

The Quest 373

Chapter 373: Azure Cloud Sect

Several days later, Mo Hua followed the Taoist Court's carriage to Azure Cloud Sect in Azure Mountain City.

Since he was only there to participate in the examination, the entourage was not large; only a few Enforcement Leaders from the Taoist Court and his father, Mo Shan, accompanied him.

The carriage was exclusive to the Taoist Court, and the horses that pulled it were nurtured by cultivators, having ordinary bloodlines and not considered valuable.

The carriage bore the Taoist Court's flag; traveling on main roads, it generally did not invite trouble.

This was Mo Hua's first long journey.

He sat inside the carriage, lifted the curtain, and stuck out his little head to watch the scenery along the way.

Whenever he encountered anything novel or unfamiliar, such as strange and peculiar cultivators, he would turn his head to ask his father, Mo Shan:

"Dad, what mountain is this?"

"Why are there no fish in this river?"

"Why is that cultivator carrying a big sword?"

"And what are those red things being sold by the roadside?"

...

Mo Hua kept asking questions throughout the journey, and Mo Shan patiently explained:

"This is Qingping Mountain, the river is poisonous so there are no fish, the cultivator carrying the sword works as a mercenary, and those sold by the roadside are the unsatisfying 'mountain delicacies'..."

Mo Hua asked all the way, and Mo Shan answered all the way.

The journey was bumpy, but also smooth sailing, and after three days, they reached Azure Cloud City.

Azure Cloud City was larger than Tongxian City and the streets were more spacious, but it was not as bustling; although some of the goods sold on the street stalls were novel, most were similar to those in Tongxian City.

After turning a few streets, they could glimpse in the misty clouds on Qingping Mountain, a majestic sect.

Azure Cloud Sect.

This was the largest sect in the Black Mountain State Boundary, a Second-Grade prefecture.

The sect was Second Grade, with more than ten Foundation Building Cultivators, and it was said that the Supreme Elder was even in the late stage of Foundation Establishment. **It** S

However, all this had nothing to do with Mo Hua; he was only there to take an exam.

The Taoist Court's Formation Master Grading took place every few years at irregular intervals, on specific dates decided by the Heaven Shu Pavilion of the Taoist Court.

The Heaven Shu Pavilion would select the examination venue, and Formation Masters who were eligible for grading would gather from each state to participate in the examination.

Generally, the venue would be at a sect or a prominent clan.

This year, the chosen site was Azure Cloud Sect.

Upon entering Azure Cloud Sect and dismounting the carriage, disciples of the sect approached to inquire about their purpose.

A young Enforcement Leader from Tongxian City said, "We are here to participate in the Formation Master Grading."

The disciple's attitude became more respectful as he said, "Please," and led Mo Hua and others to an elegantly decorated hall on the left-hand side.

Inside the hall were many cultivators sitting on rosewood chairs, drinking tea while waiting.

"Before grading, you must present a letter of recommendation, which will be registered by our sect's Elder. Once the Taoist Court's examiners confirm there are no errors, you may join the Formation examination at the main peak of Azure Cloud Peak, Wenxian Palace, the day after tomorrow."

The disciple reminded them and, after saying this and bowing, took his leave.

Mo Hua and the others sat down to drink a cup of tea while waiting.

Meanwhile, Formation Masters registered in turn.

Having nothing better to do, Mo Hua was curious about what would be asked during registration, but despite straining his ears, he couldn't hear anything.

Only when he expanded his Divine Sense did he realize that a Sound Isolation Formation was placed around the area.

The formation was simple and posed no challenge for Mo Hua, but out of respect, he withdrew his Divine Sense and sat down properly, waiting quietly.

After a while, about half the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, it was his turn.

Accompanied by Mo Shan, Mo Hua handed over the letter of recommendation to the registering Elder.

The Elder was of middle age, with a cultivation level of Qi Refining Ninth Level, seemingly not very senior, which suggested he had been recently promoted, hence he was assigned to do the registration work.

He looked at Mo Hua with a hint of suspicion, took his letter of recommendation, and his eyebrows knit together instantly. After a moment of thought, he tentatively asked:

"Which one of you is Mo Hua?"

Mo Hua said, "Me."

The Elder asked again, "Then which one of you is taking the exam?"

Mo Hua replied again, "Me!"

The Elder glanced at Mo Hua, then at the letter of recommendation, back to Mo Hua, and once more at the letter of recommendation... After a long while, he asked:

"How old are you?"

Mo Hua declared, "I'm thirteen!"

The Elder's expression became incredibly complex for a moment.

He then looked toward Mo Shan and asked, "Are you this child's father?"

