

# DEMON SLAYER

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## Summary

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The Cheng family has always been poor, but they were the model family, they were happy together despite their struggles. The mom and dad work on a daily basis and Li Cheng started working as a servant as soon as she can pick up a broom. Fortune smiled on the little girl, for the lord she served recommended her to work at the Imperial Palace.

"Mom, dad, Alex, I did it!" shouted the excited girl. "I will work at the Imperial Palace!"

Alex was a year younger than Li and he was a few inches shorter than her. His eyes **glittered** when she made the announcement. He's always looked up to his older sister, as all younger siblings do. She's pretty, kind and hard working. The parents were proud of their little girl, and they patted on her on the head and complimented her all night. She was laughing and smiling the whole time. She finally made her parents proud by finding a secure job, which for a teenage girl, is a pretty blissful feeling.

Being selected to work at the palace means Li must live at the palace, so she will be away from home for an unknown amount of time. Alex was sad about that, but the parents support this notion, as if giving their daughter away to marriage.

With much determination and youth, Li worked hard at her new job. Servants have to do what they are assigned to do for the say - cooking, cleaning and attending to their lord's needs. Buildings in the palace consists of the main structure with four walls with wooden doors. Surrounded on all four sides was a balcony made of wood, elevated a foot off ground level. A handrail would cover the floor from one end to another. One would take two or three steps to get up the balcony and push the doors open to go inside. Her main job would be to scrub the balcony floors and she made sure they were sparkling clean.

One particular morning, she was scrubbing the floor diligently. She heard a man screaming in agony. Thinking someone might be hurt, she hurried to the source of the screams and peeped into the duke's private quarters. Li peeked through the door crack. Only one eye could see inside so she closed her right eye.

"Aaarrgh! Aaarrgh!" The duke's head was facing down, palms on the desk. He was sweating heavily.

Li thought he was sick, but something kept her watching. The duke's face began to turn red, really red. his facial features began to twist into something grotesque. Horns grew on his head - his cheeks withered and slid down his face, hanging down his chin. His ears grew longer and pointier. Then he turned to face the door and that was when Li saw his complete face. She gasped as this is definitely not something she was supposed to see. She got up and ran and in her haste, accidentally kicked over her bucket of water.

"Who is there?" the duke yelled.

Li ran as fast as she could, her heart beating rapidly, adrenaline surging through her body, and she could not feel her own breath. Duke Xiang saw a glimpse of her face and recognized her as one of the servants in this area of the palace.

Li came home, surprising her entire family. "The Duke is not a human! He is a demon! I saw it with my own eyes!"

"Li, what are you saying?" exclaimed Mr. Cheng, the father.

"Li you're not making sense." said Mrs. Cheng, the mother.

"You all have to run away or they'll come after you. I have to leave now!" Right after that, Li took her belongings and ran away from home. She went to the next town to hide. Mr. Cheng went after her, leaving Mrs. Cheng and Alex.

"Li, calm down!" said Mr. Cheng.

But the girl was scared for her life and was not thinking rationally. "Sorry, father. But I can't stay here anymore."

"You're not making any sense." said her father.

"I know what I saw. The duke's face became a demon's face and he saw my face! He's going to send his people after me! If I stay with you, you will all be in danger."

"But where will you go?" asked Mr. Cheng.

"Somewhere where there's no people like Xizang Forest. Goodbye father." Tears came down her face as she ran away.

Immediately afterwards, police officers showed up to arrest Mr. Cheng. He was brought to the magistrate's office for questioning. Neither Alex nor Li knew what happened to him afterwards, but they **never** saw him again.

Mrs. Cheng took Alex to a local inn. While waiting for her husband and daughter to come back, she grew restless. The worry and anxiety nearly broke her, and she made an irrational decision to go after Mr. Cheng, leaving Alex behind. She figured she'd bring back her husband and daughter and return to the inn right away. The police brought Mrs. Cheng to the magistrate's office.

Mrs. Cheng wanted to see Mr. Cheng, but the magistrate had some questions for her. They argued in that office, resulting in Mrs. Cheng's arrest. After that, she was **never** seen again.

Li ran into the forest, her heart beating rapidly, wandering aimlessly. Where to go? Anywhere away from civilization. That night, she ran through the darkness until she was too tired to continue. She sat down by a tree and managed to fall asleep due to sheer exhaustion. After sleeping for a few hours, the sunlight woke her up. For the next few days, she had to learn how to survive into this thick forest. She had to learn quick...how to find food, where to go to the bathroom, where to sleep, and how to avoid deadly animals.

These few days was the toughest time of her life, as she had to unlearn everything she knew and learn new things for survival. She lived a pretty primitive lifestyle while traveling non-stop. One day, by sheer dumb luck, she found the Temple of Enlightenment.

Upon seeing a long flight of stairs, she knew she was safe. Like many others who took these steps for the first time, Li was full of curiosity and excitement. When she reached the top, she saw three monks sweeping the floor.

One of them was Shang, a female with long black hair. "Hey we have visitor!" She ran to Li and snatched her hands. "What's your name?"

"Greetings. I am Li Cheng." she said, blushing a little.

Fu, a small monk went to join them. "You're a taller than me!" he said to Li.

Chan, a monk with a beer belly, showed up. "And I'm taller than you!"

Shang said, "And you're the same height as me. I have a feeling we'll get along great."

Indeed, Li got along with her new peers, especially Shang, as they were the only two females in the temple. They'd train together, eat together, sleep in the same room, and shared many secrets as females do. Li Cheng found herself living the same day everyday - wake up early, breakfast, train, rest, train, eat lunch, train, have free time, and train some more. The training was routine and boring, but Li went got used to it. She was really determined and discovered her love of martial arts.

Guan Du, one of the teachers, would often compliment her on her progress and give her pointers. He'd pat her on the head and say she has a bright future as a swordsman. She'd usually respond with "Thank you Master Guan!"

