

LONGEVITY CHRONICLES

Chapter 5 4 Book Ship and Fishing_2

Li Sanyu finished speaking and Jia Qiang, pinching his goatee, nodded in agreement.

Then, with an even prouder look on his face, he said aloud, "Boss Li, your approach is prudent, but I think you can try something more stimulating."

"You know, because of those two unsuccessful wars, the court has a number of young officials starting some kind of Western movement, saying they want to learn all the heretical Western theories and secret skills to enrich the knowledge base of Tian Chao."

"We don't need to concern ourselves with the grand designs of those government masters, just know that even in Seeking Immortal County, there are many people interested in those Western heresies."

"As the saying goes, cater to their interests. If you import some translated Western books, you are guaranteed to have a unique product in the city, with no worries about sales."

"But you have to act fast, I've got some insider news for you."

"The newly appointed Governor of Southern Yue, Mr. Ji, recently defeated a group of the 'Taiping Rebel Army' and then annihilated a faction of the 'Devil God Army'. His reputation is flourishing, and his authority is wide."

"He, impressed by the novel Western weapons and theories, has instructed his nephew to set up a new 'Dexing Bookstore' and translated and printed a batch of Western books. When you go to the book market, you should inquire about it. If you can pre-order some, the profits should be considerable."

"Right, in addition to this tactic, there are also magazine girls and vulgar banned books, two sure ways to make money. If you are willing to let go of your old-fashioned ways, you can try them too."

...

"Both brothers are indeed knowledgeable and wide-read; our brief discussion just now has been more valuable than several years of study. This scholar is truly grateful."

"Tomorrow at Taian Inn, I'd like to treat you both to a lamb hot pot."

Outside Chengyou Bookstore, Tao Qian pulled the two men aside.

A flurry of sincere flattery had both of the calculating businessmen leave feeling completely satisfied.

Of course, a lot of what Tao Qian said was sincere.

Although he had acquired two sets of memories, he felt detached from many things and details.

The recent conversation filled in those gaps.

Now he had a fairly detailed understanding of the current situation in the Longevity Heavenly Dynasty.

Standing at the entrance, Tao Qian pondered for a few seconds.

He quickly went back into the store, took a piece of white paper, and wrote:

"Out to purchase books, will reopen tomorrow."

"New stock coming, looking forward to your patronage."

Sixteen simple and understandable characters, written in a robust and upright style.

Making effortless use of his muscle memory from his original body, Tao Qian had a decent mastery of brush calligraphy.

Pleased, he patted his hands, turned, and closed the shop door, then pasted the note up.

He didn't need to tidy up further; after all, his total worth was "9.9 yuan and 53 copper coins," all of which he carried in his bosom.

After checking that nothing was left behind, Tao Qian identified the direction and casually walked towards the real hub of activity in Seeking Immortal County, called "Seeking Immortal Pier."

He wasn't going there for manual labor like hauling bricks or cargo, but to stock up.

It was quite incredible.

But indeed, the book market of Seeking Immortal County was located at the pier.

Not only books, but trading centers for things like major agricultural produce, salt, iron, coal, and even some physical trades were also situated there.

Seeking Immortal County was, in fact, a relatively bustling port town.

Of course, it's called a "book market."

Essentially, it was just that several large Book Ships from the provincial capital would dock in Seeking Immortal County on specific occasions.

The time was neither too long nor too short, just enough for the seven or eight major and minor bookstores and bookshops in the county to board the ships for purchasing; occasionally, shop owners from little bookstores from towns ten or eight miles away would also go.

The so-called Book Ship, naturally, refers to a boat specializing in selling books.

This was one of the unique features of the province.

The publishing and printing industry in the capital was extremely developed, and given the much more convenient waterways over land routes, this gave rise to the special commodity known as "Book Ships."

Periodically, vessels laden with books would depart the capital and pass through various ports, distributing various types of books and newspapers

throughout the province, through the hands of bookstore owners and others with "book tokens."

The schedule was not very fixed; sometimes it was every few days, sometimes even every fortnight.

However, from the memories of his past life, he knew that recently, the Book Ships had set sail almost every day.

Moreover, it wasn't just book trading.

Other aspects had become especially prosperous and active.

This seemed somewhat contradictory, as warlords were rising everywhere and rebellions rampant. The court obviously showed signs of decline, so why had things become even more flourishing?

A last burst of vitality before death?

As Tao Qian muttered to himself, he just so happened to arrive at the very center of Vegetable Market Street.

Suddenly, he felt something.

Slowly lifting his head, he saw right in front of him a nearly ten-meter-high wooden stake.

The Soul Summoning Pole!

Before Tao Qian could complain about the ghastly name of this broken pole, a blast of hot wind blew by.

Immediately, he saw several heads, treated to prevent decay, swaying in the wind on the pole.

This could be considered a horrifying, terror-inducing scene, yet it did not evoke so much as a single exclamation.

On the street, there was a sea of people.

Everyone, except for Tao Qian, seemed to have grown accustomed to it.

Yesterday's excitement belonged to yesterday; once it ended, it ended.

Tao Qian first looked at the head belonging to "himself"—scarred all over, his eyes had remained wide open until death, but now they had been sewn shut.

It wasn't just him, the other Heroes whose eyes had not closed at beheading were treated the same.

Tao Qian didn't continue walking, but stood silently counting.

"Some are missing, hmm?"

As this thought arose, Tao Qian immediately looked towards a shaded stall not far from the Soul Summoning Pole.

There sat a weathered wooden table, behind which was an officer dressed haphazardly, half his chest exposed, dozing off with a dark complexion.

The corresponding memories surfaced in his mind.

Having run a bookshop on the street for a while, he knew all the people he should know.

Whose words held weight and whose did not, Tao Qian was clear about now.

Tao Qian walked over, tapped lightly on the table, and the old clerk seemed not to have been sleeping at all, opening his cloudy eyes the next second.

Catching his gaze, Tao Qian said,

"Elder Yuan, I heard that these heads can't be ransomed and buried until after seven days. How come some are already missing after just one day? Is there some kind of leniency from those above? If possible, I'd like to perform a good deed... I don't know..."

Tao Qian did not continue because he noticed that the old clerk in front of him suddenly looked at him with a strange gaze.

However, Tao Qian maintained his calm; he had nothing to fear.

To be beheaded and not die, to possess a body and be reborn... If such a twist of fate was exposed by an old clerk, then Tao Qian would accept his fate.

Of course, what really bolstered Tao Qian was the memory of his past life.

This old clerk was recognized as a good person on the street.

Indeed, the old clerk couldn't see through Tao Qian's flawless act. After staring for a while, he knew this scholar's stubbornness had kicked in again.

The dark-faced old clerk mocked Tao Qian with a smile, picked his earwax, sniffed it, flicked it away, flashed a grin revealing yellow teeth, and then said,

"Leniency? You naïve scholar, still so innocent."

"Considering your foolishness, I'll give you a piece of advice. If you want to do good, go to flower alley, or those flower boats on the Seeking Immortal River, or even take a spin through beggar alley."

"In short, best not to get involved in this matter."

"The county government folks are all out to catch Big Fish; keep your distance, you silly fish, lest you die without even knowing how."

"Now buzz off, don't disturb my sleep, bad luck."