

## The Quest 372

### Chapter 372: Assessment

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First-grade, twelve patterns!

Mo Hua was startled, he had never imagined that Instructor Yan's sect would have an inheritance with a first-grade formation of twelve patterns.

The Reversed Spirit Formation that Mr. Zhuang taught him was only a first-grade with ten patterns.

And although Mr. Zhuang had not explicitly stated, but according to Mo Hua's own estimation, the Divine Sense required for the Spirit Pivot of the Five Elements Slaughter Demon Great Formation wouldn't exceed eleven patterns either.

Now, from Manager Mo's words, he had actually heard of a first-grade formation with twelve patterns, which seemed to be a type of Single Formation.

"Spiritual Pivot Formation..."

Mo Hua silently remembered this name and then out of curiosity, he asked:

"Does this formation have any special characteristics, to require such a strong Divine Sense of twelve patterns..."

Manager Mo smiled bitterly and shook his head: "No one has learned it, so naturally nobody knows."

Mo Hua nodded his head slightly, and then continued to muse to himself:

"Spiritual Pivot Formation doesn't sound like a Five Elements Formation. Since it contains the word 'spirit,' it must be related to Spiritual Power, probably similar to 'Spirit Gathering Array' or 'Reversed Spirit Formation,' a formation regarding the gathering or flow of Spiritual Power..."

"The name of the formation includes the word 'pivot,' which could either refer to Spiritual Power being the pivot or the uniqueness of the 'Formation Pivot'."

"The Formation Pivot of a Single Formation is typically simple in structure, but this Single Formation requires twelve patterns of Divine Sense; could it be because its Formation Pivot is complex and out of the ordinary?"

...

Mo Hua muttered to himself, lost in thought for a long while.

Manager Mo was dumbfounded as he listened.

He hadn't said anything, just mentioned the name of the formation, and Mo Hua was able to infer so much...

And he didn't even understand it himself.

Manager Mo was secretly astounded.

The way of formations, indeed profound and intricate, Mo Hua's level in formations was also truly impenetrable and advanced; no wonder even Master Luo had such admiration for Mo Hua...

After pondering for a long time, Mo Hua still couldn't reach any firm conclusion.

With just the name of a formation, indeed, not much could be discerned.

He then asked: "Manager Mo, do you know where Instructor Yan has gone?"

Manager Mo came back to his senses, thought for a moment, took a piece of paper out of his Storage Bag, and handed it to Mo Hua. The paper had only one line of writing:

"Minor Wilderness State Boundary, South Yue City."

"This is what I found out through someone I asked, a former sect acquaintance saw that traitor, who betrayed and murdered his mentor, in an Immortal City named South Yue, to the east of Li State, within Minor Wilderness State Boundary."

"I have informed Senior Brother Yan about this. If I'm not wrong, he should have gone to South Yue City as well."

Mo Hua nodded his head and carefully stored the piece of paper away.

Manager Mo thought it over and still made a request:

"Mo Hua, I have an impolite favor to ask... If you pass by that place and encounter Senior Brother Yan, I hope you can help him."

Mo Hua said with all seriousness, "Manager, rest assured, I will definitely help Instructor Yan catch that traitor."

"No, that's not it..." Manager Mo shook his head.

Mo Hua was puzzled, "What do you mean not it?"

"I'm not asking you to help him catch someone, I want you to persuade him for me, to find a companion, settle down and start a family..." Manager Mo said with resignation.

Mo Hua was a bit confounded.

Manager Mo sighed: "Senior Brother Yan is actually quite talented..."

"Of course not comparable to you..." Manager Mo looked at Mo Hua and then continued:

"If he dedicated himself to studying formations, not to mention achieving great success, but at least to become a first-grade Formation Master and an Outer Gate Elder, that would be no problem."

"A first-grade Formation Master, in most state boundaries, is also considered a remarkable person..."

Manager Mo's tone carried some envy.

Mo Hua also nodded; his initial dream when learning formations was to become a first-grade Formation Master.

