

The Quest 45

Chapter 45: Surprise

The next day, Mr. Zhuang's teaching method changed. He only taught theories of array formations within the Qi-cultivation stage, pairing them with various arrays to allow Mo Hua to learn progressively.

This method resembled that of Yan Jiaoxi, but Mr. Zhuang's level was much higher, thus his approach was broader, the details more comprehensive, and the connections clearer.

Mo Hua also felt a secret pity for Yan Jiaoxi. If not for his limited level, Yan Jiaoxi might have been more than just an ordinary instructor, especially in terms of his educational philosophy and deep understanding of array formations, akin to Mr. Zhuang.

The complex theories of array formations previously taught by Mr. Zhuang gave Mo Hua a headache.

Mo Hua had never encountered some theories before, so he was clueless and could only memorize them mechanically. However, even with his good memory, these abstract theories were hard to retain. Often, he would forget earlier parts as he memorized later ones. When he looked back at the earlier content, he would forget the latter, making the learning process exceedingly slow.

These difficult topics Mo Hua was learning were considered foundational by major families, which explained why such families could stand for tens of thousands of years in the cultivation world without falling.

Compared to these families, ordinary independent cultivators like Mo Hua had a significant gap in heritage and transmission, almost leading to a discontinuity among array masters.

Mo Hua sighed; comparing himself with others was pointless. He could only strive to do his best. With this self-reminder, Mo Hua calmed his mind and followed Mr. Zhuang's methods to learn array formations.

Now, starting from the Qi-cultivation stage, focusing on drawing arrays and supplementing with theory, Mo Hua learned much faster.

Because he had drawn countless arrays day and night, painting on the Dao Stele at night and on paper during the day, and occasionally scratching roots on the ground when idle.

In terms of practice volume, some array masters in the later stages of Qi-cultivation might not even match Mo Hua.

Thus, after Mr. Zhuang changed his teaching method, Mo Hua learned very quickly. Once the theoretical part was completed, and Mo Hua started to draw the arrays himself, his progress accelerated even more.

Mr. Zhuang first had Mo Hua relearn several arrays containing five array patterns, including some with the Five Elements attributes that Mo Hua had never seen before. Elder Gui had even prepared all the necessary drawing materials for him.

Mo Hua learned eagerly and persistently.

During the day, he drew arrays at Mr. Zhuang's tranquil residence, and at night, he continued practicing in the Dao Stele within his sea of consciousness, finding the arrays with five patterns not too challenging. After a few days, he could master an array.

Then came the six-pattern Stabilizing Water Array. Previously, Mo Hua's spiritual sense was not strong enough to complete it. Now, after more than half a month, practicing arrays every day, his spiritual sense had increased significantly. Although still somewhat strenuous, he could now fully draw the array with six patterns.

After completing the Stabilizing Water Array, Mr. Zhuang taught him several new arrays, such as the Heavyweight Array, the Flowing Sand Array, and the Small Cloud Rain Array. Supported by his spiritual sense and constant practice, Mo Hua mastered them all in half a month.

Mr. Zhuang was very pleased with Mo Hua's progress and his temperament.

Not every child of Mo Hua's age had the determination to sit and study array formations every day.

Privately, however, Mr. Zhuang still felt a tinge of regret and said to Elder Gui:

"Mo Hua's comprehension is even better than I thought, but it's a pity he comes from an independent cultivator background. His foundational knowledge in array formations is lacking, otherwise, he might not be much inferior to those favored talents from major families..."

"What's so great about those favored talents?"

Mr. Zhuang paused for a moment.

Elder Gui silently observed Mr. Zhuang, his voice flat and indifferent yet unmistakably ironic, "Weren't you once a favored talent? What about those disciples you took in before, weren't they all favored talents, and what came of them? How low have you fallen now, do I even need to say it..."

Mr. Zhuang sighed, annoyed, "If I die young, it would surely be from frustration caused by you!"

