

## 296 The Expedition [1]

'So they just created the expedition team and sent them on their own. The overseer that has been watching us since the examination didn't even show up today, the day of the expedition. How lame is this?' Lucas complained as the expedition team started their journey in the direction where the Great Ming Mountain was. 1

Every member of the expedition team had the same facial expression: serious and silent. They were resolute in their purpose to reach the peak of the mountain, and the estimated time to reach it was a week. So, the expedition team was rushed to be formed as the 11 Elders were already impatient.

And because of this realization that hit Lucas as well, he had a thought about why they needed to recruit people when they could just use their trusted and loyal soldiers as the combat squads.

'They are strange. If they use the soldiers, coordination won't be a problem anymore. They can move more efficiently and they don't need to worry about their familiarity with each other. Furthermore, they are already trusted, so the overseer could just put the expedition on their hands.'

It was suspicious. But even so, his suspicion's

pretext was that the expedition team's lives were in danger, and he couldn't care less since he didn't care about them in the first place. After all, he joined the expedition team to use as his foothold to get familiar with the system of their government and had a smooth connection with a person within the government. Nevertheless, he was still assessing the views of the 11 Elders to the people so that he could use them at the time of negotiation.

Lucas watched a monster appear before the expedition team. Without even a minute passing, they were able to erase the monster's life.

"These people are into the 11 Elders. But, the people who protested against the expedition... I wonder why they did that. They were saying that this expedition would cause more deaths, but won't it contradict their words? They said that the red sky is not harmful."

"Are you okay, leader? You seemed too serious and preoccupied." David asked, walking by Lucas's side as he had been personally looking up to him since the day he was devastated and defeated.

Lucas shook his head, feeling fed up with his thoughts. It had been going on for a while.

"Nothing, just ignore it." Lucas sighed, then went back to explore his eyes in the new environment



they were about to enter.

Earlier, they had been walking endlessly in a casual, dense forest. Trees were everywhere, and the scent of greenery just touched their nostrils. It had been the same as before, but this time the environment had changed. The scent that the forest had was unpleasing; rather, it was unhealthy for the nose.

He furrowed his brows and inspected the scene from his vantage point. The trees in this area were slightly more green, as were the stems of the trees. The roots of these gigantic trees were red as if they were blood.

'It gives the scent of blood. Are the insides of the root were blood?'

He sniffed, then tapped his toes to the roots and answered his curiosity.

'It was indeed blood. The scent of rusty iron and rotting flesh were fighting, hurting the depths of my nose.'

It turned out that it wasn't only Lucas who noticed that change in the environment; the other members of the expedition team were curious as well. And because it was their first time here, the team leader explained everything about the area they entered.

"This is the green and blood forest. Everything

about the roots was blood, so don't try to slit or wound the roots; it gives an unpleasing smell if left for about a few seconds. Furthermore, the smell you can smell right now will stay in your clothes. So after we pass this, wash your clothes in the river ahead."

Everyone nodded to them, but Lucas didn't care about it. He could simply erase the scent of the nasty smell on his clothes later and, for now, cover his nose with mystical art. It was just piercing his nose the more he smelled it.

After an hour, the expedition team was finally freed from the suffering inside the nasty area of the forest. Each of them ran to the nearest river and splashed water on their faces. They also washed their clothes as the team leader said.

They indeed detested that experience as they exploded in each of the rubs on their clothes. The scent was just as strong, even after going out of that area.

"Leader, how are you able to survive that smell? Are you not going to wash your clothes too?" David asked Lucas, who was nonchalantly walking on the track where they were about to rest.

"Hmm...? I don't know. I might be immune to those kinds of smells. Maybe. And I didn't need to wash my clothes, they were still okay."

"If that suits you."

David could only walk away from Lucas while being preoccupied. Lucas was still strange to him. Although he changed the way he saw him, he was still trapped by the thought of him being an alien. He was unknown to them; he came out of nowhere, so it was reasonable for him to be skeptical of his origin.

'Am I overthinking? He still did nothing at this point. He was also good at being a squad leader. Maybe I just judged him too early! David thought as he joined his squad washing their clothes.

Meanwhile, Lucas sets up the tent for their squad. He was wide enough to fit ten people, and after it, he entered and rested.

Lucas wasn't tired physically. His face was still showing seriousness and energy, but his mental state was already feeling tired as he had been thinking endlessly since earlier. He had made some speculations about the 11 Elders and the expedition team's purpose, and he thought that he might be right.

'There could be a reason why the expedition team was created. It should be to test what would happen if they studied the peak of Great Ming Mountain. They might be testing what could happen, and this might be the reason why there were protests against the expedition.'



It was plausible, but with nothing to compare with, his speculation would be useless. He couldn't even think if it was possible since he didn't know about the 11 Elders' way.

Furthermore, a hundred years ago, on the day it was discovered, it was said that the peak was harmless.

However, inside Lucas's wild mind, another question appeared.

'Now, I am curious about what they were doing at the peak of the mountain for them to discover the pavilion.'

In those three days of preparation before the expedition, Lucas had been studying simple things he should know, and one of them appeared to be about the Great Ming Mountain.

'It is impossible that they were just curious. Great Ming Mountain's environment is harsh. The density of Qi and scattered life essence were chaotic to one's cultivation. So, it is impossible that they were here for cultivation matters.'

'Or maybe... they felt that a treasure was born at the peak of the mountain. But what stopped them from getting it and leaving a record that they didn't touch the pavilion or the cave? So, the speculation about the birth of a treasure was impossible?'

It was making Lucas crazy, but at some point, he was still able to manage it.

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"What do you think about the squad leader?" A sudden question came from David to his co-members, leading them to confusion because of it.

"What do you mean? Are you still not over it, David? Leader had already proven himself, and it is just that he is better than you," one answered.

Although it was a harsh remark, David simply overlooked it and went back to the topic.

"Why so serious? I am only asking if you have something in mind that you are curious about the squad leader. Nothing against him, simple curiosity." David cleared.

This made others silent. They thought of it, and they had some questions in their mind that they didn't bother to ask Lucas because of fear and respect. It wasn't really against Lucas, but wouldn't it be a blunt disrespect if they went into his personal matters?

"I am curious about his origin. Where did he come from?"

David smiled. "I knew I wasn't the only one who was curious. Now, tell me, are there any other



things you are curious about?"

"His killing intent. How could he accumulate such a level of killing intent at his young age? He showed that he was only a Master Stage cultivator, so, if he had killed plenty to have that killing intent, does that mean he almost massacred mortals or those who were weaker than him?"

David paused. It was a good idea, but he had nothing to use it for.

"Then, it settles that our leader is a mysterious and strong person. Whether who he is, let us just follow his orders until the expedition ends." David said, clearing up the suspicion that others had.

'I thought that he was still against him being the squad leader. But it turns out that he was thinking of being obedient until the end.' A co-member thought.