Manager Mo then sighed again: "But these past years, Senior Brother Yan has been troubled and restless, unable to calm down, so he has always been unable to cross that threshold."

"He joined the sect early and had a deep affection for his master, so he can't accept what happened. I understand that very well, but one should not waste one's entire life seeking revenge."

"Even if he avenges the great wrong, in the end, being alone with white hair, it will be difficult to make any more progress in formations."

"If you happen to meet him, just persuade him to be a bit more considerate of himself, no matter if he gets revenge, his master is already dead, and the sect has dispersed, the past gone with the wind, but he himself still needs to find a way to live well..."

Manager Mo expressed his feelings earnestly, his tone mixed with some helplessness:

"He might not listen to these words from me, but he might listen if you say them."

Mo Hua nodded in agreement and also sighed internally, Manager Mo truly had Instructor Yan's best interests at heart, so he promised:

"Don't worry, I will talk to the Instructor."

Manager Mo then smiled happily.

When Mo Hua was about to leave, Manager Mo took out a few boxes of expensive pastries and stuffed them into Mo Hua's arms:

"Take these and try them."

Mo Hua was unable to decline and had to accept them.

After Mo Hua left, Manager Mo sat alone in the room, pouring and drinking tea by himself, drinking several cups. He looked somewhat melancholic as he mumbled to himself:

"Senior Brother, don't blame me for being meddlesome..."

"I told Mo Hua about the Spiritual Pivot Formation, don't be angry with me for that."

"Our sect is gone, so the formation is no longer a secret."

Manager Mo was silent for a while, then looking at the floating tea leaves in his cup, he slowly continued:

"Moreover, I also want to know if it is really possible for anyone to learn that outlandishly extreme first-grade twelve-pattern formation..."

...

Mo Hua bid farewell to Manager Mo, taking with him the memory of the name "South Yue City".

Thinking of Instructor Yan's charge to him, his expectations, and the somewhat desolate figure he had left behind.

Mo Hua felt rather heavy-hearted for a moment.

Unsure of where Instructor Yan was now, whether he was doing well, if he had encountered any difficulties.

Whether he had found the mentor-killing traitor, and whether he might face any dangers...

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But worrying now is useless; I hope I really can meet Instructor Yan in the future.

Mo Hua sighed.

Then he thought of another issue:

I originally studied Formation to become a First-grade Formation Master; now that I am about to set out on a journey, should I try to get assessed?

Mo Hua went to ask Mr. Zhuang.

Mr. Zhuang was not surprised and nodded, “You can give it a try.”

"Really?" Mo Hua was suddenly nervous, "What if I fail?"

"Just go and take the test; whether you pass or fail doesn't matter."

That's what Mr. Zhuang said, but he thought to himself:

"You are now the lead Formation Master of a First-grade Large Formation; how can you possibly not pass the examination for a regular First-grade Formation Master."

"With something like Formation, whether it's good or bad is clear at a glance, and an expert can see it right away."

"For the assessment, even if there is foul play, they wouldn't dare to mess with you."

"If they really dare to be 'blind with open eyes' and revoke your qualification for the First-grade, they will definitely regret it in the future..."

...

Mo Hua nodded, and after thinking, he agreed that a regular First-grade Formation really wasn't something to worry about.

"When should I go for the assessment then?"

Mo Hua was clueless about the process of the assessment.

"Before you leave on your journey, you must finish the assessment," Mr. Zhuang said.

"Can't I do it somewhere else?"

"That won't work," Mr. Zhuang shook his head and patiently explained:

"The assessment of Formation Masters follows a recommendation system and is limited by state boundaries."

"If you want to get assessed, not only do you need a recommendation letter, the number of First-grade Formation Masters allowed is fixed for each state, each boundary, and each city; some places have more quotas, some have less."

"Here in Tongxian City, you have a recommendation; after the assessment, the quota for Tongxian City is taken."

