

LONGEVITY CHRONICLES

Chapter 1 1 Rebirth at Vegetable Market

Longevity Heavenly Dynasty, Seeking Immortal County.

The drizzling rain shrouded the streets of Vegetable Market as dusk approached.

The crowd that had gathered for the market was about to disperse when suddenly a commotion arose.

Dozens of robust soldiers rushed over from the other end, clad in battle gear and brandishing swords, their murderous aura churning around them. In their midst were several young prisoners in shackles, dressed in filthy prison garb, reeking and covered in countless scars and open wounds.

At the front was a middle-aged bureaucrat with thick lips, a black beard and a fat face, riding atop a tall horse.

At the very rear, several carts were used to transport the corpses.

This procession advanced with gongs sounding, creating quite a spectacle.

The dispersing crowd immediately regathered, with people from even farther away hurrying over.

This grand display left no doubt about the impending event.

A main attraction on Vegetable Market Street!

A public beheading.

In no time, the area was packed three layers deep both inside and out.

There were commoners, children, beggars, loafers, and the wealthy, even Western Barbarians holding devices called "cameras," with their blonde hair and blue eyes.

Although many of the spectators themselves looked emaciated, like refugees, this did not dampen their enthusiasm for the spectacle.

The appointed hour arrived, and the timekeeper bellowed out the time with a strained voice.

The Executioner, with a brush in hand and a cold smirk on his lips, checked off each name.

Executioners took their places, from east to west, ready to behead the prisoners one by one.

"They're about to behead them, they're about to behead them. Vegetable Market Street truly lives up to its reputation; you can really see a beheading."

"It's also quite pitiful to look at."

"So young and already losing their lives, sigh, it really is pitiful."

"All prime young men, they went against the court and ended up being betrayed by traitors, taken down by the ruthless officials in one fell swoop."

"Wife, did you bring the steamed buns?"

"If anyone has spare change, they could help with the burial of the bodies afterward."

"Bury what? They were charged with conspiracy, so their heads will be hung on the Soul Summoning Pole. Direct relatives can only redeem them after seven days, and if no family members pay, I fear the bodies will be thrown into a mass grave, eaten clean by hyenas and wolves."

"Be satisfied. It's just that there have been too many rebellions in recent years. Not to mention those rebel armies that swept across over a dozen provinces, there have been numerous small-scale rebellions sprouting up like bamboo shoots after rain in many provinces under court control. The court has exhausted all its suppression methods, to no avail, forcing it to gradually change the traditional rule of succession."

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The noisy commotion awoke Tao Qian.

As he opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was the crowd of onlookers, followed by the sensation of being bound.

Instinctively looking around, he was struck by an intense sense of horror.

Accompanying it was a tide of jumbled memories.

Soon, Tao Qian realized what had happened.

He had traveled through time, and to top it off, he had become a criminal about to be beheaded.

It was the Ninth year of Tianming in the Longevity Heavenly Dynasty.

The original owner of the body was from a well-off family in a county of Southern Yue. One year, they accidentally offended a local magnate, leading to the ruination and death of his family.

The young man narrowly escaped, and later joined some heroes, filled with fervor to participate in activities against the court.

For years they battled across half the Tian Chao, and just a few days ago, they tried to incite an armed uprising in Seeking Immortal County.

Alas, betrayed by a traitor, their stronghold was uprooted, and they were all captured at once.

Now, they were all brought to Vegetable Market Street for execution.

"What a start this is. Others may begin in hell, but at least they are given family and some time to react and seek survival."

"How come in my case, in just a few seconds, I will face the chop and the separation of my body and head?"

Tao Qian was consumed by anger and sorrow.

However, the executioners, dressed in coarse red garments and red headbands, holding Ghost Head Sabers, paid no mind to anything else as they began to press these dozen prisoners to kneel and then swing their blades to behead them.

But who would have thought that these young rebels, already half-dead from brutal torture, would suddenly struggle together.

Not one of them was willing to kneel.

In their eyes, there was no fear of death.

Despite blood pouring from their throats, they stared with wide eyes, mouths agape, attempting to emit sounds to the crowd.

The crowd gasped in shock, one after another.

At this moment, everyone saw that the young men had all had their tongues removed.

The bloodied, gaping wounds were a ghastly sight.

The crowd could only hear some unintelligible sounds, along with the spray of blood.

Even so, the young men on the brink of death continued to utter hoarse cries, as if trying to awaken the onlookers.

Tao Qian intended to remain calm and search for a way to survive in the final seconds.

Yet the will that remained in the body still dominated his movements.

He kept his knees stiff, eyes wide-open, looking at the shocked, curious, and bewildered crowd.

His tongue was less mutilated, so coughing blood, he managed to make some intelligible sounds.

"We are people... never kneeling to dog officials..."

"The court is incompetent... the people suffer... willing to kill the traitor... powerless to avert the catastrophe..."

"Family grudges and national hatreds... may awaken our people..."

"Boom"

As the last roar was emitted, Tao Qian was dragged into a sea of memories belonging to the body's original hero.