Despite the rough training, Li was truly happy during this time. She no longer had to worry about being hunted down and can live like a normal girl for once.

However, not all things last forever. Li always knew she'd have to leave the temple. She misses her family and she must see them again. The day Li had to leave was full of sadness and a tearful farewell.

Li and Shang embraced each other with tears streaming down their cheeks. Li walked over to the edge of the plateau and bowed before everyone, then turned around and walked down the long flight of stairs. When she took the last step on the stairs, she turned around one last time to look up. The stairs were so high that one cannot see what is at the top. What an unreal experience she just had. Li has trained at the temple for six months. It was such a short time, yet for her, it felt like six years. (Goodbye my friends. I will come back one day, I promise.)

Li's next destination was none other than the Valley of Death. She heard the rumors of the War God, but that's exactly why she's going there. There was no official boundary between Xizang Forest and the valley, but there a gradually change in the environment marked the beginning of the valley. The trees withered and plants were scarce. Also, there was the sense of death in the air. Crows croaked and the wind blew hard.

Li felt uneasy as she walked forward, her eyes glancing left and right. Suddenly, a man landed in front of her. He was wearing a priest's clothes, along with a straw hat that covered half his face. He must be the God of War of rumors. Two more men in straw hats appeared, one to his left, Shen Long, and one to his right, Sui Long.

"Who dares enter the Valley of Death?" said the War God. "All who enter must die."

Li took a step back in fear. "You...you must be the War God I've heard so much about."

"Oh? You know who I am yet you entered this valley, little girl? Do you have a death wish?" The War God drew his sword and it began to glow red and then set a flame.

She was impressed by the sight of the fiery sword. "That sword! You really are the War God!" She kneeled and saluted with her hands. "Please take me as your student!"

All three swordsmen were surprised as well as dumbfounded. "What are you trying to pull, woman?" said Sui Long.

The War God stepped forward, tilting his hat up so he can see Li better. "Are you serious, little girl?"

"My name is Li Cheng! Please accept me as your student!"

"You came here just for this purpose?" said the War God, displeased.

"What a waste of my time. Get lost."

Shen Long said, "Wait, are you sparing her life, master? All who enter our valley must die."

The War God turned so his back was facing Li. "This one is not even worth killing. I lost my motivation to fight."

"Please!" Li shouted, doing a kowtow. "I have where else to go. I am willing to do anything. I will do the mundane chores like cooking and cleaning, if you teach me swordcraft!"

The War God turned to face her and saw the glimmer in her eyes. He has not seen those eyes in a long time, they reminded him of himself. For a moment, he grew curious. "I do not take students."

"What about those two?" said Li.

"Shen Long and Sui Long are exceptional. They came to me as fugitives with no where else to go. When they met me they already have potential. Besides, you're just a girl, what can you do?"

Li stood up. "That's discrimination! I can be exceptional too. I am willing to work hard, even to the point of exhaustion. Take me as a student or kill me, but don't ignore me!"

The War God raised an eyebrow. He could kill this girl at any time, yet she dares talk to him in such a way? He grew more curious. "Let me ask you, Li Cheng, why do you want to become strong?"

Li placed a hand over her chest to express herself. "I'm a fugitive too...but I didn't do anything wrong. Because of me, my family...is in trouble. I want to see my parents and my little brother. But if I go now I can't protect anyone! It's all because of the dumbass duke!"

"The duke? Duke Xiang, the second most powerful man in the kingdom?"

Li nodded. "He's the cause of all this trouble!"

A smirk came upon the War God's face. "If I train you, do you promise to kill the duke?"

"I promise I will kill the duke." Li said, nodding. "Because he's a demon! I promise you!"

"Let me warn you, my training is tough. You might not survive. Are you able to handle it?"

Li kneeled and saluted with her hands. "I can handle it! Thank you master...War God!"

"Call me Master Genzo."

And that conversation sealed her fate as her training began immediately. The temple gave her the foundation to learn swordcraft, as she already has the stamina and basic movements. She also did the mundane chores like cooking and laundry, but those chores were shared amongst herself, Sui Long and Shen

Long. She rarely saw their faces, except if they were eating. After several months of training, she received her own nickname, Fo Long, meaning "Wind Dragon." Her comrade's name is Sui Long, "Water Dragon," and Shen Long, "Spirit Dragon."

After several years of training, she was able to last a round with Master Genzo. She wore the same outfit as her comrades, the priest outfit, which includes baggy pants, a light vest, and a straw hat. Everyone noticed her progress skyrocket from day one, as if she was meant to hold a sword.

Again, the day would come when she has to leave. After **three years** of intense training in the Heaven's Wrath Style, she felt she was ready to return to Yi Ling.

Master Genzo stood in the middle of Shen Long and Sui Long. Fo Long kneeled before him and saluted. "I have learned a lot these three years. Thank you for everything, Master Genzo."

Her master replied, "You've done well for yourself, Fo Long. I believe you are ready to go into battle."

"Thank you master! I owe you everything! One day I will pay you back!" she said.

Fo Long felt nothing but gratitude to Masai Genzo. He is nothing like the rumors say...instead of being a cold blooded killer, he is a kind hearted man who is misunderstood by the world. She is now the inheritor of the Heaven's Wrath, and she is ready to get revenge.

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After traversing the entire width of the forest, Fo Long reached the edge of the hill, where there was a great view of the city below and the sky above. She took off her straw hat and mask, freeing her face so she can feel the breeze against her skin. Her feelings of joy and excitement were indescribable. Years ago, Li would fear going back to the city, but today, she returns with a renewed sense of hope. Staring at the city below, she felt like a monarch about to take over everything, now that she is invincible.

When she left, she was a child fugitive. But now she is an adult, and no one will recognize her, thus the mask is not needed.

The first city on her travel itinerary was Yi Ting, whose magistrate arrested her parents. At night time, there was a horse carriage riding across town, protected by three bodyguards on horses. Li was standing in the middle of the street, clearly in the path of the carriage.

"Who's that?" said Bodyguard-A.

