

The Quest 43

Chapter 43: Seeking Knowledge

The Mo family was overjoyed upon hearing that Mo Hua was recommended by Master Yan Jiaoxi to apprentice under a master of array formations.

Mo Shan had his reservations initially, but after much thought, he found no cause for concern.

Master Yan Jiaoxi, a long-serving and respected teacher at Tongxian Sect, wouldn't recommend someone ordinary.

Being mere independent cultivators without spirit stones or family wealth, the Mo family had no reason to suspect others of ulterior motives.

Besides, it was rare for them to even meet a master of such status; this was truly a fortunate opportunity.

Now that Mo Hua was studying array formations while living at home, Liu Ruhua was delighted to see her son daily and cook meals for him, which made her even happier.

The next morning, after enjoying a hearty breakfast prepared by Liu Ruhua, Mo Hua set off to the southeastern mountains to seek apprenticeship under Mr. Zhuang.

At the mountain's base, following a narrow path, Mo Hua arrived at a bamboo gate and noticed a signboard titled "Sit and Forget Abode," which he hadn't seen the day before.

Entering the abode, Mo Hua found Mr. Zhuang idly sitting by a pond, cheek propped on one hand, the other holding a fishing rod fashioned from a bamboo segment, its line dangling baitless into the fishless water.

Peering into the pond, Mo Hua sensed a deeper meaning in Mr. Zhuang's actions and, looking up, realized Mr. Zhuang wasn't really fishing but rather dozing off.

Fortunately, an elderly man who had met Mo Hua the day before called him aside and explained:

"Master often dozes off. Just let him be during such times, and try not to disturb him."

“Ah,” Mo Hua nodded, somewhat impressed.

The elder introduced himself as the steward responsible for Mr. Zhuang’s daily needs, inviting Mo Hua to call him ‘Elder Gui’.

Elder Gui, noting Mo Hua’s polite greeting, then brought out a chess set, asking, “Do you play chess?”

Looking at the board, Mo Hua inquired, “Is this Five Elements Chess?”

There were many types of chess played in the cultivation world, such as Bagua Chess, Five Elements Chess, Heavenly Origin Chess, and Three Talents Chess, among others. Five Elements Chess was the simplest and most popular form, primarily used for educating young cultivators about the interactions among the Five Elements.

The rules were straightforward: each player had two types of chess pieces, and the board randomly generated various elemental chess pieces that were only identified upon being flipped over. A player's pieces that were compatible in terms of generating and overcoming the Five Elements were stronger and could capture the opposing pieces.

Simple, entertaining, and not overly thought-provoking, it was an excellent intellectual game for young cultivators.

Although Mo Hua had no issues playing Five Elements Chess himself, it seemed somewhat incongruent for the world-weary Elder Gui to be playing it...

Seeing Mo Hua’s hesitation, Elder Gui asked if he thought the game too simplistic.

After a moment’s pause, Mo Hua, bending the truth slightly, replied, “Simplicity leads to profundity. Often, the simplest of matters are the most profound.”

Elder Gui paused, then realizing the implication, commented, “That’s a good justification. I’ll use it next time I invite someone to play.”

Mo Hua: "..."

Thus, Mo Hua and Elder Gui began their game.

Initially, Mo Hua assumed Elder Gui to be an expert, so he played very attentively. However, after a few rounds, realizing they were evenly matched, Mo Hua relaxed, and they both enjoyed the game immensely.

Unknowingly, it was noon by the time Mo Hua remembered his original purpose...

Mr. Zhuang, having napped beside the pond all morning, now opened his eyes, checked the position of the sun, and nodded, "It's time for lunch."

After a morning of chess that had idly passed half a day, Mo Hua ended up joining them for lunch.

The meal, prepared by Elder Gui, featured meat, vegetables, and rice, rich in spiritual energy but somewhat lacking in flavor. It seemed Elder Gui was not particularly adept at cooking.

However, Mr. Zhuang was indifferent; grains turned into vital energy once consumed, and all sensory pleasures were ultimately illusory. Regardless of the meal's taste, each bite was consumed with a serene and elegant demeanor, as if he were partaking of the essence of nature itself.

