

Chapter 5 - Nine Oxen and Two Tigers

The black ox did not reply. Instead, it closed its eyes.

Li Qingshan laid flat on the bed. He remained calm on the surface, but his emotions were surging uncontrollably on the inside. As a result, he was unable to fall asleep even till the early hours of the morning. However, once his heart that had been stretched tight by excitement finally eased up, he felt even more exhausted than after working an entire day on the farm. He immediately sank into a deep sleep.

That night, he dreamed of becoming the enemy of thousands, killing until mountains of corpses blotted out the sun and seas of blood swallowed the stars.

Waking up, his dream receded like the tides. Sunlight poured in brilliantly. It was already late in the morning.

Patch-haired Liu's death was like a droplet of water to a pot of oil. It caused a great disturbance in the village. He had always been making trouble in the village, and now, he was finally dead. Basically all the villagers clapped and cheered, saying that it was retribution.

However, they then began to speculate about the person responsible for this. There were many people who had grievances with patch-haired Liu, but there were not many who were bold enough to settle it. There were no secrets in this tiny village. As soon as the villagers thought about what had happened in the ancestral hall the day before and how the person in question did not come to check out such a major event, they only became further convinced about their speculation.

"Li Erlang has committed murder."

"He seems quiet most of the time, but he actually possesses such bravery."

"He has probably fled already."

As the quiet discussion continued, the elder brother and sister-in-law turned pale-white, while caretaker Liu and village head Li had sunken expressions. The scoundrels became so frightened that they were weak in the knees. If they had been the one who had gone out last night, wouldn't they be lying there right now instead?

Someone called out, "Li Erlang is here." The crowd automatically parted to form a path. Under everyone's gazes, Li Qingshan strode over to patch-haired Liu's corpse. He could not tell last night due to the darkness, but looking at it now, he also felt that patch-haired Liu had suffered a horrific death. However, he showed none of it on his face. All he said was, "Good riddance." He glanced around at the crowd.

They all felt that Li Qingshan seemed to have become a completely different person overnight. He had become rather fearful. Everyone his gaze brushed past felt a chill run down their spines, while those who had been directly involved with him leaped in fright.

Village head Li said, "Tie up Li Er and take him to the ancestral hall."

Crouching Ox village was simply too remote, so they were basically autonomous. A discussion among the village elders would decide everything. Even for murders, they had to capture the person first and then send them to the government offices. It was impossible to rely on the government officials to make an arduous journey of several dozen kilometres across mountains and rivers to a place like this to capture someone. As a result, the village basically never had any contact with the government, and people were directly judged in the village.

There was a disturbance among the crowd of villagers. Li Qingshan raised his eyebrows. "Who dares to?" Even without a weapon in hand, he possessed the deterrent of the murder, so he was like a drawn sword, shining with a cold edge.

Not a single villager stepped forward, and it was not only because they feared Li Qingshan. All people had a concept of right and wrong, and the thoughts of the villagers were simple. Village head, you've been colluding with tyrants to harass the kind-hearted, so what right do you have to order us around? We've all watched Erlang grow up as well. He even calls you grandfather, yet you can still bring yourself to do this. Patch-haired Liu deserved to die. Erlang has gotten rid of a menace for us.

"Patch-haired Liu drank too much and tripped to his death. What's it got to do with Erlang?" The speaker was Zhang Wuge, who had a grievance with patch-haired Liu. Patch-haired Liu had tried to harass his wife while he was in the fields. Back then, he was tempted to throw his life at patch-haired Liu, and he only stopped under the bitter pleadings of his wife. Now that he saw this fellow's corpse, he felt an indescribable sense of delight.

Someone added immediately, "Yeah, yeah. He fell to his death. This is heaven's retribution."

There was a hubbub of agreement as they echoed the sentiment that patch-haired Liu's death was purely accidental. They completely ignored patch-haired Liu's constricted pupils. Additionally, their gazes towards Li Qingshan bore some respect now.

Li Qingshan suddenly felt rather moved. This was the so-called will of the people.

Village head Li knew that if this continued, his authority in the village would be heavily affected. More importantly, he was truly afraid of Li Qingshan's revenge. If he had known that this kid was so vicious, he never would have twisted his words for a few pieces of silver. Currently, none of the villagers heeded his order, while the other scoundrels were even worse than the villagers, having secretly slipped away already.

He could only glance at caretaker Liu. Caretaker Liu should have been able to order around the servants and workers of his home, but he pretended to not notice. It was the sister-in-law who insisted on selling the land to him anyway, and he was never directly involved in the matter either. He had a lot of matters to attend to, so why would he go up against such a vicious and brutal person over such a small affair? Moreover, it would be his loss if he accidentally aggravated the villagers.

Unknowingly, he had already begun treating Li Qingshan as a vicious and brutal person.

"Possessed by demons, possessed by demons. I've said so before, I've said so before." The witch suddenly pointed at Li Qingshan and began wailing.

Her words fazed all of the villagers, causing them to move away from Li Qingshan involuntarily.

Li Qingshan went up and kicked her to the ground. "You old hag, how much longer are you going to falsely accuse me? If you utter another word, I'll rip your mouth to pieces."

The witch uttered an 'Ouch' before shutting up. She only stared at him in resentment.

Li Qingshan was composed and unafraid. "If you truly possess supernatural abilities, then you better get those gods and ghosts to come look for me. Let's see whether I'll be afraid or not." With that, he left the crowd with his head held high. After he arrived at an area without any people, his imposing manner finally deflated. He only felt his heart thump heavily, but he knew that he had made the right move.

