

The Quest 334

Chapter 334: The Demonic Path

Mr. Zhuang noticed the abnormal changes in the Dao, but Mo Hua was unaware of this at the moment.

He found a hidden bush at the cave entrance, performed the Concealment Technique, and hid inside.

Even a Foundation Building cultivator wouldn't be able to discover him.

Mo Hua was somewhat worried about Elder Yu and the others, but after staring at the cave entrance for a long time, there was no movement inside.

"Are there no demonic beasts in this lair?"

Mo Hua was puzzled.

When he used his spiritual sense to perceive, he found that the demonic aura in this lair was very faint, and the atmosphere was dull, not like a place where demonic beasts resided.

Or perhaps, there once was a second-grade demonic beast living here, but now it's gone; otherwise, the demonic aura wouldn't be so faint.

What kind of second-grade demonic beast used to live here?

Mo Hua frowned and thought for a moment, then suddenly felt startled and silently thought to himself:

"Could it be that pig..."

The Qian family patriarch wanted to refine the Life-Transforming Elixir, and refining a demonic elixir required a demonic array. For the demonic array to be effective, flesh and blood were needed as the array medium.

The flesh and blood used as the array medium had to be either human or demonic.

Refining such a pill was difficult and time-consuming, and human blood and Qi couldn't sustain such a long process.

Moreover, refining this kind of pill required continuously using humans as ingredients.

The Qian family patriarch couldn't possibly force people to eat other people.

So the most suitable cauldron was a second-grade demonic beast.

Demonic beasts ate humans, had abundant blood and Qi, and had long lifespans, making them ideal cauldrons for refining the Life-Transforming Elixir.

Mo Hua gradually formed a hypothesis.

This lair might have belonged to that pig.

It likely fell into the hands of the Qian family patriarch because it was severely injured, allowing him to take advantage of it.

The Qian family patriarch then occupied this lair, turning it into his secret pill room.

Even if the second-grade demonic beast was severely injured, the Qian family patriarch couldn't have dealt with it alone. It's likely that the Qian family's elder was also involved.

During the process of subduing the pig demon, the Qian family elder lost an arm and was severely injured, probably not expected to live long.

But with the Longevity Pill, it was a different story.

The Longevity Pill, using human life as the guiding ingredient, could replenish blood and Qi and extend life.

However, if the Qian family elder took the Longevity Pill and healed his injuries, it would arouse suspicion.

So the Qian family patriarch had the elder fake his death to deceive others, secretly hiding in the deep mountains, helping him build the Heishan Stronghold, recruit demonic cultivators, and refine the Life-Transforming Elixir, as well as the Life-Transforming Essence Elixir.

Although these were just Mo Hua's guesses, the truth was likely not far off.

Mo Hua sighed in his heart, "This Qian family patriarch is really meticulous."

Looking at the lair in front of him, Mo Hua felt increasingly uneasy.

The Qian family patriarch was cunning, so what kind of dangers might he have set up in the depths of this lair?

It was already nighttime, the dew was heavy in the deep mountains, and the mountain wind brought a chill.

Mo Hua couldn't help but shiver and suddenly heard a faint sound of wind.

Mo Hua paused, listening carefully, and found the sound was coming from the cave.

It was the echo of the wind.

Mo Hua's eyelid twitched.

The lair was so deep, how could there be an echo from the mountain wind?

Mo Hua concealed his form, cautiously walked into the lair, and followed the sound. He found a significant crack in a wall near the entrance.

Mo Hua touched the wall, and the earth and stone were fresh, with a faint moisture.

With a little force, the earth and stone fell inward.

Mo Hua was shocked.

This was an entrance, recently sealed with earth and stone.

There were no formations around the entrance.

Mo Hua had focused all his attention on the formations inside the lair, so he hadn't noticed this entrance.

As a formation expert, he was misled by the formations, ignoring the areas without them.

"A good swimmer drowns, a good rider falls."

Was this the blindness under the light?

Mo Hua sighed, taking this as a lesson to be more vigilant next time.

But what was this entrance for?

Could the Qian family patriarch really be hiding here?

Mo Hua released his spiritual sense, feeling the air behind the entrance was murky and filled with a thick blood smell, making it impossible to discern anything.

What should he do?

Mo Hua frowned, thought for a moment, and decided to go in and take a look.

He wouldn't go deep, just peek inside, and retreat if there was anything unusual.

If there was nothing special or unrelated to the Qian family patriarch, he could still sneak away quietly.

The crack in the entrance was large and not tightly sealed. Mo Hua, being small, slipped in directly.

Behind the entrance was a dark stone staircase leading downward, with a faint red glow at the end.

Mo Hua felt a chill in his heart but steeled himself and walked down the steps.

After a few steps, he heard harsh snoring and an old voice.

The sounds, along with the thick blood smell, seemed trapped in this space, inaudible from afar but too loud up close, indicating some method was used.

The stone staircase was narrow and deep but not long. Mo Hua soon reached the end.

To the right of the staircase end was a spacious stone chamber.

