!” Yang Jun was about to issue an order for his men to capture Li Qingshan. Even if the Drawn Reins village could not be trifled with, there was no need to worry about anything being divulged if the corpse and all the traces were destroyed considering that they were so deep in the mountains.

Li Qingshan’s body seized up. He planned on going straight for the leader to destroy the group. He could endure a strike from the sword and capture Yang Jun before deciding what to do.

Someone suddenly said, “Young master, he seems to be carrying the Stone Splitter bow on his back!”

“What? The Stone Splitter bow!” Yang Jun stopped and studied the great bow on Li Qingshan’s back. Even he possessed some understanding of the renowned weapon of the figure who had made a name for himself near Qingyang city. “Where did you get the bow from?”

“It’s obviously a gift from the hunting chief,” said Li Qingshan.

Yang Jun became uneasy. He would hear and see things in the sect, so he had learnt everything he should know. To be able to receive this weapon, he was probably Huang Binghu’s successor, the next hunting chief of the Drawn Reins village.

If someone like him died, the Drawn Reins village would never let the matter rest. They could find out they had been moving about in this area without much effort at all. If they truly tried to avenge him with everything that they had, their sneak attacks and traps would be difficult to handle. He could not afford to cause something like that because of his momentary anger. He waved his hand. “Kid, don’t let me meet you again.”

In the blink of an eye, all of them were gone. Once again, only Li Qingshan was left on the mountain path. He was not a mind reader, but he could guess that they probably feared the might of the Drawn Reins village.

When strangers see you, they are never looking at just you. Instead, they look at your influence, strength, and wealth. Although Li Qingshan was no different from a third-rate master, he had only evaded the dangerous situation prior because of the bow on his back.

He was fuming as he thought to himself, I swear I am not a man if I don’t repay this debt. I won’t accept anyone who purposefully makes things difficult for me, nor will I live relying on the names of others.

Originally, he disagreed with the black ox’s philosophy that even the slightest grievance, such as a hostile glare, had to be resolved. He felt that as a man, he should be slightly forgiving. Only now did he understand that many great grievances often developed from just this hostile glare, evolving into life or death struggles.

After more than a month since his departure, Li Qingshan returned to the Crouching Ox village once more. Before he had even set foot through the gate, he heard something in his house. Is there a thief?

Fair enough, my residence is rather remote. I would like to see just which thief dares to rob me. His anger had not subsided, so he made his way in quickly and grabbed the person, causing them to turn around in pain.

The two pairs of eyes met, and they both became surprised.

“Li Fugui!”

“Erlang!”

“What are you doing in my house?”

“Erlang, you’re alive?”

Li Qingshan saw how even though he had been gone for over a month, there was not a speck of dust in the house. Then he realised that Li Fugui was not stealing anything. Rather, he was cleaning his house for him.

“Of course I’m alive. Why do you say that?”

Only with that question did Li Qingshan find out the story. When there was no more news of him after he left Cypress Stream village, combined with how villagers had seen him in conflict with the people of the Drawn Reins village, they had all said that he was done for.

Li Fugui even burnt some joss paper and cried for him.

Li Qingshan had no idea how to react. “Aren’t I alive and well? Hunting chief Huang of the Drawn Reins village invited me to their village as a guest, so I stayed there for a few days.”

Li Fugui never imagined he could enter a place of danger like the Drawn Reins village and still emerge alive. As for hunting chief Huang’s invitation, he did not believe it much at all. In his eyes, Li Qingshan was powerful. However, he was still nowhere close to someone like Huang Binghu. He did not know how to respond, so all he did was repeat, “As long as you’re fine, as long as you’re fine.” It did touch Li Qingshan a little. He had not chosen to help the wrong person before.

However, Li Fugui’s expression suddenly became worried. “You’d better go. Don’t let the people from the village know that you’re here.”

“What has happened now?”

“The first son of the village head has returned. He said he’s looking to make things difficult for you.”

“Li Long!”

Li Qingshan did not find the name of the village head Li’s first son, or Li Hu and Li Bao’s¹ elder brother, unfamiliar. Instead, his name had been mentioned so often in the village that Li Qingshan’s ears were about to fall off.

Li Long was only a few years older than him, but it was said that when he was playing around outside, a noble had taken a fancy to him. As a result, he had been taken to Qingyang city to learn martial arts. He would only return whenever there was a festival. He had seen the cowherd Li Qingshan a few times, but they had never even held a conversation before.

In the eyes of the villagers, he was an important figure of excellence who had managed to leave the village and reach Qingyang city. The daughter of every family in the village longed to be engaged to him. Along with caretaker Liu's son, little caretaker Liu, they were known as the 'Two Talents of the Crouching Ox'.

Of course, after Li Qingshan's sudden rise, perhaps it should be known as the 'Three Talents of the Crouching Ox'. However, Li Qingshan had never gone out and seen the world. He had never gone to Qingyang city before, so regarding him as the 'third talent' seemed a little far-fetched.

Li Qingshan said, "Am I supposed to be afraid of him?" Not only was he not afraid, but he even wanted to check him out. He ignored Li Fugui's efforts of dissuasion and took off for village head Li's home.

In the village head's house, a young man with a buzz cut lectured village head Li, "Even any old person is bold enough to harass us. You really are letting your lives worsen instead of bettering it." Then he pointed at Li Hu and Li Bao. "And look at you two grown men, you're just letting others harass us as much as they want?"

He had basically grown up in Qingyang city, having experienced and witnessed a great abundance of things. As such, he already treated himself as a person of Qingyang. He was looking at what happened in the village from the perspective of a 'city folk' right now, so he automatically developed a sense of disdain; it was not just to Li Qingshan, but to everything that had to do with the village as well.

He was not young, but he had yet to marry. His household had once frantically searched for a partner for him, but he readily rejected it all. A village girl was no longer worthy of him.

The village head, who had been so mighty in the village, could only serve as a yes-man now. "Don't be irritated, my son. That kid is dead anyway."

"He provoked the Drawn Reins village, so that's him bringing about his own death. It'll save me the effort of teaching him a lesson."

Li Hu shrank back and agreed to his every word, but Li Bao said, "Big brother, you are not allowing us to join the Iron Fist school to learn martial arts, so of course we'll be harassed in the village."

Li Long shot a glance at him. "That's because both of you are unworthy!"

"Li Qingshan is not dead! Li Qingshan has returned!" Someone called out suddenly from outside.

Li Long leapt to his feet.

If that piece of news only caused a ripple in the calm village, then the message of 'Li Qingshan is going to village head Li's house!' would be a roaring wave, causing the entire village to set out once more. They wanted to see the battle at the peak between the first talent and the third talent of Crouching Ox village.

Under the scorching sun, Li Qingshan and Li Long gazed into each other's eyes. The villagers all held their breaths as if they were afraid of disturbing them.

Li Hu and Li Bao stood beside Li Long to add to his presence. Li Long waved his hand and sent the two away. "Li Erlang, long time no see. You've already grown this big."

He had completely spoken in the tone of a senior to a junior, but the villagers believed he had that right. They whispered,

“Erlang is in big trouble this time.”

“Yeah, Li Long can’t be compared to those scoundrels like patch-haired Liu.”

Li Qingshan did not continue the conversation. He looked at Li Long’s tall, sturdy stature, with swelling muscles and a pair of shining eyes. Just by standing there, he gave off an aura of might, but Li Qingshan’s instincts told him that this person was not as powerful as Huang Binghu.

1. Li is the surname. Long means dragon, Hu means tiger and Bao means leopard. They’re all named after ferocious beasts.