

The Quest 119

Chapter 119: The Trap

Forewarned is forearmed, unpreparedness spells disaster.

If one wishes to venture into the Dahei Mountain, ample preparations are essential.

Dahei Mountain, with its treacherous terrain, is rife with poisonous creatures and miasmic air, and beasts lurk at every corner.

These beasts do not reason; they generally devour any human they see, and those that do not still kill, disemboweling cultivators before striding away.

Mo Hua, having grown up in Tongxian City and his father being a demon hunter, was deeply aware of the perils of Dahei Mountain from a young age.

Venturing into the mountain without caution could mean vanishing without a trace, likely leaving not even bones behind.

Thus, entering the mountain requires thorough consideration and planning in advance to avoid unforeseen dangers and a precarious fate.

“My parents have only me as their son,” Mo Hua silently mused.

One day, Liu Ruhua brought some beef and vegetables to Jiang Yun, asking her to take them home for her children.

Jiang Yun demurred, saying she couldn’t carry so much.

Storage bags used by Qi-cultivating cultivators are indeed cheaper and smaller, hardly holding much.

“Aunt Jiang, I can help you take it back,” Mo Hua volunteered.

“How could I let you do that?”

“It’s fine, I’m actually on my way to see Uncle Chu.”

“Really?” Jiang Yun asked, puzzled.

“Mm.” Mo Hua nodded.

No longer refusing, Jiang Yun led the way with the storage bag, while Mo Hua followed, carrying two large Chinese cabbages.

Along the way, Jiang Yun frequently looked back, advising Mo Hua to be careful and inquiring if he was tired and needed to rest.

It took about the time it takes to drink a cup of tea to reach Jiang Yun’s house.

Jiang Yun’s home was modest, with just a few rooms. The walls were mottled, and the furniture, though old and worn, was sufficient.

Fortunately, the kitchen was still lively, ensuring at least enough for sustenance.

Jiang Yun, somewhat embarrassed, said, “My home is a bit shabby...”

“It’s okay, Aunt Jiang,” Mo Hua smiled.

The homes of independent cultivators in Tongxian City were generally like this, simple and modest.

Mo Hua’s family had been slightly better off, thanks to Liu Ruhua’s frugality and Mo Shan’s prowess in demon hunting which kept the family stable, allowing them to live modestly but comfortably.

However, such stability was contingent on avoiding misfortunes.

Once disaster struck, the family’s fortunes would plummet, and even making a living would become challenging, let alone pursuing the path of cultivation for immortality.

Aunt Jiang's husband had been severely injured while hunting demons, leaving the family in financial ruin and without income, with a child still to feed. Despite her tears, there was no solution in sight.

Later, working in a restaurant brought some income from spirit stones, and as her husband's condition improved, it helped supplement the family's needs somewhat.

The life of an independent cultivator is more fragile than one might assume, but despite this, they still strive to survive.

Aunt Jiang's mother-in-law was entertaining the child, who peeked out with big, curious eyes, sizing up Mo Hua.

Mo Hua handed the child a cloth tiger, and with a voice full of excitement, the child thanked him and clung to the toy without letting go, shouting joyfully.

Mo Hua smiled, then went to see Jiang Yun's husband, Chu Guangshan.

Chu Guangshan was surprised to see Mo Hua but happy to hear he had matters to discuss.

"Tell me, what is it? If I can help, consider it done!"

"Uncle Chu, I'd like to learn how traps are used," Mo Hua inquired.

The small demon cat Mo Hua had practiced the Passing Water Step with was caught by Chu Guangshan using a trap.

Juvenile demonic beasts, although not strong, are highly alert and familiar with their environment, rarely falling for traps laid by cultivators.

That Chu Guangshan could trap hunting demons, and even alive, was quite impressive.

Part of this was because Mo Hua had drawn the Wood Binding Array on the trap, making it difficult for the beast to escape.

But it also spoke volumes about Chu Guangshan's vast experience and skill in setting traps.

Not every demon hunter has the patience and meticulousness to study traps.

Chu Guangshan hesitated.

"If it's inconvenient, never mind," Mo Hua quickly added.

It was somewhat presumptuous to inquire about a livelihood skill.

Chu Guangshan paused, then laughed:

"There's nothing inconvenient about it. I'm happy you asked, but..."

