

The Quest 266

Chapter 266: Deep Mountains

Mo Hua felt a slight chill in his heart and silently memorized the sixteen characters.

It seemed that this map was no ordinary item. If he didn't figure it out, it would surely become a significant hidden danger.

Cultivators lived off the mountains, adapting to the environment.

Near Tongxian City, there were no fertile spiritual fields, no surging rivers or seas, and no spirit beasts to raise.

The wandering cultivators nearby all had to make a living in Dahei Mountain.

The artifact crafting shops, pill refining shops, and even Fushan Tower in the south of the city also relied on demon hunters to hunt demonic beasts, stripping their bones and flesh to provide materials for artifact crafting, pill refining, and cooking.

Mo Hua, studying arrays, also needed to draw a large amount of demonic blood to prepare spirit ink.

The cultivators in Tongxian City, whether in their cultivation or daily life, were closely linked to Dahei Mountain.

If Dahei Mountain harbored hidden dangers, it would be a huge problem.

From then on, Mo Hua studied the Reverse Spirit Array while occasionally venturing into Dahei Mountain. Whenever he encountered remote or unfamiliar areas, he would compare them with the criminal cultivator's map to see if he could locate the marked positions.

However, after several days of searching, he still found nothing.

Feeling dejected, Mo Hua looked up and suddenly saw a thick fog covering the distant mountains, obscuring the sun, creating a hazy scene where it was hard to distinguish mountain from cliff.

That area was the deep mountains of Dahei Mountain, known to be the most dangerous part of the mountain.

It was said that the deep mountains were fraught with unpredictable dangers, with no cultivator ever returning.

As Mo Hua gazed at the scene, he was suddenly startled, taking a sharp breath:

“Dahei Mountain’s fog can cover the abyss...”

Could the marked location on the map be in the deep mountains of Dahei Mountain?

Mo Hua’s eyelids twitched, the more he thought about it, the more likely it seemed.

He knew the outer mountains like the back of his hand, and while the inner mountains were large, he was also quite familiar with them.

If the marked location was truly in the inner or outer mountains, he would definitely have an impression of it.

It wasn’t in the outer mountains, nor the inner mountains, so it must be in the deep mountains.

The disappearing criminal cultivators, the deep mountains from which no one returned.

A chill crept into Mo Hua’s heart as he speculated.

He hurriedly rushed back to Tongxian City, breathlessly finding Elder Yu Changlin, and urgently asked:

“Elder Yu, has anyone ever ventured into the deep mountains?”

Elder Yu was startled by the question, “Why are you asking this? The deep mountains are dangerous; you cannot go there.”

He thought Mo Hua was curious and wanted to explore the deep mountains.

“I’m not going, just asking.” Mo Hua took a breath, “Have the demon hunters who entered the deep mountains never returned?”

Seeing Mo Hua’s serious expression and tone, Elder Yu, realizing this might not be a trivial matter, nodded:

“Indeed, that is true.”

“Since when?”

Elder Yu frowned in thought and after a moment said, “About two hundred, maybe more than three hundred years ago...”

“You’re not sure?”

“I’ve only lived for over two hundred years; how would I know about earlier events? I’ve only heard about them.”

Elder Yu stroked his beard, recalling, then said:

“It seems that more than three hundred years ago, although the deep mountains were dangerous, they were still accessible.”

“Accessible?” Mo Hua was somewhat surprised.

Elder Yu nodded, “Yes, accessible, but the fog was thick, the miasma poisonous, and the demonic beasts strong, with quite a few second-grade beasts.”

After thinking for a moment, Elder Yu added, “At that time, it was called the deep mountains, but it was actually part of the inner mountains, just the most dangerous part. But later, too many demon hunters who entered the deep mountains never returned, and gradually, no one dared to go there. The deep mountains of Dahei Mountain became taboo.”

“Even Foundation Building cultivators don’t dare enter?”

Elder Yu’s eyelid twitched, “Foundation Building cultivators don’t dare because Foundation Building cultivators have died there.”

