

## The Quest 273

Chapter 273: Black Mountain Fortress

Mo Hua was utterly stunned.

“Black Mountain Fortress!”

Deep within Dahei Mountain, there was unexpectedly a fortress!

The mountain gate of this fortress was ancient, likely existing for a century.

The gate was stained with blood, evidently from decapitations, where fresh blood splattered over the years, giving off a nauseating bloody scent.

It appeared both eerie and sinister.

“At midnight, present a token of allegiance.”

Mo Hua silently repeated.

Presenting a token of allegiance, that’s what it meant—killing someone, using a severed head as an offering, thus revealing the gate of Black Mountain Fortress.

The gate appearing meant the acceptance of the sinners within the fortress.

Sure enough, after a moment, accompanied by a creaky, unpleasant sound, the gate of Black Mountain Fortress slowly opened.

The chubby cultivator showed a crazed expression, adjusted his dao robe, and then stepped into Black Mountain Fortress.

Once he entered, the creaky sound resumed, and the gate slowly closed, then gradually vanished.

The chubby cultivator was nowhere to be seen.

Mo Hua's eyelids twitched.

So, this is how you enter Black Mountain Fortress...

Hidden so deeply, no wonder it hasn't been discovered for years.

Moreover, it seemed that those who could enter Black Mountain Fortress were indeed all bloodstained sinners.

At least this chubby one was not a good person.

He had six lives on his hands, and had ruthlessly and swiftly struck down a sworn brother, piercing his chest with a sword, catching him completely off guard.

His association with the thin cultivator was only to bring a living "token of allegiance." When the time came, he would decapitate him and use his head to gain entry into Black Mountain Fortress.

He probably never even considered the beheaded thin cultivator.

Cultivating is perilous, and people's hearts are unpredictable.

Mo Hua had witnessed this and took it to heart.

It's wise to be wary of unfamiliar cultivators, especially those who seem half-familiar; you never know their true intentions.

At the same time, Mo Hua also learned.

If he had to strike, he should do it like this chubby cultivator, catching the other completely off guard.

"What should I do next?" Mo Hua pondered.

Should he sneak in to take a look?

This Black Mountain Fortress was rather eerie; it wouldn't hurt to see what's inside to get a sense of it.

At least get a rough count of how many sinners were inside.

Quietly, without alerting anyone...

Mo Hua thought silently.

But how to sneak in?

Mo Hua was in a bit of a quandary.

The mountain gate of Black Mountain Fortress was probably also set with a concealment array, even more densely than the path between the cliffs.

Without careful spiritual sense scanning, it wouldn't be noticeable at all.

Now the gate was closed and concealed.

Unless someone else presented a "token of allegiance," it probably wouldn't open. Mo Hua couldn't just throw a head in to knock, right...

Besides, going in through the front, even if he could hide, there was no guarantee he wouldn't be discovered.

Once discovered, it would be dangerous.

"What to do?" Mo Hua mused.

Although the mountain gate of Black Mountain Fortress had vanished, its outline remained in Mo Hua's sea of consciousness.

Mo Hua spied on Black Mountain Fortress with his spiritual sense, thoughts racing, gradually coming up with an idea.

All paths of cultivation involve arrays, especially in the construction of cultivators' buildings.

Though Black Mountain Fortress was sinister and eerie, it didn't appear out of nowhere; it was built by cultivators, with all its concealment, defense, and warning functions achieved through arrays.

Moreover, there should be a high-level array master in the fortress. If so, the fortress was likely constructed relying heavily on arrays.

Since it relied on arrays, there was a way to solve it.

Mo Hua's expertise was in arrays.

He maintained his concealment and wandered around the mountain gate of Black Mountain Fortress, forming a rough guess.

This fortress was built against the mountain, with the mountain's slopes embracing it on both sides, and the gate built at the gap. There should also be high walls on both sides.

Mo Hua climbed up along the mountain slopes on both sides and indeed saw high mountain walls.

