

THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

Chapter 6: Spirit Stones

Mo Hua thought to himself in the room for a while, waiting until Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua finished their conversation. He changed into casual clothes and then, pretending to know nothing, happily walked out of the house.

The family of three was eating. Mo Shan had already eaten, so Mo Hua kept talking to him about the amusing hunting tales.

Mo Shan selectively shared a few stories, such as a one-eyed wolf, a two-headed tiger, and a three-legged wild boar.

Some teams killed a mature demonic beast but failed to retrieve its core. They stripped off some worthless fur and only realized their mistake when it was too late—the core had already been taken by others, causing the team leader to regret so deeply that he spat blood and fainted.

Someone even captured a beast of ancient lineage, which was then sold to a major sect for a high price, securing a life of ease. However, one day, that person vanished without a trace...

Mo Hua listened with great interest, aware of the bloody, dangerous, and cruel elements his father intentionally omitted from the tales.

Parents always wish to shield their children from harsh realities, hoping for a pure and joyful childhood.

After the stories, three little heads peeked outside the door, their eyes gleaming as they saw Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua at home. They stood in unison and greeted:

“Hello, Uncle Mo, Auntie Liu!”

The three children, surnamed Meng, lived on the same street and their families also relied on hunting beasts for a living.

The Meng elders were friends with Mo Shan and lived nearby, so Mo Hua had played with them since they were young. The three were named Meng Da Hu, Meng Shuang Hu, and Meng Xiao Hu, in the order of their birth.

In the area near Tongxian City, tiger-like demonic beasts were the strongest. Naming children after tigers was hoped to endow them with tiger-like strength and majesty.

True to their names, the children looked robust and strong.

Mo Hua, the youngest and often ill as a child, was unlikely to grow up tiger-like. Seeing his delicate and clean features, resembling a porcelain doll, Mo Shan took the character "Hua" from Liu Ruhua's name for his son, calling him Mo Hua.

Liu Ruhua gave each child a steamed bun. They said they didn't want it, but couldn't help reaching out to take it and stuffed it into their mouths, their cheeks bulging as they said, "Thank you, Auntie Liu!"

Liu Ruhua's cooking was the best in the neighborhood, which made the other children quite envious of Mo Hua.

Mo Shan waved them off, "Go play together, but remember to come back for lunch!"

Mo Hua and the three children nodded and dashed out the door.

Among the Meng children, Da Hu was straightforward, Shuang Hu was clever, and Xiao Hu was talkative. All were older and taller than Mo Hua, usually leading the play.

Da Hu talked non-stop about where to see dragon dances, where fireworks were lit, where it was crowded, and where there were dancing, graceful girls...

But they talked too much and couldn't decide where to go.

Finally, they agreed that adults pick, but children want everything—they would visit each place!

As the year-end approached, disciples seeking to join sects were on holiday, and cultivators working abroad returned home, making Tongxian City much livelier than usual, and the streets were packed. 人山人海

Some at the Qi-cultivation stage flaunted their martial skills with swords and spears, while spirit cultivators performed flashy, albeit useless, spells that left the children awestruck and envious. Those skilled in crafting mechanisms made toys that moved on their own with just a bit of spirit power—wooden rabbits, dogs, cats, and various other items, too numerous to fully take in.

Da Hu, Shuang Hu, and Xiao Hu were having a blast, finding everything fresh and exciting, exclaiming with joy, while Mo Hua played along but kept an eye out for ways to earn spirit stones.

Looking around, he found that the profitable ventures were already taken, and those not yet undertaken were beyond his current capabilities.

Watching the cultivators performing and hawking their skills, Mo Hua sighed inwardly, realizing that making a living was not easy.

Shuang Hu noticed Mo Hua's dispirited mood and asked, "Mo Hua, are you worried about something?"

Upon hearing this, Da Hu immediately said, "Has someone been bullying you? I'll beat them up!"

Xiao Hu also nodded vigorously, "Beat them! Beat them!"

The Meng family elders had always instructed them to take care of the frail Mo Hua, and with Liu Ruhua making delicious food and always saving some for

them, the three felt indebted and loyal. Whenever someone tried to bully Mo Hua,

they didn't hesitate to roll up their sleeves and fight.

Mo Hua, recognized as the smartest among the local cultivators, often helped with homework questions, which only strengthened their bond.

Seeing them eager to fight, Mo Hua couldn't help but smile and said:

"No one's bullying me. I was just thinking about how to earn some spirit stones."

Earning spirit stones...

Da Hu and the others also grew concerned, not knowing much about that.

They could help in a fight but earning spirit stones was beyond them.

Mo Hua's thoughts turned again, asking:

"Do you know how array masters earn spirit stones?"

The vast world of cultivation was limited to daily practice and studying array formations for Mo Hua, leaving much unknown. He was aware that becoming an array master meant not worrying about basic needs, but how ordinary, especially low-level apprentices, made a living was still a mystery to him.

Da Hu often wandered about and might know something Mo Hua didn't.

After thinking, Da Hu shook his head and said, "The certification for array masters is very tough. Our neighborhood doesn't even have a first-rank array master, and I don't know much about it..."

"Not just our neighborhood, even in the whole of Tongxian City, there aren't many array masters, and even fewer who have passed the certification to become first-rank. Our distant uncle in the Meng family has been studying

arrays for twenty years and still hasn't passed..." Xiao Hu said, shaking his head in disbelief.

"You heard wrong. Uncle Meng is just an array apprentice. He wanted to study under a master but couldn't answer the questions posed by others, and they wouldn't accept him," Shuang Hu interjected, then counted on his fingers:

"Apprentice, ordinary array master, first-rank array master... Uncle Meng isn't even close to certification. Those who are, already have some fame."

Mo Hua curiously asked, "So, how does he make a living?"

"I heard he draws simple arrays for merchant guilds and earns some spirit stones, then uses those to buy ink and paper to practice more arrays, then goes on helping the guilds with arrays without ever becoming a master..."

"Merchant guilds, huh..."

"Yes, even if you don't make it to first-rank, being an ordinary array master and drawing arrays for merchant guilds can still earn you quite a few spirit stones, enough to not worry about food and drink," Shuang Hu explained, then asked Mo Hua:

"Do you want to be an array master?"

"Yeah," Mo Hua didn't hide it, "I'm too weak physically, probably can't become a beast hunter, and would likely lose half my life to a single swipe from a beast. I need to find a way to make a living. But talking about this is still too far off; I first want to see if I can earn some spirit stones. If I can, I'll treat you to pastries!"

Hearing this, Da Hu and the others instantly brightened up.

"Sure, sure!"

"You're so smart, you'll definitely be able to earn spirit stones and become an array master!"

“Pastries, pastries!”

For ordinary cultivator families, even simple street pastries were a rare treat.

After another round of visiting, they hadn't seen any of the dancing girls they talked about, but they visited everything else, and around noon, they all returned home satisfied for lunch.

Mo Hua finished lunch and told his parents he was going out to play, then headed alone to the north side of Tongxian City.

The north side of Tongxian City was prosperous, and the south side was lively.

The south side had many markets, mostly small vendors and stalls, while the north side had more merchant guilds, offering everything from spirit talismans to pill instruments, with more regular products of better quality and, of course, higher prices.

But Mo Hua wasn't there to shop; he didn't have the spirit stones.

He walked from one end of the street to the other, looking at all the merchant guilds, then entered one that had an array drawn on its entrance but was comparatively shabby and quiet, attracting the least business.