Elder Gui remained unmoved, "Life and death are predestined, your saying this shows that you still don't understand the Dao of Heaven."

Mr. Zhuang simply lay back in his lounge chair, thoughtfully adding, "The heavens are not benevolent; all beings are mere dogs. If one truly understands the Dao of Heaven, can he still be considered human?"

Elder Gui

continued to play chess alone, sitting still as if he were petrified wood.

After teaching many array formations containing six patterns, because six patterns were relatively complete and involved many basic forms, it required extensive study and understanding.

When Mr. Zhuang was ready to teach seven-patterned array formations, he discovered something quite surprising—Mo Hua's spiritual sense had grown unusually fast.

The first time Mr. Zhuang met Mo Hua, his spiritual sense was insufficient to draw six patterns, but now, a month later, not only could he support himself to complete an array with six patterns, he was even able to draw six and a half patterns of a seven-pattern array.

Mo Hua's spiritual power had progressed minimally over the month, but his spiritual sense had increased rapidly.

Mr. Zhuang frowned slightly, sensing something amiss.

One day, as Mo Hua was learning an array with seven patterns, Mr. Zhuang suddenly asked, "Mo Hua, do you know about visualization techniques?"

Mo Hua looked baffled, "Disciple has never heard of it."

"Is that so," Mr. Zhuang tapped the table thoughtfully, then asked, "Have you ever seen any strange images or patterns that, upon a single glance, immerse one's spiritual sense uncontrollably?"

Mo Hua thought for a moment and shook his head.

The strangest thing he had seen was the Dao Stele in his mind, but it had no discernible patterns or lines, and staring at it did not lead to immersion.

Mr. Zhuang paused, then added, "You must have noticed that your spiritual sense is growing faster than others."

Mo Hua nodded, "Disciple draws arrays during the day, and at night, I dream of practicing them too. Moreover, practicing in dreams does not consume spiritual sense, allowing it to gradually strengthen over days and nights."

He didn't mention the Dao Stele, but everything else was true.

Mo Hua wasn't entirely sure whether his increased spiritual sense was due to the Dao Stele or simply because he kept drawing arrays.

Mo Hua then asked, "Master, does continuously drawing arrays enhance spiritual sense?"

Mr. Zhuang was momentarily speechless.

Drawing arrays continuously consumes spiritual sense but also continuously trains the sea of consciousness. Over time, naturally, the spiritual sense also strengthens.

However, the usual practice in the cultivation world is to first find ways to enhance spiritual sense, then learn array formations.

Because relying on drawing arrays to enhance spiritual sense is extremely slow and carries the risk of depleting spiritual sense, potentially damaging the sea of consciousness irreversibly.

Thus, very few cultivators think of relying on such a simplistic and slow method, fraught with great risk, to enhance their spiritual sense.

Mr. Zhuang felt that things weren't so simple, and looked at Mo Hua doubtfully. But meeting Mo Hua's gaze, he found a pair of unusually sincere and straightforward eyes.

Mr. Zhuang had taught many disciples and seen eyes filled with admiration, fear, and craftiness, but never such candid eyes. He chuckled, "Well then."

"Do you know meditation techniques?" Mr. Zhuang asked again.

Mo Hua shook his head again.

"Meditation techniques allow a cultivator to enter a meditative state through meditation, recovering spiritual sense more quickly. This isn't something a cultivator of your level should learn, but you are somewhat special, so you can learn it now."

Mo Hua didn't know what Mr. Zhuang meant by special, but he was happy to learn something new, "Thank you, Master."

"But there is one thing you must remember," Mr. Zhuang's expression became more serious.

"If anyone asks why your spiritual sense grows quickly, just say it's because of the meditation techniques I taught you. Don't say anything else."

Mo Hua was somewhat confused, but he felt that Mr. Zhuang was looking out for his best interest and silently memorized his words.

Mr. Zhuang nodded and pulled a thin booklet from his sleeve, inscribed with three characters:

"Meditation Techniques."