"What the hell are you doing, woman?" shouted the Bodyguard-B.

Li was not fazed by them at all. "I need to see Lord Dumai now."

Bodyguard-B got off his horse and drew his sword. "Move it or we'll move you as a dead body."

Li smiled. "Now we're talking." She drew her sword and charged forward. Bodyguard-B thrust his sword at her, but she dodged, went past his safe zone, and stabbed him. He fell on the ground and bled to death. Bodyguard-A and Bodyguard-C hopped off their horses and attacked her. \*Slish Slash\* She finished them off with no problems. This helped her confirm that the Heaven's Wrath Style is invincible.

**Magistrate Dumai** exited the carriage. "What the hell is the ruckus?" Then he gasped upon seeing his fallen bodyguards. "Aaagh! Who did this? Did you kill them?"

Li approached Dumai and kicked him in the chest, causing him to fall against the nearby wall.

"Ugh! Wait, why are you doing this?" said the frantic magistrate.

"Answer my question or this sword will be inside your throat. Ten years ago you arrested a man and woman with the surname Cheng. Where are they?"

"I don't remember." said Dumai.

Li's eyes opened wide. "Don't remember? Don't fuck with me!" The tip of the blade touched his cheek.

"Listen miss, I don't know who you are. But over the years I have arrested countless people. There's no way I can remember a particular one."

"You have to remember! It was one man and one woman! There's also a small boy with the surname Cheng and he has silver hair! Tell me where that boy is!"

"I don't remember. Do you know how many boys with silver hair we have in this big city? And the name Cheng is very common."

Li was extremely pissed off, her blade was shaking from the anger. "You...you...!"

A man named Vincent just arrived and he rushed over to the scene. He threw a fan at Li. She saw it before it hit her, and knocked it away with her blade, and the fan flew back to Vincent.

"Who the hell are you?" Li asked.

Dumai recognized him. "You're Vincent, the swordsman I'm supposed to meet tonight! Help me! I'll give you any amount of money you want!" He crawled towards Vincent and grabbed his pants. "I don't want to die, help me!"

Li said, "Look at his true face, he's just a coward who only cares about his live life. This is the kind of man you're protecting."

Vincent pushed Dumai off his leg. "I already knew the type of man he is. But we of the Heaven's Council do not shed blood needlessly. I was here as a representative to talk to him about the stability of Yi Ting."

Li pointed her sword forward. "There is no stability with this kind of man running the show! He has done something unforgivable! Don't get in my way!"

Vincent drew two fans from his sleeves. The ninja girl charged at him and attacked aggressively. Vincent's steel fans to deflected her attacks. \*Cling cling\* Their range is small, but he had more control over their range of motion, and Li was unable to get close to him.

"Grrrrr. What kind of man uses fans? That's a woman's weapon."

"Oh? I did not realize fans had a gender assigned to them. What about you? A sword is a man's weapon, yet a woman is holding one."

"That's because I want to show the world a woman is as good as any man."

Vincent threw her fans at her, she blocked, and they would boomerang back to his hands every time. Only able to defend, the ninja girl was getting frustrated.

"I think the same. I want to prove to people that fans are as good as swords."

Li jumped back. "This is a waste of time. I'm not here to debate with you." She threw smoke bomb on the ground and disappeared.

Vincent and Dumai coughed from the smoke. By the time the smoke cleared, Li was long gone. Vincent had never met a female fighter like that, and he wondered who she was.

After that incident, Magistrate Dumai put up wanted flyers with Li Cheng's face all over the city, as well as neighboring cities. In just one night, Li became a fugitive again.

Li sat on an arbitrary rooftop. In ancient times, rooftops in large cities were triangular shaped, made of tiles. It was not meant for people to walk on top of them, but often times, ninjas would use the rooftops to take shortcuts or hide from people.

(The Heaven's Wrath Style is supposed to be invincible. How can I have trouble with a guy with fans? I wasn't expecting a guy like that to begin with. Unless...if my training is not complete?)

Suddenly, she had a flashback of her master's words. "Invincible? Is that what you think? That's a dangerous way of thinking. When you go back to the city, you face all kinds of scenarios that you are not trained for. You must be prepared for anything."

At the time, Li brushed off his words as old-man talk, but his words ring true right now. Realizing this, she grew annoyed, knowing with her current strength, she cannot kill the duke.

Suddenly, she saw a burning fire a few blocks down. Unable to contain her curiosity, she headed over there, jumping from roof to roof.

Li landed atop the roof adjacent to the burning building. She saw two men on the ground. One was a regular bodyguard fighting off a man dressed in black clothes. His face was covered by a veil. His movements were peculiar, not any she has seen before. Each step he took left after-images of himself, creating an



illusion of multiple copies of him. His swift movements allow him to the bodyguard using fast and precise strikes. The Black Reaper then ran to the next area.

Li hopped off the roof and landed next to the corpse to examine it. She was shocked to see that the cuts were so deep and clean, as if he was a piece of meat on a Petri dish. Those illusory movements...these deep cuts...who is the man in black?

The Black Reaper just killed another guard. Li appeared with her sword. "Who are you?" asked he.

"My name is Fo Long and I want to see your true skill."

"You have a death wish, woman!" The Black Reaper dashed at her and she swings her blade at him. He side-stepped to avoid it, creating after-images of himself. Li's eyes were confused and she struck the air. She kept striking, only to hit the air, while the reaper stayed within her range. This is his specialty - the **Shadow Walk**.

The Black Reaper felt it was his turn to retaliate - he swings his blade with circular swipes and Li defended, but it was difficult to predict where he would strike with his tricky footwork. It was very painful to defend his attacks, maybe downright impossible. She kept retreating until her back was near the wall. The Black Reaper knocked her sword out of her hand, and then pointed his blade's tip near her neck.

"Now you get to meet the real Grim Reaper."

"Your strength is nothing I have ever seen. You're completely different than my current master." Li suddenly knelt and saluted, which surprised him. "Please teach me swordcraft!"

