

The Quest 44

Chapter 44: Enlightenment

The Principles of Array Formation can only be read at Mr. Zhuang's place and cannot be taken out.

In the following days, Mo Hua always arrived early at Mr. Zhuang's Residence and found a quiet and comfortable place to read alone.

He silently noted any questions he had, and once Mr. Zhuang had finished his nap, he would seek guidance. Mr. Zhuang was always responsive, often resolving Mo Hua's doubts in just a few words, greatly impressing him.

In just a few short days, Mo Hua's understanding of array formation had grown significantly.

The Mo couple wanted to visit Mr. Zhuang to express their thanks, but he declined, stating that he preferred solitude and did not engage much with others. He acknowledged their good intentions but dismissed the need for a visit.

Despite this, the Mo couple still felt somewhat uneasy.

Thus, Mo Shan went up the mountain and killed a wild ox. Liu Ruhua marinated the beef and stewed it to enhance the flavor, also preparing various pastries for Mo Hua to bring to Mr. Zhuang, advising Mo Hua:

"Since Mr. Zhuang likes tranquility, we won't disturb him, but it's customary to bring gifts. He probably doesn't lack for things like spirit stones, these foods aren't precious, but they are heartfelt gifts. I hope Mr. Zhuang won't find them too humble."

"Uh-huh," Mo Hua nodded in agreement.

When Mo Hua delivered the food box to Mr. Zhuang, he felt somewhat apprehensive.

Given Mr. Zhuang's demeanor, he likely had tasted all sorts of exquisite delicacies, and might not favor these common offerings from independent cultivators.

However, Mr. Zhuang seemed intrigued by the food box. He tasted a few slices of beef, nodding slightly.

Though it was low-grade wild demonic beast meat, lacking spiritual energy, the cooking style was quite unique. The fragrance of the beef mixed with spicy seasonings offered a wild charm he had not experienced before.

It was the first time Mr. Zhuang tasted beef like this, and he ate several more slices, saving some to accompany his drink later.

Mo Hua also delivered some pastries to Elder Gui. Elder Gui was surprised to receive them but did not behave differently towards Mo Hua, tasting a few without expressing approval or disapproval.

Seeing that both had accepted the gifts and had even tasted them without any dissatisfaction, Mo Hua felt relieved.

Liu Ruhua was also happy and took the time to cook various dishes for Mo Hua to deliver to Mr. Zhuang and Elder Gui.

The mountains had many types of demonic beasts, each with a different flavor. Liu Ruhua, busy with her eatery, would focus on cooking in her spare time. She experimented with different meats and seasonings, each combination yielding a unique flavor.

She chose the best-tasting dishes for Mo Hua to bring to Mr. Zhuang to try.

Elder Gui favored crispy pastries, particularly enjoying them while playing chess. So Liu Ruhua made some crispy fruit pastries, which Mo Hua delivered to Elder Gui every now and then.

Over time, Mr. Zhuang grew accustomed to these flavors, showing less interest in the meals prepared by Elder Gui.

One day, after delivering stewed meat and pastries to Mr. Zhuang and Elder Gui, and after a day of reading and asking a few questions, Mo Hua bid them farewell and headed home.

It was getting dark. Mr. Zhuang sat by the pond, watching the evening sky while eating beef and sipping wine, his demeanor quite relaxed.

Elder Gui, eating pastries on the side, played chess by himself. After a moment, he looked up at Mr. Zhuang and said:

"Your qi sea is shattered, you can eat other things, but don't overindulge. Don't neglect the medicinal meals I make either."

Mr. Zhuang appeared indifferent: "A broken mirror cannot be made whole again, spilled water cannot be recovered. The qi sea is already shattered, what I eat makes no difference now, might as well enjoy what makes me happy."

Elder Gui didn't bother with him and after a moment, suddenly asked, "Is it really that tasty?"

Mr. Zhuang took another piece of meat and savored it, "The flavor is quite unique."

Elder Gui frowned and said, "What delicacies haven't you tasted in your life? Why are you suddenly craving these simple things?"

"Yes," Mr. Zhuang replied with a meaningful look, his eyes reflecting the cool detachment of the world:

"I'm tired of exotic foods. Now, these simple dishes, though plain, carry a simplicity of heart, making them truly rare."

"Oh," Elder Gui seemed uninterested, continuing to focus on his chess game while taking a piece of crispy pastry and munching on it.

Elder Gui,

absorbed in the chess game, paused then said, "I'm just chewing to hear the crunch."

After saying this, he picked up a crispy cake and crunched away.

Half a month later, after Mo Hua had almost finished reading *The Principles of Array Formation*, Mr. Zhuang began to teach him about array theory.

The array theory taught by Mr. Zhuang was broader and more abstruse than that taught by Yan Jiaoxi. It was all new to Mo Hua, who learned very slowly.

Mr. Zhuang was indifferent whether Mo Hua learned quickly or slowly, well or poorly, and never commented more than necessary.

But perhaps because he had eaten too much beef, Mr. Zhuang felt uneasy and thus asked Mo Hua:

"What kind of array master do you wish to become?"

Mo Hua wanted to say a first-rate array master, but that goal might seem trivial in Mr. Zhuang's eyes, and he really didn't know what kind of array masters there were, so he simply replied:

"Disciple doesn't know what kind of array master he can become."

Mr. Zhuang pondered for a moment then said, "Your spiritual root is not outstanding, even with ample spirit stones and techniques, reaching the Golden Core stage will be difficult, and your realm determines the limit of an array master. Even with high aptitude, without sufficient realm, you cannot touch deeper array methods..."

"Speaking of aptitude, your aptitude is actually quite good, but unfortunately, you started too late and lack a foundational understanding of various array theories. Descendants of large families are immersed from childhood, familiar with profound array methods early on. You lack this depth of knowledge, even if you start learning now, you will be much slower."

"I previously taught disciples by first teaching them array theory, letting them memorize the myriad array methods and theories of the cultivation world, establishing a foundation that makes it easier to integrate and advance further in the path of array formation."

Mr. Zhuang looked at Mo Hua, his expression slightly apologetic, but still straightforwardly said: "But you may not go far, a third-rate array master might already be your limit, so teaching you in the usual way would just be wasting time, offering you no benefit."

Mo Hua looked downcast, somewhat disheartened.

But after thinking it over, even becoming a second-rate array master would be cause for joy, considering that in the entire Tongxian City, first-rate array masters were few and far between.

He had almost been carried away by Mr. Zhuang's influence...

After a moment, Mo Hua said earnestly: "All things in heaven and earth have their destinies; the disciple only needs to wholeheartedly study array formation. What I can learn is what I will achieve. Being overly concerned with gains and losses will only cause me to lose my true self. Please continue to teach me without reservation."

Mr. Zhuang looked surprised, watching Mo Hua silently, then smiled faintly:

"You are correct, man proposes, God disposes. We should not let the fear of loss consume us. Since this is the case, tomorrow I will change my teaching method."