Mo Hua admired Mr. Zhuang's grace and tried to emulate his refined eating style but found it awkward and eventually just focused on eating heartily.

Though not delicious, the ingredients were of high quality and contained spiritual energy. Mo Hua, not fussy by nature, found the meal satisfying, especially as Elder Gui kept adding

meat to his bowl.

After the meal, Mr. Zhuang seemed to finally remember Mo Hua's purpose and led him to a bamboo pavilion in the courtyard where a breeze stirred and bamboo rustled.

"I've had disciples before, but their learning was different from yours; it's hard to generalize. Let's see what you've learned about array formations so far."

Mr. Zhuang then posed several questions, which Mo Hua answered one by one.

After Mo Hua's responses, Mr. Zhuang thought for a moment, then retrieved a thick tome, advising Mo Hua:

“Your knowledge of array theory is too superficial, and what you've learned consists mostly of basic array patterns, which are neither comprehensive nor solid. Such a shaky foundation will make it difficult to understand more profound array formations later on. In the path of array formation, you won't get far without a solid grounding.”

Mr. Zhuang handed the tome to Mo Hua, instructing, “You should start with the basics. This book contains fundamental array theories from various schools, attributes, and lineages in the cultivation world. Memorize what you can, understand what you can, and come to me with questions. Once you have a solid foundation in array theory, I'll teach you how to craft arrays.”

Gratefully accepting the thick book on array formations, Mo Hua thanked Mr. Zhuang.

Mr. Zhuang waved him off, “Find a comfortable spot in the courtyard to read; I'm going to rest my eyes.”

Mo Hua then took the “Array Formation Fundamentals” to a shady spot under a tree, where he lay on the soft grass and began flipping through the book.

The opening chapter of the book stated that ancient immortals observed the stars and surveyed the earth, drawing insights from the transformations of all things under heaven and earth. They manifested these insights into array formations that mimicked the workings of the heavenly dao, thus harnessing their immense and unfathomable power.

Among all cultivation practices, array formation was the most direct and fundamental means of comprehending the heavenly dao, and it also placed the most stringent demands on spiritual sense.

Array masters were classified from the ninth rank upwards, with those above the ninth rank considered immortals and known as Celestial Array Masters.

However, Celestial Array Masters were the stuff of legend, as no one had truly attained immortality in nearly twenty thousand years, and thus no one had become a Celestial Array Master. What these heaven-altering Celestial Arrays looked like remained unknown.

Even records of ninth-rank array masters were scarce, with eighth rank being legendary. Recorded history mentioned a few sixth and seventh-rank array masters, all of whom were from powerful families, ancient sects, or high-ranking elders of the Dao Court—figures of great ability yet beyond reach.

From the fifth rank down to the third, more records of array masters appeared, but below that, none were mentioned unless they had achieved something unprecedented in array formation; otherwise, they were not deemed worthy of inclusion in the records.

After documenting the history of array formations, the book analyzed various array schools and array formation terminologies.

Families, sects, and regions differed significantly in their array schools, and even within the same array tradition, there could be many sub-lineages. These sub-lineages varied in their approach to learning, researching, and utilizing array formations, resulting in slight differences in effectiveness.

Each major power kept their core array formations confidential, each conducting their own research and applications, leading to a flourishing yet somewhat insular state in the cultivation world's array formation landscape.

Array formations were further categorized by types such as the Binary Array, Trinary Array, Quaternary Array, Five Elements Array, Six Harmonies Array, Seven Stars Array, and the Bagua Array, among others. The most widely transmitted and utilized were the Five Elements and Bagua Arrays, but other types of arrays also had their specific uses.

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Mo Hua spent most of the day roughly flipping through “Array Formation Fundamentals,” feeling enlightened yet even more aware of his insignificance.

For Mo Hua, becoming a first-rank array master was challenging enough, let alone reaching the seventh, eighth, or even celestial ranks. Array cultivation was like a vast ocean, and Mo Hua, not even a first-rank array master yet, was merely a speck in this vast sea.

