

## The Quest 146

### Chapter 146: Dividing Ranks

When Mo Hua saw Mr. Zhuang again, there was a hint of melancholy on her young face.

"Sir, didn't you say there was a threshold?"

Mr. Zhuang smiled and replied casually, "There is a threshold. You might have crossed it without realizing."

"So, am I considered a First-Rank Array Master now?"

"It's not that simple."

Mr. Zhuang adjusted himself to a more comfortable position on his bamboo chair and explained to Mo Hua, "Being able to draw the nine array patterns only means you've stepped over the threshold of becoming a First-Rank Array Master. You still need to learn more, draw more, and master more First-Rank arrays. Only when you can seamlessly complete the nine patterns in one thought can you be considered to have the strength of a First-Rank Array Master."

Mo Hua sensed something in Mr. Zhuang's words. "Having the strength of a First-Rank Array Master doesn't mean having the title?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded. "The title is determined by the Dao Court."

"The Dao Court? Isn't it the Dao Court Division?"

"The Dao Court Division is overseen by the Dao Court. The Division itself doesn't have the authority to rank Array Masters."

Mr. Zhuang's eyes deepened. "The Dao Court is situated in the central province of Daozhou, named after the Seven Stars. Among the seven pavilions, the Tian Shu Pavilion is responsible for determining the ranks of all Array Masters above the First Rank across the nine provinces. Every few years, the Tian Shu Pavilion sends cultivators to evaluate and rank Array Masters."

"The Tian Shu Pavilion..."

Mo Hua was shaken. The Dao Court was lofty and out of reach, and he had never heard of the Tian Shu Pavilion before.

"Is it difficult to get ranked?" Mo Hua couldn't help but ask.

Mr. Zhuang nodded. "It's quite difficult. Firstly, the examination is tough. Secondly, it's about connections."

Mo Hua didn't quite understand.

Mr. Zhuang continued, "The assessment depends on your array skills. The number of spots depends on your connections."

Mo Hua frowned. "Ranking Array Masters should be based on their array skills. Why does it depend on connections?"

Mr. Zhuang sneered. "The ranking is based on array skills, but the people who rank you are humans. As long as humans are involved, connections are inevitable."

"What kind of connections..."

"Either you come from a prestigious family, your parents are extraordinary, or you have plenty of spirit stones to smooth things over. Connections will naturally follow."

Mo Hua was stunned. As a wandering cultivator with no power, influence, or many spirit stones, did this mean he had no chance of being ranked?

Mo Hua weakly asked, "Do wandering cultivators have any spots?"

"It's not impossible. There are always a few spots. Whether you can get one depends on your luck."

Luck, in this context, essentially meant fate.

Mo Hua frowned. "Does this mean Array Masters are all from prestigious families and sects, leaving a gap among the lower-level cultivators?"

Mr. Zhuang's gaze became meaningful as he looked at Mo Hua and said calmly, "Exactly."

Mo Hua was stunned, a faint chill rising in his heart.

Mr. Zhuang gently rubbed Mo Hua's head. "These are all external matters. Don't worry too much about them."

Mo Hua couldn't help but worry. After a pause, he couldn't help but ask, "Sir, what if I'm unlucky and never get ranked?"

Mr. Zhuang slowly sat up, his eyes losing their laziness and revealing a sharp edge. In a calm manner, he said:

"Array Masters seek the Dao of Heaven, comprehending all truths, unbound by any worldly constraints or judged by any cultivator."

"The Dao Court can set ranks, but they are ranks of power and profit."

"What Array Masters truly seek is not the rank of authority, but the grade of the Great Dao of Heaven and Earth!"

Mo Hua was deeply moved. For a moment, his consciousness cleared, feeling suddenly enlightened.

"Thank you, sir, for your guidance."

Mo Hua respectfully stood up and gave Mr. Zhuang a deep bow.

Mr. Zhuang nodded and then casually said, "However, you should still try to get ranked by the Dao Court."

"Ah?" Mo Hua was stunned.

"Once you're ranked by the Dao Court, your status will change. You'll speak with more authority, work more easily, and won't have any random people bothering you. Plus, the spirit stones you receive won't be wasted..."

Mo Hua was once again shaken, thinking Mr. Zhuang was indeed quite... pragmatic.

"What if I can't get ranked?" Mo Hua asked weakly.

Mr. Zhuang glanced at Mo Hua indifferently. "No rush."

"No rush to get ranked?"

"No rush even if you can't get ranked."

"Uh..."

Mr. Zhuang said, "How old are you? When you go for the ranking, those taking the test with you will either be middle-aged cultivators or old men with white hair. They're more anxious than you. Why are you in a hurry?"

"Oh." Thinking about it this way, Mo Hua indeed felt much more relaxed.

"But what if I still can't get ranked?"

Mo Hua became serious.

Mr. Zhuang couldn't help but rub Mo Hua's head again. "If you really can't get ranked, just go for the Second Rank directly."

Mo Hua was stunned. "Second Rank?"

"The First Rank has hurdles, but the Second Rank doesn't. The Tian Shu Pavilion isn't full of fools. If they block you at the First Rank, they'll turn a blind eye. But the Second Rank is different. If your

array skills are good enough for the Second Rank, even without a prestigious background, you're definitely extraordinary. The Tian Shu Pavilion wouldn't dare provoke you."

Mr. Zhuang smiled knowingly. "If you truly have the skills of a Second-Rank Array Master and the Tian Shu Pavilion refuses to rank you, you can stand at their gate, point at the plaque, and scold their elders for being blind."

Mo Hua whispered, "What level are the elders of the Tian Shu Pavilion?"

"That's hard to say. At least, they'd be in the Dongxu realm..."

Mo Hua's mouth fell open. He had never even heard of the Dongxu realm.

Mo Hua glanced at Mr. Zhuang and quietly asked, "Sir, you wouldn't have scolded the elders before, right?"

Standing at their gate, scolding their elders.

If Mr. Zhuang hadn't done it, how would he know so well?

"I never scold people," Mr. Zhuang said.

Mo Hua looked at Mr. Zhuang again.

With his celestial demeanor and graceful manner, even when lying down, he exuded a sense of elegance and ease.

Mo Hua thought: Mr. Zhuang doesn't look like someone who would scold people, but who knows what he's really like.

Then Mr. Zhuang lightly tapped Mo Hua's head.

"Are you thinking ill of me?"

Mo Hua chuckled and then said, "But sir, it would take forever for me to become a Second-Rank Array Master."

Mr. Zhuang said, "A First-Rank Array Master is difficult, with only one rank. The Second Rank is different, divided into three levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Each step up shows a significant improvement in array skills."

Mr. Zhuang looked at Mo Hua. "With your ability, as long as you can build your foundation and put in the effort, becoming an elementary Second-Rank Array Master shouldn't be too hard."

Mo Hua's spirit lifted, feeling he had a new goal to pursue.

But he still had a doubt: "Why is the Second Rank divided into three levels, but the First Rank isn't?"

According to Mr. Zhuang's logic, the First Rank could also be divided into three levels.

Unranked apprentices, Array Masters, and those who made it to the First Rank.

The current First-Rank Array Masters could be considered as high-level First-Rank Array Masters.

"What do you think?" Mr. Zhuang asked.

Mo Hua frowned, thinking for a while. "Is it because of the threshold?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded, calmly saying, "Raising the threshold prevents lower-level cultivators from crossing it."