The complex and brief life experiences of more than twenty years surged over me, overwhelming my being.

Outside, the thick-lipped, black-bearded executioner had fallen into a panic, continuously dismissing the red talismans and roaring,

"Behead!"

"Quick, behead them, you bunch of trash! If you let the rebellious traitors speak again, I'll have you all chopped as well."

"Behead!"

Angered by the officer, the executioners, who had previously been somewhat nonchalant, no longer dared delay.

They struck with lethal force, even smashing the knees of the heroes so they couldn't stand, but before swinging their blades, they all whispered, "Gentlemen, we are here to escort you on your way, to ensure you suffer no more, go forth."

As their voices faded, the gleaming blades began to rise one by one.

Heads fell to the ground, blood sprayed onto the yellow soil.

As hot blood gushed, the executioners still needed to rinse their mouths, spray wine, take a breather, and change blades.

A few seconds later, it was finally Tao Qian's turn.

At this moment, Tao Qian had seemingly "reviewed" the entirety of his previous life, only the last of his childhood years remaining.

And it was then that an astonishing change occurred for Tao Qian.

From his memories, Tao Qian knew that although this world resembled the final years of a certain dynasty from his past life, there were far too many differences.

For instance, the people here did not wear braids, nor did anything like the Eight Banners exist, could it simply be a normal Feudal Dynasty?

At the same time, this place possessed a large variety of demons, ghosts, unexplainable mysterious phenomena, and indescribable deceitful objects.

Were humans living in coexistence with demons, immortals, and ghosts?

Or was it that these numerous abnormalities were born from the humans themselves?

In his original childhood, he had a supernatural encounter:

He wandered into a desolate burial ground, fell asleep on an old grave, and dreamt that he was reading books alongside a fox.

Most of the content from that "Fox Book" had vanished from his original memories.

Only a certain mnemonic had resurfaced at this very moment, starting faintly weak and then growing louder, even being chanted aloud.

Perhaps it was due to a stroke of luck, or maybe it was a desperate clutch at straws.

As Tao Qian saw the glint of the blade from the corner of his eye, he instinctively began reciting the mnemonic in his mind,

"The dung beetle rolls its ball, and when the ball is completed, they ponder upon it, yet there is a writhing white thing within, shedding its shell to become a cicada. That dung beetle thinks not, why is that writhing thing so white?"

"The cook prepares the crab, leaving one leg on the shelf; though the crab is cooked, the leftover leg still moves."

"Those who are of life and death, they are but an assembly and dispersal of breath. Neither living nor dying, yet people casually speak of life and death..."

Just once, merely once.

Then the strange event took place.

Tao Qian felt himself instantly enter an incredibly bizarre state; a torrent of information in his mind exploded fiercely.

Before he could even comprehend it, a cold, terrifying aura emerged.

This presence instantly made Tao Qian think of "corpse," "puppet," "decay," and so on.

As he seemed about to slip into the abyss, suddenly, from the depths of his soul, there surged an indescribable, unimaginable power.

Like a force that shatters dry rot, it scattered that fearsome cold aura.

In that instant, Tao Qian shuddered violently.

And then, he saw it.

His own head rolling off, blood spurting, yet without a trace of pain.

Instead, his soul slowly withdrew from the remnant corpse, first glancing at the other heroes, where he saw over a dozen faint white lights flicker and fade away.

However, his own being strangely sensed various attractions coming from all around.

Quickly, Tao Qian understood what these "attractions" were.

They were the bodies of those who had recently died.

The old beggar starved on the street corner, dead rats or cockroaches in the ditches, mosquitoes drunk to death in a restaurant, fish, shrimp, and crabs recently dead at a nearby seafood stall... all these exerted a pulling force on Tao Qian's soul.

Tao Qian had a realization; it seemed he had the opportunity to be reborn by possessing a body.

But he instinctively refused these mosquitoes and shrimp.

His soul drifted in confusion, no longer hearing the clamor of the crowd, the executioners, or the supervising officer.

He only tried desperately to resist the pull from those insect and animal corpses, wanting to choose a suitable host body.

But soon, he faced a catastrophe.

Though it was a rainy day without harsh sunlight.

The cold wind that could arise at any moment was also capable of harming his soul.

Just then, a truly cold and bone-chilling gust blew past, nearly leading to his complete dispersal.

To survive!

Tao Qian had no choice but to yield to one of the strongest attractions among the many pulling forces.

In the next second, Tao Qian's soul was forcefully yanked, turned into a streak of white light.

It shot towards the end of Vegetable Market Street, into a closed shop.

It turned out to be a dimly lit, narrow bookshop.

The oil lamp used for lighting had long been extinguished, and the floor was a mess, littered with piles of books.

Beside the counter, there lay a tall, thin male corpse, dressed in a cotton robe and wearing a short vest.

"It has to be you."

Tao Qian had no other choice.

Letting the pulling force take his soul, he thrust himself into the unknown cause and age of the male corpse.