

The Quest 52

Chapter 52: Meeting with the Guest

The scenery in the courtyard was different from what the three had imagined; it was serene but seemed quite casual.

A pond and a view, merely ordinary in uniqueness, without any fluctuations of spiritual energy, did not resemble the residence of a great cultivator.

Mr. Zhuang also differed from their expectations. Although he had the handsome and heroic look, and a visage weathered by hardships, it seemed he lacked the temperament they imagined.

Aunt Xue was respectful, pondering silently in her heart.

Before leaving, the madam had shown her a portrait in which the man stood with his hands behind his back atop a mountain peak, resembling a fully unsheathed celestial sword with a domineering aura that almost made one dare not look directly at him.

The current Mr. Zhuang was lying leisurely in a bamboo chair, rocking back and forth, appearing very... languid.

If not for the portrait, one would hardly believe it was the same person.

Despite this, Aunt Xue dared not show any disrespect, respectfully handing over a token and a jade slip to Mr. Zhuang.

“The madam asked me to deliver this token and letter to you, sir, saying that you would understand once you see them.”

Mr. Zhuang looked at the token and then at the jade slip, chuckled lightly:

“She really is a good junior sister, still thinking of me and sending troubles my way.”

Mr. Zhuang turned to Aunt Xue, “When you have time, tell your madam that too much scheming by a woman can age her quickly.”

Aunt Xue bowed her head, not daring to respond.

Mr. Zhuang then looked at Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi, nodding his head: “The aptitude is indeed excellent, worthy of...” He paused, leaving his sentence unfinished.

Aunt Xue did not know what Mr. Zhuang meant, but seeing his appreciation for Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi’s aptitudes, she showed a pleased expression, “Then, sir...”

“I don’t take direct disciples, at most as a nominal disciple,” Mr. Zhuang put down the jade slip, “If you are willing, stay; if not, you may leave.”

This was within the expectations of the madam, as Aunt Xue remembered the madam’s words before leaving:

“My senior brother is stubborn by nature; he will do what he promises, and nothing can make him do what he doesn’t agree to. But he can be softened, just slowly persuade him. If not a direct disciple, then being a nominal one, or even just staying to serve tea and water is good. As long as he holds affection, he will eventually take in Zixi and Zisheng.”

Aunt Xue quickly said, “To be taken as a nominal disciple by sir is already a divine opportunity, how could we be unwilling.”

“Hmm,” Mr. Zhuang nodded, “Then let’s dispense with the formalities, just call me ‘sir’ and that will be enough.”

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi performed a kneeling salute to Mr. Zhuang, calling out “We greet you, sir.”

Mr. Zhuang looked at the two children, his expression becoming distant for a moment.

He faintly saw two children, a handsome boy and a beautiful girl, paying respects to an old man with white hair, recalling the children’s tender voices, “We greet you, master.”

Mr. Zhuang came back to his senses, a trace of self-mockery crossing his face, then said:

“I don’t have many rules here, your mother’s skills in array formation are not low, she should have taught you what needs to be taught, and you’re past the age for basic array initiation, you should have some foundation, learn on your own, if you have questions, come and ask me, but one thing, do not disturb me while I am meditating.”

“I have another nominal disciple here, called Mo Hua, you’ve probably met him, just get along well.”

After saying this, Mr. Zhuang waved his hand, “You may leave, ascend the mountain at the hour of Chen, descend at the hour of You, the rest of the time is at your leisure, if unclear, go find Mo Hua.”

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi then respectfully took their leave, the three left the bamboo house, coming to the courtyard.

Aunt Xue felt that things had gone more smoothly than she thought, almost a bit too casually.

And she also didn’t know why Mr. Zhuang had not met them before, but after these days, he was willing to see them and had simply accepted Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi as apprentices.

Aunt Xue frowned, puzzled.

“Could it really be as Mo Hua said, that Mr. Zhuang acts based on opportune moments, not seeing us was because the opportunity

hadn’t come, and now seeing us, the opportunity has arrived?”

As Aunt Xue walked, she saw Mo Hua under the locust tree, earnestly reading a book on array formations.

Aunt Xue felt that there must be something unusual about Mo Hua, for Mr. Zhuang to take him as an apprentice, and Bai Zixi and Bai Zisheng also wanted to know what Mr. Zhuang teaches.

The three approached Mo Hua, who was intently reading a book on array formations.

Mo Hua was completely focused on his book, but hearing their approach, he looked up and saw Bai Zisheng and his sister. He said, “You met Mr. Zhuang?”

Aunt Xue replied, “Indeed, and thanks to the young master’s words before, otherwise we might have waited in vain for many days.”

“I am no young master, just call me Mo Hua,” Mo Hua waved his hand, “and if you have to thank anyone, thank the sir, it has nothing to do with me.”

At this moment, Bai Zisheng could not help but ask, “The book you’re reading... is it ‘Elementary Solutions to the Five Elements Array’?”

Mo Hua nodded.

Bai Zisheng wondered, “Following Mr. Zhuang, you are still at this stage? This is the book our clan’s children three to four years old use for basic array training...”

Mo Hua was slightly annoyed.

One could question him, but questioning Mr. Zhuang was not acceptable.

Mo Hua retorted, “Was this book written by three to four-year-old children?”

Bai Zisheng was stunned for a moment, “That’s not the case, these basic array books, although seemingly simple, are very significant and mostly compiled by great cultivators with profound knowledge in array techniques.”

“If they were compiled by such great cultivators, why can’t they be read? The simpler things are, the deeper the truths they contain, the great way is simple, returning to the pure and true. Even high-level arrays are composed of the most basic array patterns.”

Mo Hua, imitating Mr. Zhuang, adopted an air of profound mystery.

Still, his limited experience only allowed him to mimic three or four parts of the demeanor, but it was enough to fool Bai Zisheng.

Bai Zisheng had an epiphany, seeing Mo Hua in a new light.

However, moments later, he again wondered, “Your cultivation is so low, you look only two or three years younger than me and Zixi, but how come you are only at the third level of Qi cultivation? Normally, one should at least be at the fifth or sixth level...”

Mo Hua found him somewhat annoying; too much talk when full, but he seemed more likable when hungry and too weak to speak.

Mo Hua didn't really want to deal with him, but Aunt Xue, feeling apologetic, said:

“Sorry, Zisheng spoke out of turn, what does one need to do as Mr. Zhuang's apprentice?”

Bai Zisheng wanted to argue something, but Bai Zixi gave him a cold glance, and Bai Zisheng swallowed his words.

Mo Hua didn't mind, saying, “Nothing much, just practice and study on your own, consult the sir when he's free, but don't disturb the sir's sleep.”

Bai Zisheng couldn't help asking, “Is sir's proficiency in array formation really that high? I see that the courtyard is quite ordinary, not using any special arrays, shouldn't a place where an array master lives be covered in array formations?”

Mo Hua countered, “If Mr. Zhuang's proficiency in array formation wasn't high, why would you go through all the trouble to become his disciple?”

Bai Zisheng said, “That's because...”

“Young master!”

Aunt Xue called out to Bai Zisheng, who realized his slip of the tongue, and casually replied, “Because I had only heard about it and had not witnessed it myself, so I asked you.”

“Oh~”

Mo Hua looked at him skeptically but said nothing else.