

The Quest 53

Chapter 53: Disciples

Bai Zisheng felt somewhat guilty and then a bit annoyed, feeling his spirit weaken. He straightened his chest and glared at Mo Hua.

"They probably have ulterior motives for wanting to become disciples..." Mo Hua thought to himself, then ignored Bai Zisheng and focused on reading the beginner's guide "Initial Explanation of the Five Elements Array."

Today, he intended to finish the book because he had some questions to ask Mr. Zhuang in the evening. If he kept chatting, he wouldn't be able to finish it.

Bai Zisheng, finding no interest in the conversation and being new to the place, didn't know what else to do. He and Bai Zixi began sitting with spirit stones and meditating.

While they meditated, a faint blue aura of spiritual power surrounded them, indicating that their cultivation level was probably at the later stages of Qi cultivation given the depth of their spiritual power.

Mo Hua was secretly impressed. Indeed, the resources of a great family were different from ordinary cultivators. Although only two or three years older than Mo Hua, their cultivation was already four or five minor realms higher than his.

And from Bai Zisheng's earlier words, both siblings also possessed high talents and standards in array techniques.

Mo Hua silently thought: "There are always people better than oneself, and the heavens beyond this sky. One should not be arrogant but also not disheartened. Just diligently continue cultivating and studying array techniques."

Mo Hua quickly calmed his mind and continued to study the array book.

A cool breeze started in the mountains, rustling the leaves and rippling the pond water, and then everything returned to calm.

Initially, Mr. Zhuang's small courtyard had only one disciple, but now it had three.

After consulting with Mr. Zhuang and finishing his questions as the evening approached and the sunset covered the mountains, it was time for Mo Hua to go home.

He bid farewell to Mr. Zhuang, and at the crossroads, he also said goodbye to the Bai siblings before slinging his storage bag over his shoulder and walking down the mountain path illuminated by the sunset.

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi took another mountain path. Halfway through, Bai Zisheng couldn't help but ask:

"Aunt Xue, can you tell what kind of spiritual root Mo Hua has?"

Aunt Xue hesitated for a moment, then said, "Judging by the fluctuation of his spiritual power, it seems to be a minor Five Elements spiritual root, with scant and mediocre quality, and it appears he hasn't formally started any cultivation techniques."

"An ordinary minor Five Elements spiritual root, and he's looking at beginner's array books..."

Bai Zisheng muttered and added, "Mr. Zhuang only agreed to take us as nominal disciples, and that's also because of our mother's influence. What merits does that Mo Hua have to be taken as a nominal disciple by Mr. Zhuang?"

Aunt Xue frowned slightly, recalling Mo Hua's behavior, and said:

"Mr. Zhuang is unconventional in his methods of accepting disciples and doesn't necessarily look only at one's aptitude..."

Aunt Xue further explained, "Moreover, the path of cultivation is long; we shouldn't only look at short-term progress. This child Mo Hua probably comes from an independent cultivator background. Independent cultivators are different from family cultivators; they lack inheritance and resources. Both their cultivation and understanding of arrays start late, and they progress slowly. They can't compare with the children from great families."

Bai Zisheng asked, "Is the gap between independent cultivators and family cultivators really that big?"

"The gap is not just big; it's like the difference between heaven and earth."

Aunt Xue sighed and advised:

"Even if Mo Hua comes from humble beginnings, you are now half his fellow disciples, so don't belittle him or hold a grudge, and be mindful of how you speak, lest you displease Mr. Zhuang."

"I understand, Aunt Xue," Bai Zisheng replied, nodding, half understanding.

The next day, the Bai siblings went up the mountain at dawn, and together with Mo Hua, they studied under Mr. Zhuang.

Elder Gui set up two more stone tables under the big pagoda tree next to Mo Hua's small table.

The three children each pursued their cultivation and studied, gathering in the evening at Mr. Zhuang's place for answers.

The Bai siblings, both in terms of cultivation level and knowledge of arrays, were far ahead of Mo Hua. Many questions they raised were things Mo Hua barely understood, but Mr. Zhuang often gave brief insights that struck the heart of the matter.

