

The Quest 40

Chapter 40: Plans

Yan Jiaoxi stared at Mo Hua's exam paper, pondering for a moment before marking a "Grade A" on it.

Yan Jiaoxi then continued to correct other disciples' Array methods. After a while, he remembered something, and flipped back to the previous papers, upgrading other disciples from "Grade B" to "Grade A".

Now, Mo Hua was not the only one who had achieved "Grade A".

After finishing the corrections, Yan Jiaoxi sat at his desk lost in thought for a long time, muttering to himself:

"It seems I can no longer stay at the Tongxian Sect..."

When the Array exam papers were distributed, Mo Hua nodded at the "Grade A" on his paper but wondered if the other Qi-cultivating disciples could really draw the Stabilizing Water Array...

This was an array with six Array patterns, after all.

Curious, Mo Hua inquired around and heard that other disciples also received "Grade A", feeling surprised and reflective:

"There are always higher skies and people beyond us, I must not be complacent about my own level of Array methods!"

What Mo Hua didn't realize was that his "Grade A" was genuine, while the "Grade A" others received was inflated by Yan Jiaoxi...

Later, Mo Hua planned to continue his studies at the Tongxian Sect, learning Array methods, and after a while, consider choosing a Technique to practice. But half a month later, he heard something utterly preposterous:

"Yan Jiaoxi is leaving the Tongxian Sect, and henceforth, the outer sect will no longer teach Array methods..."

Mo Hua stood rooted to the spot.

No more Array methods to learn...

Mo Hua went to find Yan Jiaoxi, who looked at him with a complex expression, saying nothing, only telling Mo Hua to go back first and come find him again in a few days.

After Mo Hua left, Yan Jiaoxi went to see Manager Mo.

"Have you heard anything about the matter I entrusted to you?"

Manager Mo handed Yan Jiaoxi a letter, "The person you're looking for isn't in Tongxian City anymore, here's the clue, but I can't guarantee its authenticity."

"Thank you."

Manager Mo hesitated for a moment before saying, "Are you really planning to leave the Tongxian Sect?"

"Not just the Tongxian Sect, I'll also leave Tongxian City."

"Will you ever come back?"

"It's hard to say," Yan Jiaoxi forced a smile, "like you said, let's leave it to fate."

Manager Mo wanted to persuade him, but thinking better of it, said nothing. He knew persuasion was futile.

"The parting of cultivators can be longer than their lifespan."

In the end, without words, they had to substitute tea for wine and drank a cup together.

"Take care!" said Manager Mo.

"Take care!"

Yan Jiaoxi nodded and disappeared into the bustling streets under Manager Mo's gaze.

Staying in the outer sect of the Tongxian Sect had become meaningless without the teaching of Array methods. Moreover, Yan Jiaoxi kept the issue of the Independent cultivator's Array diagram in his heart and wouldn't give it up.

Before leaving Tongxian City, Yan Jiaoxi's last task was to find an Array master for Mo Hua.

He prepared some fine wine and tea gifts, knocking on the door of a cave dwelling on North Street in Tongxian City.

This cave dwelling was one of the grandest on the street, splendid and luxurious.

The owner of the cave dwelling was one of the two first-rate Array masters in Tongxian City, known as Master Luo.

Yan Jiaoxi presented the tea gifts, explaining his purpose.

Master Luo, having good relations with Yan Jiaoxi, was intrigued and said, "Does this child truly possess such talent to warrant Yan's personal plea?"

Yan Jiaoxi showed Master Luo the Blazing Fire Array Diagram drawn by Mo Hua, "This was drawn by him when he was at the third level of Qi-cultivation."

He didn't bring out the Stabilizing Water Array with five and a half Array patterns that Mo Hua had drawn, as it would draw too much attention.

Generally, at the third level of Qi-cultivation, being able to draw an array with three Array patterns was already considered exceptional.

Master Luo's eyes lit up and he nodded, "Indeed not bad!"

After reviewing the Blazing Fire Array Diagram, he asked, "Which family does he belong to? The Qian Family? The An Family, or the Chen Family?"

