

The Quest 343

Chapter 343: Choices

Master Luo finished speaking and then stood up to leave.

“Mr. Mo Hua, I will take my leave for now. You can think about this matter carefully; there's no need to rush your decision.”

After speaking, he sighed again, “The path I offer is a good one, but it may not be the best. You have many choices; just follow the best one.”

Master Luo indeed had Mo Hua's best interests at heart.

In the following days, Mo Hua understood what Master Luo meant by "many choices."

Nearby sects and families, both large and small, sent invitations to Mo Hua.

Some invited him to become an array instructor; some directly promised to make him an elder; some forces, with passionate words, invited Mo Hua to “discuss great plans and create new achievements together.”

Some families even wanted Mo Hua to marry into their family, attaching pictures of young female cultivators in their prime, either pure or charming, with their invitations.

Mo Hua didn't say much, but Liu Ruhua was particularly angry.

She threw all those pictures into the stove and said to Mo Hua:

“Families with such indecent intentions, using beauty to tempt people, are not proper families. You mustn't go!”

“If you are looking for a Dao companion, find a decent and pure girl.”

Mo Hua said helplessly, “Mother, it's too early to think about this...”

“Prevent troubles before they happen!” Liu Ruhua said seriously.

“All right...”

A few days later, Zhang Lan came to see Mo Hua.

“I have a few things to discuss with you.”

Zhang Lan sat in his usual spot at the food stall, ordered a pot of wine and a few plates of meat, and spoke to Mo Hua while drinking.

“You're not trying to recruit me too, are you?” Mo Hua asked suspiciously.

Zhang Lan choked on his wine, then nodded, “To put it subtly, it's about building good relations. To be blunt, yes, it's about recruitment.”

“For the Zhang family?”

Zhang Lan sighed, “Not just them.”

He first took out a document, “This is a handwritten document from the Chief Supervisor. You can join a sect directly under the Dao Court.”

“Directly under the Dao Court?”

“It's a sect directly affiliated with the Dao Court, training talents for it. You need connections within the Dao Court to enter. A city's Chief Supervisor has a few recommendation spots, but they are rare...”

“So it's very precious.”

“Of course.” Zhang Lan nodded, “This is also a token of the Chief Supervisor's goodwill. If he encounters difficulties in the future, you mustn't stand by idly.”

“Don’t worry. I have a good relationship with the Chief Supervisor. I will definitely help him!” Mo Hua promised.

Zhang Lan nodded in satisfaction.

“After completing the training in the sect, can I enter the Dao Court Office?”

“Not necessarily.”

Mo Hua was slightly taken aback.

Zhang Lan explained, “It depends. Generally, as long as you practice diligently, have a decent character, and are not extreme in conduct, you can join the Dao Court Office after completing your training.”

“And it’s not restricted by your current status,” Zhang Lan looked at Mo Hua, “As an independent cultivator, it’s hard to enter the Dao Court Office. But through these directly affiliated sects, it’s much easier.”

“So many pathways...” Mo Hua couldn’t help but complain.

“Of course.” Zhang Lan took a sip of wine, his gaze slightly focused, “Those who set the rules leave some loopholes for their own benefit. Cultivators who don’t know the rules hit the barriers head-on, ending up battered and bruised.”

“The higher-level cultivators, familiar with the rules, easily bypass these barriers.”

“That’s why independent cultivators, despite their talents, often can’t compete with well-connected family cultivators.”

Mo Hua nodded.

He wouldn’t have known these things if Zhang Lan hadn’t told him.

“What about unusual situations?” Mo Hua asked again.

“There are two cases,” Zhang Lan replied, “One is having extremely poor aptitude, unable to learn anything despite the opportunity.”

“Such people enter the sects purely by connections. Unless they use more connections, they can’t get any position in the Dao Court Office.”

“The other is having outstanding aptitude, excelling in learning. Such cultivators might directly enter the Dao Court.”

Mo Hua was surprised, “The Dao Court, not the Dao Court Office?”

“Yes,” Zhang Lan nodded, “The central Dao Court, not the local Dao Court Office.”

