

Chapter 6 - Settling a Small Grievance

Who knows how many so-called prodigies of startling talent the black ox had seen before. Every single one of them would be naturally endowed with talent and divine fortune, but only a handful would actually achieve something in the end. Instead, many ordinary, nameless folk would spring into prominence overnight, making themselves known through the world as they reached the pinnacle of this path of cultivation.

Throughout these years, it had purposefully stood aside and watched on coldly, letting Li Qingshan be strengthened through hardships. It had only spoken out at the most crucial moment. It was like a blacksmith, slowly refining and tempering its material. Only then could a supreme weapon be forged.

Ordinary people cared about foreign aspects like talent, fortuitous encounter, and so on, but the ox looked at a person's willpower. If you were someone with a weak will, even if you were given a colossal fortune, could you bear the weight that came with it?

So and so, one was willing to teach and the other was willing to learn, so they obviously made rapid progress. In under two hours, Li Qingshan gained a rough understanding of the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength. He had vaguely grasped its essentials.

Although the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength was a set of punching moves, it focused on forging the muscle and the bones, the skin and the flesh, strengthening the body. The actual way of punching was secondary. There were only three forms, which were 'The Ox Demon Butts its Horns', 'The Ox Demon Stamps its Hooves', "The Ox Demon Forges its Hide". They were all the foundational forms of the fist style, able to unleash complexity with its simplicity and lead into countless moves.

Of course, grasping it was one matter, while practising it was something else. If he wanted to achieve something with it, he would need an accumulation of practice over time. As for the two basic items required to practise this ability, Li Qingshan had already seen them. They were meat and alcohol.

Regardless of the ability or technique, it was impossible to create something from nothing. It could not grant people with tremendous strength and might for no reason. There had to be a process of absorption and conversion, whether it be through gathering the essence of the sun and moon or by absorbing spiritual qi of the world. Once a profound level was attained, they would be able to feed off the wind and dew and stop eating. It would be replacing normal food with the spiritual qi of the world.

Li Qingshan was just a mortal, so how was he supposed to connect with the spiritual qi of the world? He could not find immortal pills or medicines either, so he could only start with the most ordinary of items to rapidly replenish and refine his vitality.

Even though Li Qingshan had eaten a few days of meat, his body was still not strong. He barely managed to go through the three forms. Afterwards, he was dripping in sweat and panting hard as his stomach grumbled.

Enduring until midday, he felt like he had been starved for three days. He wolfed down all of the remaining wild boar meat in a single stroke. His appetite was actually even greater than when he ate the boar meat for the first time.

He was not allowed to lie down and rest at midday either. Instead, he had to meditate and nurture his vitality, sensing for some feeling of qi that was supposed to exist. He did this until his body had mostly recovered. After that, he would practise the fist style again. He repeated this several times. By dusk, Li Qingshan was utterly exhausted. He did not even have the willpower to lift another finger.

Three figures secretly stumbled their way to the outside of Li Qingshan's house. Li Qingshan heard the activity and made his way out, only to see the three scoundrels who frequently messed around with patch-haired Liu. He was afraid that they had come to avenge their brother, so he could not help but groan inside. Currently, he was completely spent, so how could he take them on? Even if it were some other time, he would not be able to match three people working together.

However, he never expected the three of them to react like rats to a cat as soon as they saw him. They all lowered their heads and exclaimed, "Spare us!"

This surprised Li Qingshan. It made him ask, "Why have you come here?"

He had never imagined that the three rascals would be utterly frightened after witnessing patch-haired Liu's corpse. They were afraid that Li Qingshan was still not satisfied after killing patch-haired Liu and wanted to come for them tonight, which was why they had reluctantly come to explain themselves. They said that all of their actions had been urged and impelled on by patch-haired Liu, so it was all his fault as the leader. They also added that caretaker Liu was behind it all.

Li Qingshan said, "Say no more. I already know all about this." That night, he had heard it loud and clear, but of course, he could not admit he was patch-haired Liu's murderer.

The three scoundrels shivered inside. Thinking of how this fiend was right outside the window that night, they felt more and more afraid.

Li Qingshan could understand why these three were so afraid to a certain degree. In his past life, there had once been an escaped murderer on the loose in the small city he lived in. Various rumors sprang up everywhere, scaring everyone from staying out at night. He had now gained the influence of a murderer.

There were different levels to bad people too. The three scoundrels were just 'small evils' who committed theft. Against a 'great evil' like him, they could only follow him around obediently and submissively. His expression remained the same, but he felt rather strange inside. He had yet to gain any supernatural abilities. However, from a few mental changes, his status in the village had undergone an overwhelming upheaval.

These changes had all been caused by the black ox. Perhaps this was changing the bad for good as well!

Li Qingshan ignored them. He barely managed to go through the entirety of the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength once more. This time, the three of them were present, so he practised especially diligently. He knew that he was only putting on a bravado right now. Once people discovered that he was at the end of his rope, the consequences would be inconceivable.

The three scoundrels watched on from the side carefully. In all the years they had spent in the village, they had never heard that Li Qingshan knew martial arts. In the setting sun, Li Qingshan's movements were valiant and filled with force, so he clearly was not fooling with them. They could not help but think about what the local witch had said. Perhaps a demon had truly possessed Li Qingshan.

They watched the sky grow darker and darker, becoming so frightened that their calves twitched from fear. They wanted to leave, yet they were unable to bring themselves to mention it. They were afraid Li Qingshan would suddenly reveal his true form and swallow them all in a single gulp.

