

THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

Chapter 14: Ji Qingbai

Mo Shan did not know why Ji Qingbai suddenly asked this question, but he nodded and said, "Elder Brother Ji is right, Mo Hua is cultivating at Tongxian Sect, and he is currently at the second level of Qi-cultivation."

Ji Qingbai found it hard to believe, "The second level of Qi-cultivation, and he can already draw array formations?"

Mo Shan explained, "It shouldn't be the case; he's only learned the basics at the sect, merely imitating what he's seen."

"Elder Brother Mo is being modest. Even that is quite impressive. The few strokes he made were well-formed, showing that Mo Hua has talent," Ji Qingbai commented.

Mo Shan smiled, "If that is true, then I'll take your auspicious words."

Ji Qingbai sighed, "Among the descendants of us demon hunters, let alone an Array master, there are few who can roughly understand array formations and draw some Array patterns. Earlier this year, I went to request an Array master to help draw some array formations, and I ended up swallowing a lot of humiliation, even had to smile apologetically to avoid offending him."

Ji Qingbai grew angrier as he thought about it, "It's just a small array formation. Not only did he demand two hundred spirit stones, but he also wanted my niece to dine with him and toast him. If it were in Dahei Mountain, I really would have chopped him down!"

Mo Shan's expression darkened, "To be so unreasonable?"

"What else could I do?" Ji Qingbai sighed, "We don't understand array formations, and the younger generations won't learn them. Whenever there's an issue, we can only humbly seek help from those family Array masters. They act all high and mighty, and we have to appease them."

"Elder Brother Mo," Ji Qingbai looked at Mo Shan earnestly, "If Mo Hua really wishes to learn array formations, you must let him continue, whatever the difficulties, come to me. I will help without hesitation!"

"Elder Brother Ji, you're too kind! If Mo Hua really wants to learn, I will definitely let him," Mo Shan said seriously.

Ji Qingbai nodded.

The two talked a little longer about demon hunting before Ji Qingbai took his leave.

Mo Shan escorted Ji Qingbai and his son to the door.

After Ji Qingbai left, he took his son to the west side of Nanda Street to stay at an elder's house.

On the way, Ji Qingbai instructed his son, Ji Li, "The demon hunting business in our Qingxuan City is getting tougher, so this time I came to ask your Uncle Mo to visit the inner mountains of Dahei Mountain together. You have a good talent, already at the seventh level of Qi-cultivation, so you should come to gain some experience. But demon hunting is our job; you should not intervene lightly."

"Father, I understand," Ji Li responded.

"I know you understand, but you are still young and might not fully grasp how fierce and cunning beasts are. You are the least experienced among us, and if you act, any weakness will cost you dearly," Ji Qingbai explained. RANÓBES

Ji Li nodded, then curiously asked, "Father, is Uncle Mo's cultivation impressive?"

"Of course, your Uncle Mo is the most talented demon hunter I've ever met in all these years. He has great natural ability and quick reactions, with rich hunting experience. It's just a pity that, like us independent cultivators who start families and have children, all the spirit stones we gather go towards the children's cultivation, leaving less for our own," Ji Qingbai sighed.

"If that wasn't the case, with his abilities, he could have continued to cultivate and possibly reached the Foundation-building stage," Ji Qingbai continued.

Ji Li fell silent for a moment, his father's cultivation could have progressed further, but the spirit stones earned were also spent on his own cultivation.

Speaking of Foundation-building cultivators, Ji Li asked in a low voice, "How is Elder Zheng's health..."

"He's not doing well," Ji Qingbai looked dejected, "Uncle Zheng is the only Foundation-building elder in our Qingxuan City's demon hunting guild. If he passes away, we Qi-cultivation independent cultivators will probably be bullied by those few families. It's going to get tougher..."

"Are there any Foundation-building elders in Tongxian City?"

"There is one, with the surname Yu. He has a bad temper but is also very protective. The entire demon hunting operation in Tongxian City relies on him, and even the powerful families don't dare to go too far. If things really get tough, you could move to Tongxian City, find a Dao companion, and settle down there. I would be more at ease," Ji Qingbai advised.