If he hid at home due to fear and gave village head Li time to mobilise the villagers, people would probably come for him before nighttime had even arrived. With his current stature, he was truly in no shape to take on a few adult men. He could only truly be safe and sound by making a risky move, overwhelming the others in terms of presence and swaying the public opinion to his side.

Returning to the cottage, the black ox had already been waiting. It examined Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan also noticed the strange atmosphere. He went up and bowed politely, raising his head and asking with a smile, "Brother ox, do you still want to hold a banquet for the acceptance of a disciple?"

The black ox said, "Hasn't all of your wine and meat been acquired by me? Yet you still want to hold a banquet for the acceptance of a disciple."

Li Qingshan shrugged. "Then I'll help you harvest some tender grass instead?"

The gaze of the black ox darkened. "Let's stop kidding around. You have the heart to kill, which is why I will teach you the art of killing. In the future, you'll have to contend and fight against a lot of people, so you won't get another day of peace. If you aren't skillful enough and end up getting killed instead, then you'll only be able to die with no objections."

"The strong prey on the weak. It's the same no matter where you go. I can't say no objections, only no regrets."

The black ox replied, "Well put, no regrets. Since you've made up your mind, I will pass onto you the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength. Once you attain the strength of an ox and have established a foundation, I'll then pass onto you the Tiger Demon's Fist of Bone Forging. By practising them together, you will be able to attain a supernatural ability from daoism, the Strength of Nine Oxen and Two Tigers. By then, you will be able to wander the world unopposed."

"The Strength of Nine Oxen and Two Tigers?" When Li Qingshan first heard that, it seemed like nothing special. What was so extraordinary about nine oxen and two tigers? They were just the most ordinary of livestock and wild beast, yet they were worthy of being called a supernatural ability, enough for him to wander the world unopposed?

However, after further thought, he felt shocked. He had tended to an ox for more than a decade, so he understood just how strong an ox was. A bull had the strength of ten fit men. As long as he achieved the strength of an ox, he could don a suit of armour, and with a weapon in hand, he could charge onto the battlefield and earn the title of a valiant general.

There was nothing extraordinary about nine oxen and two tigers, but if all of their strength were gathered on a single person, the person's every single action would bear the weight of thousands of kilograms. Would there still be anyone who could stop him? Even if Lü Bu was reborn and Li Yuanba was still alive, they would also struggle to block a gentle punch of his.

"But since it's a daoist ability, why's there 'ox demon' and 'tiger demon' in the name?"

"The ability originated from times of antiquity. It has already been lost now."

Li Qingshan became excited after hearing the ox mention times of antiquity. Based on his knowledge, any kind of pill, medicine, esoteric manual, or treasure that had anything to do with that phrase would be unmatched.

However, the black ox's following explanation disappointed him greatly, as the ability had been lost due to being too hard to use. It had been replaced by other abilities and skills created by later prodigies and masters. In other words, it had fallen obsolete.

The wise men of antiquity were impressive, but the people who came after them might have been just as great as them. Besides, they would be standing on the shoulders of these wise men of antiquity.

"Cultivators of the current age focus on practising qi and neglect practising the body. They even call their bodies vile skin-bags. This ability that pursues brute strength will obviously be looked down upon."

"Heh, but there's no need for you to be too disappointed. The ability I'm teaching you is no longer the original version. Instead, it has been improved by an almighty daemon, which is why it has 'ox demon' and 'tiger' demon in its name. The ox demon refines its body, while the tiger demon forges its bones. You will be entering cultivation through demonic means. Just like how the righteous grows by a foot while the demonic grows by ten, it'll be much more powerful."

"Are there any side effects to practising this ability as a human?"

"I don't know, as nobody has tried it before. You might suffer from cultivation deviation and become a daemon or demon."

The black ox said it easily, but Li Qingshan could only smile wryly. If it were just practising a long lost ability from times of antiquity, then so be it. At most, he would just be a freak and be laughed at by other cultivators. However, practising this ability that had been modified through daemonic methods might turn him into a monster. He might end up getting purged.

However, now was not the time for him to be picky. After a while of consideration, Li Qingshan inhaled deeply. "Please teach me this ability, brother ox." If someone could understand his desire to change his fate right now, they would understand that even if a demon gave him an offer, he would have accepted it.

The black ox explained the essentials of the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength to him in detail, and Li Qingshan immediately began to practise it. He tried every gesture and motion, exercising his body and moving his limbs around.

Under the dazzling sun, there was an old ox and a young man under the swaying tree shade. The old ox crouched down leisurely and gave guidance as the young man remained solemn and respectful, listening quietly and attentively.

Although the black ox was unable to personally demonstrate the moves, its every single sentence would always hit the mark, enlightening Li Qingshan and deepening his understanding of the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength. His movements would grow more vigorous as a result.

The black ox seemed unconcerned, but it was very satisfied with this disciple's comprehension ability. He was truly a person with innate knowledge. Someone like him would never remain in the underbrush for long. He was unfortunate to be born in a village deep in the mountains, which was quite a mishap. He was a dragon in shallow water, a tiger in the plains.

If he had been born in a prosperous city, his talent for both martial arts and literary pursuits would have demonstrated itself already. He would have become a man of outstanding talent, without the need to be indicated by a few foolish villagers.

However, exactly because of this, the ox was able to get its hands on such a great diamond in the rough. Moreover, it was not like it only wanted to raise him into a man of talent.