Mo Shan nodded.

"Do you know what he's here to do?"

Mo Shan slightly frowned and said calmly:

"It should be clearly written on the letter."

The Azure Cloud Sect's Elder glanced at the letter of recommendation, which indeed spelled out clearly:

"There is a cultivator from Tongxian City, surnamed Mo and named Hua, aged thirteen, with profound knowledge in formations and already qualified for assessment. He is hereby recommended.

Tongxian City Court Leader: Zhou Tiancheng."

There was the official seal of the Taoist Court, as well as the private seal of Court Leader Zhou Tiancheng.

The letter was real, but the more one looked at it, the faker it seemed.

Who, at the age of thirteen, would participate in a grading assessment?

"Could it be a deception..."

The middle-aged Elder felt uneasy and unleashed his Divine Sense, attempting to probe into Mo Hua.

He was very subtle, sending out his Divine Sense and retracting it immediately, but as soon as it reached Mo Hua, it was instantly annihilated, leaving no trace behind, and he gleaned no information.

Unfathomable?

This Elder was shocked and as he raised his head, he saw Mo Hua silently looking at him, with a hint of displeasure on his face.

"I've been discovered!"

A chill ran through the Elder's heart, and he quickly stood up, cupping his hands and saying:

"It was presumptuous of me. Please, no offense; I will register you now."

Mo Hua was not the type to be unreasonable, so he nodded and said:

"I appreciate it, Elder."

The Elder sat back down, relieved.

"That was a close call..."

Unable to be probed by Divine Sense, he must be wearing a Spiritual Artifact that hinders it.

Such artifacts are extremely valuable, usually only worn by those from noble clans with a background or by sect disciples.

If that is the case, then this child's background should not be underestimated.

If not, then it's even more frightening.

The stronger the Divine Sense, the more deceptive it becomes.

One's own Divine Sense cannot probe.

This means that the child's Divine Sense is extremely powerful, perhaps much stronger than one's own, thus completely blocking one's probing.

Even a mere glance of surveillance could be detected by him.

With such a powerful Divine Sense, he indeed has the capital to study formations, and likely, the ability to participate in the grading and become a First-Grade Formation Master.

Moreover, he is only thirteen years old.

A thirteen-year-old First-Grade Formation Master...

That would be truly terrifying...

The Elder pondered deeply, growing more and more anxious.

On the surface, he composed himself and diligently registered Mo Hua's name, stroke by stroke. Then he bowed and apologized once more:

"I was offensive just now, please forgive my impudence."

He then introduced himself:

"My surname is Li. I am an Outer Gate Elder of the Azure Cloud Sect, in charge of receiving duties for this Formation Master Grading. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me."

Elder Li handed over a jade plaque, a map, and a jade token.

"This jade plaque is your credential. You must have it to participate in the grading assessment the day after tomorrow."

"This map is a simplified layout of the Outer Mountain, marking the buildings of the Outer Mountain, where you can and cannot go, and it is all marked on it."

"Our Azure Cloud Sect is the largest sect within the Black Mountain State Boundary. When free, you may browse around according to the map and enjoy the views of the Azure Cloud Sect's Outer Mountain."

"This is my identity token. All elders of the Azure Cloud Sect have one. If you encounter any trouble, showing this token can save you a lot of effort..."

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Elder Li's attitude was neither humble nor arrogant, yet his words were quite warm.

Mo Hua was pleasantly surprised and said with a smile:

"Thank you, Elder Li!"

Seeing Mo Hua's genuine smile, not bearing a grudge, Elder Li finally breathed a sigh of relief and personally escorted Mo Hua and Mo Shan out.

The other Formation Masters waiting to register looked at each other in confusion.

They had been waiting for a long time, observing for a long time.

Elder Li carried out his duties in strict accordance with the rules, dealt with matters formally, and was not someone overly warm or given to superfluous words.

Why was he so warm towards this father and son duo?

A sense of bewilderment grew in their hearts.

The registration area was equipped with a simple Sound Isolation Formation, so they couldn't hear clearly what Mo Hua and others had said, and naturally did not know what had transpired...

At the same time, what made them more curious was Mo Shan.

They didn't know his exact name or background, but saw that he had starry eyes and a noble presence, with surging Blood Qi around him. His clothing was not expensive, but he indeed carried an extraordinary air.

However, although he had an extraordinary demeanor, he didn't seem like a Formation Master.

He looked more like a Body Cultivator skilled in using swords rather than a Formation Master skilled in Drawing Formations.

Furthermore, his participation in the Formation Master assessment along with his son—what was that all about?