

The Quest 50

Chapter 50: Siblings

Every morning thereafter, the three of them would visit Mr. Zhuang, paying respects from outside his door for the span of half a teacup. If the door remained shut, they would then descend the mountain.

Mo Hua actually wanted to tell them that Mr. Zhuang was accustomed to sleeping in until the afternoon, making their visit timing inopportune.

Yet, he reconsidered, thinking that at least for the time being, Mr. Zhuang did not seem inclined to meet them.

Whether they arrived early or late, they would not see Mr. Zhuang. Since they were fated not to meet, the timing of their visits seemed trivial.

Their morning ventures into the mountain allowed them to witness the mountains draped in morning glow, making their trips worthwhile.

During his ascents, Mo Hua would occasionally encounter them, exchanging greetings and, if time allowed, engaging in casual conversation.

Though both hailed from prestigious families, appearing prideful, they were actually quite approachable.

In their conversations, Mo Hua learned that the siblings' surname was Bai. The elder and strikingly handsome boy was Bai Zisheng, and his sister, Bai Zixi, delicate as a porcelain doll.

They had traveled far on the behest of their family elders to apprentice under Mr. Zhuang and study array formations.

Bai Zisheng was talkative, while Bai Zixi spoke less.

The siblings bore some resemblance, but Bai Zixi was notably more beautiful.

Mo Hua, shocked upon closer inspection, thought her beauty unreal, as if not made of flesh but crafted from celestial beauty and jade bones.

As Mo Hua stole another glance, he mused internally:

"Beauty often spells trouble, and it seems the Goddess Nuwa wasn't merely creating a person with Bai Zixi, but rather crafting a calamity..."

Accompanying the Bai siblings was a veiled woman called Aunt Xue, apparently a family protector.

Mo Hua was unsure of Aunt Xue's cultivation level, but it was definitely high, emanating a subtle oppressive aura unlike any other cultivator he had met before.

The highest cultivator he had seen was an elderly sect master from the Tongxian Sect, a mid-stage Foundation Building cultivator. However, due to his age and waning spiritual power, he did not exert the same pressure as Aunt Xue.

"At least a Foundation Building stage..."

Mo Hua guessed silently.

Having a Foundation Building cultivator as a guard spoke volumes about the siblings' status. The Bai family was undoubtedly a prominent clan from beyond Luzhou. Mo Hua wisely chose not to inquire further about their exact standing.

Such matters of noble clans and sects were far beyond Mo Hua, a cultivator of humble origin.

For independent cultivators like him, advancing to the Foundation Building stage was exceedingly challenging. In the small Tongxian City, such cultivators held significant status.

His own cultivation might never surpass that of a mere guard in his lifetime.

Mo Hua remembered his initial resolve: to diligently study array formations to become a first-class Array Master, which would eventually enable him to establish a foothold in the cultivation world.

Despite Mr. Zhuang's silent consent to the Bai siblings' daily visits, he showed no interest in meeting them.

However, Mr. Zhuang seemed to relax over time, maintaining a routine of rising in the afternoon to drink beef with liquor or enjoy pastries with tea, gazing at the mountainous vistas in contemplation.

Mo Hua continued his routine: studying arrays, drawing them, meditating, and then drawing some more. Whenever he had doubts, he would seek Mr. Zhuang's guidance.

One day, Mr. Zhuang abruptly tasked Mo Hua with drawing an array called the "Tripartite Array."

This array included six paths of array patterns, which Mo Hua could not complete with his current spiritual awareness, and its structure was quite unique, differing from the Five Elements Array he was accustomed to.

Mr. Zhuang gave Mo Hua only one day to work on it, asking to see whatever he could manage by the next day.

Mo Hua devoted the day to studying the "Tripartite Array," attempting several drawings. That night, he practiced on the remnants of steles in his sea of consciousness.

The next day, in Mr. Zhuang's presence, Mo Hua presented the array, albeit discontinuously and with difficulty, rendering some patterns ineffective due to insufficient spiritual awareness.

Mr. Zhuang said nothing, noting Mo Hua's fatigue and pale complexion—signs of overused spiritual awareness—and lit an incense stick. The pale smoke, carrying a refreshing fragrance, rose and filled the air.

"This is Calming Spirit Incense, nourishing for spiritual awareness. Meditate here until the incense burns out, then head back and rest. No more drawing arrays today."

"Thank you, sir."

After expressing his gratitude, Mo Hua meditated, feeling his spiritual

awareness recover more rapidly. About the time it took to drink two cups of tea, the incense was spent, and he respectfully took his leave.

After Mo Hua departed, Mr. Zhuang stared at the "Tripartite Array," pondering deeply without uttering a word.

Elder Gui entered, noticing his expression, and inquired, "Was it poorly drawn?"

Mr. Zhuang shook his head. "It's not about being poorly drawn... With insufficient spiritual awareness and limited time, it's impossible to draw it well. There will inevitably be flaws, but..."

He furrowed his brows, "Mo Hua is learning too quickly."

"What's wrong with quick learning?"

"It's not just quick; it's too quick..."

Mr. Zhuang unfolded the "Tripartite Array," explaining:

"This 'Tripartite Array' uses a completely different array hub and patterns compared to the Five Elements Array. I only gave him the diagram yesterday, and in just one day, he's almost mastered it. If not for his lacking spiritual awareness, he might have actually managed to draw this array correctly..."

His gaze sharpened, "The strangest part is, with Mo Hua's spiritual awareness, he should've only been able to practice it three or four times at most, but looking at this 'Tripartite Array' now, the strokes seem quite practiced, almost as if he's done it about ten times."

Elder Gui's expression remained unchanged, but his tone deepened, "Are you suggesting... Mo Hua is hiding something from you?"

Mr. Zhuang shook his head, "I've never asked, so it's not a matter of hiding. But it seems that Mo Hua might indeed have some other fortuitous encounter."

Elder Gui rolled his eyes, “In the path of cultivation, who doesn’t have their fortunes? Haven’t you had your share? Every creature born into this world is already blessed with great fortune by the heavens.”

Mr. Zhuang fell into thought.

Elder Gui continued, “If you really care, just ask him.”

Mr. Zhuang looked startled, “Ask him?”

Elder Gui, growing impatient, said, “You’re such a person, believing yourself to be perceptive, yet really just overthinking things, always assuming others are as secretive as you. Mo Hua seems straightforward enough, not like you, hiding countless thoughts and acting all hesitant.”

Mr. Zhuang lay back in his chair, his tone calm, “If I really were that suspicious, I wouldn’t have ended up in this situation.”

“Birds of a feather flock together; you think you’re clever and like dealing with cunning people. But since your heart isn’t as dirty as theirs, you naturally get played. This situation is of your own making, and you can’t blame others.”

Mr. Zhuang chuckled bitterly, “Yes, so now I can only associate with someone as heartless as you to find some peace.”

Elder Gui’s face remained impassive, and he spoke no more.