The Black Reaper startled, took a step back. "What kind of trick is this?"

"It is no trick. I want to be your student. I'll do anything if you're willing to teach me."

The Reaper put his sword back into its shell. "What a waste of my time. You're not even worth killing. I will spare you if you leave and never appear before me." He began to walk away.

Li stood up. "Hold it!"

"Oi, don't test my patience, kiddo. I will said I will spare you and I will not say it twice."

"Teach me swordcraft or kill me, but don't ignore me!"

The Reaper turned to face her, astounded at her audacity. "Do you know what position you're in, woman?" He saw the fire in her eyes...those eyes tell that she is serious...those eyes cannot tell a lie. "Who is your master?"

"None other than Master Genzo."

If the Reaper's face was shown, his face would be one who is impressed. "The Legendary War God. Interesting. That explains how you were not killed by me instantly. But I work alone. I do not need a student, you'll only get in my way. " (Wait. If she's mastered the Heaven's Wrath Style she could be useful to

me. It will save me a lot of time if I had an underling. She's a woman and a pretty good looking one so she can seduce lords and politicians.) "Just so you know, I am nothing like Master Genzo. I will kill innocent people if they are in my way."

"I don't care." Li replied. "I want to learn what you know no matter what the cost."

"I have one condition. You will do exactly as I say and never question my orders. You might die several times over if you follow me."

"Yes, I agree!" She kneeled before him. "I look forward to your instructions, master...uhhh..."

"I have no name but if you must call me something, call me the Black Reaper."

"Master Black Reaper!"

"Those words don't go together. Just Black Reaper is fine."

Li stood up with much excitement on her face. "Yes master!"

Shortly afterwards, Li came to regret her decision. In a town located in Shen, a mansion was burning, and most of the household members were dead. An old man, a servant of the house, crawled backwards. "No...don't do this!" he pleaded. Li approached him, with a dark look in her eyes, sword in right hand. "Why? Why do you do this?" Her left leg stepped forward and bent at the knee, and slashed his neck. \*Slish\* The old man fell down completely, with a blank look on his face.

Li panted for breath. She was ordered to kill an innocent old man and she went through with it. Nay, she murdered the entire family and the servants, even though they were innocent. In the background, the fires burned brightly. She stared at the Black Reaper and many things went through her mind. He slaughtered everyone just to gain a few measly documents...was killing the servants necessary? She is not allowed to question him, for that is the promise she made. And now she may have chosen the wrong person to follow.

The mansion they burned belonged to the Lee family, a prominent family who holds land in the north. With the entire family dead, the land now belongs to the lord whose territory is closest to this town, which is Lord Huong. One of the witnesses survived the slaughter and caught a glimpse of Li's face.

The next morning, wanted posters of Li were posted all over the kingdom. She was already wanted because she tried to murder Lord Dumai, but now she is more wanted than ever.

Despite her being hunted down by multiple politicians, Li still refused to wear a mask. A ninja's asset is her stamina, and the key to stamina is oxygen. Wearing a mask will reduce her breathing by half, which will make it uncomfortable to wear, but ineffective as well.

The Reaper and Li went on a journey of several cities with them ending up in the middle of the **Shu Kingdom**. In the larger cities, customs and cultures

can be seen across different kingdoms, but in rural towns, there is not much difference. Everyone is doing what they can to put food on the table.

One day, the Reaper had a bombshell announcement for his student. "Li Cheng, this is where we part ways."

Li was stunned as this came out of no where. "What? Are you serious? Why?"

"I will continue the rest of my journey alone." said he.

"Are you tossing me aside? I've done everything you asked me to! I even killed innocent people."

"I have no complaints about your loyalty." replied the Black Reaper. "The journey from here on will be ten times more dangerous. Li, you have already inherited my Shadow Style. You have your own goals, right? Such as slaying Duke Xiang."

"I guess so. But..." Li was doubtful if he actually says what he means. Without a visible face, it was hard to decipher his true intentions. That's how it's always been between her and the Reaper.

"If you do not feel ready, you can go back to the Valley and train under Master Genzo some more." The Black Reaper began to walk away.

"I guess this is farewell. Will we meet again?"

"We definitely will, when I have achieved my goal. It could be six months or a year, or even longer. But I **will** come back for you. Be my student in the future." The man in black walked away using his Shadow Walk - he vanished, then appeared further down, then vanished again, only to appear further away. After a few more repetitions, he was completely out of sight.

Li leaned against the wall with her arms crossed. (I bet he doesn't want me go with him because he doesn't want me learn the secret of the Shadow Puppet.)

Later on, Li went to an outdoors restaurant. The waiter brought her a bowl of noodles, the smoke simmering before her face, but she paid no attention to it. (Why should I go back to the War God? Is my training not complete? Am I ready to kill Duke Xiang? Breaking into the Imperial Palace is out of the question. I will wait for him to leave the palace but he'll be surrounded by bodyguards. But he's a demon...do I know how to kill a demon? If I had allies it would be so much easier.) Suddenly, a revelation came to her. (There's Shen Long and Sui Long! They're also fugitives. They are sure to join me! I have to go back.)

Li was traversing a thick forest when she sensed something. "I know you're watching me. Come out." She threw a dagger at the tree above. A hand caught the dagger between his fingers. Then War God's camouflage vanished and his body appeared. He jumped and landed on the ground. \*Thud\* "You have improved, Li." said he.

The ninja girl smiled. "Master, I have returned to be under your tutelage once again." She kneeled and saluted.

"I'm surprised. I thought you'd come back in five to ten years. This is much sooner than I thought."

"Master Genzo. I know you have killed countless bounty hunters, enough bodies to make a mountain. I also know you slew countless demons. Please teach me how to kill a demon."

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Alex Cheng Contents  
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The Cheng family has always been poor, but they were the model family, they were happy together despite their struggles. The mom and dad work on a daily basis and Li Cheng started working as a servant as soon as she can pick up a broom. Fortune smiled on the little girl, for the lord she served recommended her to work at the Imperial Palace.

