

## The Quest 144

Chapter 144: The An Family

An Xiaopang secretly wiped his tears.

Mo Hua sighed and took An Xiaopang for a stroll around the An family estate. An Xiaopang felt a bit better but suddenly realized something was off:

"This is my home, how come you know it better than I do?"

"The formations in your house are too simple, I saw through them at a glance," Mo Hua thought, but to save the An family's face, he didn't say it directly, instead he said, "I'm an array master, I figured it out based on the formations."

The formations were arranged according to the layout of the An family's pavilions and towers. Seeing through the formations naturally meant Mo Hua understood the structure of the An family estate.

Artificial mountains and waters, pavilions and towers, every stone and tree followed the formations and left clues.

An Xiaopang admired, "Mo Hua, you're really amazing. I wish I was as smart as you."

Mo Hua replied, "You don't need to be discouraged. Everyone has their talents. Think about it, what do you like to do?"

Everyone has their talents...

An Xiaopang felt encouraged, furrowed his brows in deep thought, and suddenly his eyes lit up: "I like to eat!"

Mo Hua's expression froze.

An Xiaopang scratched his head, "Is that... not good?"

"It's... okay," Mo Hua said against his conscience.

An Xiaopang scratched his head again.

Mo Hua said, "Don't worry about what others say or think. Just think carefully about what you want to do the most in this life. You don't have to achieve great success; it's enough to live without regrets."

"Oh." An Xiaopang nodded.

The two walked around the garden.

An Xiaopang suddenly remembered something and said, "Mo Hua, I think my grandfather wants you to marry into our family."

Mo Hua wasn't surprised and asked curiously, "How do you know?"

"I overheard my mom and my aunts talking. They love to chat about this kind of thing and can talk about it all day without getting tired..."

Mo Hua saw An Xiaopang's happy expression and guessed that while his mother and others chatted all day, An Xiaopang also listened with great interest all day...

However, Mo Hua was still puzzled, "I'm only about ten years old. Isn't it too early for your grandfather to think about this?"

"It's not early." An Xiaopang shook his head, "This kind of thing needs to be decided early. If it's too late, someone else will snatch it."

An Xiaopang lowered his voice, "I heard that some prominent families match their children for marriage as soon as they are born and their spiritual roots are determined."

"Childhood betrothal?"

"Yes." An Xiaopang nodded, "These families with deep roots study the inheritance of spiritual roots. They match cultivators with certain spiritual roots to produce children with desirable spiritual roots. To cultivate rare and high-quality spiritual roots, prominent families arrange marriages based on spiritual roots."

"Does marriage based on spiritual roots really work..."

"It does." An Xiaopang said, "Among the disciples of prominent families, those with high-quality spiritual roots are countless. Even lower-grade high-quality spiritual roots are considered average. For us cultivators from small places, medium-grade roots are already good. This is the result of prominent families studying spiritual root inheritance and arranging marriages accordingly."

Mo Hua frowned, realizing that the issue of spiritual root inheritance was more complex than he thought.

"Isn't becoming Dao companions supposed to be a matter of mutual consent? Can those forced into marriage agree?"

"They have no choice." An Xiaopang sighed, "You eat from the family, drink from the family, cultivate with the family's methods, use the family's spirit stones and spirit items, and even rely on the family's power outside. You can't avoid paying a price."

"Did you come up with that yourself?"

"No, I heard my mom say it." An Xiaopang replied honestly.

"What if they disagree, can they resist?"

An Xiaopang pouted, "A finger can't twist a thigh. What's the use of resisting? Prominent families are like towering trees, and family disciples are just leaves. One more or one less leaf doesn't matter. If you don't resist, you can cultivate and enjoy life peacefully. If you resist, you lose everything."

Mo Hua felt complicated.

In families maintained by blood, familial affection was the thinnest...

"However, there is a way." An Xiaopang added.

"What way?" Mo Hua asked.

An Xiaopang said secretly, "Everyone does their own thing!"

"What do you mean..." Mo Hua didn't understand.

"It means..." An Xiaopang recalled what his mother said during her chat, "You can follow the family's requirements to match spiritual roots, become Dao companions, and have children, but in private, you can be with whoever you like and do whatever you want, as long as it doesn't look too bad on the surface..."

Mo Hua was dumbfounded, "That's so messy..."

An Xiaopang nodded, "It's very messy!"

He added, "The bigger the family, the messier it is!"

On the other side, Old Master An casually chatted with Zhang Lan about trivial matters.

Zhang Lan didn't have much to say to Old Master An.

It was boring.

He would rather chat with Mo Hua, even though Mo Hua sometimes said annoying things.

Zhang Lan made some polite remarks and then left with Situ Fang.

Old Master An sat and pondered for a moment, and An family head An Yonglu entered, sat next to Old Master An, poured himself a cup of tea, and asked:

"Father, have the guests left?"

Old Master An nodded.

"Then what are you thinking about?"

"I'm not going to live much longer, considering my affairs."

An Yonglu choked on his tea, "Father, you shouldn't say such things."

Old Master An's eyes were sharp as he glanced at An Yonglu and slowly said:

"Our An family has been fighting with the Qian family for hundreds of years, always at a disadvantage. We've almost handed over the fields of artifact crafting and alchemy. Only in spiritual meals do we still have some advantage."

An Yonglu lowered his head. As the family head, even if it wasn't his fault, he had to bear the responsibility.

Old Master An sighed and asked, "Do you know why we're inferior to the Qian family?"

"Not as ruthless as them..."

"Qian Hong is a wolf, his son, and all the direct disciples of the Qian family are wolf cubs. And you, and your son... I won't say more."

An Yonglu bowed his head lower.

Seeing his son's appearance, Old Master An stopped scolding and said, "Do you still want your son to be the head of the family?"

An Yonglu raised his head, looking ashamed but still insisted, "Father, although Xiaofu has no great skills, he at least has a good heart and knows propriety. If he becomes the family head, he may not achieve much, but he won't make mistakes."

His son was naturally dull. If he, as a father, didn't consider him, who else would?

Old Master An closed his eyes to rest, unwilling to speak.

An Yonglu was anxious but knew it was not a good topic to continue, so he changed the subject and said:

"I heard you wanted to bring a boy into the family?"

Old Master An opened his eyes, "Not anymore."

"Why not?" An Yonglu asked quietly.

"The An family doesn't deserve it." Old Master An said flatly.

An Yonglu was stunned and felt a bit indignant, quietly arguing:

"Why doesn't the An family deserve it?"

Old Master An raised an eyebrow, "With what?"

An Yonglu said with some pride, "Our An family's industries, spirit stones, and numerous disciples are among the best in Tongxian City. Even this estate, many cultivators in Tongxian City want to live here..."

"Oh, what's so good about this estate?"

"The layout is exquisite, the materials are meticulous, and the formations were drawn by a famous array master in the city at a high cost. It's almost impenetrable..."

Old Master An sighed, "That boy saw through all the formations inside and outside without missing a single one."

An Yonglu was stunned, "What?"

How could he see through them?

These formations weren't simple street formations. How could they be so easily seen through?

Old Master An glanced at his son and said:

"Your 'impenetrable' formations are like sieves to him..."

Like sieves...

These words were like knives stabbing into An Yonglu's heart.

An Yonglu opened his mouth wide, unable to speak for a long time.