He paused again and added:

"These are just minor tricks. Don't spend too much time on them; focus more on cultivation and learning arrays; that's where your future lies."

"I, myself, am practically disabled now. I can't hunt demons anymore, so I just focus on these little tricks to make a living. Otherwise, your Aunt Jiang would suffer too much..."

Chu Guangshan sighed, his expression self-deprecating.

Moved by his words, Mo Hua pondered for a moment, then said, "All knowledge is learning, and the path of cultivation is profound and vast, encompassing all things. The greater path is a path, and so is the lesser path."

Chu Guangshan looked slightly taken aback, then chuckled, "I don't know where you learned such reasoning, but it makes sense. Since you don't mind, I'll teach you everything. Still, remember what I said: these tricks aren't worth too much of your effort."

"Don't worry, I won't neglect my cultivation and array learning," Mo Hua reassured him.

Chu Guangshan then nodded in approval.

“Setting traps is actually quite simple, but it requires patience and carefulness,” he explained.

“When setting a trap, you need to observe the terrain and predict where the demons might come from and where they might go. Place the trap along their inevitable path...”

“After setting a trap, you need to erase any traces. Whatever the plants and rocks looked like before, they should look the same afterward. You also need to eliminate any scents. For those scents you can't remove, you need to learn how to mask them...”

“How do you mask them?” Mo Hua inquired.

“Demonic beasts are drawn to the scent of blood and decay. You can use demon blood or rotten flesh to mask the scent, or use herbs like blood-scented grass that naturally emit a bloody smell.”

“I'll draw you a few diagrams of the traps later; they are quite simple. You can add some array patterns yourself; that should enhance their effectiveness.”

...

“Lastly, be wary of demonic beasts playing dead. They are cunning and might feign death if they accidentally fall into a trap. When you approach to check, they might suddenly attack, and nine times out of ten, you won't be able to guard against it.”

Chu Guangshan detailed everything meticulously.

Mo Hua listened intently, nodding frequently.

When it was time to leave, Chu Guangshan appeared hesitant, as if he had more to say but was reluctant to speak.

“Uncle Chu, is there anything else?”

“It’s nothing, nothing.”

Chu Guangshan quickly waved his hand, but his expression clearly indicated that there was something, though he felt uneasy about mentioning it.

Mo Hua gently pressed, “Aunt Jiang has been very kind to me, and you’ve taught me how to use traps. Just say whatever it is.”

Chu Guangshan’s face flushed red, and after a long hesitation, he finally spoke:

“When Zhou grows a bit older, could you, perhaps, teach him a bit about arrays...”

Zhou was Chu Guangshan and Jiang Yun’s son, the child Mo Hua had just met.

Chu Guangshan himself had been injured by a demonic beast, and while he hadn’t died, he could no longer hunt demons, making it difficult even to earn a living.

He did not want his son to follow the same perilous path, constantly living on the edge. So, he hoped his son would learn a bit about arrays to secure a livelihood.

Learning arrays requires taking on a master, and he simply couldn’t afford the spirit stones for it.

Thus, he could only ask Mo Hua for help, unable to afford any compensation, feeling both embarrassed and ashamed.

But he had no other options, and despite how difficult it was to voice, for his son’s sake, he had to make the request.

Mo Hua was slightly taken aback and thought it over for a moment.

Chu Guangshan quickly added, “Of course, if Zhou is not smart enough or lacks the talent, then never mind...”

He said this, but hope lingered in his eyes, even appearing somewhat humble.

Mo Hua felt a twinge of sorrow...

He pretended not to notice anything and simply smiled, saying, "Sure, but let's wait until Zhou is a bit older. Even if his talent isn't great, as long as he can learn a few arrays, he can trade with merchants to earn some spirit stones. That should be enough to provide a decent living."

A weight seemed to lift from Chu Guangshan's heart, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

He looked at Mo Hua, his emotions fluctuating and his eyes slightly moist. Grateful words hovered on his lips, but feeling they were too meager, he didn't know how to express them properly.

Mo Hua smiled as he bid farewell.

Chu Guangshan escorted Mo Hua out of his house and down the street, watching him until he reached the sign for "Liu's Restaurant,"

where he finally stopped, his gaze lingering on Mo Hua as he walked away.