

Outside of Time

Chapter 4: Anomalous Substances

“If that person is alive, it might really have something to do with the purple light...but it might also be a trap.”

Xu Qing contemplated as he muttered to himself.

During these few days in the ruined city, he deeply understood that those existences, who had transformed into mutated beasts due to the corruption by the gods' aura, were all incomparably savage and boundlessly strong.

However, maybe because the forbidden zone hadn't completely formed, these mutated beasts would be sleeping during the day.

Unless it was like back then when he had obtained the bamboo slip. He had barged into the external perimeter of the location where they were sleeping.

If not, as long as one was slightly more careful, there wouldn't be much problem.

As opposed to them, Xu Qing was warier of living humans because sometimes, the human heart was even more treacherous compared to savage beasts.

After pondering, his gaze slowly turned cold and sharp. Regardless of whether it was a living person or a trap, he was prepared...to enter that area once again.

But before he headed over, he had to be fully prepared.

When he thought of this, Xu Qing clutched the cultivation bamboo slip in his hand tightly.

During the cultivation these few days, the changes to his body allowed him to gain some confidence. The content of the bamboo slip involuntarily appeared in his mind. Other than the cultivation method, there was also an introduction to cultivation.

Cultivation had been passed down from ancient times long before the god's fragmented face appeared.

Now, although there were some changes, the overall system was still the same as in the past.

It was categorized as Qi Condensation, Foundation Building, Core Formation, and Nascent Soul.

As for the stages after Nascent Soul, maybe the cultivation realms were too high so the bamboo slip had no records. However, this clearly enlightened Xu Qing to the helplessness cultivators felt.

This was because the gods' aura had contaminated spirit energy, causing spirit energy to be tainted. This taint was like poison to all living things.

It was unknown when it began, and everyone referred to the gods' aura as anomalous substances.

Xu Qing was very clear that the icy chill he felt during his cultivation earlier was actually due to the fact that the spirit energy he absorbed contained these anomalous substances.

Once the anomalous substances were accumulated to a certain degree in the body, it would cause the cultivator to mutate. Either the cultivator would explode in a burst of blood or they would transform into a mutated beast with no intellect.

As for the area the god gazed at when its eyes opened, the anomalous substances there would instantly increase explosively. In reality, it simply hastened the speed of the transformation.

Danger existed in cultivation.

If one didn't cultivate, the lifespan of humans in this Endsoil World that was polluted by gods' aura was more to the lower end. In addition, sicknesses and diseases were more prevalent. It was as though they were living in the nine levels of purgatory; almost no one could have a good ending.

The so-called cultivation became the only path. There were no more choices left.

Hence, for countless years, humans inferred the cultivation methods through the generations based on what was passed down.

The knowledge that was currently being disseminated was that when one absorbed the spirit energy, they should also make use of their cultivation art to separate the anomalous substances that mixed into the spirit energy before compressing them inside a certain part of their bodies.

This location was known as the mutation point.

Thus, the degree of separation for anomalous substances also became an important criterion to judge whether a cultivation art was good or bad.

In addition, all the cultivation arts that could provide high degrees of separation were controlled by huge forces or powerful clans. These were their important resources. For this point, things were the same regardless of whether the gods arrived in this world or not.

Since people would practice various cultivation arts, the degree of separation for anomalous substances would be different as well. Naturally, the locations of their mutation points would differ as well.

However, no matter what, as long as one cultivated, their bodies would contain anomalous substances, and they would slowly form their mutation points.

In theory, the mutation couldn't be reversed. One could only cleanse it through some medicinal pills, but the pills could only treat the symptoms and not the root of the problem.

As for the method to completely purify the mutation point, the bamboo slip did have a sentence about it.

In Endsoil, other than the Nanhuang Continent, there was an even vaster continent named the Wanggu Continent.

It was the place of origin for the human race. Although the gods' aura had also polluted that place, there seemed to be a way to completely cleanse the taint in the Wanggu Continent.

But evidently, this solution couldn't be quantized. Only people of extremely noble statuses could enjoy it.

Ordinary cultivators could only hope for it but never obtain it.

