

THE MIRROR LEGACY

Chapter 13: Murder

Li Yecheng's father passed away last year. As the eldest son, he inherited the family's fields and fortune. Elated with his newfound wealth, he quickly sold a plot of field for cash and squandered it in a small restaurant in the village.

Since then, Li Yecheng spent his days aimlessly roaming the village and mountains, frequently engaging in delinquent behavior like harassment and theft. Apart from his eldest uncle, Li Mutian, there was no one he feared or respected in Lijing Village.

His youngest brother, Li Yesheng, shared the same age as Li Xiangping. While Li Xiangping received education under the village head, Li Yesheng endured a life of solitude, hunger, and coldness.

As a teenager who had just lost his father, he was forced to herd ducks and take care of cattle for others. Without the occasional assistance from Li Mutian's family, he might have starved in his own home.

Li Yecheng never cared about his little brother's well-being. His thought was consumed by envy toward Li Changhu's family. Observing them entering and exiting their beautiful residence, he was driven mad with jealousy.

"We all belong to the Li Family, so why are our lives so different? Why do they have such fertile fields and a high-walled courtyard, while I have none? They're only slightly wealthier than others in the village. Is there really a need for such an extravagant courtyard? It's as if they're guarding numerous treasures within it!"

He then vividly recalled a night years ago, the anxious expressions of several people, and the saber in Li Mutian's hand.

"Li Mutian must have a treasure..."

Chewing on a foxtail, Li Yecheng watched Li Changhu having a pleasant chat with his tenants in the field, thinking bitterly, *Some are just born lucky.*

After dozing under a tree and realizing night had fallen, Li Yecheng spat out the foxtail, rolled up his pant legs, and stealthily approached the Li Family's courtyard.

Circling the courtyard, he found no cracks in the wall to exploit. The wall, smooth and well-constructed, seemed impossible to scale.

"Damn it!" he grumbled, spitting on the wall. He kicked it in frustration, then turned and ran toward the back of the mountain.

"I bet they can't shield against prying eyes from above," he mumbled.

Mount Dali was winding and extensive. One of its peaks was situated right behind Lijing Village. The villagers never gave it a name and simply referred to it as "the back mountain".

To the south, beyond the back mountain, was Meiche Peak, and further south, was Jingyang Village. The two villages were connected via a mountain path.

Li Yecheng pushed through the bushes, climbing the mountain path for about fifteen minutes. Reaching a vantage point, he crouched down, surveying the small courtyard below.

Straining his eyes, he saw figures moving around, some sitting cross-legged, others walking around with a huge bluestone. He wondered what they were doing.

“I heard there were stone locks in the courtyard. Maybe Li Mutian acquired some laborer’s martial arts or battle techniques and is teaching them secretly,” Li Yecheng speculated.

As he gazed at the sky, the mountains grew dim. The moon was obscured by dark clouds, and soon, Li Yecheng could not even see the figures in the courtyard clearly. ㄖᄁNᄁbEᄁ

The night deepened with the howls of apes, jackals, and wolves echoing through the chilly breeze that caused Li Yecheng to sit on a boulder and squeeze his legs together.

How eerie, he thought.

After shivering for another fifteen minutes, his body cold and his nose running, Li Yecheng concocted rumors he planned to spread in the village.

If it was an ancestral treasure, then he deserved to have it too since he was part of the Li Family. If it was indeed a martial art technique, he could always sell it for a decent sum even if he did not intend to practice it.

Peering down at the courtyard, which was now deserted, Li Yecheng shrugged. He wrapped his arms around himself to fend off the cold and stood up to leave.

“Damn!”

Turning his head, he was startled by a figure standing quietly on the mountain path. In panic, he tumbled back behind the large boulder.

Peeking out, he recognized that it was his cousin, Li Xiangping, looking at him disapprovingly.

Li Yecheng glared at him. He was ready to confront him but suddenly noticed Li Xiangping making some sort of a gesture with his hands.

“What?”

A bright golden light flashed before his eyes, followed by a sharp pain in his throat. His vision swirled, alternating between the bright moon in the sky and the moonlit courtyard below.

Li Yecheng's head was severed, tumbling through the air before crashing down onto the mountain path. The last thing he saw was the extremely cold smile on Li Xiangping's face. It was so out of character that it rendered his cousin strangely unrecognizable.

Li Yecheng's headless body was still hidden behind a rock. Blood gushed out from the stump of his neck, staining the rock, dirt path, and dead leaves, running in a rivulet toward Li Xiangping's feet.

Stepping back in revulsion, Li Xiangping watched the fallen corpse. After thinking for a moment, he performed the hand seals to summon the golden light once more.

He squatted down and expertly dismembered the body into large chunks. This would make it easier for the wild animals, attracted by the scent, to carry the pieces away and scatter them across the mountainous terrain.

After completing this, Li Xiangping stood and surveyed his surroundings. The shadows between the forests were now filled with glowing green eyes.

He clapped his hands and murmured, "Feast to your heart's content."

Meanwhile, in the Li Residence...

Li Changhu emerged from his meditation to find his two younger brothers absent and the large backyard eerily silent, with only the soft hums of insects in the air.

Puzzled, he quickly made his way to the main courtyard, where he encountered Li Tongya.

Seeing Li Tongya engrossed in his reading at the wooden table, Li Changhu asked, somewhat perplexed, "Where's Xiangping?"

Li Tongya slowly rolled up the wooden slips and looked at his elder brother.

"Washing his hands," he replied.

Li Changhu, pressing his hands on the table, inquired with a hint of envy, "Are you preparing to condense the Profound Scenery Chakra already, Tongya?"

"In a few days, I should be able to condense all eighty-one wisps of moonlight qi. We're not as talented as Chejing, though. I have a feeling I may need a few more days to prepare."

Li Tongya smiled as he retrieved a small piece of white cloth and tightly wrapped it around the wooden slips, securing it with a knot.

"Changhu, who do you think among us four resembles father the most?" Li Tongya suddenly asked, fixing a serious gaze on his elder brother.

"You, of course," Li Changhu responded without hesitation, then paused, finding a seat and continuing with a smile, "I'm too carefree, Xiangping is too active, Chejing is too timid. You, Tongya, have the most composure and resolve. You take after our father the most."

"Hahaha." Li Tongya laughed dryly, waving dismissively as he said, "Don't flatter me, big bro. In my opinion, Xiangping takes after him the most."

"Why do you say that?" Li Changhu looked at his younger brother curiously.

"Back when we were kids playing in the courtyard, father once told us that the first time a person takes a life, they might experience ringing in their ears or a burning sensation in their head. They could end up paralyzed, tremble uncontrollably, shout incessantly, or feel disconnected from reality.

“Yet, when he first killed, he simply sheathed his saber, poured himself a drink, engaged in conversation, and laughed. He was actually proud of his accomplishment. That’s why, Xiangping takes after our father the most.”

Li Tongya lowered his voice and leaned in to whisper to Li Changhu,
“Because he’s ruthless enough.”