"Mom, dad, Alex, I did it!" shouted the excited girl. "I will work at the Imperial Palace!"

Alex was a year younger than Li and he was a few inches shorter than her. His eyes **glittered** when she made the announcement. He's always looked up to his older sister, as all younger siblings do. She's pretty, kind and hard working. The parents were proud of their little girl, and they patted on her on the head and complimented her all night. She was laughing and smiling the whole time. She finally made her parents proud by finding a secure job, which for a teenage girl, is a pretty blissful feeling.

Being selected to work at the palace means Li must live at the palace, so she will be away from home for an unknown amount of time. Alex was sad about that, but the parents support this notion, as if giving their daughter away to marriage.

One day Li came home unannounced, surprising her entire family. "The Duke is not a human! He is a demon! I saw it with my own eyes!"

"Li, what are you saying?" exclaimed Mr. Cheng, the father.

"Li you're not making sense." said Mrs. Cheng, the mother.

"You all have to run away or they'll come after you. I have to leave now!" Right after that, Li took her belongings and ran away from home. She went to the next town to hide. Mr. Cheng went after her, leaving Mrs. Cheng and Alex behind.

Alex has never seen his sister act like that before and did not know what to make of it. But he was certain of one thing: he had this ominous feeling that his life will never be the same again.

Unable to decipher Li's cryptic message and fearing for their safety, Mrs. Cheng took Alex to an inn. They stayed there for two days straight with Alex

restricted from leaving the inn. He was bored so he sat by the window and stared blankly at the sky. This is the beginning of this habit that he would carry him until his adulthood.

One day, Alex's mother headed out to see the magistrate that arrested Mr. Cheng. "Listen Alex, no matter what, do not leave this room until I come back, okay?" she said.

"Okay, I got it." replied the boy.

Little did he know, that was the last time he saw his mother. At this time, Alex grew very uneasy, he sat by the window all day, waiting for his family members to come back. But they never did, and the anxiety became too great. He disobeyed orders and left the inn and went back to see his neighbor and friend Zi Lai.

Alex told Zi everything, but did not explain it well, due to his emotional state. Zi did not quite understand everything, but he knew how bad the situation was.

That night, the boys decided to go find Alex's sister on their own. It was a cold night with dark clouds looming over. Alex and Zi ran through the street, now littered with puddles of water. \*Sploosh sploosh\*

Suddenly, a man with a sword appeared before Alex. He was from the **East Brigade**, an elite police unit under the control of eunuchs. Alex held a kodachi, a miniature sword that is perfect for a child his size. \*Clang\* Alex's kodachi was knocked away. The officer then slashed him in the right arm, causing him to bleed profusely. Alex fell down face flat on the water filled street. \*Splash\* Lightning flared and the rain poured even harder. His blood mixed with the rain.

"Oh no! Alex!" Zi screamed. Seeing his friend injured and near dead, he snapped and became angry beyond logic. He also carried a kodachi and he jumped up like a mantis and stabbed the officer in the chest, killing him quickly. \*Stab\*

A second officer attacked Zi. \*Clang\* Zi blocked the attack from above, stabbed the officer's leg, causing him to scream. Zi jumped up and slashed him in the neck, giving him three seconds before he died.

The remaining officer was bewildered that a kid like him has such power. He panicked and ran away, disappearing into the thick rain.

Zi went to check up on his fallen friend. "Alex, wake up! Alex, speak to me! Alex!"

Alex woke up and he found himself in a stranger's bed. It is most likely a doctor's office or hospital. He sat up and looked at his right arm, it had two layers of bandages stained with a circle of blood. Curious, he touched his arm and grunted from the pain.

"Do not touch the wound, young man." The doctor brushed the curtains aside to come into the room. Zi was behind him.

"Zi...you brought me here?"

"Yeah. You're gonna be alright. Isn't that right, doctor?"

The doctor stroked his beard. "The critical period is over so your life is not in danger." The boys sighed in relief.

"However I have bad news for you. Best prepare yourself."

Alex stared at the doctor with big bright eyes. "Please tell me."

"I did what I could to stitch up your injury, but it is too deep. You can never use a sword for the rest of your life." The doctor paused so the boys can reflect on his words. "I suggest studying to become a merchant or politician, or a doctor like myself."

Zi was sad for his friend. "Alex..."

"It's fine." said Alex, looking down. "I didn't plan on becoming a swordsman. I only pick up a weapon so I can find my sister and my parents."

"I have to check up on my parents. I'm worried about them." said Zi.

"You're leaving me?"

"I'll be back soon. I promise."

Alex nodded. "Mmm."

After Zi left the room, a nurse walked in. The doctor took a hold of his injured arm. "Alright my boy, it's time to change these bandages."

Having an ominous feeling, Zi hurried home, running until he was out of breath. From a distance, he saw smoke and his heart nearly skipped a beat. Figuring that it's not his house, he ran down the street. His eyes grew wide open and his eyeballs became dark when he saw his house up in flames. It was the worst case scenario and Zi fell on his knees, tears streamed down his cheeks. Every fiber of his being wanted this to be a bad dream...but the smell of smoke and the heat was too real...his parents are in the house and burnt to a crisp along with his house.

On the way back to the doctor's office, Zi walked like a zombie, with dried up tears on his face. After walking for hours, he finally reached the office by muscle memory.

Alex was overjoyed to see his friend. "Zi, you're back! How are your parents?"

Zi was silent, which made his friend uncomfortable.

"Zi? What happened? Zi?"

Just when he thought his tears were dried up, fresh tears dripped down his cheek. "They killed my parents!" He sobbed with his mouth wide open.

Alex was shocked and did not know how to respond. Suddenly, Alex received this feeling that he too will never see his parents again. Like Zi, he cried

out loud. The room became full of their crying and sobbing. **"Waaaaah! Waaaaah!"**

In the next room, the nurse overheard them. "Those poor boys. Can't we do something for them?"