To the rogue cultivators at the lowest level of the social ladder and also the class with the most number, it was even more impossible for them to obtain it.

The cultivation arts practiced by rogue cultivators usually had an extremely low degree of anomalous substances' separation. In this case, not only was it difficult for them to cultivate, but their risk of mutation was also greater.

However, despite the risk of cultivation being so great, the vast majority of people would still choose to become a cultivator.

For example, Xu Qing knew that the current him could be considered a rogue cultivator.

According to the records on the bamboo slip, the cultivators of the Endsoil were walking on a path of no return that was filled with difficulty and immense danger. They were akin to mortals swimming toward the other side of the deep sea, rushing toward the unreachable other shore.

But no matter what, before they could even see the 'legendary' other shore, they would have died of exhaustion.

However, for Xu Qing who had grown up in the slums, he deeply understood that every single conflict and illness could cause one to lose their life.

"So, rather than worrying about mutation in the future, I might as well be worried about my survival tomorrow."

Xu Qing mumbled. He gingerly touched the wound on his chest as he stared at the sky outside the entrance gap.

At this moment, dawn was about to arrive in the outside world. The howls and mournful cries also became fewer in number.

"If the blood rain still continues and I haven't found the purple light, I have to consider leaving this place to search for medicinal herbs in other cities." Xu Qing lowered his head and looked at the wound on his chest.

Due to the gods' aura permeating the atmosphere and the continued falling of the blood rain, almost every item in the city was heavily polluted. The medicinal herbs were naturally among them and this place was very lacking in terms of resources.

Xu Qing lifted his hand and pressed down at the wound on his chest, causing some blood to seep out.

His countenance was somewhat pale. He drew in a deep breath and removed his inner shirt, wrapping it around his body to use as a bandage for his wound. After that, he drummed himself mentally and silently waited for dawn.

Not long later, the roars and mournful cries outside became scarcer.

This lasted for a while before all sounds vanished completely. Through the entrance gap, Xu Qing could see that the sky outside was starting to become bright.

Time was tight. According to his past experiences, he could already head out now.

However, he didn't move immediately. Rather, he stood up to flex his somewhat stiff body first.

Only after his body was warmed up did he remove the stones and miscellaneous items blocking the gap. He borrowed the aid from the faint light seeping in through the gap to open his leather pouch for a search.

A dagger covered with rust was then taken out and tied to his thigh.

That black-colored iron stick was placed in a location where he could grab it freely.

There was also a snake head that was wrapped by him in sackcloth. He carefully opened it to do a check before cautiously keeping it.

After he finished doing all this, Xu Qing closed his eyes for a few breaths before opening them again. His gaze was now replaced by a cold calmness.

He rapidly squeezed his way out of the cave and paused for a moment outside the entrance.

After vigilantly surveying his surroundings and ensuring that there were no troubles, Xu Qing rushed ferociously ahead. As the sky gradually brightened, he arrived in the outside world.

He then sprinted ahead.

Because the blood rain was still falling, the dense clouds completely covered the sky. Hence, even in daylight, one wouldn't even be able to see the sun, let alone have any chance to experience intense sunlight.

Dawn and dusk were like an aged old man filled with age spots and were heavily ill. Hence, Xu Qing's cloudy gaze contained the frost of the night.

Also, the breaths he exhaled transformed into the clear wind that was filled with the stench of death. It was very cold and very frosty.

If Xu Qing didn't warm his body up earlier, he would involuntarily shiver once the wind gusted past him.

But to Xu Qing, because his body still retained the warmth earlier, he wasn't too affected.

Hence, his speed didn't reduce as he sped toward the area where he saw the seemingly alive man yesterday.

If one stared at him from afar, in this spacious city, Xu Qing's figure was like a leopard, leaping across broken walls and sprinting smoothly forward with no hesitation.

There were also a bunch of birds flying through the air that accompanied him. It was just that their altitude was very high so it was tough to capture them.

As he sprinted, Xu Qing lifted his head and stared at the soaring birds while licking his lips.

He also had no idea why, but after the god opened its eyes, all lifeforms were tainted and almost everything died, including beasts. However, the bird species had the most survivors.