Li Qingshan finished practising and ordered, "Come with me." He made his way out of the courtyard by himself. The three scoundrels looked at each other and had no other choice but to follow him.

Right now, there were many villagers eating at the entrance of their houses. Those who were familiar with Li Qingshan greeted him carefully, while those who were not fled back into their houses in a hurry to hide. Even though they had protected Li Qingshan during the day out of righteous anger, there was not a single person who did not feel fear when they faced this murderer.

The three scoundrels usually hung out with patch-haired Liu. Patch-haired Liu used his cruelty to earn some respect in the village, but they were disliked by all, so when had they ever been so imposing before? They temporarily forgot about their fear and instead became complacent. If they could follow Li Erlang, they would have far more glory than before.

There were also old people who sighed. Although the scourge patch-haired Liu was gone, there was probably an even greater scourge now. At least patch-haired Liu had not claimed the life of someone. Everyone had not been as afraid of him.

Li Qingshan experienced an almost novel feeling as well as he walked down this path he had taken countless times in the past. He had clearly realised that he was no longer the Li Qingshan of the past. Arriving before a cottage, he thought about how he had been frustrated by poverty right here just a while ago, and emotions temporarily overcame him.

Inside, the elder brother and sister-in-law pressed against the door as they shook in fear. The elder brother held a thick stick, while the sister-in-law held a kitchen knife. How could they not fear the same thing that the scoundrels had been worried about? However, compared to the scoundrels, they held the money from selling the land. If they yielded to Li Qingshan, the money would no longer be theirs.

As a result, they did not even do farmwork today. They only remained home and discussed between themselves for the whole day. In the end, it was still the elder brother who made the decision. "He's just a single person. Are we supposed to be afraid of him? If he comes, I'll eliminate this vile spawn for the sake of the Li family." However, soon after he uttered those bold words, he saw Li Qingshan arrive with the three scoundrels, and he immediately fled back into the house to hide.

Li Qingshan said, "Drag them out."

The three scoundrels were frightened by his might, so they dared not disobey him. They had plenty of experience in harassing ordinary people like them. They barged in and made a ruckus, and the couple immediately laid down their weapons and surrendered. They did not dare to fight back. They only ended up becoming ashen from fright as they trembled uncontrollably.

"Brother, brother, what are you trying to do?" The elder brother forced out a smile that was even uglier than weeping.

Li Qingshan said, "I haven't come for you. He said to the sister-in-law, "You accursed bitch, I can turn a blind eye to how you insult me normally, but how dare you insult my parents yesterday? You won't be spared today."

After he glared at her, the sister-in-law's legs shook like jelly. She lost her usual impudence completely. "Xiao Er, I was just blabbering nonsense. I've looked after you for all these years. We're a family."

Li Qingshan sneered. "A family? It wouldn't have mattered if you hadn't mentioned that, but now that you have, we still have debts to settle. Let's talk about the rubbish you said yesterday. What should we do about that?"

A skinny, monkey-like scoundrel sucked up to him. "Is there any need for big brother to personally take action? I know exactly what to do." As he said that, he rolled up his sleeve and swung his hand toward the sister-in-law's face.

Li Qingshan caught the scoundrel's arm. He was truly tempted to do this in the ancestral hall yesterday, but looking at them tremble, he was slightly unable to bring himself to. He thought about how the two of them were still his elder brother and sister-in-law after all. How could he let them be harassed by the hand of a scoundrel?

However, what had to be done, had to be done. He came up with a good idea and said to his elder brother, "Weren't the people she cursed your parents as well? Don't you know that you should teach her a lesson?"

The elder brother came to a realisation. "Yeah, yeah, yeah!" Afraid that Li Qingshan would be unsatisfied, he slapped his wife a few times viciously with enough force. The sister-in-law's cheeks immediately began to swell.

Li Qingshan instead felt that his elder brother took great satisfaction in hitting her. Perhaps he was using this opportunity for revenge. Anyways, most of his anger had subsided. He asked, "You say we're a family, so let me ask you, where is the money from selling the land?"

The sister-in-law's face that had become red from the swelling immediately paled, while the elder brother fell silent. That money was their flesh and blood. Li Qingshan was slicing away at their flesh this time! Compared to returning the money, they would much rather suffer a beating instead.

The sister-in-law suddenly became unreasonable and tried to make a scene. "Just beat me to death. If you beat your sister-in-law to death, I would like to see whether the government will come for you or not. I don't know what this money is about. If you want it, go ask caretaker Liu for it!"

Li Qingshan roared. "Do you really think I would be afraid to do so?" He was no longer putting on an act. The murderous aura from killing patch-haired Liu last night seemed to have returned to him with nightfall. The bloodied, wide-eyed teenager in the reflection of the stream had already become part of him.

The three scoundrels on the side only felt a chill and could not help but take a step back. They looked at Li Qingshan fearfully.

Having to face the roar directly, the couple were petrified. They had never seen someone so terrifying before in their lives. They struggled to imagine that this was the Li Erlang who had lived with them for over a decade.

In the end, a bag of silver pieces was handed to Li Qingshan. He weighed it in his hand and looked at the ghastly pale couple. He sighed inside. Just for the sake of this pitiful amount of silver, Li Qingshan ended up coercing his own brother so much. He turned around and left, and the three scoundrels followed him in a hurry.

Just when the sister-in-law wanted to sob painfully, the bag of silver flew through the air in an arc, landing before them with a thud.

Li Qingshan's voice rang out from afar. "You might have treated me like a slave, harassing and degrading me, but exactly because of you, I was able to live until now. From today onwards, our slate is cleaned. We no longer have any connection."