

The Quest 323

Chapter 323: Plotting a Kill

Master An took a sip of tea before he began to speak:

"In those years when our An family competed with the Qian family for profits, we were not at a disadvantage from the start."

"Initially, both families had their wins and losses, but the Qian family was profit-driven, and most of their disciples were selfish and self-serving. Our An family, on the other hand, was harmonious, united, and unlike the Qian family, we didn't exploit our people so harshly. Gradually, we gained the upper hand in the struggle against them."

"At that time, over half of the artifact refining and alchemy businesses in Tongxian City were under our An family's control. The Qian family was on the verge of defeat..."

"Did something unexpected happen?" Mo Hua asked.

Master An nodded, sighed deeply, and continued:

"Yes, a major incident occurred. The Qian family took on a significant business deal..."

"It was the largest deal our An family had ever handled. Completing this transaction would have ensured that the Qian family could not rival us for the next hundred years."

"We had everything prepared. All we needed was to safely transport the goods out of Tongxian City to the nearby Runan City, and the deal would have been successfully completed."

"To this end, I specially arranged for our only Foundation Building elder to oversee the operation, fifty elite disciples to escort, along with two hundred An family cultivators."

"Even the Qian family wouldn't dare underestimate these cultivators. Moreover, the Qian family wouldn't risk a direct confrontation with us, as it would result in significant casualties and would be a lose-lose situation."

"I believed my plans were meticulous and our preparations secure, but I never anticipated... never anticipated..."

Master An's face showed regret and pain.

"They entered Dahei Mountain and never returned!"

"Not a single one returned!"

"They all vanished in Dahei Mountain!"

Master An's face trembled with intense emotions.

Mo Hua quickly poured him another cup of tea. Master An took a sip, breathed deeply, and nodded slightly before continuing:

"This not only hurt our strength but struck at the very foundation of our An family, as if a piece of flesh had been cut from my heart!"

"Afterwards, I went into Dahei Mountain myself, but no matter how I searched, I couldn't find our elder or those disciples. It was as if they had evaporated from the world."

"I even risked going deeper into the mountains, but the thick fog provided no clues, and I didn't dare venture too far, so I retreated."

Mo Hua asked, "Did you suspect the Qian family?"

Master An nodded, "The first ones I suspected were the Qian family."

"But I observed that on the day our disciples entered the mountain, the Qian family patriarch and most of their Foundation Building elders did not leave their premises nor entered Dahei Mountain. They didn't have the opportunity to attack us..."

"Yet, it must have been the Qian family!"

Master An's eyes were filled with coldness.

Mo Hua quietly asked, "How do you know?"

Master An hesitated, unwilling to involve Mo Hua further. However, seeing that Mo Hua seemed to know something, and considering the time that had passed, he decided to share.

"I wasn't sure if the Qian family was involved, but later, during a conflict over a pill furnace, a rift between our families deepened."

"Though our An family was greatly weakened, we refused to bow down. However, the Qian family patriarch said something to me..."

"No one can compete with the Qian family. In Dahei Mountain, I can make anyone disappear..."

"From then on, I knew it was the Qian family. Their strength was greater than I had thought, and their methods more ruthless."

"I wanted to fight them to the death, but the other An family disciples needed to live. If we fought the Qian family head-on, our An family might be the one to disappear..."

Mo Hua's eyes sharpened, and he asked quietly, "Do you know what the Qian family did exactly?"

Master An shook his head, then his expression turned serious. "Do you know?"

Mo Hua nodded.

Master An was shocked, "How do you know?"

"Do you know about Heishan Stronghold?" Mo Hua continued.

Master An nodded slightly, "I've heard it's a group of demonic cultivators in the deep mountains, recently eradicated by Daoist soldiers."

He then froze, "Are you saying..."

Mo Hua nodded, "Heishan Stronghold was created by the Qian family patriarch. The An family disciples were killed by the demonic cultivators of Heishan Stronghold. On the surface, the Qian family patriarch didn't need to get involved directly and could keep his hands clean."

