

The Quest 36

Chapter 36: The Stove

As they observed Mo Hua's smile, Master Chen and the others also began to share in the joy.

Master Chen couldn't help but praise, "Young man, you're truly remarkable. I've lived most of my life, but this is the first time I've seen such a young cultivator capable of designing array patterns."

Mo Hua, somewhat embarrassed by the compliment, shyly responded, "Master Chen, let's first see if the stove with the array pattern on it works."

Master Chen called out, and with the help of several sturdy apprentices, they reassembled the stove and tossed a few spirit stones into it. Soon after, flames sprouted inside the stove.

Master Chen nodded and said, "No problem, it's just a bit smaller in size, but this stove is no different from those expensively forged ones at the Spirit Meal Tower, even the flames are fiercer."

Mo Hua breathed a sigh of relief, and then Master Chen and Da Zhu's disciples transported the stove to Mo Hua's house.

After discussing with his parents, Mo Hua decided to open the eatery at his own home.

It was more convenient, and the nearby market spaces were too expensive. Originally a small-scale business, renting a costly shop could lead to financial ruin if they ran at a loss.

Moreover, Mo Hua's place, although mostly inhabited by poor independent cultivators, was near a busy road and became quite lively during festivals. As long as the food was good, selling it wouldn't be a concern.

Mo Hua's home was small, a typical layout for Qi-cultivation independent cultivators with two rooms and a living room, plus a small courtyard. It was sufficient for a family of three but cramped for an eatery.

Mo Shan discussed with some neighbors and paid them some spirit stones monthly to use their courtyards, then he invited friends from a demon hunter team to help remodel a kitchen. They

connected several courtyards, creating a large open space where tables and chairs could be set up for dining.

The stove was too big to fit into a storage bag, so Da Zhu and the other disciples carried it to Mo Hua's house. When they arrived, Mo Shan and his wife were tidying up the courtyard, digging and building walls, making it appear somewhat disordered.

Da Zhu and the others helped install the stove and then sat down for a cup of tea before taking their leave.

Although Mo Hua had assured them beforehand and was generally reliable, seeing the stove forged and in front of them, Mo Shan and his wife still found it hard to believe.

Liu Ruhua touched the stove and remarked, "It looks just like those at the big Spirit Meal Tower, only smaller, but clearly more sturdy and well-crafted, though it must have cost quite a few spirit stones."

"I helped Master Chen fix the array in his artifact-forging furnace, and he gave me a fifty percent discount. Plus, I drew the array on this stove myself, so it didn't cost too many spirit stones," Mo Hua said, a bit smug.

Liu Ruhua and Mo Shan exchanged glances. They knew Mo Hua had some talent in arrays, but they hadn't realized he could not only repair arrays for others but had even started crafting them on spiritual artifacts himself.

Liu Ruhua hugged Mo Hua and exclaimed, "Hua'er, you're truly amazing!"

Mo Shan looked at his son, his eyes filled with pride.

Originally worried about Mo Hua's frailty, seeing his son's talent in arrays now assured him that even without physical cultivation, Mo Hua could make a living through arrays, avoiding the dangers of battling demonic beasts like himself, which was more than ideal.

"Mom, let me tell you how to use the stove."

Mo Hua took Liu Ruhua's hand, explaining how to operate the stove, the amount of spirit stones needed, and how to control the heat. These instructions were not complicated, and Liu Ruhua understood them after one explanation.

Using the stove, Liu Ruhua then cooked a simple yet tasty meal consisting of a pot of clear rice porridge, a few vegetable dishes, and soft, white steamed buns.

Eating the meal prepared by his mother moved Mo Hua deeply, especially since most of their recent meals had been cooked by Mo Shan, whose culinary skills were understandably not as refined.

"Mom, your cooking is much tastier than Dad's!" Mo Hua declared openly.

"You little rascal!" Mo Shan chuckled as he ruffled Mo Hua's hair, but seeing the smile on his wife's face, he couldn't help but laugh as well.

After the meal, Liu Ruhua asked, "Opening an eatery is fine, but what should we sell?"

Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua both looked at Mo Hua.

"Beef!" Mo Hua responded, meeting his parents' gaze.

Mo

Shan paused, frowning, "But where would we get the beef? Spirit-infused meat is expensive, and we can't afford it. Besides, the nearby independent cultivators wouldn't buy it either."

"Dad, remember the wild mountain ox you killed before? We could use that meat."

"That wild ox meat... it's too tough and dry; no one would want to eat it."

"Then we could stew it for two days and two nights. Even the toughest meat should soften by then, and it would surely be flavorful."

"Stew for two days and two nights..." Mo Shan's gaze involuntarily shifted to the stove, "So, you had this stove forged not only to spare your mother from using spiritual energy for cooking but also for stewing meat..."

"Yes!" Mo Hua nodded.

"Will that really work?" Mo Shan was hesitant.

"It will work," Liu Ruhua's eyes brightened. "Meat infused with spiritual energy is delicious and doesn't need to be stewed for long, or it loses its essence. But that meat is expensive and not affordable for families like ours."

"Meat without spiritual energy is cheaper, but tough and needs to be stewed for a long time. While affordable for independent cultivators, they lack the means to properly stew it, so it's rarely consumed."

"With this stove, we can stew meat that's both inexpensive and delicious, even affordable for ordinary cultivators."

Mo Shan nodded, then added, "But stewing for two days and two nights would also consume a lot of spirit stones, wouldn't it?"

Mo Hua counted on his fingers and then said, "It should take about ten spirit stones, but one batch can stew a lot of meat, and if sold, it should at least break even."

"Alright, I'll try stewing a pot the day after tomorrow to calculate the costs," Liu Ruhua decided.

Mo Shan nodded, "I'll go get some more wild ox meat; we've run out at home, and the Zhao family should still have some. If this meat can sell, then the meat from hunting demonic beasts might also find a market, improving everyone's living conditions."

As the day drew to a close, Liu Ruhua urged Mo Hua to go to sleep.

Rising, Mo Hua suddenly recalled a question and asked, "Mom, forging a stove isn't that hard, but why do we seldom see ordinary independent cultivators using one?"

"Oh, you silly child," Liu Ruhua touched Mo Hua's face and chuckled, "Aside from the complexity of artifact crafting, if you aren't drawing the stove's array yourself and have to hire another array master, that would cost a lot of spirit stones."

"Becoming an array master is difficult, and once someone does, they naturally aim to advance further. Depending on their family and sect, they craft higher-level arrays to earn more spirit stones, hardly sparing a thought for us poor independent cultivators."

"Not just array masters, but all cultivators are the same; when people climb higher, they seldom look back..."

Mo Hua felt a complex mix of emotions and was momentarily lost for words.