

The Quest 27

Chapter 27: Heartache

"Your mother has overworked herself, using spiritual energy for long periods to stoke the kitchen fire, which has damaged her heart and lungs from the heat, leading to her coughing, weakness, and difficulty in breathing."

Old Master Feng explained the condition to Mo Hua and continued:

"When she was first brought here, she could barely breathe. I've concocted some medicinal pills that have temporarily alleviated her condition. There's no need to worry for the time being, but she must take good care of herself going forward. She cannot use her spiritual energy to stoke the fire anymore, and she must quit her job helping in the kitchen at the Spirit Meal Tower; otherwise, her heart and lungs will inevitably deteriorate beyond repair."

Mo Hua, frightened by the diagnosis, bowed deeply and said, "I will forever remember Grandfather Feng's kindness in my heart!"

Old Master Feng helped Mo Hua to stand up, smiled slightly, and said, "Saving lives and helping the injured is the duty of a pill master; there's no need to talk of kindness. Although you are young, you speak very precisely—as if I might not be around by the time you wish to repay me."

Mo Hua then breathed a sigh of relief and said with a smile, "Grandfather Feng, with your benevolent heart, you will surely live for hundreds more years!"

Old Master Feng laughed out loud, "You've always been a sweet talker since you were little."

"Why did my mother's heart and lung damage become so severe all of a sudden? She only worked in the kitchen for four hours daily before and was fine," Mo Hua couldn't help but ask.

Old Master Feng replied, "I spoke to the cook at the Spirit Meal Tower. Starting this year, your mother's kitchen hours increased from four to six per day. With the longer hours, her spiritual energy is more likely to deplete, and the excessive labor has naturally exacerbated her condition."

"Wasn't the Fire-Resisting Hairpin of any use?"

"You mean the hairpin your mother wears?" Old Master Feng stroked his beard and nodded as he explained:

"The hairpin is indeed useful, but as a common spiritual tool, its efficacy is limited. However, it's fortunate she had it; otherwise, her condition could have been much worse, and even if cured, her heart and lungs might have suffered residual issues."

Mo Hua felt somewhat relieved but still apprehensive, and then inquired about the cost of the diagnosis. Old Master Feng said, "The manager of the Spirit Meal Tower has already been here. They feel very guilty about your mother's condition, so they will cover all expenses for the medicinal pills. You don't need to worry about that."

Old Master Feng winked at Mo Hua and whispered, "Since they are willing to pay, I won't hold back and will use the best ingredients to ensure your mother is cured."

Mo Hua, reassured, thanked Old Master Feng sincerely, then asked softly, "May I go see my mother?"

Old Master Feng nodded, "Go ahead, she just took her medicine and laid down. Remember to keep your voice down."

The Xinglin Medical Hall's side rooms were opened up, placing several sickbeds specifically for patients to rest. Although simple, they were clean and tidy, with a faint scent of incense in the air.

When Mo Hua saw Liu Ruhua, she was lying quietly on a bed near the inside, sleeping soundly with light breathing and a pale, somewhat gaunt face.

Mo Hua moved a small stool over and sat quietly beside her, looking at Liu Ruhua's face.

Mo Hua remembered how young and gentle his mother looked when he was born, her smile was very beautiful.

Ten years have passed unknowingly.

For cultivators with long lifespans, ten years is not very significant; some cultivators do not even change their appearance in a decade.

But Mo Hua's mother had become somewhat gaunt, and there were even a few white hairs at her temples.

Thinking about how his parents were aging slowly without his knowledge until one day, he suddenly realized they no longer looked like the images he remembered.

Mo Hua felt a sourness in his heart, and his eyes blurred with tears.

Liu Ruhua, not knowing how long she had slept, woke up to find Mo Hua by her side with red eyes, feeling both comforted and a bit pained.

Liu Ruhua touched Mo Hua's head, "Why are you here? Shouldn't you be cultivating at the sect?"

Mo Hua silently watched her, and Liu Ruhua, slightly embarrassed, said, "I'm fine; you don't need to worry about me."

"Old Master Feng mentioned you've been working six hours daily in the kitchen."

"Six hours is nothing; look at your uncles and aunts in the neighborhood, their tasks are sometimes even harder. Your father goes out to hunt demons, sometimes for days and nights without rest. Everyone lives like this..."

Mo Hua shook his head, "Mother, you're not well; how can you compare? Is our family lacking spirit stones?"

Liu Ruhua sighed slightly, "We aren't lacking spirit stones, but you're about to start learning techniques soon, aren't you? A mid-grade lower-tier technique would cost over two hundred spirit stones, so I thought to save up more to let you choose a better one."

Mo Hua was startled, "I never mentioned the techniques; how did you know?"

Liu Ruhua touched Mo Hua's head again, "Silly child, how could your mother not know? You didn't say because you are considerate, but your parents have to plan for you. We are only Qi-cultivating

cultivators and can't give you the best, but we still want to provide as well as we can within our means."

Mo Hua's nose tingled, and then he took out a storage bag and said:

"Mother, I can earn it myself; I've already earned a hundred and eighty spirit stones!"

Liu Ruhua was surprised, her mouth opened slightly, and after a moment, she said:

"How did you earn so much...?"

Mo Hua felt better, "I've been helping people with array formations."

"Is it Destiny's Shop on North Street?"

"Yes."

Mo Hua said, then paused, "Mother, how do you know about that too?"

Liu Ruhua chuckled softly, "Your father told me. He saw you taking out so many spirit stones one day, suspected someone was deceiving you with ill intentions, followed you to that merchant, asked the manager a few questions, then found out you weren't being deceived, but rather, it was the manager who had been fooled by you. I didn't even know you had an older brother..."

Mo Hua's mouth fell open in shock, feeling that he had hidden everything, yet nothing was truly hidden; he didn't even know when his father had followed him to the array hall...

Liu Ruhua stroked Mo Hua's face, relieved, "When you were little, small and thin, I was worried you'd be bullied, and also worried about how you'd make a living in the future. I never imagined that at such a young age, you'd be able to earn so many spirit stones. Now I can rest easy."

"But keep these spirit stones for yourself. Although it seems like a lot now, when your cultivation is higher in the future, or when you marry and have children, you'll have many expenses. Save up now to avoid being strapped for resources later."

Mo Hua shook his head, "Mother, I'll earn even more spirit stones in the future; you don't need to worry about that. What's most important now is for you to get well; don't worry about anything else."

Liu Ruhua looked at Mo Hua gently, wanting to say more, but couldn't help coughing again. Mo Hua no longer let her speak, urging her to rest well.