

# THE MIRROR LEGACY

## Chapter 3: Mirror

“Hey, Brother Xiangping.”

Li Xiangping was walking home with a basket on his back when he spotted a girl approaching from a distance. She had a round face with plain features, but her broad smile lent a certain charm to her appearance.

“Little Sister Yun,” Li Xiangping greeted her with a smile, turning around to offer her a view of his basket.

“Look at these fish I’ve caught. You should take a few home to try,” he offered.

“Oh, I couldn’t possibly,” Tian Yun demurred, smiling shyly and looking down. The girl had matured early; at eleven, she was already taller than thirteen-year-old Li Xiangping.

In Lijing Village, men and women usually marry around thirteen or fifteen. Of all her peers, Tian Yun had long set her heart on Li Xiangping as a future husband as they were closest in age.

“Please take them, I insist!” Li Xiangping insisted, pushing two fish into Tian Yun’s hands. He had no ulterior motives; Tian Yun’s father was the most generous in the village, and Li Xiangping naturally wanted to treat his daughter better.

After parting ways with Tian Yun, Li Xiangping hurried home, lowering the basket into the small pond.

He thought for a moment, then took out the mirror he had found earlier and pocketed it. Taking along the three wooden boxes from the table, he headed toward the fields where his father and two elder brothers were working.

The Li Family had four sons—Li Changhu, Li Tongya, Li Xiangping, and Li Chejing. In Daya Village, the Li brothers were highly respected.

Every time the topic of the Li Family's four sons came up, Tian Yun's father would often comment enviously, "Li Mutian is one lucky man!"

However, Li Mutian, the only one in Daya Village to have traveled far and wide, did not share this sentiment. As he watched his sons toil in the fields, he felt a sense of regret.

"A good man should pursue studies or military service. Working the fields is nothing to be proud of!"—he would say this while pointing at Uncle Tian.

Alas, life had its own designs; those who had seen the world beyond often found their return to simpler lives the hardest.

Li Mutian, a former soldier who had killed in battle, returned to his village after the age of forty with his military salary. With that money, he bought land and became a prominent landowner. Yet, this was the life he found least fulfilling.

Arriving at the field's edge, Li Xiangping found his eldest brother, Li Changhu, already waiting under a tree. At seventeen, Li Changhu was already sporting a beard.

"Watch where you go, Third Brother. There's no need to rush," Li Changhu called out.

"I heard from Uncle Tian that you had quite the catch today." Li Changhu smiled and affectionately tousled Li Xiangping's hair, looking at him with a gentle expression.

“Absolutely, Big Brother! We’re gonna have a great meal tonight!” Li Xiangping laughed heartily.

“That’s great,” Li Changhu smiled while he wiped away the sweat on Li Xiangping’s face.

He then picked up a wooden box and shouted across the field, “Second Brother!”

“Coming!” The second brother, Li Tongya, hurried over with his hoe, sitting down and addressing Li Changhu respectfully as “big brother” before turning to Li Xiangping with a smile.

“You guys go ahead and dig in, I’ll head back now,” Li Xiangping said. Famished from the morning’s work, he promptly made his way home.

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Inside Li Xiangping’s rope basket, Lu Jiangxian sensed an inexplicable force drawing him closer. As they neared his house, the sensation intensified.

Passing the large acacia tree at the village entrance, Lu Jiangxian felt his chest tighten and his breathing quicken. The mirror in the basket trembled, emitting a faint red glow. ㄨㄚㄣㄛㄨㄣ

“That must be a part of me, or at least something important to my existence.” Lu Jiangxian realized.

“It’s to the north, toward that large lake!” The pull faded as Li Xiangping moved away from the village entrance, and Lu Jiangxian mentally marked the direction.

Staying close to Li Xiangping and observing life around the village, Lu Jiangxian began to understand the locals’ speech by combining his own mental perceptions with observations of their movements and tone.

The village appeared ordinary, with no signs of martial arts experts or flying immortal cultivators.

The people followed a simple routine—work at sunrise, rest at sunset. The tools they used and size of the fields they tended to were nothing out of the ordinary.

“This seems to be just an ordinary village. Even the largest house is only a two-story building made of wood and mud. There’s no way immortal cultivators would live in such modest homes, right?” Lu Jiangxian mused.

“Great powers usually bring about great productivity, but this village seems way too old-fashioned,” he concluded.

With some of this stuff figured out, he began formulating a plan, envisioning a framework for his future actions.

Meanwhile, the Li Residence bustled with activity. The mother and two youngest brothers were busy preparing dinner.

Li Xiangping had come home with a full basket, and his youngest brother, Li Chejing, had triumphantly brought back a horde of fat voles caught in a grain bag while he was out gathering mulberry leaves in the back mountain for raising silkworms.

Their father, Li Mutian, patted them on the back and showered them with praise.

At fourteen and fifteen, the boys were growing rapidly, and the food on the table barely sufficed to fill their hungry stomachs.

Li Mutian had only a quick bite, and Liu Linyun, the mother, watched her four sons with a smile. Only the big brown dog under their table seemed anxious, weaving between the legs of the six family members.

After dinner, the moon began its ascent over Mount Dali.

Leaning against the corner wall with a straw in his mouth, Li Xiangping watched his father frown at the sky as if searching for something.

“By the way, Father,” Li Xiangping said, tugging the leg of his father’s pants to get his attention, then pulled out the mirror from his chest pocket.

“I found this in the river this morning.”

Li Mutian took the object and then examined it closely. “This isn’t made of iron or copper. What exactly is this thing?”

The moonlight, casting its glow in front of the house, suddenly seemed to come alive as it converged above the mirror, forming a captivating halo.

Li Xiangping, unable to believe his eyes, rubbed them, transfixed by the most stunning moonlight display he had ever witnessed in his entire thirteen years of existence.

“Father!” he whispered urgently.

“Quiet!” Li Mutian, visibly paled, forced himself to look away from the moon halo. He shakily pushed the mirror back into Li Xiangping’s arms and whispered, “Keep it hidden. Tell your brothers to grab their sabers and come out.”

For the first time, Li Xiangping witnessed a look of murderous intent in his father’s eyes. They were narrowed and piercing, resembling those of an eagle, sharp and focused.

“G-Got it...” His voice quivered as he stumbled back into the house.

The night was still young. Li Xiangping pushed open the bedroom door.

“Brothers... Father said to grab your sabers and head out,” Li Xiangping tearfully relayed his father’s message to his two elder brothers, who were lounging on their beds.

“What?!” Li Changhu stood up abruptly, gripping Li Xiangping with concern. “Is father in trouble? What’s going on?”

Li Tongya, meanwhile, sprang into action, retrieving two sabers from under the bed and taking down the rattan armor and a long pole from the wall.

He peered out the window somberly and quietly said, “It must be an enemy seeking revenge.”

Keeping the long pole for himself, he handed the saber and rattan armor to Li Changhu, then patted him on the back. “Take these, Big Brother. Third Brother, you go get Mother and Youngest Brother to the backyard.”

After acknowledging his instruction, Li Xiangping rushed to find his mother. Li Changhu quickly calmed himself down and donned the rattan armor. With a saber in hand, he moved toward the door.

Outside, Li Mutian stood silently, surveying the melon field in front of the house.

Once his two sons joined him, he took one of the sabers and instructed, “Look around the house, one on the left and one on the right. Make sure no one’s lurking around.”

The brothers hurried off to their assigned tasks.

Meanwhile, Li Mutian walked to the front of the house. With surprising agility, bent down in the melon field and, astonishingly, pulled a person out from its depths.