Yan Jiaoxi fell silent for a moment and said, "He's an Independent cultivator, not from any family."

Master Luo then became quiet, his interest fading significantly

.

Yan Jiaoxi tentatively asked, "Does Master have any concerns?"

"Teaching an Independent cultivator is troublesome..." Master Luo said.

"Brother Luo..."

Master Luo waved his hand, "Yan, you know what I mean, but taking an Independent cultivator as an apprentice is complicated. You should understand."

"Mo Hua is young but sensible, diligent, and has a high talent for Arrays. Just a little guidance from you, Brother Luo, and his future in Array methods would be limitless," Yan Jiaoxi earnestly said.

"That's not the issue." Master Luo sighed, "Regardless of his talent or comprehension, it's about the fees for accepting a disciple. Can he afford it?"

Master Luo stood up, pacing slowly, "It's not that I covet these fees, but there are rules to accepting disciples. I've taken many disciples, and each has paid a significant fee. If only he can't afford it or pays less, how would I explain it to the other disciples? Even if they don't say anything, they would surely feel some resentment, thinking I am biased."

"Not just the fees for discipleship, but the costs of paper, ink, and other materials for studying Arrays, can an Independent cultivator's background support that?"

"And even if he eventually becomes proficient, becoming an Array master, he still has only two paths: to attach to a family or a sect. If he doesn't attach, his cultivation and study of Arrays would be very difficult. If he does attach, then it's like selling himself, losing his own name, background, and parents, not his own master anymore, how could he still regard me as his master?"

"So, whether taking him as an apprentice or a disciple, there's no benefit to me."

Master Luo finished speaking and sat down to drink some tea.

Yan Jiaoxi remained silent, understanding Master Luo's points, with nothing to refute. He had hoped that seeing Mo Hua's exceptional talent, Master Luo would at least consider, but it seemed he had oversimplified things.

Independent cultivators without an Array master had their reasons...

Yan Jiaoxi looked dejected.

Seeing this, Master Luo also sighed, his tone softening, "If he had any family background, even a minor one, I could have accepted him. But as an Independent cultivator, there are too many concerns, and I don't have the energy for it..."

"It's too hard for an Independent cultivator to become an Array master!" Master Luo lamented.

Yan Jiaoxi still wanted to try one last time and said, "Mo Hua's talent in Array methods is truly unparalleled..." as he started to bring out the Stabilizing Water Array with five and a half Array patterns.

But before he could fully present it, Master Luo said, "It doesn't matter if he can draw three Array patterns, even if he could draw four or five Array patterns at the third level of Qi-cultivation, I wouldn't accept him."

Yan Jiaoxi's hand stopped, and with no other option, he put the Array back.

"Brother Luo, is there really no way?"

"Yan, you can come here anytime to discuss or chat, but on this matter, there's no room for negotiation."

"Brother Luo..." Yan Jiaoxi had nothing more to say, only sighing, "Just don't regret it later."

"Many cultivators have said that to me, but Luo has never regretted it to this day!"

The two remained silent, and Master Luo poured tea to see his guest off.

Yan Jiaoxi sighed, looking disappointed, and stood up to leave.

After Yan Jiaoxi left, Master Luo sat in the room, with a disciple serving him tea, who quietly asked, "Master, if he can indeed draw the Blazing Fire Array at the third level of Qi-cultivation, then his talent is truly remarkable."

"Yes," Master Luo picked up his tea, taking a sip, "but what use is high talent? Cultivation isn't just about talent. How many people were brilliant in their youth but ended up indistinguishable from others? Spirit stones, heritage, family background, all these are crucial. Without them, talent is just rootless vegetation, bound to wither eventually."

"But, Master, if you just gave him a few pointers, he would at least be grateful to you..."

Master Luo shook his head, "You're oversimplifying human nature. Coming from a poor Independent cultivator background, they tend to be radical in temperament. A slight mishap could easily breed resentment, creating more enemies than gratitude. Why should I muddy the waters?"

"Master's words are wise, but such talent is indeed a pity."

"It is a pity," Master Luo put down his teacup, sighing, "but that's fate, and it can't be forced."