Master An was suddenly enlightened and then fell into a trance, "So that's it..."

With this revelation, he understood.

Although his disciples weren't directly killed by the Qian family, they were indeed dead because of them.

Master An's eyes sharpened, "You didn't come to me just to say this, did you?"

"I wanted to confirm the relationship between the Qian family patriarch and Heishan Stronghold and ask if you want revenge," Mo Hua said.

Master An's gaze became focused, "Revenge?"

Mo Hua nodded, "The Qian family patriarch extended his life with a Longevity Pill and will live for a long time. If he remains, he will become a great calamity, so we must strike first."

Master An calculated, "How many people do you have?"

"Quite a few," Mo Hua said simply, listing the demon hunters, Dao Court officers, and Dao soldiers.

Master An didn't hesitate, "Good, count our An family in!"

"As long as that old dog from the Qian family is alive, Tongxian City will never have peace!"

Mo Hua initially intended only to gather information and evidence of the Qian family patriarch's connection with Heishan Stronghold.

Unexpectedly, the deep-seated grudge between the An and Qian families, and Master An's willingness to help, turned out to be a pleasant surprise.

When Mo Hua told Elder Yu about it, Elder Yu was also relieved.

Although the An family was weakened, they were still the second strongest family in Tongxian City. Their assistance increased the chances of defeating the Qian family.

An hour later, Zhang Lan and Mo Shan returned.

Elder Yu asked, "How did it go?"

Zhang Lan nodded, "We had someone pose as a demonic cultivator and talked to the second-in-command. He didn't react to most topics."

"But when we mentioned 'the leader is dead,' the second-in-command opened his eyes and sneered, saying it's impossible. When we said 'the stronghold chief is also dead,' he laughed even harder, saying it's even more impossible."

"This shows that Heishan Stronghold indeed has a chief, and he's not the same as the leader!"

Mo Hua then relayed Master An's words and asked Commander Yang, "Is this evidence enough?"

Yang Jiyong pondered, "It's not conclusive, but it's sufficient. When dealing with demonic cultivators, it's better to act than to miss the chance. Delaying might alert the Qian family and lose the opportunity."

Elder Yu nodded, "We'll know if the Heishan Stronghold chief is the Qian family patriarch once we make a move."

"If he is, we'll kill him on the spot!"

"If not, I'll apologize to the Qian family. I've scolded them plenty, so apologizing isn't a big loss."

Yang Jiyong nodded, "Alright, let's finalize our plan to infiltrate the Qian family and kill their patriarch!"

The group spent the entire day planning.

By evening, Master An, dressed in black, arrived quietly.

After brief greetings, Master An shared secret information about the Qian family, including their layout, the patriarch's cultivation methods, Dao techniques, and combat tactics.

Mo Hua listened intently.

He didn't understand the intricacies of Foundation Building cultivators' spiritual power operations or how to kill one.

His abilities couldn't harm a Foundation Building cultivator.

The only thing that might work was using his spiritual sense to calculate and collapse an array.

But array calculations took time, and Mo Hua, busy tracking the Qian family patriarch, hadn't completed the calculations, nor had he used it practically, so it was useless now.

For now, Mo Hua could only listen and learn:

How to design a plan to kill a powerful enemy cultivator.

How to estimate the opponent's strength, including cultivation, techniques, Dao methods, and spiritual tools.

How to assess the required strength to succeed.

How to arrange and deploy people, avoid the enemy's strengths, attack their weaknesses, and minimize casualties.

As a Dao soldier commander, Yang Jiyong, with Zhang Lan's family heritage, Elder Yu's experience, and Mo Shan's battle-hardened skills, each had their strengths.

When discussing plans, they each expressed their views, complementing each other.

Mo Hua silently watched and listened, memorizing everything, slowly thinking and internalizing.

He couldn't use it now, but someday, it might come in handy.

Two days and a night later, the plan to kill the Qian family patriarch was finalized.