"Once outside, unfamiliar with the place, firstly no one is willing to recommend, and secondly, if you pass the assessment, you take up a quota from another Immortal City, which others are even less willing to give up..."

"That sounds troublesome..." Mo Hua recalled what Mr. Zhuang had said before and asked:

"Is all this complexity designed to set barriers and make a profit?"

"Part of it is," Mr. Zhuang admitted.

"And the other part?"

Mr. Zhuang wanted to explain but didn't; instead, he just said:

"You'll gradually find out in the future; knowing now is of no use."

Mo Hua, only partially understanding, nodded and asked again, "Then how is the quota distributed?"

Mr. Zhuang sighed, "There are many factors, including the wealth of the state boundary, the number of Family Sects and Clans, personal connections, and so on... The poorer the state boundary with a weaker Formation heritage, the fewer the quotas, and the more effort one has to put in to become a First-grade Formation Master."

"On the contrary, in places with a deep foundation or entrenched power, there are many quotas given each year, and it's relatively easier to become a First-grade Formation Master."

Mo Hua clicked his tongue and said, "That's really... not very fair."

Mr. Zhuang replied, "The Heavenly Dao is fair, and the Formation stands as it is; knowing is knowing, not knowing is not knowing. What's unfair is actually people; some know but still can't become First-grade Formation Masters, while some don't know yet still wear the title of a First-grade Formation Master..."

Reflectively, Mo Hua quietly asked:

"Then who should I ask for a recommendation?"

"The Taoist Court, local Clans, Sects, or other powerful entities recognized by the Taoist Court can all qualify to recommend," Mr. Zhuang said.

"As for you... better go through the Taoist Court Officials. After all, don't you have a Bronze Waist Token from them? Your Court Leader would surely be very happy to recommend you."

Mr. Zhuang advised.



Mo Hua was surprised, "Gentleman, you knew about the waist token too?"

Mr. Zhuang looked composed, "Such trifles, if I want to know, I naturally do."

Mo Hua marveled internally at Mr. Zhuang's mysterious prowess.

"Also," Mr. Zhuang's slender fingers ruffled Mo Hua's hair, "you should call me 'Master' now, not 'Gentleman.'"

"Oh..."

Mo Hua realized and gave an embarrassed laugh.

He had become accustomed to calling 'Gentleman' and hadn't managed to switch immediately.

"Master!"

Mo Hua's voice was crisp and clear.

Mr. Zhuang half-closed his eyes, his expression relaxed, and he nodded lightly.

After that, Mo Hua went to find Court Leader Zhou.

When the Court Leader heard that Mo Hua wanted to participate in the First-grade Formation Master assessment, he agreed without a second thought.

If Mo Hua could get a recommendation from the Taoist Court and pass the assessment, becoming a First-grade Formation Master would also reflect well on him.

Even if Mo Hua failed the assessment, Court Leader Zhou was more than willing to help with this favor.

Although in his heart, Court Leader Zhou knew it was impossible for Mo Hua not to pass the assessment with his Formation expertise.

But he also understood that the ins and outs of the assessment process were very complex.

The Taoist Court's assessment determined not the grade of the Formation but that of the Formation Master, and it was not decided by the Heavenly Dao but by people with complicated interests.

Unless one had an extraordinary network of connections, the outcome was uncertain to anyone.

Zhou, the Court Leader, was only an official of a small Immortal City; he had some connections but couldn't influence the major decisions of the Heaven Shu Pavilion in the central Taoist Court, so all he could do was provide a recommendation. For the rest, Mo Hua had to rely on himself.

Zhou, the Court Leader, checked the relevant documents, handwrote a letter of recommendation, and then said to Mo Hua:

"On the twenty-sixth of October, there will be an assessment for Second-grade Black Mountain State Boundary, held at the Azure Cloud Sect in Azure Mountain City. I will send someone to take you there."

Mo Hua nodded.

The twenty-sixth of October, which was only seven days away, was very soon.

"It seems Mr. Zhuang... Master has calculated even the timing of the assessment..."

Mo Hua inwardly mused.