"Perhaps...perhaps not. They are fugitives." replied the doctor.

The nurse's name is Mrs. Lee, who is Jade's grandmother. She is a kind hearted old woman who cannot stand by while these innocent boys were suffering. She instructed the boys on what to do once they leave town. They are to go to the next town immediately because the East Brigade are professionals and will find them eventually. They need to go from town to town and stay at inns and motels, always staying on the move. The best bet is to cross the border to the Shu Kingdom, where the East Brigade has no power. Mrs. Lee even gave them some money for food and rent so they can at least survive a few weeks.

Alex and Zi bowed to the nurse. "Thank you for every thing, Mrs. Lee." said Zi.

"I promise I will repay the favor one day!" said Alex. "I won't let this be the end of my life. I will make it big one day, you'll see!"

The nurse's eyes were small so when she smiled her eyes became a line. "I'm sure you will, young man."

Zi and Alex, still injured, left the office and left the town.

East Brigade officers knocked on the doctor's door. \*Knock knock\* The doctor answered. "Can I help you?"

The officer pulled up a wanted poster. "We are looking for two boys about nine to ten years old, one of them has silver hair and has an injured arm."

"I have not seen anybody like that." said the doctor.

"If you do, notify us immediately."

The boys did exactly as the kind old woman instructed, they went from town to town, never staying more than one night, until they reached the border. Once they were in Shu they were ninety percent safe. Just to make sure, they still traveled until they reached the city at the very east of Shu, near the border of Chiri.

They lost their parents but they have no time to grieve as they had to survive to put food in their stomachs. Alex and Zi took on odd jobs here and there to make money. Alex was unable to wield a sword, but Zi can and he would take on dangerous jobs. Despite his mediocre skills, he managed to complete every job he was given. Alex never gave up on his sister - on his free time he'd search for clues on her whereabouts.

Eventually, they both became teenagers and unrecognizable from their former selves. They traveled by horse back to Shen and settled in Yi Ling, the capital city. If there is any place where there is information, it is here. This is also the city that Mrs. Lee moved to.

Alex and Zi reunited with Mrs. Lee and befriended her granddaughter Jade, a jewelry saleswoman who owns a store at the marketplace. Alex worked diligently to look for clues to his sister's whereabouts. One day he found the clue that he was looking for: an eyewitness saw Li Cheng and Mr. Cheng talking on the outskirts of town before she disappeared. Apparently she went into the Xizang Forest and deeper into the jungle, where supposedly there is an ancient temple full of monks. With just this one clue, Alex and Zi set forth on their journey to the forest. This is the beginning of the story in **Legend of the Fire Sword**.

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Zi's grandfather was a demon who was originally a man named **Zho Lai**, a farmer but also fighter from a poor village in an unknown province. Sometimes demons wander into the village, endangering everyone in it, so it is up to Zho and the fighters of the village to kill these demons. One day, a group of ten fighters went into the wilderness to search for wandering demons. They found two and killed them swiftly, but two of the fighters were wounded.

"Good job today Zho!" said a comrade of his.

"It was nothing." Zho replied with a hand on the back of his head. "I just do what I usually do."

"I'm just glad someone like you is defending our village." said the comrade.

"But our situation is getting worse. I wish I was stronger so I can protect my village."

The group of fighters returned to their home to report the good news to the village elders. Zho would often think to himself he wants to be stronger. Day after day he would train in his backyard non-stop, but he was still a human doing battle with demons. The human body has limitations and Zho would try to constantly overcome those limitations.

The village elders congratulated Zho on today's success, and Zho would reply how he usually does. "I'm just doing my job, that's all. But I wish I was stronger. It's quite difficult for us to fight demons even if we outnumber them. I worry about the day there are too many demons to handle."

"You worry too much, young man." said the elder. "Your group of fighters are doing just fine protecting our village. We all appreciate what you do."

One of the elders had his gaze intently on Zho Lai, unbeknownst to him. It was the gaze of someone cooking up a scheme.



Zho went home and was greeted by a woman named Dae. "Welcome home dear." She was a skinny woman with a long, brown hair, pale skin and small eyes.

"I'm back Dae!" Zho and her gave each other a good embrace. "How is my fiancé doing?"

"Today was really productive. Some of the village women attended a sewing class and I learned many things about sewing."

"That's great. You can make me a sweater sometime."

"I will before winter comes. Dinner is almost ready."

How this couple has dinner is the same as the entire village - they put a pot over a burning fire, and put the water into the pot with ingredients to make soup. The meat is placed on dishes and they use chopsticks to put the meat into the pot to cook it. After about an hour of eating, they were both full and Dae cleaned up. Zho usually over eats.

"Man that hit the spot!" he said, rubbing his stomach. Knock knock. Zho answered the door and he was surprised to one of the village elders at his doorstep. "En Ko? What's going on?"

**En Ko** was a man in a straw hat, wearing plain clothes and sandals. "I have something I'd like to discuss with you. Please come to my house."

"Uh, sure." Not knowing what this was about, Zho put on his sandals and followed En Ko into his house. As soon as Zho closed the door, his life was about to change forever. "So Mr. Ko, can you tell me what this is about?"

En Ko put down his straw hat. "Before I do that, do you mind if I read your mind?"

"Read my mind? As in sorcery? Naw, such a thing doesn't exist."

"I'm going to show you right now..." En Ko put his palm on Zho's forehead. Flashes of images entered Ko's mind and it was an intense experience for both of them. Zho stuttered backwards and hit the wall.

"Ugh! I have a headache. What did you do?"

En Ko was sweating and panting for breath. "I read all of your memories since the day you were born. Hmmm, I see. You want more strength to protect your fiancé and protect the villagers. What a noble spirit you are."

"That doesn't prove you read my mind!"

"Alright. Let me tell you something that only you know. The last time you and your fiancé Dae had sex was the night before and your favorite position is--"

"Aaaah! That's enough!" Zho exclaimed. "Okay I believe you!"

