

The Quest 265

Chapter 265: Strange Occurrence

After returning, Mo Hua spent all his time, apart from his daily cultivation, on the Reverse Spirit Array.

At night, he practiced the Reverse Spirit Array in the Sea of Consciousness on the Dao Stele. During the day, he continued to draw the Reverse Spirit Array, stroke by stroke, either in his small room or on the table at the eatery.

After about ten days, his spiritual sense had grown considerably. He could roughly draw the nine and a half incomplete Reverse Spirit Arrays. It wouldn't be long before he could fully draw them.

Once he could draw these nine and a half Reverse Spirit Arrays, he could go to Mr. Zhuang to learn the Hidden Array.

Mastering the Hidden Array would allow Mo Hua to compensate for the deficiencies in his own concealment techniques using the array.

With the mastery of the concealment technique, he would have more room to maneuver in any situation.

The recipe Bai Zixi gave him, he passed it on to his mother, pointing specifically to the dessert called "Flowers Full Moon."

"Mother, I want to eat this."

"Always thinking about food," Liu Ruhua gently tapped Mo Hua's nose, her tone slightly reproachful, but her expression was doting.

She took the recipe and glanced at it, looking puzzled, "Is this what you want to eat?"

Although Mo Hua was not picky about food, his mother knew his preferences well.

This dessert, with so many flowers as ingredients, seemed overly sweet and cloying, likely not something he would choose.

Mo Hua blinked, "Mother, I want to try something different."

Sweet, floral...

Liu Ruhua seemed to understand, and then laughed, "Alright, mother will make it for you."

Though the "Flowers Full Moon" was a bit complicated, the ingredients were not expensive. After studying for two days, Liu Ruhua figured out the method and steamed a basket.

Mo Hua carefully stored the dessert and brought it to Bai Zixi when he visited Mr. Zhuang.

Bai Zisheng also received a portion, his favorite rabbit meat.

This was ordered by a diner, and Mo Hua had asked his mother to make a bit more for Bai Zisheng.

Under the big locust tree, Bai Zisheng ate with great enjoyment.

Bai Zixi, as usual, ate quietly and elegantly, savoring each bite. Some petals stuck to her lips without her noticing.

Mo Hua watched, wanting to remind her, but he found her lips more beautiful than the flowers, and was momentarily stunned, forgetting to speak.

Seeing Mo Hua looking at her, Bai Zixi thought he wanted some too. After a moment's hesitation, she took out a piece and handed it to him.

Mo Hua was taken aback but shook his head, "You eat it."

He had tasted it earlier; the floral fragrance was too strong, too sweet, and he couldn't eat much.

Bai Zixi asked, "You really don't want it?"

After a moment of thought, Mo Hua took it.

A little cloying was fine, eating one piece wouldn't hurt.

Bai Zixi nodded slightly, and the two ate the flower cake quietly under the tree.

Afterward, Mo Hua continued to study the Reverse Spirit Array.

Occasionally, when he had time, he would take out the copy of the map to examine.

After pondering for a long time, he still couldn't figure out which part of Dahei Mountain the map depicted.

He also wondered how the bald and one-eyed men were faring in their interrogation, and whether there were any new clues.

One day, while practicing the Reverse Spirit Array in the eatery, Zhang Lan came to dine, looking troubled.

Seeing Mo Hua, Zhang Lan hesitated.

"What's the matter?" Mo Hua asked.

After some thought, Zhang Lan said, "That one-eyed convict confessed."

Mo Hua's eyes lit up.

Zhang Lan sighed slightly. He hadn't intended to tell Mo Hua.

Mo Hua had already helped capture Guang Toutuo. The matter should have ended there, leaving the interrogation, sentencing, and execution to the Dao Court.

These should have had nothing to do with Mo Hua, but if what the one-eyed convict said was true, it might concern all demon hunters.

Zhang Lan continued, "Regarding the map, Guang Toutuo did lie."

Mo Hua snorted, "That bald man is still lying on his deathbed!" He then asked, "What did the one-eyed man say?"

Zhang Lan's expression grew serious, "The map is indeed of Dahei Mountain."

Mo Hua's brows furrowed, feeling a sense of unease.

Zhang Lan continued, "Among the convicts, there's a rumor that if you're covered in blood and have nowhere to go, you can enter Dahei Mountain."

"How long has this rumor been around?" Mo Hua asked.

"A long time, according to the one-eyed man, it's been around for about a hundred or two hundred years," Zhang Lan said, his tone heavy. "Previously, few believed it, as Tongxian City is remote and Dahei Mountain is dangerous, so not many convicts came. But recently, it's different..."

"Recently, Tongxian City has been flourishing, and wandering cultivators are wealthy. With more merchants and more profit, many convicts have gathered in Dahei Mountain. That's why we could capture them all and get this clue."

As Zhang Lan spoke, his tone grew heavier.

If this were true, the biggest trouble in Dahei Mountain might not be these convicts.

"If you're covered in blood and have nowhere to go, you can enter Dahei Mountain..."

Mo Hua repeated, then asked, "And then? What can they do after entering Dahei Mountain?"

Zhang Lan shook his head, "That we don't know. Or rather, those who know might not have been caught yet."

"Neither Guang Toutuo nor the one-eyed man knows?"

"No," Zhang Lan nodded, "They were tortured but didn't say, likely because they truly don't know."

If these convicts didn't know, the only clue would be...

Mo Hua's heart skipped a beat, "The map?"

Zhang Lan nodded slowly, "That's what I think. If we can find the location marked on the map, we might uncover the truth behind the rumor."

"What about Guang Toutuo? This map is his."

Zhang Lan looked disappointed, "He doesn't know either. He indeed stole the map by killing someone, but he has no idea about its location or significance."

"But that one-eyed man mentioned something strange."

"Strange?" Mo Hua frowned.

Zhang Lan nodded slightly and recounted the story:

"Ten years ago, the one-eyed man went to Dahei Mountain to rob but found nothing. He wrapped himself in a single garment at night, braving the mountain winds, and slept in a tree. He didn't dare sleep below, fearing he might be eaten by beasts in his sleep."

"In a daze, he heard voices."

"The voices were low, rough, and eerie at night, and he couldn't hear them clearly."

"Alone and scared, he held his breath in the tree, listening for a long time before he made out some of their conversation."

"The men below were also convicts, having slaughtered a whole family of cultivators and looted their spirit stones. Chased by the Dao Court, they fled to Dahei Mountain."

"They were powerful and ruthless. The one-eyed man shivered in the tree until dawn, not daring to come down until he was sure no one was around."

"After that, he never saw those convicts in Dahei Mountain again. Though they said they were hiding there, it was as if they had vanished from the world..."

Mo Hua felt a chill.

If true, Dahei Mountain was a den of evil, and its depths were unfathomable.

Seeing the diners around, Zhang Lan thought for a moment, then whispered to Mo Hua:

"The one-eyed man heard them say something else..."

Zhang Lan's expression was grave, making Mo Hua's heart tighten.

"What did they say?"

Zhang Lan thought for a moment, then slowly said:

"Thick fog in Black Mountain, conceals the lair; Midnight at the third watch, ask the way with a name."