

THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

Chapter 12: Compensation

After wandering for a while, Meng Xiao Hu suddenly asked, "Where are we heading next?"

Mo Hua patted the storage bag on his side, "Let's head to North Street first!"

As they arrived at the entrance of Destiny's Shop on North Street, Mo Hua stepped onto the storefront's steps but turned back to see his three companions standing still. He couldn't help but ask, "Aren't you coming in?"

All three friends shook their heads in unison:

"I get dizzy just looking at array formations..."

"Me too..."

"I've given up on array formations in this lifetime; I'm not going in either..."

Mo Hua had no choice but to say, "Then wait here for me, I'll be out soon."

His three friends nodded together.

Entering the shop, the door chime rang as the steward looked up to see Mo Hua standing tall with his storage bag, and couldn't help but chuckle, "It's you again, huh? Did your brother finish all the array patterns?"

Mo Hua nodded, "Yes."

The steward perked up, "Oh? That was quick, only five days," he beckoned to Mo Hua, "Let me see."

Mo Hua reached into his storage bag and tiptoed to place the array patterns on the counter.

The steward picked up the patterns and frowned slightly after inspecting them.

Mo Hua felt uneasy, "Did I draw them incorrectly?"

The steward pondered for a moment, "They're correct, but these don't seem like they were done by an expert. Some are passable, but these..." He flipped through a few, revealing the ones Mo Hua had initially drawn.

"These are quite off; the strokes are crude and discontinuous, as if pieced together bit by bit. Are you sure your brother is learning from an array master? This level is quite lacking..."

Mo Hua felt a bit embarrassed; it was his first attempt, and he had tried his best.

"Can these be used, though?"

The steward tapped the desk, examining the array again:

"While the strokes are poor, the array itself isn't flawed, it's still usable... just that the strokes are poor."

Mo Hua breathed a sigh of relief, "That's good to hear." He added, "Maybe my brother was unfamiliar with this array initially, hence the rough start, but you see, the later ones are much better, right?" **RÃ□óbĘŚ**

After inspecting the later patterns, the steward slowly nodded, "Indeed, the latter ones are somewhat better, at least standard."

"Right," Mo Hua reassured, "You can be sure he'll get better over time!"

The steward was amused by Mo Hua's confidence, "Alright, for your sake, we'll consider this order complete. But next time, make sure the quality at least matches these later ones; no using practice arrays to fill the quota."

Mo Hua nodded vigorously.

The steward packed away the array patterns and counted out several spirit stones.

"Eight successful, two failed; two spirit stones will be deducted from the deposit, leaving a reward of six spirit stones."

"If your brother continues to draw, the deposit remains ten spirit stones. He already has the Blazing Fire Array pattern, just add ten more paper and ink materials."

The steward handed Mo Hua a storage bag filled with paper and ink.

Mo Hua collected the materials and picked up the six spirit stones, unable to suppress his excitement.

Earning six spirit stones in five days was comparable to the income of a mid-to-late Qi-cultivation stage cultivator.

Mo Hua's mother, Liu Ruhua, helped in the kitchen at Spirit Meal Tower, earning only one spirit stone a day. His father, Mo Shan, earned more from hunting demonic beasts, but that income was less stable, sometimes higher if valuable beasts were hunted, and otherwise lower.

Mo Hua thanked the steward and exited Destiny's Shop, his three friends eagerly watching him.

Mo Hua patted his storage bag and with a wave of his hand declared, "Come on, let's have some snacks!"

Meng Da Hu and the others cheered joyfully and crowded around Mo Hua as they headed to a street-side pastry shop called Wang's Pastries.

In Tongxian City, many establishments made pastries, and while Wang's Pastries didn't use exquisite materials, they were affordable.

During festive seasons, common cultivators often bought these to treat their children.

Wang's Pastries was famous for its Five-Colored Cakes, made by steaming five different colored spirit grains together, creating a sweet and soft treat that only cost two fragments of a spirit stone.

As lower-tier cultivators had minimal income, many earned less than one spirit stone a day, resorting to using fragmented spirit stones. A whole spirit stone was divided into ten parts, with ten fragments equaling one whole stone.

Fragmented spirit stones were not recognized by the Dao Court or the major sects and families, circulating only among the lower-tier Qi-cultivation cultivators.

Mo Hua spent two spirit stones for ten Five-Colored Cakes, and given he was a child buying in bulk, the shopkeeper even gifted two extra cakes.

Mo Hua distributed two cakes each, keeping four to take home for his parents.

With one cake in each hand, sweet and steaming, they walked and ate. Meng Xiao Hu's mouth was too hot to close, but he couldn't stop talking,

"This pastry is really good, I'll eat this every day once I earn my own spirit stones!"

Meng Shuang Hu commented, "Then you might as well marry someone who can make pastries, so you can have them every day."

Meng Xiao Hu had an epiphany, "Right, right, how did I not think of that!" then became conflicted, "But I already have someone I like, it's not right to be fickle..."

Meng Shuang Hu widened his eyes, "Who do you like?"

Meng Xiao Hu said, "The girl who sells tofu on the west street, I said I liked her first, you can't compete with me for her!"

Meng Shuang Hu scoffed, waving his hand, "Don't worry, her temper is terrible, I won't compete with you..."

While Meng Shuang Hu and Meng Xiao Hu chatted, Meng Da Hu focused on eating his cakes, quickly finishing both and even licking his fingers.

Mo Hua gave him the last cake he had saved.

Meng Da Hu smiled sheepishly but couldn't resist starting on the cake.

Meng Shuang Hu suddenly asked, "Mo Hua, did you really help with the array patterns at that shop?"

Mo Hua nodded.

Meng Xiao Hu's mouth fell open, "You can actually draw array patterns for others now?"

Meng Shuang Hu gave him a look, "Where else do you think the spirit stones for the pastries came from?"

Meng Xiao Hu grasped his pastry in shock, "These pastries were bought with the spirit stones you earned from drawing arrays? That's incredible, Mo Hua, you might actually become a first-rate array master one day!"

Mo Hua said, "It's too early to talk about that. Becoming an array master isn't so simple. Let's keep this to ourselves, okay? I'll earn more spirit stones and treat you to more pastries later."

Hearing the word 'pastries,' the three friends eagerly nodded, with Meng Xiao Hu promising, "If I spill the beans, I'll never have pastries for the rest of my life!"

Mo Hua and his friends continued to roam the streets, exploring various curious and novel items, and as dusk fell, they each returned to their homes.

Mo Hua gave the pastries to Liu Ruhua, who steamed them before placing them in Mo Hua's bowl. After some insistence, Mo Hua ended up eating two, while Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua each had one.

The steamed pastries were hot and aromatic, tasting even better than at noon. Mo Hua couldn't help but ask, "Mom, can you steam pastries?"

Liu Ruhua smiled, "There's nothing too hard about it; I can make even more complicated dishes. It's just that many meals require an array craftsman to specially forge a stove and integrate specific arrays. We just don't have the means at home."

"Are stoves expensive?"

"A stove needs to be forged by a craftsman, so naturally, they aren't cheap. But what's even more expensive are the arrays. Getting an array master to draw arrays isn't easy, especially for something big like a stove, so unless you're opening a restaurant, nobody spends a lot on a stove..."

Mo Hua nodded, realizing that arrays were more widely used in the cultivation world than he had initially thought. He wondered which array was used in stoves.

Mo Hua made a mental note to learn about it when he had some free time.