

The Quest 143

Chapter 143: Old Master An

The An family is the second largest family in Tongxian City. The patriarch is An Yonglu, who is also An Xiaopang's father. However, the family's major affairs are still decided by the Foundation Building cultivator, Old Master An.

Upon meeting Old Master An, everyone paid their respects. Old Master An exchanged a few polite words in return.

Old Master An did not dismiss Mo Hua because of his young age; on the contrary, he was quite courteous.

His excessive politeness made Mo Hua feel uneasy.

Having never met before, why was he being so kind to him?

Mo Hua grew suspicious.

After chatting for a while, Mo Hua learned the truth of the matter.

The rogue cultivator who practiced the Extraction Method had indeed taken a concubine from the An family.

This woman, captivated by the rogue's handsome appearance and deceived by his sweet words, secretly pledged her life to him. When she realized something was wrong, it was too late; she had become a cauldron, her body withering away, and her spirit listless.

In her misery, she sought death. Although she was rescued, she was left in a state of living death, haunted and suffering every day...

Old Master An was furious upon hearing this and secretly sent An family disciples to investigate, but they found nothing.

The rogue cultivator was skilled in evasion, making him difficult to track and even harder to catch.

Old Master An then sought help from the Situ family, with whom he had connections, and asked Mr. Zhuang from the Dao Court to assist in the search.

Later, with Mo Hua leading the way, they managed to capture the rogue cultivator on Dahei Mountain.

Old Master An was deeply grateful to Mo Hua.

However, Mo Hua still felt something was off. Old Master An's gratitude seemed excessive.

He should be more grateful to Mr. Zhuang and Situ Fang, as they were the ones who captured the rogue; Mo Hua had only helped a little.

Sure enough, after a period of indirect questioning, Old Master An began to inquire about Mo Hua's personal affairs.

He asked about his parents, what he planned to do in the future, and whether he had studied arrays.

Old Master An was not someone Mo Hua could afford to offend.

Mo Hua responded politely and carefully, choosing unimportant topics to answer.

Old Master An continued to probe.

Mo Hua, feigning innocence, rambled on from one unrelated topic to another, speaking in circles, all the while maintaining a serious expression but providing evasive answers.

When he couldn't keep it up any longer, he just laughed and said he didn't remember.

After all, he was still a child, and such an excuse was acceptable.

Old Master An, having tried various indirect questions without getting any useful information, sighed inwardly:

If only the younger generation of the An family had such wit, it would save him a lot of trouble.

After a while, Old Master An called in some of the An family's younger disciples.

There were both males and females, mostly girls, all around Mo Hua's age, well-dressed and attractive.

Among them, Mo Hua spotted An Xiaopang.

It was hard not to notice him, being the plumpest among them.

Standing out like a crane among chickens, it was impossible to miss him...

But An Xiaopang didn't seem happy, standing among the disciples, looking downcast and sullen.

It seemed that even though he was the son of the family head, he was not valued, and among the An family disciples, he appeared to have the lowest aptitude and cultivation, likely included just to make up the numbers.

Old Master An said, "I have some matters to discuss with Mr. Zhuang. Mo Hua, if you don't mind, you can take a stroll in the An family's garden. It's full of blooming flowers and beautiful scenery."

"These family disciples can accompany you," Old Master An added, gesturing towards the group, particularly the beautiful female disciples in the front.

Mo Hua felt a bit awkward; Old Master An's intentions were clear to everyone.

Situ Xiu was also somewhat embarrassed, not knowing what to say.

Mr. Zhuang, however, calmly sipped his tea, raising an eyebrow at Mo Hua with a hint of schadenfreude.

Old Master An seemed to be trying hard to make Mo Hua marry into the family.

To avoid making it too obvious, he had mixed in other An family disciples.

Mo Hua sighed inwardly, too lazy to continue humoring Old Master An.

Just now, he had wasted time on polite conversation, which was already quite courteous of him.

Mo Hua stood up and said, "It's getting late. I have other matters to attend to, so I'll take my leave. I won't disturb you and Mr. Zhuang any longer."

Old Master An looked slightly disappointed but didn't insist, saying only:

"Feel free, little brother, no need to stand on ceremony."

As Mo Hua got up to leave, he turned and saw An Xiaopang's dejected expression. After a moment's hesitation, he sighed inwardly.

"Young Master An?"

Old Master An's eyes lit up, "Little brother, do you know Xiaofu?"

Mo Hua nodded, "We are fellow disciples and have some acquaintance. Young Master An has even helped me before."

An Xiaopang was stunned.

Wasn't it Mo Hua who helped him with his homework? When did he help Mo Hua?

He couldn't remember at all...

Old Master An's eyes brightened even more, looking at An Xiaopang with newfound appreciation.

"Since you are fellow disciples, Xiaofu, why don't you show Mo Hua around?"

Everyone in the room looked at An Xiaopang.

For the first time, An Xiaopang was the center of attention, feeling a bit awkward but straightened his back and said, "Yes, Grandpa."

An Xiaopang led Mo Hua out of the living room.

Once outside, he immediately sighed in relief, deflating like a punctured balloon, looking both pitiable and amusing.

Mo Hua couldn't help but ask, "Are you afraid of your grandfather?"

An Xiaopang nodded, "Yes. I'm not only afraid of my grandfather but also my father and my uncles."

"Do they beat you?"

An Xiaopang shook his head.

"Do they scold you?"

"My father does, but my grandfather doesn't, and my uncles generally don't either. Oh, and my father also hits me sometimes..."

Mo Hua was puzzled, "Then what are you afraid of?"

An Xiaopang didn't answer immediately but looked dejected, saying:

"Mo Hua, am I useless?"

Mo Hua wanted to say no but couldn't think of any of his strengths, so he tactfully said:

"Just a little."

An Xiaopang became even more dispirited, "My father is the patriarch, so logically, I should become the patriarch in the future. But I'm not capable enough to be the patriarch..."

"Is that why you're unhappy?"

"Yes." An Xiaopang nodded, "So my uncles and grandfather look at me with regret and disappointment. When I was young, my grandfather loved me dearly, but as I grew older, he stopped looking at me with affection..."

An Xiaopang's voice grew softer, almost inaudible.

"Didn't you realize this earlier?"

The An Xiaopang Mo Hua remembered was a carefree, somewhat temperamental, but kind-hearted chubby boy.

Now he seemed burdened with worries.

"I didn't realize it before because I wasn't aware. But one day, I suddenly noticed that my grandfather's gaze was no longer caring but indifferent and disappointed. Then I looked at my father and uncles; they all had the same look, eyes filled with disappointment..."

"Maybe they've been disappointed in me for a long time, but I just never noticed."

An Xiaopang's eyes showed deep sadness.

"Then why don't you work hard in cultivation and learn more things?" Mo Hua suggested.

An Xiaopang wiped away a tear, "Mo Hua, I'm stupid. No matter how hard I try, I just can't learn anything. Things that others can learn easily, I just can't grasp no matter how much I try..."