The mountain gate was shrouded by a concealment array, but the high walls on both sides were not.

Probably because concealment arrays are hard to learn and draw, they could only cover the gate, not the entire walls.

Mo Hua breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed that although the array master was skilled, he wasn't extraordinarily so.

Perhaps only slightly better than himself...

Besides the concealment array on the gate, the arrays on the high walls were primarily for defense and warning.

The defensive arrays included Earth Stone Array, Earth-Wood Array, and some Earth Solidification Arrays, mostly composite arrays with a few single arrays mixed in.

There were also some arrays on the walls that Mo Hua had not seen before, but their structure resembled the Sima Compass Composite Array, and they were also metal-based composite arrays.

So Mo Hua speculated these should be warning arrays.

Concealed in the front to avoid detection, defended and warned on both sides to prevent sneak attacks from cultivators.

Mo Hua nodded. This array design was quite reasonable.

To guard against ordinary cultivators, it should be sufficient. Even a common array master might not notice any flaws.

However, Mo Hua had personally designed and drawn all the arrays on the largest artifact crafting and alchemy shops in Tongxian City, being thoroughly familiar with first-grade building arrays.

The arrays on Black Mountain Fortress, though cleverly designed, were built on a ghostly mountain stronghold, limiting their scope and structure, making many of the arrays crudely constructed in comparison.

To Mo Hua, the flaws were numerous.

Moreover, the fortress arrays seemed to have been drawn by a single array master.

He had likely drawn them over a long period, with old and new arrays overlapping, some even conflicting, just barely linked together.

Typically, array masters draw arrays slowly.

Array masters like Mo Hua, who drew arrays daily, was well-versed in them, and could draw them quickly due to his keen spiritual sense from learning the Heavenly Proliferation Technique, were rare.

It was normal for one person to draw them like this.

But this made the flaws in the whole array system even more apparent.

Mo Hua was reassured that this array master wasn't superior to him in some aspects.

Mo Hua circled around a couple more times, then identified the general layout of these arrays. He then found a weak spot, sat cross-legged, and took out his pen and ink from his storage bag.

The best way to deal with arrays was to decipher them.

Breaking an array caused too much commotion, and with Mo Hua's current cultivation level, he couldn't break the fortress's arrays.

Moreover, deciphering arrays best showcased an array master's skills.

Mr. Zhuang had told him this, and Mo Hua remembered it clearly.

Mo Hua then began to decipher the arrays.

He first deciphered the warning arrays to prevent the cultivators inside from noticing, then used array pattern counteraction to neutralize the connected Earth Stone Arrays and Earth-Wood Arrays.

This small section of the array was independent and not part of the surrounding composite arrays, so its deactivation wouldn't be noticed.

After the arrays were deciphered, the array patterns flickered, then turned gray, losing their array effect.

The corners of the wall, serving as array mediums, also withered and crumbled as the array patterns lost effect, becoming loose.

Mo Hua scanned the surroundings with his spiritual sense, ensuring no one was around, then stealthily took out a small dagger and started chipping away at the wall.

Master Chen had crafted the Qianjun Stick for Mo Hua and, feeling unsatisfied, had specially made a small dagger for him to peel fruit.

This small dagger was perfect for chipping at the wall now.

Mo Hua chipped for a while, rested, extended his spiritual sense to confirm no one was nearby, then continued chipping.

After an unknown amount of time, he finally broke through the wall corner, creating a small opening.

Mo Hua, covered in dust, had only his eyes shining brightly.

“Success!”

He could sneak in and take a look!

Mo Hua, being young and small, found the opening just right and not easily noticeable.

He rested again until his strength and spiritual power recovered, then reactivated his concealment technique, activated the concealment array, made sure everything was prepared, and carefully crawled through the opening.

Under the dark night sky, in the eerie deep mountains.

The small Mo Hua sneaked into Black Mountain Fortress without anyone knowing.

After two or three hundred years, Black Mountain Fortress welcomed its first intruder who didn't enter through the main gate.