Although Mo Hua did not fully understand, he gradually absorbed the knowledge and benefited greatly.

Mo Hua thought it was a good thing that Mr. Zhuang

had taken the Bai siblings as nominal disciples. Otherwise, many questions he had never encountered would have remained unasked.

Now, with others to ask and Mr. Zhuang to answer, all Mo Hua needed to do was listen carefully.

Thus, the three of them became Mr. Zhuang's nominal disciples, spending their days each practicing cultivation, drawing arrays, consulting Mr. Zhuang, and then returning home.

The three didn't talk much on a daily basis. Mo Hua was absorbed in his books when reading and had no time for idle chat.

Bai Zisheng was somewhat haughty, and since Mo Hua didn't approach him for conversation, he naturally didn't seek out Mo Hua either. Bai Zixi, on the other hand, was somewhat aloof and also not much of a talker.

This routine continued for a month until one evening, the three Meng brothers approached Mo Hua, telling him that the Lotus Festival was coming, and invited him to go out and enjoy the festivities.

The Lotus Festival was a minor holiday but quite lively.

It was said to commemorate a meritorious cultivator from Tongxian City. Every year at this time, people would burn incense and light the nine-curved lotus treasure lamps to send their remembrances.

Having drawn arrays all day and his spiritual sense depleted, Mo Hua had also used the Meditation Technique twice and could not use it again. With nothing else to do, he decided to go out with his three young friends to enjoy the festivities.

Passing by the far left side of the street, they discovered a newly built cave dwelling. Located in a rather remote area, it occupied a large plot, seemingly formed by buying up several contiguous houses and rebuilding.

The cave dwelling's gate bore no plaque and was built with greyish-blue bricks, appearing understated but still standing out among the ordinary and low houses of the independent cultivators.

Mo Hua wondered, "When did this cave dwelling appear here?"

Xiao Hu said, "You haven't been around this part for a while, so you didn't know. This cave dwelling has been built for about a month now."

Xiao Hu looked at the high walls of the cave dwelling and exclaimed, "Building this cave dwelling must have cost a lot of spirit stones."

"How many?" Da Hu counted on his fingers but couldn't figure it out, eventually scratching his head, "Thousands, maybe..."

"Probably tens of thousands..."

"Tens of thousands of spirit stones... I could never save up that many in my lifetime..."

"Can't you be a bit more ambitious?"

"Do you have the ambition to save that many?"

Shuang Hu said, "I said to have ambition, not that you necessarily need to save up the spirit stones. Most of those who aspire to become immortals usually don't become immortals and end up gone..."

Da Hu and Xiao Hu nodded together, finding it reasonable.

Shuang Hu curiously added, "This place is so remote, far from the market, and inhabited by ordinary independent cultivators. Who would bother building such a big cave dwelling here, unless they had too many spirit stones?"

"If I had that many spirit stones, I'd build such a big cave dwelling too."

"Who do you think the owner of this cave dwelling is?" Shuang Hu turned to Mo Hua, "Mo Hua, do you know?"

Mo Hua shook his head, "How would I know?"

Before their conversation ended, the gate of the cave dwelling opened.

Out walked a handsome boy, a delicately beautiful girl, and a veiled woman with a graceful figure.

Mo Hua recognized them immediately—it was the Bai siblings and Aunt Xue.

The Bai siblings also saw Mo Hua and his friends. Bai Zisheng paused, "Mo Hua?"

Da Hu and the others all looked towards Mo Hua, who was also taken aback; he hadn't expected the owners of the cave dwelling to be the Bai siblings.

Bai Zisheng asked, "What are you doing here?"

Mo Hua replied, "I'm out shopping."

"Shopping?"

Bai Zisheng seemed to hear the word for the first time, his expression becoming excited, then he eagerly looked at Aunt Xue.

Bai Zixi's eyes also brightened, her gaze turning towards Aunt Xue like autumn waters.