Hence, these birds became the main solution for him to satisfy his hunger by hunting them during this period.

At the same time, the birds were also trapped in the blood rain, but they seemingly could instinctively seek out a shelter with some modicum of safety. For example, the cave Xu Qing stayed in had been found by him by following the tracks of birds.

This shelter also couldn't be considered completely safe; it was only safer comparatively. Also, it seemed easier for those mutated beasts and bizarre existences to neglect it.

During this period, Xu Qing found two shelters. One was the stone cave and the other was a place outside the city lord's residence.

Right now, he merely swept his gaze through the sky before retracting it. His eyes locked onto a certain area in the city as he moved closer and closer.

Very soon, Xu Qing arrived at the area he saw yesterday. He didn't head over immediately but circled one round to look for a tall vantage point.

After cautiously climbing up, he lay down unmoving as he squinted his eyes, trying not to reveal the light within as he slowly lowered his head to take a look.

Xu Qing cast a gaze over and his pupils narrowed. Once again, he saw the person from yesterday!

The other party was seated down with his back facing a wall. His clothes were tidy and his skin was normal.

The most important thing was that...his demeanor, his body, and everything about him were exactly the same as what he saw yesterday.

It was like during the entire night, he didn't move or wasn't moved in any way at all.

This was extremely illogical.

If the person was a living human, he couldn't possibly ignore the dangers that emerged during the night.

If the person was dead, his undamaged body would be the favorite food for mutated beasts. So it was impossible for his body to have remained untouched until now.

Xu Qing fell silent. After pondering, he decided to remain unmoving. He, who grew up in the slums, didn't lack patience.

Just like this, under his careful observation, time slowly flowed. Even when afternoon arrived, he still remained immobile.

Xu Qing who had waited for six hours slowly lifted his right hand now. He held a stone in his hand and tossed it toward the location the other party was in.

The speed of the stone was very quick and the impact wasn't small. When the stone hit the person, there was a loud bang.

That figure trembled from the impact before falling down to the side like a corpse.

And at the instant he fell down, a flicker of purple light flashed. The source of the light was on the ground where the person sat down previously.

The moment he saw the purple glow, Xu Qing's eyes immediately gleamed as his breathing grew hurried.

He had been searching for so many days for no other reason than the purple beam of light that had fallen into the city.

At this moment, he forcibly suppressed his impulse to rush over immediately. He waited for some more moments with great difficulty and only rushed out rapidly after confirming that it was safe.

His speed was extremely quick as he erupted forth with all his strength. His entire person was like a hunting eagle, directly heading to the location of the purple light.

After swiftly rushing over, he grabbed the source of the purple light and retreated far away immediately with no hesitation.

The entire process happened extremely quickly. Xu Qing only stopped and panted after he had retreated for over ten zhangs. He then glanced at the item emitting purple light that was clutched in his hands.

That was a shiny purple crystal that had a dazzling beauty.

Xu Qing's heart pounded rapidly. When he tilted his head, he saw that the corpse that had fallen to the side was currently rotting rapidly after losing the purple light's protection. Its skin instantly turned greenish-black.

This scene caused Xu Qing to instinctively tighten his grasp on the purple crystal in his hand. He then turned in the direction of his cave and rushed there speedily.

Not long after he sprinted, Xu Qing suddenly paused. A puzzled look appeared on his face.

He lowered his head and undid the button on his coat to glance at his bandaged wound.

Right now, there was no longer blood seeping out. On the contrary, he felt waves of itchiness from the wound.

Hence, Xu Qing's gaze turned heavy. He removed the inner shirt that he used as a bandage, and the moment he saw his wound, he felt an intense shock.

He clearly remembered that when he checked this morning, his wound hadn't healed yet and the blackening had increased by a certain degree. But now...

More than half of the wound on his chest had healed. Only a very thin scar remained at the sides of the wound!

"This..." Xu Qing panted. After that, he fiercely stared at the purple crystal in his hand.

[1] the words 'Wanggu' in more liberal translation can mean staring at the past, gazing back at ancient times, etc