

THE MIRROR LEGACY

Chapter 2: Li Family

Li Mutian woke up in the early hours of the morning, his gaze fixed on the dilapidated roof of his house. A faint glimmer pierced through the darkness, a reminder of the small opening that had formed a few days ago.

He did not have the time to repair it, which led to three nights of restless sleep. Beside him, his wife lay deeply asleep, prompting a deep sigh from Li Mutian.

“She might not be aware of what’s going on, but these past few days have been wild. Those immortals around Mount Dali are going crazy, turning the place upside down as if they’re on some kind of treasure hunt. Everyone’s terrified. All they can do is kneel and bow their heads to the ground whenever those streaks of light pass by...”

Frowning, Li Mutian’s mind was fraught with worries. At the foot of Mount Dali, their small village had always been tranquil. However, recent events had cast a shadow of fear over everyone.

“The mountain roads are narrow and secluded. The imperial court is too far away to be concerned, and we’re usually fine with that. But... a battle among immortals? Their immortal techniques could easily wipe out the entire Lijing Village without sparing even a single soul.”

Unable to sleep any longer, Li Mutian got up and peered out the window into the dark night.

“My boys’ appetite grows day by day. They eat more with every meal. I’ll catch some fish and crabs at Meiche River tomorrow.”

“No one can escape their fate, even if it means being killed by an immortal. The Li family has worked hard on these barren lands for over two hundred years. We can’t just up and leave.”

With a shake of his head, Li Mutian turned and left his house with hands clasped behind his back.

Outside the house, the brown dog was still sleeping. Li Mutian walked through the gentle morning mist, observing Lijing Village as it awoke—the sound of chickens, the barking of dogs, and the smoke rising from the houses.

“Xiangping—!” Li Mutian called out loudly toward the side house. He heard some noises inside before the door creaked open and a teenager burst out.

“Father!” Li Xiangping, a decent-looking boy with mischievous eyes, tilted his head as he looked up at Li Mutian and asked, “What will we be doing today?”

Li Mutian waved his hand and said, “We’re going to Meiche River to fetch some river fish and crabs. There’s not much work today. Let’s bring some fresh flavors home for your mother.”

“Yes, Father!”

Li Xiangping grabbed a rope basket and a long fork, ready to set off.

With a hearty laugh, Li Mutian headed toward the fields.

The Meiche River was both shallow and wide, its banks lined with large amounts of mudflats and reeds.

Rather than feeding their dozens, sometimes hundreds, of geese and ducks every morning, the villagers set them free to wander freely toward the river.

Later in the evening, someone from the village would make their way to the riverbank and call out to the birds. Familiar with their keeper's voice, the geese and ducks would then follow them back home.

Li Xiangping arrived at the Meiche River before the geese and ducks were released for the day. The river was quiet, with only two small rafts swaying on the shore. Rolling up his sleeves and kneeling in the mud, he blindly felt around with his hands, then fixed his eyes on a flash of green in the water.

"That's a good fish."

Li Xiangping held his breath and moved swiftly. With a firm grasp, he caught the green-tailed fish by its gills and pulled it up.

"Hehe."

He chuckled, tossing the fish into his rope basket. The fish in Meiche River were not usually this easy to catch. This green-tailed one must have carelessly swum downstream, and Li Xiangping was lucky to have caught it.

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As he looked at the riverbed, Li Xiangping noticed something unusual. A spot under the water was too smooth, faintly reflecting a silver light.

Just as he was about to hold his breath again and dive in for a closer look, a loud voice called from the shore, "Brother Xiangping!"

Li Xiangping instinctively hid his rope basket and turned toward the bank, where a boy that looked just over the age of ten emerged from the reeds.

"Oh it's you, Little Brother Ye, are you here to watch over the ducks?" Li Xiangping asked, relieved.

He then held out the basket. "Look at this greentail, I caught it barehanded."

"Awesome!" Li Yesheng exclaimed, looking enviously into the basket.

Li Yesheng's father had been bedridden for years, and his elder brother was a freeloader at home, so they often struggled for food. They frequently relied on Li Mutian, their uncle, for meals. Li Xiangping, his first cousin, had always treated him like a younger brother.

After a brief exchange, Li Yesheng shook his head and said, "All right, brother, I better go check on the ducks. If I lose any, my brother will beat the crap out of me."

"Off you go, then," Li Xiangping urged, eager to investigate the mysterious object at the bottom of the river.

"All right!"

As soon as Li Yesheng left, Li Xiangping took a deep breath and dived into the riverbed. He groped around and, sure enough, his hands found a round object.

Emerging from the water, Li Xiangping gasped for air and wiped his face before examining his find.

The object was a palm-sized plate, with a bluish-gray center and a dark iron frame.

It was broken into several pieces, held together only by the frame. The back was engraved with strange symbols that Li Xiangping could not decipher.

"This looks a little like my aunt's mirror," he mused. His aunt, who owned the largest field in the family, was the only one in the village who could afford such a luxury. Ordinary village girls had to make do by looking at their reflection in the water.

Li Xiangping remembered his mother taking him to see it when his aunt first acquired it—indeed, it was more convenient than relying on water.

Yet the piece in his hands was a far cry from that mirror—murky and blurry. Shaking his head in disappointment, Li Xiangping tossed it into his basket and turned back to his fishing.

Lu Jiangxian had been submerged in water for nearly half a month. Starting from the third day, the moonlight's energy had stagnated, showing no signs of increase.

Despite a week of effort, there was no growth. He could only make himself glow.

One morning, as his gaze lingered absentmindedly at a large green fish, a hand suddenly pressed the fish into the silt. With a swift movement, the hand seized the fish by its gills and lifted it.

Lu Jiangxian, still grappling with the shock of seeing a living person for the first time, watched as a large hand scooped him up.

He caught sight of a rather handsome face and felt a flicker of nervousness. The boy uttered a few unintelligible words and tossed him into a basket, leaving him to stare at the wide eyes of the green-tailed fish inside.

It was at that moment, Lu Jiangxian realized a serious problem—he could hear, but he might not understand.

The local dialect sounded similar to the Fujian and Zhejiang dialects from his previous life, which were completely foreign to him. Even if he managed to speak, the likelihood was that the locals would not understand him either, thus complicating his integration into this new world.

Observing the fish being thrown into the basket one after another, Lu Jiangxian focused, probing his surroundings.

He watched the boy carefully raise the long wooden fork in his hand. From this vantage point, Lu Jiangxian had a rough idea of what this boy was thinking and the specific fish that had captured his attention.

Every time the boy caught a fish, Lu Jiangxian saw him murmuring to himself. In no time, Lu Jiangxian learned the specific pronunciations of numbers three to six and the names of different fish species. Each catch provided a valuable learning opportunity, all thanks to the boy's self-talk.

I guess I'll take it one step at a time.

Watching the boy get up and leave, he sighed. The child seemed to be from a farming family, so perhaps he would offer what he found to his parents.

Lu Jiangxian's plan was to engage with more people to gradually learn the local dialect. Meanwhile, he would seek ways to amass the energy of the moonlight while ensuring his own safety.