"Zho Lai, what if I told you - you can get the power you wanted for a small price. But you will no longer be yourself."

"Huh? I dunno what you mean. But I am willing to do anything to protect my village! I grew up here!"

"Anything? Even if it requires a sacrifice?" asked En Ko. He can tell his target was becoming curious, so the bait worked.

"Yes anything! I'll gladly sacrifice my own life if it comes down to it!" Zho exclaimed, making a fist.

"Even if it means losing your humanity?"

"I dunno what you mean?"

"Are you willing to become a demon to gain the ultimate strength?"

"A demon? Hell no! Those are the enemies we're trying to fight. Why would I become one of those things?!"

"There are different kinds of demons. Someone like you will never become like those mindless zombies. You can become a demon but still be yourself. You'll look the same as you are now. You will become stronger, faster, more durable, and less likely to die from blood loss. You'll be physically superior to your former self in every way! And best of all, you won't change physically. Transforming is completely optional. If you want you can stay in your human form your whole life."

Zho gave it a lot of thought. "That does sound pretty good. Are you saying that you can make me like that?"

En Ko said, "Of course. As you've guessed, I am a demon myself."

Zho's eyes grew wide. "No way! I couldn't tell all this time."

"See? No one can tell the difference. You'll be able to protect your precious village and no one will know your secret."

"Hmmm...But there has to be drawbacks, right? Can demons still...do **that**?"

"Do what?"

"You know...that thing...with a woman."

"Oh ha ha ha ha. Don't worry. You can do **that** all you want. You and your woman can make healthy babies. Healthy human babies. They'll have some demon blood, but they won't transform. Your sons and daughters will be half demons. Your grandchildren will be quarter demons. Your great grand children will have half of that...and your great great--"

"You're going too far ahead! Anyways, I get what you mean." Then his face grew serious. "Mr. Ko, please turn me into a demon."

"Once the process begins there's no turning back."

Zho nodded. Once he makes up his mind, he will go through with it no matter what.

Once the **turning** process began, Zho Lai felt the effects immediately. During the group's next hunt, Zho was at his physical peak. He killed two demons all by himself and he was still not tired. The rest of his group of nine men killed two other demons collectively. A comrade of Zho's put his hand on his shoulder. "Wow you are on a roll today, Zho! Have you been taking energy drinks?"

"Ha ha ha. It's not energy drinks. I been training a lot. See?" Zho flexed his biceps. Him and his hunting group laughed the rest of the way back to the village.

He felt like he was on top of the world. He was stronger than he was before the turning, he can protect his village, and his fiancé loves him as she normally does. But like a drug, his happiness did not last long.

One night, Zho was unable to sleep and went out to his backyard because he did not want to wake up Dae.

His arm was reacting strangely, it started to change color and it was painful. He grabbed his demonic arm and fell on his knees, groaning in pain. "Ugh...uuughhh. What is happening? En Ko did not tell me about this! That bastard."

Unfortunately, Dae saw what happened. Zho turned around and saw Dae, and he was startled.

"What is wrong with your arm?" Dae asked, with a hand over her mouth.

Zho stood up. "Dae, listen to me calmly. There's a good reason for this."

"How could you?" she responded. "Was this the only way?"

"You know...? That I am becoming a demon?"

"What else could this be? I thought we discussed everything together?"

"I'm sorry, Dae. I decided this impulsively. I wanted to protect the village, to protect you. This looks ugly, doesn't it?"

Dae walked over to him and touched his demonic arm. "I don't care about that. You always carry the burden by yourself. You put everything on your shoulders but you don't know that others worry about you."

Zho stared at her eyes and they were serious eyes. She was a lot more understanding than he originally thought. He thought she might freak out after seeing his arm and abandon him. This woman truly is a keeper and he is fortunate to have chosen her.

A child of the village was spying on them from behind the fence. She was so scared she covered her mouth with both hands and tear drops appeared in the corner of her eyes.

One day, Zho was summoned to see the village elders. He showed up to find half the village waiting for him. "Village elder? What is this about?"

"Is it true?" asked the elder. "You've been hiding it from us?"

"Wait...what is this about?" asked Zho.

"Are you a demon?" the elder asked with his eyes narrowed.

All the villagers waited anxiously for his answer. Zho, being a straight arrow, can never lie to his fellow villagers. "I did it to protect the village."

The villagers chatted amongst themselves.

"Unbelievable!" exclaimed the elder. "To think that a demon was living amongst us. This is a village for humans, not for the likes of your kind!"

"What are you trying to say, elder?"

"You can no longer live here. Please leave."

Zho was shocked beyond belief. "You can't be serious?!"

Suddenly, Dae showed up and she stood by Zho. "Wait! You're all being unreasonable. Listen to me. Zho only became a demon recently. But he looks human, doesn't he? He's no different than before!"

An elder said, "But he is still a demon and he has demon blood flowing through his veins! Demons have ruined our peaceful village!" The other folks shouted in agreement.

Dae would not back down. "Think about why Zho did it? He did it to get strength to protect the village, to protect all of us! He did it for you! And now you're going to shun him just because it's different? You're all being paranoid over nothing!"

Zho was pleasantly surprised. "Dae..."

Nine of the fighters walked over from the crowd's side to Zho's side. "It's true. Zho has done nothing wrong. He has fought for his village day after day, risking his life selflessly."

Another fighter said, "He saved our lives many times! Each one of you are still alive because of him!"

Yet another fighter said, "It's an undeniable fact that he's the best fighter out of all of us."

Zho was so touched he could cry, but he held it in.

The elder stood forward. "Every thing you said is true. Zho Lai has done a lot for us and this is his home as much as it is ours. However...the people no longer trust you. You're no longer human and that is a fact."

Zho focused on the looks on the villagers' faces. Many of them had a look of distrust, some were disgusted, and the small children were scared. He tapped Dae on the shoulder. "It's fine...I volunteer to leave."