Mo Hua, hidden and pressed against the stone wall, peeked into the chamber.

Cold sweat trickled down his back.

It was the Qian family patriarch!

That old thing was really here?

Mo Hua calmed himself, pondering, and felt complicated.

Encountering the Qian family patriarch had both pros and cons.

The advantage was that others wouldn't encounter the patriarch and face danger.

The disadvantage was that he did...

Mo Hua sighed helplessly.

The formations in the depths were just a decoy.

Everyone thought the Qian family patriarch must be hiding deep in the lair, but he was actually at the entrance!

The Qian family patriarch indeed thought differently from ordinary people, acting unpredictably!

Had the patriarch noticed him?

Mo Hua tensed up, but noticing no spiritual sense probing and the patriarch continuing his conversation without changing his tone, he relaxed.

It seemed his Concealment Technique hadn't been detected.

Mo Hua took another peek and found the stone chamber blood-stained and chaotic, filled with various demonic herbs and porcelain bowls containing colorful herbal juices.

In the center of the chamber lay a snoring pig.

Beside the pig were two cultivators, one being the Qian family patriarch, and the other was Qian Hong, the head of the Qian family!

Mo Hua was puzzled.

The Qian family was sealed, and all cultivators were forbidden to leave.

How was Qian Hong here?

He was the head of the Qian family, though not very powerful, he was still the highest-ranking person below the patriarch.

Could the Heishan Stronghold be related to him too?

Mo Hua couldn't figure it out.

But no matter the reason, it was best to sneak away.

As long as the pig was breathing, the elixir wasn't finished.

Without the elixir, the Qian family patriarch was still in the mid-Foundation Building stage, severely injured.

He could sneak out, send a signal, call for help, and everyone could deal with the patriarch together.

The Heishan Stronghold issue could then be resolved completely.

Mo Hua turned to leave but heard the Qian family patriarch sigh:

"Hong'er, our Qian family has it tough..."

Mo Hua sneered silently, "This old thing is shameless. Your Qian family has it tough, but what about the poor independent cultivators in Tongxian City?"

But he stopped, wanting to hear what the patriarch had to say.

Was there something he didn't know?

After all, such demonic techniques and elixir recipes weren't something normal cultivators could obtain.

The Qian family patriarch continued, "Do you know what the world is really like?"

Qian Hong didn't respond.

The patriarch didn't expect an answer and continued:

"I've lived over three hundred years and finally understood one thing: a cultivator's abilities are limited. To achieve great things, you must use others' strength and blood."

"This world is survival of the fittest; big fish eat small fish, and small fish eat shrimp."

"The cultivation world is the same. Independent cultivators are exploited by small families, small families are oppressed by medium families, and medium families are suppressed by great families."

"In other words, independent cultivators support small families, small families support medium families, and medium families support great families..."

"In essence, it's all about draining the blood of independent cultivators."

"The Dao Court's policies, the rise and fall of families, and the changes in sects—all remain constant. The independent cultivators at the bottom are always at the bottom, always exploited, always scorned."

"The prosperity of the cultivation world is built on the blood and tears of independent cultivators, but it has nothing to do with them."

"So, never be an independent cultivator!"

"This is what I realized when I was an independent cultivator."

"So I wanted to establish a family, relying on the family to achieve the Dao."

"But building a family didn't work either. I had no spirit stones, no connections, and couldn't build the Qian family by myself."

"Relying solely on hunting demons,

I couldn't earn many spirit stones in a lifetime."

"So, I had to kill and rob."

"No matter how dirty the methods of establishing power, once you succeed, someone will clean your name, praise you, and serve you loyally."

"The Qian family was established and grew stronger, but it still wasn't enough."

"The greatest benefits in this world are taken by greater families and sects. Small families like ours can't scrape much off the independent cultivators."

"The family's development was limited, my cultivation stagnated, and my lifespan was less than a century..."

"I realized that if this continued, I would die a mediocre death."

"But heaven doesn't seal all paths. One day, I met a mysterious Daoist. After talking, he was delighted and gave me several demonic techniques, the Longevity Pill, and the Life-Transforming Essence Elixir recipe."

"I practiced demonic techniques, refined demonic pills, and entered the demonic path, feeling enlightened."

"Is there such a thing as people in this world?"

"There can be, or there can be none, depending on how you see it."

"If you see others as people, then they are people. If you don't see them as people, they aren't people."

"Others are just tools for you to earn spirit stones, servants to follow your orders, pigs and dogs to slaughter at will, spirit slaves and blood slaves for your cultivation, the foundation stones of your Dao."

"I finally understood, this world is all about people eating people."

"Not only do demonic cultivators eat people, but righteous cultivators do too."

"Demonic cultivators consume human flesh and blood, absorbing their spiritual power. Righteous cultivators also oppress and enslave, draining invisible blood, eating invisible flesh. People just don't see it clearly."

"The way of humanity is to diminish the weak and serve the strong, to take from others to benefit oneself, and rise above all, reaching for immortality."

"This is the most unbreakable truth of this world!"