

The Quest 76

Chapter 76: Zhang Lan

As long as Mo Hua doesn't ask anything, there's nothing to fear.

The man in green regained his composure and silently vowed never to show off unnecessarily again, especially not before carefully checking what book the seemingly cute and obedient young cultivator in front of him was holding.

"Uncle, are you an Array Master?" Mo Hua couldn't help but ask.

"No, why would I bother being an Array Master?" the man shook his head.

"Not an Array Master, yet you know so much, you're really amazing," Mo Hua sincerely praised.

"It's nothing really, these things are quite simple," the man in green said, somewhat sheepishly.

"Can I still ask you things in the future?" Mo Hua inquired.

"No!"

The man panicked, and his refusal slipped out hastily, but then feeling it was inappropriate, he elaborated with earnest, "Uncle is also very busy, I might not always be available. Besides, the cultivation path always emphasizes lineage, and it's not appropriate to pass on such knowledge lightly, especially since we're neither kin nor kindred..."

"Besides, I might not even know the answers..."

The man added silently in his heart.

Mo Hua was a bit disappointed, but he could still ask the Bai siblings and Mr. Zhuang, so he wasn't too bothered.

Mo Hua opened "Composite Array: A Beginner's Guide" and continued reading.

The man in green was afraid that Mo Hua might come across something he didn't understand and ask him about it, so he made small talk: "Where's your father?"

"He went up the mountain to hunt demons."

"Hunt demons? Are there many cultivators around here who live off hunting demons?"

"Yes, the land here isn't fertile and doesn't produce much, but it's rife with demonic beasts, so most cultivators make their living by hunting demons," Mo Hua explained, and then curiously asked, "Uncle, what do you do?"

"I work at the Dao Court office," the man replied.

Mo Hua's mouth dropped open, the Dao Court...

The Dao Court unifies all of Qianzhou and is the largest power in the cultivation world, akin to an imperial dynasty in feudal times, possessing the greatest authority. The Dao Court, located at the central Daozhou, acts as the cultivation world's hub, while its subsidiary offices in other states handle affairs including spirit stone taxation, public works, cultivation industries, and law and order.

In other words, it's a "steel rice bowl," "eating the royal grain!"

The status of a Dao Court cultivator goes without saying; even serving in a local office is a dream job for many cultivators.

Mo Hua's amazed expression was quite satisfying for the man, feeling it somewhat restored his dignity.

"So, you're here drinking because you're slacking off?" Mo Hua asked curiously.

The man in green corrected him, "This is called inspecting the local geography and customs of the cultivators."

"Oh," Mo Hua responded noncommittally, clearly skeptical. "Aren't you afraid of being reprimanded by the head of the Dao Court office?"

The man chuckled, "No worries, even if he did say something, I'd pretend I didn't hear."

Mo Hua nodded, "I see."

"What do you see?" the man asked curiously.

Mo Hua thought for a moment and said, "If I'm not mistaken, you're a clan disciple."

The man raised an eyebrow, and Mo Hua continued, "Your family must be quite significant. Coming to Tongxian City like this, either you were sent out due to some mistake, or you're here for tempering and will return after a while."

The man was stunned, "You can tell?"

Mo Hua shrugged, pointing to the nearby diners, "There are people from all over here, and when they gather for meals, all kinds of gossip are discussed. The matters of clan descendants who make it here boil down to just a few things."

The man looked at Mo Hua, "Seeing how obedient you look, I didn't expect you to be so sharp."

Mo Hua chuckled, then asked quietly, "So, what did you do wrong to be sent away by your clan?"

"Nonsense!"

The man was slightly annoyed.

"Then why?" Mo Hua asked.

The man sighed, somewhat romantically stating, "I won't hide it from you; I come from a good family, have higher talent, and also look somewhat handsome. Some women from prestigious

families fell for me at first sight and insisted on marrying me as their Dao companion. I found it annoying, so I came out to hide and seek some peace..."

Mo Hua looked at him skeptically.

"You don't believe me?"

"No," Mo Hua nodded.

"Which part don't you believe?"

"The part about 'falling for me at first sight and secretly giving their

heart'—even street storytellers don't make up such clichés anymore; they can't fool anyone. Erhu's father was deceived by a woman like that, ended up abandoning his wife and child, and got his kidneys cut out, and no one knows where he was buried."

The man in green: "..."

"So if a woman tells you she fell for you at first sight, she's definitely tricking you. You should be careful."

The man in green was dumbstruck.

"But there's another possibility," Mo Hua said.

"What possibility?" the man couldn't help but ask.

"That you started a mess and played with people's feelings, then ran away because you didn't want to take responsibility and marry them..."

The man almost choked, "What do you mean by 'started a mess'? What playing with feelings? How old are you, and what are you thinking?"

"I may have experienced little, but I've heard a lot of stories," Mo Hua stated firmly, "The cultivation world is perilous. Knowing more can prevent being deceived later."

The man was both amused and irritated, "You little kid, you really are something when you talk."

Mo Hua said seriously, "Uncle, I'm saying this for your good. There's a saying that goes, 'Heed advice and you'll eat well.'"

Zhang Lan felt a mix of emotions, unsure of what to say for a moment. Then, suddenly remembering something, he asked, "By the way, what's your name?"

"Mo Hua."

"Mo Hua?" The man looked at Mo Hua's fair little face and delicate features, finding the name quite fitting.

"Uncle, what's your name?" Mo Hua also asked.

"Zhang Lan."

"Scum man?" Mo Hua repeated.

Zhang Lan choked on his drink and coughed for a long time before gritting his teeth to correct him:

"Zhang! Lan! The Zhang from 'changing the strings,' the Lan from 'stemming the overwhelming tide'! Not scum man!"

"It's okay if you're not, why are you yelling?" Mo Hua muttered.

Zhang Lan realized he was indeed foolish to get worked up over a child's words. He took out a jade pendant from his storage bag and tossed it to Mo Hua, "This is for you."

Mo Hua shook his head, "I don't accept rewards without merit."

"You treated me to a drink, I give you a jade pendant. Keep it, and I'll come to play again next time."

Zhang Lan waved his hand and was about to leave when he suddenly turned back to ask, "Just to confirm, what's your cultivation level?"

"Qi Cultivation Level Four!"

Mo Hua was somewhat proud.

Only Qi Cultivation Level Four...

Zhang Lan sighed.

Thinking back to the earlier discussion about composite arrays, he decided it wasn't worth the headache and waved goodbye, fleeing as if escaping.