

## The Quest 274

Chapter 274: Inside the Fortress

Mo Hua stealthily dug at the base of the wall, slipping into the Black Mountain Fortress undetected.

As soon as he entered, the pungent stench of blood and decay hit him.

The smell was a mix of old rot and fresh blood.

The surroundings were filled with an eerie chill that seeped into the bones.

Mo Hua couldn't help but shiver, then he looked around and his mouth dropped open in shock.

What a huge fortress!

Nestled between two mountain slopes, the Black Mountain Fortress lay in the center.

The wall Mo Hua had just dug through was only a small part of the tall walls encircling the place, and more towering walls could be seen in every direction.

Besides the high walls, the encircling mountain slopes also formed a natural barrier for the fortress.

The entire Black Mountain Fortress sprawled beneath the night sky, resembling an impregnable fortress, or perhaps a monstrous creature that devours humans.

Mo Hua was deeply shocked and then felt a wave of fear.

This was likely the largest group of criminal cultivators not just in Tongxian City, but perhaps in the entire Black Mountain Province.

Without prior investigation, calling people over recklessly would likely lead to heavy casualties.

Mo Hua then began to cautiously observe the layout of the Black Mountain Fortress.

The fortress was vast, with numerous buildings densely packed between the enclosing mountains, roughly numbering in the hundreds.

The overall atmosphere was sinister and eerie.

Under the dim firelight, mottled bloodstains could be seen almost everywhere—on the roads, walls, and pillars.

In some corners, unidentified body parts and remains of cultivators were discarded.

Some houses were inhabited by criminal cultivators, while others held captured cultivators, likely abducted.

These innocent cultivators were imprisoned in iron cages, emaciated and skeletal, looking neither human nor ghostly.

Mo Hua frowned.

"What are these criminal cultivators keeping them here for? Normally, they would just kill them, wouldn't they?"

Criminal cultivators like Guang Toutuo killed without hesitation, and the Black Mountain Fortress seemed even more sinister, its cultivators presumably even worse. Why would they spare these cultivators' lives?

Mo Hua was puzzled and watched for a while.

Soon, a fierce-looking criminal cultivator came over, picking out a cultivator who seemed in slightly better condition, and slit his wrist to drain his blood.

The cultivator's face contorted in pain, but he couldn't struggle, his blood filling a bowl.

The criminal cultivator drank the fresh blood in one gulp, his energy surging.

He licked his lips, seemingly unsatisfied.

After a while, another criminal cultivator came.

This one pressed his large hand on a young cultivator's forehead, and the young cultivator screamed in agony.

Through his spiritual sense, Mo Hua saw the young cultivator's spiritual power reverse flow from his dantian, through his meridians, to his head, and finally into the criminal cultivator's hand.

The reverse flow of spiritual power caused immense pain.

The young cultivator's screams were inhumanly shrill.

Annoyed, the criminal cultivator continued to absorb the spiritual power with his right hand while choking the young cultivator with his left to silence him.

When he finished absorbing the spiritual power, the young cultivator fell to the ground, silent and unmoving, his fate unknown.

More criminal cultivators arrived afterward, doing similar things—absorbing blood or spiritual power, or using even more terrifying methods.

Mo Hua felt like he had fallen into an ice cellar.

He realized that the Black Mountain Fortress wasn't just a hideout for criminal cultivators but a nest of demonic cultivators!

The entire huge fortress was filled with hundreds of demonic cultivators!

Mo Hua couldn't help but gasp.

Criminal cultivators killed and looted for wealth.

But demonic cultivators used people for their cultivation, not treating them as humans at all.

The imprisoned innocent cultivators were more like... livestock being raised!

Mo Hua was both shocked and angry, but he could only sigh helplessly.

He couldn't save these cultivators.

He was lucky to protect himself.

If the Black Mountain Fortress was a demonic cultivator's nest, it was much more dangerous than he had initially thought.

"Should I sneak back while they haven't discovered me?"

Mo Hua thought for a moment but shook his head.

He had been lucky to sneak in this time. If he came back, he might not be so lucky again.

Moreover, although demonic cultivators were dangerous, as long as they were still in the Qi refining stage and their spiritual sense wasn't stronger than his, they wouldn't be able to detect his concealment technique.

As long as his concealment technique wasn't discovered, he was safe.

Demonic cultivators had cruel methods.

But Mo Hua didn't plan to confront them head-on; no matter how strange and vicious their methods, they didn't matter.

Mo Hua breathed a slight sigh of relief.

For now, the large demonic force in the Black Mountain Fortress posed a severe threat to all demon hunters and even the entire Tongxian City.

If they were allowed to grow for another two or three hundred years, the demonic cultivators could number in the thousands.

By then, all the independent cultivators in Tongxian City would be their livestock.

Mo Hua felt a chill in his heart.

Since they didn't know he had a concealment technique and he had already snuck in, he should try to uncover their secrets.

Then he could call for help, plan thoroughly, and eradicate them to prevent endless troubles.

Mo Hua made up his mind and began considering his next steps.

"First, the most important thing is to determine if there are any Foundation Building stage demonic cultivators here!"

Only demonic cultivators at the Foundation Building stage could potentially see through his concealment technique.

In other words, as long as he didn't encounter a Foundation Building demonic cultivator, the risk wouldn't be too high even in this fortress filled with demonic cultivators.

Where would the Foundation Building demonic cultivators be?

Mo Hua pondered and then used his understanding of arrays to reverse-engineer the layout of the Black Mountain Fortress.

He had seen through the array layouts of the An Family.

He personally designed the arrays for the artifact crafting and alchemy shops in the southern part of the city, constructing them based on the arrays.

So he was quite skilled in this.

After some calculations, Mo Hua had a rough idea.

The Black Mountain Fortress was divided into the front and back sections.

The front section was where Mo Hua had just wandered around; it was mostly filled with Qi refining stage demonic cultivators, though many were at the eighth or ninth level of Qi refining, none were at the Foundation Building stage.

The arrays in the front section were relatively simple, mainly first-grade single arrays, with many not even reaching first grade.

The basic buildings like dining halls, prisons, and residences were in the front section.

The arrays in the back section were much more complex.

They primarily consisted of first-grade Earth-Wood Composite Arrays, mixed with first-grade single arrays, and there was even a separate wall dividing it, making it clearly more important than the front section.

Mo Hua disabled a small part of the array and slipped into the back section.

Using his concealment technique and Passing Water Step, Mo Hua moved between rooftops and beams, observing everything.

The back section was quieter and more solemn compared to the front section.

The smell of blood was less intense, but the atmosphere was more oppressive.

The buildings were larger and more exquisite.

However, the exquisite craftsmanship had a somewhat sinister feel to it.

As Mo Hua walked, he suddenly heard voices and immediately found a beam to lie down on.

Two people inside seemed to be talking, but their tones were cold, indicating a lack of close relationship.

Mo Hua secretly peeked down.

He could only see the table below and the food and wine on it.

Mo Hua guessed that these two people were of high status, as their side dishes were the best.

Better than what any other demonic cultivator outside had.

Seeing that they hadn't noticed him, Mo Hua thought they were Qi refining cultivators, and he tilted his head slightly to get a look at them.

One was a middle-aged cultivator with a stern expression.

The other was a burly man with slightly red eyes and bloodshot veins.

Mo Hua only glanced briefly, his gaze just brushing over the burly man.

The burly man's eyes suddenly widened, the bloodshot veins deepening, and his aura surged violently as he shouted, "Who's there?"