

The Quest 306

Chapter 306: Misty Forest

Commander Yang deployed three teams of Dao soldiers, all clad in sturdy armor and armed with sharp weapons, their cultivation profound.

Commander Yang sternly ordered them, "Ensure the safety of Mr. Mo Hua on this journey, or you will be dealt with by military law!"

"Yes!" the Dao soldiers responded in unison.

Afterwards, Commander Yang took the lead, guiding the three teams of Dao soldiers to escort Mo Hua towards the Misty Forest deep in the mountains, with Mo Hua and Zhang Lan walking behind.

On the way, Mo Hua secretly asked Zhang Lan, "Uncle Zhang, are you and Commander Yang very familiar with each other?"

"Sort of."

"You seem to get along well."

"Don't talk nonsense," Zhang Lan pouted. "How are we getting along well?"

"You just seem very close."

Zhang Lan glanced at Mo Hua and explained:

"Our Zhang family and the Yang family have always had marital ties. The elders are related and often visit each other. Yang and I are of similar age and have known each other since childhood, but we've never really gotten along."

"You two seem to bicker happily, not like people who don't get along..."

Mo Hua thought silently.

Zhang Lan gave Mo Hua a sideways glance, "Are you thinking bad things about me?"

Mo Hua shook his head, "No."

Zhang Lan snorted.

Mo Hua then asked, "Uncle Zhang, since you and Commander Yang are of similar age and have known each other since childhood, why is it that he's already in the Foundation Building stage, while you're only at the ninth level of Qi Refining? Is it because your talent isn't as good as his?"

"What do you know?" Zhang Lan lowered his voice, "I'm laying a solid foundation, seeking the greater Dao for the long term."

Mo Hua muttered softly, "I don't see it..."

Zhang Lan pinched Mo Hua's cheek in frustration, "Foundation Building is nothing. If I wanted, I could achieve it tomorrow."

Mo Hua clearly didn't believe it, "Foundation Building isn't as easy as picking cabbages, you know."

"It's difficult for independent cultivators, but for disciples of noble families, Foundation Building is just a matter of course. The hard part is honing the Dao foundation during the Qi Refining stage."

Mo Hua nodded, as Mr. Zhuang and Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi had said the same.

"But..." Mo Hua couldn't help but say, "You've been honing for too long..."

Honing until you're over thirty...

Zhang Lan sighed, "It's not up to me."

Mo Hua quietly approached Zhang Lan, concerned, "Uncle Zhang, if you have any worries, just tell me. I'll keep it a secret."

Zhang Lan glanced at Mo Hua, "You just want to hear a story..."

Mo Hua smiled sheepishly.

Zhang Lan shook his head helplessly, "It's nothing major. Once you reach Foundation Building, you have to marry someone you don't like for the sake of the family."

"Do you have someone you like?" Mo Hua asked.

Zhang Lan scratched his head, "You're still young. Don't ask about these things. Focus on your cultivation and studying arrays."

"I'm very focused on my cultivation," Mo Hua said. "It's just that the journey is boring, so I'm chatting with you to pass the time."

Zhang Lan's face darkened, somewhat amused and annoyed. So I'm just a way to pass the time...

The two muttered along the way.

At the edge of the Misty Forest, the group found a huge rock to hide behind.

Mo Hua poked his head out, observed the opposite side for a while, then released his spiritual sense, using Xu Bai's spiritual sense vision to sense the lingering spiritual power on the other side.

As soon as Mo Hua released his spiritual sense, Commander Yang was startled but then shook his head, murmuring to himself, "Impossible..."

After a while, Mo Hua retracted his spiritual sense and nodded:

"The positions of the mist arrays have indeed changed, and there are more of them."

Zhang Lan's eyes narrowed, "Have they detected something?"

Commander Yang's expression was firm, "If they haven't detected anything, we'll attack by surprise. If they have, we'll confront them head-on and eliminate them all! No matter what, our task remains the same."

