

THE MIRROR LEGACY

Chapter 5: Rarity of an Immortal Destiny

“During the battles against Mount Yue, their shamans often used miasma, plagues, snakes, and insects as attack. The army issued these talismans as protection against such witchcraft. This particular talisman had saved my life, but now its power has faded, and it’s no more than a scrap of paper. That’s the second item.”

“People of Mount Yue were skilled in using animal bones, feathers, and glaze. I scavenged these valuable items from those I defeated in battle; these are the third.”

“Tomorrow, I’ll present this piece of glaze to your uncle, claiming it’s something Xiangping found in the river. Whether Yecheng saw it or not, we’ll insist that it’s just a piece of broken glaze that happens to shimmer in the moonlight.”

Li Mutian, holding a fragment of glaze, carefully packed the item and whispered his plan to Li Tongya.

“Father has a good eye for things.” Li Changhu nodded in agreement. “Our second uncle is a reasonable man. I’m sure he won’t fuss over such a small matter just to keep the peace.”

“It’s just unfortunate that Yecheng is a piece of trash,” Li Tongya commented softly, glancing at his father.

Li Mutian placed the mirror on the wooden table, shaking his head slightly.

“Now, the value of this treasure depends on how we use it. It might turn out to be useless if we don’t use it right.”

Lu Jiangxian, listening from within the mirror, began formulating his own plan. Trapped in the mirror, he pondered how to protect himself and find a way out.

He realized he might need to rely on the resources and help of the people in this village to navigate the long path of immortality unless he could escape from the mirror.

The Li Family, though of humble peasant origins with shallow roots, had remarkable members.

Li Mutian, the father, was courageous and perceptive. Li Changhu, the eldest, was mature and magnanimous. The second son, Li Tongya, was brave, keen, and decisively bold. Li Xiangping and Li Chejing were also quick-witted and agile. Together, they formed an impressive and formidable family unit.

What's more, Lu Jiangxian was helpless, lacking both hands and feet, unable to walk or run. How could he even think of escaping or hope to be in the possession of someone else?

Was he doomed to be discarded like trash in the river, imprisoned in silence for a hundred years?

Whatever the case, I must at least take a look East, even if it's from a distance, Lu Jiangxian thought, channeling the qi within his body toward the mirror's upper left corner.

Inside the house, the Li brothers fiddled with the mirror, cautious not to damage it and lose their chance at an immortal destiny.

The moonlight felt cool and soothing upon touch, but the moon halo remained unaffected by their efforts to influence it, whether by blowing on it or attempting to manipulate the surrounding airflow.

It was only when Li Xiangping picked up the mirror and gently caressed its reflective surface that something changed.

Lu Jiangxian's efforts catalyzed a reaction, and the upper left corner of the mirror suddenly illuminated, startling Li Xiangping so much that he trembled and yelped, unsure whether to hold on to it or set it down.

Li Tongya leaned in for a closer look. The mirror's upper left corner glowed with a bright white arc, thin on the sides and thicker in the center, a sight that gradually faded after the space of a few breaths.

"It lit up, brother!" Li Xiangping exclaimed in a hushed, excited voice.

Li Tongya took the mirror, mimicking Li Xiangping's actions. Indeed, a white light illuminated the mirror. He then passed it to his father, gesturing for him to try. □aNŌBĒŠ

Both Li Mutian and Li Changhu stroked the mirror, expressing their admiration for the phenomenon.

However, Li Tongya, after a soft exclamation of surprise, took the mirror from his elder brother and stroked it while turning away from the others.

"Father, regardless of where it's stroked, the illuminated area always points north. It's just like..." Li Tongya paused, pondering as he held the mirror.

"A compass." Li Mutian nodded in agreement.

Inside the mirror, Lu Jiangxian was cheering internally, impressed by Li Tongya's quick thinking!

"Let's head to the village entrance first."