"Why?!" Dae exclaimed.

"Elder is right. Most of the village does not trust me anymore. Imagine this Dae, every day you visit the market, people will give you glances. You go to sewing class and people avoid talking to you. And I'm pretty sure our kids will get bullied. It's not something I want to put you through. This place is no longer my home." Zho held his woman by the shoulder and the two walked away from the crowd. The fighters watched helplessly as the two walked away.

Zho and Dae went back to their house and packed all their belongings into two bags. Both of them were carrying a large backpack containing everything they can fit inside. When they stepped out the door, the nine hunters were waiting for them.

Fighter-A said, "Zho Lai, we want to wish you well on your new journey."

Fighter-B said, "You've done a lot for us, and we'll never forget you. It's not much but here's some money for you."

Fighter-C said, "Here's some food in case you get hungry."

All the fighters bowed. **"Thank you for everything!"** they said in unison. The couple was touched by their words and actions. They literally did not know how to respond other than to receive their gifts of generosity. Even if the village no longer trusts him, Zho knows that his comrades appreciate everything he did for them, and they will always remain his comrades.

Zho and Dae traveled to a farming village not far away from their original home. Fortunately one of the houses was abandoned so they had no issues finding a home. One summer night, Dae was making dinner for them. The door was open, revealing nearly the entire living room. Zho sat by the wall, with a stick in his mouth, spacing out from boredom.

A man in blue clothes and a straw hat arrived at the front yard. Zho became alert and drew his sword. The man lifted up his straw hat. "Calm down, it's me, En Ko."

"I know." said Zho with an angry face. "How dare you hide information from me! You tricked me!"

En Ko put up his palms. "Whoa, calm down. I did not come here to fight you. I came because I was concerned about you two."

"Hmph." Zho put his sword back into its shell.

"Can we talk somewhere privately?"

"Dae is my wife. If you have something to say to me, say it in front of her. I decided not to keep secrets from her anymore."

Thus, En Ko entered the living room and sat down by the bonfire.

En Ko found them. He says zho must absorb souls or he will die  
Zho decided to become a bounty hunter so he can get money and take souls  
En Ko trains him. Zho develops the shadow style.  
he joins the assassin lodge  
the headmaster wants to see his abilities. Zho vs some guy  
he shows the shadow style and defeats some guy, headmaster is impressed

Grandfather - Zho Lai

Grandmother - Dae

Father - Shun Lai

Mother - Mei-Lei Lai

Zho and Dae had a son  
the kid showed super human strength and speed  
Shun was told not to show off his powers in front of others  
one day he was bullied, and he beat up the bully. all the students saw it. and the teacher was told of it.

he could no longer go to school...suspected of being a demon

Zho and Dae took their son to another town

Shun grew up and married Mei-Lei Lai

they had a son named Zi

Zi is half demon, half human, and he's the target of both. He has demonic powers, but ages like a human.

zi and alex were neighbors so he'd come to play often

but alex's sister and her parents were always working, often leaving alex alone so zi kept him company

Mei-Lei told Zi to not spend so much time with the neighbor's boy, lest he should get attached. Shuns says don't worry about it

zi kept seeing alex and play with each other and sometimes zi saw alex's sister but she's always working so she's rarely seen at the house

one day li came back and was scared to death. she muttered something that didn't make sense and ran away from home  
alex's father ran after her.

li says she must run away, her father is still puzzled

then authorities arrested him

hearing about the arrest, alex's mother went to the local police office, leaving alex by himself. she was arrested too.

alex was being chased by soldiers. he defended himself with a kodachi. one of them slashed his right arm. he fell.

zi killed the soldier despite being a kid. other soldiers saw that. they realize he has demon's blood.

zi takes alex and runs. they go to the local doctor. he bandages alex's right arm. zi is worried about his parents so he goes to check on them

east brigade kills his parents shun lai and mei-mei lai

zi sees his house burn, he cries

goes back to alex, he cries. alex cries.

at zi's house...mei-lei's on the floor with a sword stuck in her back. shun is extremely pissed off. he charges at the soldiers

they stab him with spears, one after another, pushing him back.

the commander makes a taunt. shun throws a knife at his eye, commander screams like hell.

soldier stabs shun in the back, and they all push their spears into him. he coughs blood and dies.

commander orders the house to be burned. zi shows up to watch his house burn. he falls on his knees and cries.

zi goes back to alex. zi falls down and cries. alex also cries.

despite being wanted, the kids managed to not get caught, they move from house to house. alex insists on using swords, despite not being able to swing one because of his injury. zi pretends to be a slacker to make alex not feel bad.

no word of alex's parents. don't know if they're dead or alive.

a tear drips down li's eye. she feels bad about what alex has to go through.

then li tells her version of the story.

li was working at the palace and saw something she shouldn't have went home to give her family a warning.

her father chases her. she says she's running away. she went to Yi Ting but saw wanted posters of her face. she can't go to any town so she hides in the forest.

but she can't survive there...no food or water and being hunted by animals.

then by sheer luck she found the temple

was greeted warmly by everyone

she trained a few years. but this is not the strength she wanted. she wants revenge on the duke for this outrage. she left the temple & said her goodbyes.

then she went to the valley of death.

begs the war god to accept her as a student

he does. they train a lot. then one day li says she's leaving.

back to the city. li saved a kid from being bullied by a corrupt policeman. she wanted to test her skills. she killed him quickly.

li sat on a rooftop. saw a commotion

soldiers were attacking the messenger

li was curious so she showed up, killed a soldier.

fought the messenger and lost. she begs him to teach her swordcraft. he refuses.

she's persistent about it. then he accepts - condition is she works for him and never questions his orders.

a few years later, messenger says he's going solo. she's free to go. without a place to go, she goes back to the valley.

she fights Sui Long to test her new skills. war god is impressed.

one day after much searching alex found a dude who says he saw li cheng, as well as an older dude who's her father. they're going to the temple with this lead alex decides to visit the temple

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