Mo Hua nodded, thought for a moment, and then said:

"Commander Yang, you all stay here. I'll go in first. If I don't encounter any demonic cultivators, I'll draw a map of the Misty Forest. If I find any, I'll come back and call you, and we can secretly capture them and interrogate them thoroughly."

Commander Yang was taken aback, then immediately refused:

"That's too dangerous. I'll go with you."

Mo Hua shook his head, "If we go together, they'll be in the dark and we'll be in the light, easily alerting them. If I go alone, they'll be in the light and I'll be in the dark. They won't notice me."

Commander Yang didn't understand, "How will you be in the dark if you go alone?"

He stopped talking because Mo Hua disappeared right under his nose, silently, without leaving a trace.

Commander Yang looked at Zhang Lan in disbelief, "Is that Concealment Technique?"

Zhang Lan nodded.

Commander Yang frowned, thought for a moment, but still shook his head, "Concealment Technique has flaws and can be detected by spiritual sense..."

He suddenly stopped talking.

Because when he released his spiritual sense, Mo Hua's figure was completely absent from his spiritual sense vision.

Recalling his previous suspicion, Commander Yang's eyes widened, his voice trembling:

"Foundation Building spiritual sense?!"

Zhang Lan pretended to be calm and nodded, patting Commander Yang's shoulder, frowning:

"You get startled too easily. How can you be a good commander? Don't tell anyone you know me, it's embarrassing..."

"Get lost!" Commander Yang lowered his voice, "I've never seen a Qi Refining cultivator with Foundation Building spiritual sense before."

"Well, now you have."

Commander Yang's eyes were still filled with shock, muttering, "How did he do it..."

"Don't ask about that."

Zhang Lan suddenly remembered something and sternly warned, "Don't tell anyone about this. Mo Hua comes from a poor background and might provoke envy."

Commander Yang glanced at Zhang Lan, "Don't worry, I'm not as unreliable as you."

Then Commander Yang looked around and said to the nearby Dao soldiers:

"The conversation between me and Officer Zhang just now is confidential. You heard it, keep it to yourselves, not a word should leak."

Commander Yang's expression was stern. The Dao soldiers, all his trusted subordinates, looked serious and bowed in response:

"We will follow the commander's orders!"

Zhang Lan nodded, "I have to admit, you do look like a commander now..."

Commander Yang gave him a sidelong glance and ignored him.

Mo Hua, concealing his figure, silently entered the Misty Forest.

There were more mist arrays, and the mist was thicker, but it didn't affect Mo Hua much.

According to Mr. Zhuang, everything has an appearance and a true nature.

In this Misty Forest, the mist is the appearance, and the arrays are the true nature.

Mo Hua had already learned the First Grade Ten Pattern Reverse Spirit Array, so the First Grade Nine Pattern mist arrays seemed rather "simple" to him.

After a quick look, Mo Hua discerned the arrays in the Misty Forest.

Using the Passing Water Step, Mo Hua climbed to the treetop, took out paper and pen, and marked the positions of the mist arrays in the forest.

From the outer edge to the inner, Mo Hua meticulously sketched out the terrain of the deep mountains.

Following the positions of the mist arrays along the outer edge of the Misty Forest, Mo Hua reached the gate of Heishan Stronghold without encountering a single demonic cultivator.

Mo Hua frowned.

Among the demonic cultivators in Heishan Stronghold, only the third leader was a First Grade array master, and these mist arrays were all set up by him.

The third leader had refurbished the mist arrays. Had he discovered something?

But what exactly did he discover?

The breach in the wall of Heishan Stronghold?

The dismantled arrays?

Or Mo Hua's identity?

Unable to figure it out, Mo Hua decided to let it go for now. Once the Dao soldiers breached Heishan Stronghold and annihilated the demonic cultivators, everything would become clear.

There was no point in staying at Heishan Stronghold any longer. Drawing the map of the Misty Forest would achieve their goal.

Mo Hua stood up and prepared to leave.

Before leaving, he turned and looked at Heishan Stronghold again.

A long-standing question resurfaced in his mind:

How was such a large Heishan Stronghold built in the first place?