Li Mutian stroked his beard thoughtfully after saying that, then turned back into the room to address his children, "Grab a chunk of cured meat, we're going to visit the scholar first instead."

Li Yecheng, with tears still in his eyes, stomped into his front yard, cursing under his breath and kicking at the stones on the path.

“Why are they acting as if a few melons are some great prizes when they’ve got a real treasure on hand? Raising sabers in the middle of the night, those idiots must be hiding something!” he muttered, sitting down on a stone, his mind racing with thoughts.

“Li Mutian spent twenty years wandering around; he must have collected some valuable things! There’s no way he doesn’t have treasure hidden around somewhere,” he mused.

“But those stubborn fools are so tight-fisted, I couldn’t coax even a speck of mud from their hands. The old man is just as obstinate, always keeping his secrets closely guarded. If only Li Mutian was out of the picture, we’d get a share of whatever treasures he’s hiding!”

Li Yecheng glanced toward the courtyard door as his younger brother, Li Yesheng, timidly entered.

His glare intensified, and he barked at the boy, “Get over here, you brat!”

He grabbed his brother’s collar and flung him toward the front of the house. Li Yesheng tumbled to the ground, curling up in fear.

“I know you’re chummy with that runt Li Xiangping. Tomorrow, you’re going to sneak into their house and steal a couple of their melons,” he snarled viciously.

Li Mutian, accompanied by his three sons, walked from the end of the village to the entrance, receiving smiles and greetings from villagers resting at their thresholds.

“Uncle Mutian! Where are you off to?”

“Just delivering something to the scholar!” Li Mutian replied cheerfully, hoisting up the cured meat in his hand.

At the village entrance, he scanned the surroundings, then patted Li Tongya and Li Xiangping on the shoulders and whispered, “Go ahead.”

The two nodded in understanding and quickly vanished into the dense reeds with a swift turn.

Li Mutian gazed into the distance with a look of concern.

Li Changhu, sensing his father's unease, offered a reminder. “We should have told them earlier to keep their distance if they encountered anything unusual. It’s better to be safe than sorry.”

“I’m sure Tongya knows what he’s doing,” Li Mutian reassured, squinting as a myriad of thoughts flitted through his mind like fleeting shadows.

He was acutely aware of the risk posed to his sons tonight; the possibility of losing them, leaving Li Changhu as the sole heir. However, their safe return could elevate the Li Family to new heights. Clenching his fists, he grappled with the weight of his decision.

“For two hundred years...”

The Li Family had toiled on this land for two hundred years. Now, faced with a potentially life-changing opportunity, Li Mutian had made a rational decision that aligned with the best interests of his family, although it was an emotionally excruciating one.

The courtyard door suddenly opened, interrupting his thoughts. Han Wenxu stood there, a small bowl in hand, looking perplexed.

“Brother Li!”

“Master Han,” Li Mutian greeted, his face breaking into a broad smile as he stepped forward and placed the cured meat on a wooden table.

“How generous of you,” Han Wenxu said with a smile and a nod.

He sliced off a piece of the meat, finely chopping it onto a dish, and served some pickled vegetables alongside it.

The two then pulled out a small table made of eucalyptus wood, poured two cups of rice wine, and sat by the door to chat.

“Those flying immortals have finally ceased their visits.” Li Mutian sighed as a sense of relief washed over him.

Han Wenxu shrugged and clicked his tongue. “Immortals, eh? When I was twelve, an immortal visited our town.”

With a nostalgic look on his face, he continued, “He claimed to be looking for enlightened individuals. Out of over a thousand children, he found only three and took them away. Who knows, some of these immortals we see today might be those very townsfolk.”

“Such opportunities to encounter immortals are truly rare!” Li Mutian responded after a pause, consoling the scholar.

“Indeed, rare and elusive...” Han Wenxu murmured, staring at the moon, lost in thought.

Both men sat in contemplative silence, each burdened with their own worries.