

The Quest 189

Chapter 189: Worries

Elder Yu took the spirit stones, allocating a portion for public use to build the artifact crafting shop, while the rest was used to purchase a large amount of wine and meat. He then invited the craftsmen and demon hunters for a feast.

The wine was of good quality, but the meat was not spirit meat.

With so many cultivators, Elder Yu couldn't afford to serve spirit meat. He found Mo Shan and spent some spirit stones to have Liu Ruhua help cook some demonic beast meat.

There was beef, mutton, and chicken, all stewed with spicy spices. The various aromas mixed together, making it very tempting, and there was plenty of it, enough for everyone to eat their fill.

Everyone was having a great time, and Mo Hua was also eating heartily. The artifact crafting shop was filled with a lively and joyful atmosphere.

Only Master Ban had lost his appetite.

He was originally worried that with only Mo Hua painting the array patterns, there wouldn't be enough manpower, and they wouldn't be able to keep up with the schedule.

Now, with the Qian family repeatedly causing trouble, injuring craftsmen, and destroying some buildings, some array patterns had to be redrawn. It was clear that they were falling further behind schedule.

Master Ban sighed, the wine tasted sour and bitter in his mouth, and he couldn't tell what flavor it was.

Mo Hua, who was gnawing on a large chicken leg, saw Master Ban's expression and asked, "Master Ban, do you have something on your mind?"

Master Ban sighed again, his heart heavy with worries, but he didn't know how to express them.

He couldn't possibly rush Mo Hua, asking him to paint the array patterns faster.

Moreover, since he knew Mo Hua was an array master capable of painting first-grade array patterns, Master Ban had developed a subtle respect for him. Speaking to Mo Hua had become more cautious and less relaxed than before.

Mo Hua noticed Master Ban's concerns and said, "If you have something to say, just say it."

Seeing Mo Hua's openness, Master Ban had no choice but to muster the courage to say, "Mo... Mo Hua, how much longer will it take to finish these array patterns?"

Mo Hua estimated and said, "It depends on whether the Qian family continues to cause trouble. If they do, it will take longer. If they get scared off, then it will be quicker. But since some array patterns need to be redrawn because of their interference, it will definitely take longer than expected."

Master Ban nodded, "Thank you for your hard work."

Despite his words, he still felt uneasy.

As a craftsman for so many years, he had heard many promises and estimates, but very few were actually fulfilled or met on time.

Mo Hua saw that Master Ban was still worried and asked, "Is it very serious if the construction is delayed?"

"It's not that serious, it's just that if the project is delayed, we craftsmen can't settle the accounts, and the workers under us won't get their spirit stones."

Master Ban's expression turned gloomy, "Craftsmen usually come from poor families. They need to earn spirit stones to support their families and to provide for their children's cultivation. They work day and night just to make a living. If the project is delayed, they won't get paid, and their families might not be able to make ends meet..."

Mo Hua nodded, deeply empathetic, as his family had also struggled financially in the past.

In Tongxian City, most of the wandering cultivators made a living as demon hunters, and there were few craftsmen, even fewer who became master craftsmen.

These craftsmen were mostly cultivators from other regions who had to travel wherever they were needed to build cave dwellings, houses, artifact crafting shops, alchemy shops, and other structures.

A single construction project for a cultivation building could take anywhere from a few months to a year or more, rarely allowing them to return home, resulting in long separations from their families.

Despite this hard work, the spirit stones they earned were barely enough to make ends meet.

Indeed, wandering cultivators found it difficult to make a living no matter what they did.

Mo Hua sighed and asked, "Do people often default on payment for spirit stones?"

Master Ban looked resigned, "It's very common. Once the cave dwelling is built, some people claim they can't spare the spirit stones or make excuses about cash flow issues, dragging out payments indefinitely. We have no recourse."

"About eighty or ninety years ago, when I was just a regular craftsman working under my master, we built a small cave dwelling for a cultivator. When it was completed, the cultivator claimed he had no spirit stones and asked us to wait."

"We waited for three months without receiving a single spirit stone. Our families were starving, so we had to seek him out again. We found him feasting and carousing, lavishly spending spirit stones. When we asked for our payment, he arrogantly declared that he had plenty of spirit stones but wouldn't give us any."

Mo Hua was incensed, "Didn't you beat him up?"

"We did!" Master Ban nodded, "We tied him up and beat him, leaving him seriously injured."

"And then?"

"Then he reported us to the Dao Court, and they arrested us, locking us up for half a month. My master took the blame and was sentenced to ten years in prison. We were given a few dozen lashes and released."

Thinking of his former master, Master Ban felt a pang of sorrow.

"The Dao Court is truly despicable!" Mo Hua was furious.

Then he remembered that Zhang Lan was also a cultivator from the Dao Court and seemed to be a good person, though he might have unintentionally injured him...

"It's not all like that," Master Ban tried to reason with Mo Hua.

"Are there exceptions?"

Master Ban nodded, "The cultivation world is vast, and there are Dao Courts everywhere. Some are dutiful and honest, while others are greedy and corrupt. It's not fair to generalize."

"I've dealt with several Dao Courts in nearby cities. The one in Tongxian City is relatively fair. Even if they occasionally take bribes, it's understandable. Other places vary. Some Dao Courts collude with local families, seizing properties and scheming for cultivation techniques, causing families to be ruined..."

Master Ban spoke with lingering fear.

Mo Hua was also shocked, realizing that the cultivation world was more complex than he had imagined.

He kept these things in mind, preparing himself for any future encounters.

"Master Ban, don't worry. Elder Yu may be stingy, but he will pay the spirit stones owed. He won't default."

Mo Hua said with certainty, then added, "I'll try to paint the array patterns faster to minimize the delay."

After all, it wasn't easy for the craftsmen to earn spirit stones, and it was hard for them to wait for their payment.

Master Ban was taken aback, "Paint faster?"

He was already working quickly. How much faster could he go? After all, Mo Hua was just one person, and only an eleven or twelve-year-old child at that.

Master Ban felt a bit guilty, worried, "You don't have to rush. Just follow the normal pace. Don't push yourself too hard, or you might damage your sea of consciousness. I heard that if an array master's sea of consciousness is injured, they won't be able to paint array patterns for life..."

"Don't worry, I know my limits," Mo Hua reassured him.

Previously, it was his first time painting array patterns on such a large-scale cultivation building and his first time designing and planning so many array patterns. He had been cautious, ensuring no mistakes, which slowed him down.

Now, after painting for so many days, he was much more skilled. Most of the array patterns, though numerous, were not complex, many not even reaching first-grade. Painting them wasn't difficult, just tedious.

Mo Hua also wanted to finish quickly and find a way to learn and apply more advanced composite arrays.

Composite arrays should be much more interesting.