Mo Hua’s eyes widened, “Foundation Building cultivators also died in there?”

Elder Yu nodded.

“Not disappeared, but died in there?” Mo Hua asked, puzzled.

Logically, disappearing didn’t necessarily mean death, so how could it be certain that they died in the deep mountains?

“Because their bodies were found on the outskirts of the deep mountains.”

The more Mo Hua listened, the more suspicious it seemed, “Who died?”

Elder Yu’s expression turned complex, “The former Grand Elder of the Qian family.”

“The Qian family?” Mo Hua found it hard to believe.

Elder Yu nodded slightly and said to Mo Hua:

“When I was still a lowly Qi Refining cultivator, I heard that the Grand Elder of the Qian family entered the deep mountains and vanished. Half a month later, the Qian family patriarch led a group to search the deep mountains, determined to find him, dead or alive.”

“The Grand Elder of a family, a man of high status, couldn’t die in vain. At that time, the Qian family was already very powerful, with many people, so they dared to enter the deep mountains. But even so, they didn’t dare be careless.”

“The entire Qian family, from Foundation Building to Qi Refining cultivators, almost all of them went, forming a human net, advancing from the outer to the inner deep mountains. Finally, they found the deceased Grand Elder under a tree on the outskirts.”

“It’s said he died very strangely, missing an arm, seemingly bitten off by a demonic beast, but this is a rumor after all. The Qian family has never disclosed the cause of death.”

“What happened next?” Mo Hua asked.

“After that, it was left unresolved. The Qian family didn’t dare go deeper. The Foundation Building Grand Elder had died, and the body was found, which was a sort of closure. Going deeper might have led to some great calamity, and the Qian family could have been wiped out.”

Elder Yu seemed both gleeful and regretful.

Gleeful perhaps because the Qian family’s Grand Elder died, and regretful that the Qian family didn’t all perish in the deep mountains.

Mo Hua asked, “Since then, no cultivators have dared enter the deep mountains?”

Elder Yu corrected, “Some dare, but no one has come out.”

“There are always those in the world who are audacious or ignorant. There are both highly skilled and foolishly fearless ones, but regardless, no one has ever returned from the deep mountains.”

Mo Hua’s expression was complex as he slowly said, “Did they go willingly?”

Elder Yu smiled, wanting to say something, but suddenly froze, his smile fading, and he solemnly said:

“Did you... find out something?”

Mo Hua took out the map and handed it to Elder Yu, then told him about Guang Toutuo and the criminal cultivators, including the sixteen characters.

“Dahei Mountain’s fog can cover the abyss; at midnight, throw a stone to test the path.”

Elder Yu murmured, repeating the words, increasingly alarmed.

His mind raced, his voice trembling slightly:

“Do you mean that the deep mountains of Dahei Mountain could be a massive den of criminals, with heinous criminal cultivators lurking there for the past two or three hundred years?”

Mo Hua slowly nodded.

Elder Yu couldn’t help but stand up, frowning as he paced back and forth in the hall.

After pacing a few times, Elder Yu gathered his thoughts, sat down, drank a cup of tea to calm himself, and said in a deep voice:

“This is indeed possible...”

“In the past two hundred years, not only foreign cultivators but also many demon hunters have disappeared in the deep mountains.”

“When the Elder of the Demon Hunter Hall and I were still here, we repeatedly warned not to enter the deep mountains, or there would be little chance of survival.”

“But some demon hunters didn’t heed the warnings and ventured into the deep mountains, never to be heard from again.”

“I used to think they were foolish, not knowing their limits. Now I realize something is very suspicious.”

“To be demon hunters and survive in the inner mountains, who among them didn’t know the dangers of Dahei Mountain? How could they not value their lives, suddenly rushing into the deep mountains?”

“Even if they didn’t value their own lives, their wives and children depended on them hunting demons for spirit stones to live. With families to support, how could they risk their lives so recklessly?”

“If they died, leaving behind widows and orphans in misery, how could they not understand this?”

“Now it seems they didn’t enter the deep mountains willingly; they were captured or killed and then taken into the deep mountains!”