Ji Li, still young

, blushed, "Father, it's too early to talk about that."

Ji Qingbai laughed, "It's not too early. These things need to be planned early."

Ji Li then tried to change the subject, asking, "Father, that younger brother at Uncle Mo's house, Mo Hua, can he really become an Array master?"

"I don't know," Ji Qingbai frowned, "It's not easy to become an Array master. Starting from an apprentice to a non-ranked Array master, and only then can one become a ranked Array master."

"First of all, it's not easy to be an apprentice. We independent cultivators don't have a heritage. To learn array formations, you need to find a dedicated Array master as a teacher," Ji Qingbai explained.

"Aren't there also teachings on array formations at the sect?" Ji Li asked.

"That's far from enough," Ji Qingbai replied, "What the sect teaches is just the basics, meant to make you aware of array formations, not to train you as an Array master."

Ji Li was astonished, having found learning array formations at the sect challenging, and to think that was just the basics.

"Finding an Array master as a teacher is not easy. Which Array master isn't arrogant, with standards higher than the sky? Asking them to take apprentices is so hard that even spending all your wealth wouldn't be enough," Ji Qingbai grew agitated, "Array formations are so difficult without a heritage or a teacher. How can one possibly learn?"

Ji Qingbai shook his head in frustration.

"So, after becoming an apprentice, can one then become an Array master?" Ji Li asked.

"Being an apprentice is just the beginning. You have to endure many years, constantly learning and practicing, to gradually improve your skills before you can become an Array master, and that's just for the non-ranked ones. Then you endure more, learn more, gain some renown, and only then are you

eligible for ranking. The ranking is personally determined by the Dao Court, and that's another huge hurdle... Some Array masters spend their whole lives trying to get ranked," Ji Qingbai explained.

Ji Li was overwhelmed by the complexity, unable to help but say, "Can Brother Mo really become an Array master?"

"Let's hope," Ji Qingbai sighed, "Even if it's just a foolish dream, it's still something to look forward to."

Mo Hua continued to draw the Blazing Fire Array, and a few days later, he completed the entire array. This time he was much more proficient, succeeding in nine out of ten attempts, earning eight spirit stones.

On the last day of the year, Mo Hua went to Destiny's Shop again to exchange the array formations for spirit stones.

The manager at Destiny's Shop, a stout man, was quite satisfied with the array formations Mo Hua delivered.

"That's more like it. Since you've taken a master and become an apprentice, this is the standard you should achieve!"

During the settlement, the stout manager gave Mo Hua ten spirit stones, with an extra two as a New Year's gift, "Although it's not much, it's still something festive!"

For the stout manager, it wasn't much, but for Mo Hua, it was quite a lot.

Mo Hua was very pleased and chose some auspicious phrases like "Wishing the manager greater success and continued brilliance" to say.

The stout manager was very pleased and nodded in agreement.

The next day was New Year's Eve, and Mo Hua's family of three had a lively celebration.

The New Year's customs in the cultivation world had many similarities with Mo Hua's memories from another life, yet there were differences.

For instance, although both involved hanging Spring Festival couplets, the couplets here glowed, the 'Fu' character had moving cloud patterns, and the New Year paintings featuring mythical creatures like Qilin would stare at you with big eyes, sometimes even sneering, which was quite novel.

The New Year's Eve dinner was the most lavish meal of the year, including some meat, which was otherwise not commonly eaten, allowing everyone to fully enjoy rare delicacies.

Mo Hua had a very happy New Year. After playing with his friends for several days, he continued to draw array formations for Destiny's Shop.

With night and day efforts, Mo Hua could draw the Blazing Fire Array from memory, completing ten array diagrams in just three days, maintaining a success rate of over ninety percent.

Until the fifteenth day of the first month, the day before he was to start his studies at Tongxian Sect, Mo Hua had earned nearly fifty spirit stones.

After dinner, Mo Hua was packing his belongings for his upcoming cultivation at the sect, while Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua discussed the future.