Then Zhang Lan sighed, “But don’t think about that.”

“Is my spiritual root too poor?”

“Yes,” Zhang Lan regretted, “Your talent in array formations is exceptional...”

“So exceptional that I don’t know how to praise it...”

Zhang Lan thought silently and then continued:

“But your spiritual root and physical body are indeed... lacking...”

Zhang Lan spoke mildly, but seeing his expression, Mo Hua knew that “lacking” actually meant “seriously lacking.”

However, Mo Hua didn’t blame him. Knowing oneself is wisdom. He knew his spiritual root and physical body were indeed his weak points.

After saying this, Zhang Lan changed his tone:

“This is the Dao Court Office’s invitation. It’s up to you whether to go. Now, let me talk about the Zhang family...”

Zhang Lan didn’t hold back, directly stating the conditions: the status, prospects, and array inheritance the Zhang family could offer him.

“There’s also the matter of marriage. If you stay with the Zhang family, marriage is inevitable.”

“But for a normal marriage, your Dao companion would be from a collateral branch, and your children would follow your surname.”

“But if you are willing to marry into the family, you can marry a direct-line female disciple. You and your future children would change your surname, but in return, the family would treat you as one of their own. You would truly become part of the Zhang family...”

...

Zhang Lan explained everything about joining the family in detail to Mo Hua.

After finishing, Zhang Lan’s tone shifted again, “This is what I should say as a Zhang family disciple...”

“Now, I’ll speak to you personally.”

Zhang Lan looked at Mo Hua seriously:

“Do not marry into a family. Unless absolutely necessary, do not rely on families!”

“Marrying into a family means abandoning your surname, losing yourself, in exchange for your own success... unless you have no other choice, it’s best not to do this.”

“If you don’t marry into a family, with your skills, the cultivation world is vast, and you can go anywhere; if you do, you step into a deep, stagnant pool.”

“Better to be a roaming crane than a fish trapped in stagnant water.”

“Besides, in my eyes, no family in this world is worthy of you marrying into, not even the Zhang family!”

Mo Hua was stunned. He didn’t expect Zhang Lan to hold him in such high regard and was grateful for his kindness.

As Mo Hua was firming his resolve never to marry into a family, Zhang Lan suddenly changed his tone again:

“Of course, if you really want to marry into a family, then it should be my Zhang family...”

Mo Hua looked at him with a complicated expression.

Zhang Lan helplessly said, “Better to keep the benefits within the family...”

“Isn’t that inappropriate...” Mo Hua was speechless.

Zhang Lan waved his hand, “It’s a minor matter. As long as the meaning is clear, don’t mind the details.”

“If it doesn’t work, a second-best choice... would be the Yang family...”

Zhang Lan showed a hint of disdain.

Mo Hua asked, “Do the Zhang and Yang families not get along?”

“The Zhang and Yang families are on good terms; it’s just I don’t get along with Yang Jiyong.”

Zhang Lan said seriously, “The Yang family disciples are brave and battle-hardened, worthy of admiration...”

“Except for Yang Jiyong...”

“You excel in array formations. On the battlefield, you could achieve great things. With the Yang family’s backing, you would do well in the Dao Soldiers Office.”

“But following Dao soldiers in battle is harder and more dangerous.”

“You should think this through...”

After speaking, Zhang Lan also left it for Mo Hua to consider carefully. He quickly finished his wine and meat and left.

As a Dao Court Office official, he usually could be lazy, but now with Feng Xi appearing and cultivators relocating, he had a lot to do.

Zhang Lan bid farewell to Mo Hua.

But as he left, he glanced back at the food stall, feeling heavy-hearted.

He had become accustomed to eating and drinking here.

After the relocation, he too would leave.

As a family disciple, he couldn’t move with the independent cultivators of Tongxian City. He would likely return to his family or seek a more promising position.

After leaving, he might no longer experience this simple and bustling atmosphere.

These wines and meats, he might never taste again, and perhaps he would never again have a small cultivator like Mo Hua to chat and joke with...