

THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

Chapter 5: Mo Shan

Mo Shan is a Qi-cultivation beast hunter of the eighth level who makes his living by hunting demonic beasts and harvesting their materials. Though it sounds impressive, it is in fact a grueling and risky occupation.

Most demonic beasts in the cultivation world are far stronger than human cultivators, making them exceedingly difficult to hunt.

Typically, demonic beasts of the same realm require a team of five to ten cultivators for a successful hunt, and even then, success isn't guaranteed. Even if the beast is slain, its more valuable parts are often damaged during the fight, fetching only a modest sum of spirit stones. The profits, once divided according to each team member's contribution, are minimal.

Injuries are another hazard. The cost of medicinal pills for treatment can be substantial, potentially leading to a financial deficit. A serious injury might permanently end a hunter's ability to make a living.

Mo Shan is a burly man, a solo practitioner with a rugged, handsome face marked by the trials of his trade. Though still young by cultivator standards, his life outdoors has weathered his appearance.

Upon entering his home, Mo Shan sets down his blade and the unknown beast's pelt he carried on his shoulder, sighing in relief.

His coat is worn and stained with blood, both fresh and old—mostly from beasts, but some from himself or his comrades.

"This hunt must have been rough," Mo Hua guessed quietly.

Mo Shan's brows were furrowed, his expression somber, and his blood-stained clothes added a forbidding air to his presence.

However, this fierceness melted away when he saw his wife, like a battle-weary warrior returning home, shedding his heavy, scar-laden armor.

"Is everything okay at home?" Mo Shan asked, his voice hoarse from fatigue but still gentle.

Liu Ruhua was tidying his belongings and fetched a clean cloth to wipe his face. "Everything is fine at home, don't worry."

Seeing his dusty face, she couldn't help saying, "Take care of yourself when you're outside."

Mo Shan smiled and then looked around the house. "Has Hua'er returned?"

"He just got back yesterday. The sect is on holiday now, and he's probably still asleep. I'll go wake him; he'll be so happy to know you're back."

Mo Shan glanced at the blood and wounds on his clothes and stopped her. "Let him sleep a bit more. Sect cultivation is tough too. I'll take a bath first, apply some herbal medicine, and change these clothes."

"That's a good idea. Why don't you eat something first?" Liu Ruhua suggested.

Having traveled all night, Mo Shan was famished.

Liu Ruhua's cooking was excellent, and even though the meals were simple, Mo Shan devoured them hungrily.

Usually, he would have to settle for cold, hard rations or sparingly use vitalizing pills. But now, eating the meals his wife prepared washed away all his fatigue and hardships. **RAOEs**

Mo Shan ate a lot and drank a large bowl of fragrant, sticky porridge, finally exhaling a long breath of relief. Liu Ruhua, noticing the bloodstains on his clothes, then asked worriedly, "Did someone get hurt again?"

"We lost three, and Old Chu was seriously injured," Mo Shan sighed as he began to recount the hunt.

"We were eight when we cornered a demonic wolf over three meters tall. We had it trapped and were slowly draining its demonic energy to finish it off. However, another hunting team passed by—mostly novices who hadn't seen much blood yet. They recklessly tried to steal our kill and ended up being devoured by the beast..."

"The beast replenished its energy from their blood and went berserk. Old Chu and I used up all our spiritual energy to finally take it down, but the loss was heavy. Old Chu lost an arm and bled profusely; his vital energy severely depleted. He might not be able to continue as a hunter..."

"Old Chu has a two-year-old child, and his wife only supplements their income with some gardening. Now with his severe injuries and the high cost of healing pills, even if he recovers, I don't know how his family will manage," Mo Shan added bitterly.

Liu Ruhua sighed, "When we were in a tough spot, Old Chu lent us some spirit stones even though he wasn't well-off. We still have some saved; let's give them to Old Chu first to at least get him treated."

Mo Shan nodded, "That wolf beast hasn't been sold yet; it should fetch about three hundred spirit stones. We'll give Old Chu a larger share and lend him some more to get through this, but..."

Mo Shan felt guilty, "Hua'er is supposed to start his sect cultivation next year... I was hoping to earn enough from this hunt, but now..."

Liu Ruhua held his hand,

"As long as the family is safe, we can always find a way to earn spirit stones. I've saved some from working in the tavern kitchen, and we can borrow some more. It won't delay Hua'er's cultivation next year."

Mo Shan looked silently at his wife, her once youthful and beautiful face now slightly worn. He felt even more remorseful.

"Quit the kitchen job at the tavern. The heat harms the heart, lungs, and meridians. Next year, I'll find more hunters, kill more beasts, and earn more spirit stones. I won't let you suffer like this."

Liu Ruhua smiled wryly, proud yet modest, and pointed to her hairpin, "See what this is?"

Mo Shan hadn't noticed when he walked in, but now, he saw that the hairpin was different from the usual.

"What's this pin?"

"It's a gift from Hua'er, called a Fire-Resisting Hairpin. It wards off the heat from the stove, keeping the heart and meridians much cooler."

"Hua'er is really thoughtful."

Mo Shan felt both reassured and ashamed, "I haven't given you a gift in years..."

Liu Ruhua chuckled, "Hua'er is your son, so his gift is as if you gave it."

Mo Shan laughed, then bittersweetly added, "In cultivation, they often talk about fate. Perhaps my greatest fortune in this life is having a wife like you and a sensible son like Hua'er."

Liu Ruhua playfully glared at her husband, but couldn't help laughing.

Watching his wife's smile, Mo Shan silently resolved to recruit more skilled beast hunters after the new year, aiming to venture deeper into the mountains

to slay more demonic beasts, earn more spirit stones, and ensure his family would not endure such hardships. Moreover, he was determined to secure a better future for his son.

Mo Hua heard everything from inside the house, and sighed.

Unbeknownst to him, his parents had always endured the hardships of the cultivation life. Perhaps in any world, the burdens parents bear are always much heavier than their children imagine.

Even as cultivators, they toiled for spirit stones and struggled for a living.

Though cultivators and mortals may seem different, in some ways, they are not so different at all.

Reflecting on this, Mo Hua wondered silently, "Is there a way I too can earn spirit stones?"