

The Quest 59

Chapter 59: Choosing Techniques

Mo Hua ultimately did not choose a technique. As they parted ways, Mo Hua's silhouette carried a hint of desolation.

Bai Zixi, observing this, suddenly spoke, "I'll have Aunt Xue give you some spiritual items."

Mo Hua was momentarily stunned. He hadn't expected the usually aloof Bai Zixi to have such a kind heart, prompting him to smile, though he declined, "No need. Cultivation is a lifelong journey; I can't rely on others forever. Besides, one shouldn't accept rewards without merits."

Bai Zixi's expression remained neutral, unreadable whether pleased or not.

After expressing his thanks, Mo Hua continued to feel grateful for others' kindness.

As they left, Mr. Zhuang, who had been sunbathing from sun to moon, slowly rose and walked to his dusty, secluded study, mumbling, "Elder Gui is too lazy; how long has it been since this study was cleaned?"

Suddenly, Elder Gui's figure appeared behind him: "If it's not used, what does it matter whether it's clean?"

Mr. Zhuang replied irritably, "How many times have I told you not to sneak up like that? You make the whole yard feel eerie."

Wandering through the study, Mr. Zhuang flipped through various books and jade slips, further cluttering the already messy room.

"What are you looking for?"

"Some cultivation manuals," Mr. Zhuang replied nonchalantly.

"For Mo Hua?"

"Yes."

"You never cared this much about your disciples before," Elder Gui commented dryly, a hint of sarcasm in his voice.

Mr. Zhuang picked out a few jade slips, spread them on the table, and slowly sat down to look through them, "I was too proud and solitary before, focusing solely on my path. Now that I'm no longer concerned with that path, I find myself with the time to meddle in these matters."

Elder Gui remained silent, and the room fell quiet.

After a while, Mr. Zhuang couldn't help but speak, "You could talk occasionally, or this place really does feel gloomy."

Elder Gui coldly asked, "What do you want me to say?"

Mr. Zhuang thought for a moment, "What technique should we pick for Mo Hua?"

"It's best not to choose any."

"Why not?"

"If you don't interfere, you won't create karma, and Mo Hua will have less trouble."

Mr. Zhuang shook his head, "You believe in karma, I don't. Even if karma exists, it's not something you can avoid if you want to. Perhaps by coming to Li province and taking Mo Hua as an apprentice, I've already set it in motion. Once the wheels of fate start turning, it's not something I can change."

Finding his own words ominous, Mr. Zhuang self-deprecatingly added, "I sound like those old fuddy-duddies at the Dao Court, always squabbling over fate."

Elder Gui dryly remarked, "I am one of those old fuddy-duddies from the Dao Court."

Mr. Zhuang chuckled awkwardly, "You're a bit different, though." He then changed the subject, "What about the 'Dual Yin-Yang Technique'?"

"Too obscure."

"The 'Five Elements Life-Giving Technique'?"

"His meridians won't withstand it."

"How about the 'Mysterious Dao Technique'?"

"He'd be hunted by the Mysterious Dao Sect."

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Mr. Zhuang kept picking, and Elder Gui kept rejecting, until Mr. Zhuang finally asked, "Do you have any techniques that might work?"

"The techniques I have aren't suitable either."

Mr. Zhuang sighed, "Poor spiritual roots are indeed troublesome. Why couldn't Mo Hua have high-quality spiritual roots? Choosing techniques would be so much easier. Like back in my day, I just picked the best one available, without all this fuss."

Elder Gui silently rolled his eyes.

"To be outstanding, to have mid-to-low grade spiritual roots, and the required spiritual items can't be too valuable..." Mr. Zhuang mumbled.

"That requirement to be outstanding is unnecessary..."

Mr. Zhuang shook his head, "No, my disciples must stand out."

"He's just a nominal disciple, not one who has formally apprenticed and served tea."

"That you don't understand," Mr. Zhuang said cryptically, "Even nominal disciples must be exceptional to reflect the uniqueness of their master."

Elder Gui retorted, "You used to say, 'The strong boast with their power, the weak boast with their words'..."

"Why can't you remember the good things I've said?" Mr. Zhuang complained.

"You were unstoppable back then, never a kind word from you."

Mr. Zhuang looked a bit chagrined but redirected, "Let's focus on choosing the technique."

He

continued to search the room, setting aside those that seemed suitable and discarding the rest. Elder Gui silently followed, occasionally handing over a jade slip, which Mr. Zhuang would glance at with disdain but kept anyway, muttering, "Your taste in techniques is still as vulgar..."

The next day, after a full day of designing arrays, Mo Hua was about to head home when he saw Mr. Zhuang waving from the pavilion.

Mo Hua approached and bowed, puzzled, "Do you need something, Master?"

Mr. Zhuang placed a large bag of mixed jade slips and books before Mo Hua, "Pick something."

Mo Hua gasped in surprise, "Master..."

"Since you call me 'Master,' I can't treat you too shabbily. Choosing a technique is but a small effort."

Remembering Mr. Zhuang's usual laziness, lounging all day if he could, Mo Hua felt a warm gratitude towards his master's evident care in selecting these techniques. He stood up and bowed respectfully again.

"You pick, I'll contemplate the Dao for a while," Mr. Zhuang gestured dismissively, then laid back down in his chair, closing his eyes for a nap.

Mo Hua, trying not to disturb his master, gently and carefully reviewed the pile of techniques.

"Spiritual Transformation Technique," "Sitting Dao Technique," "Heaven and Earth Dual Yin-Yang Scripture," "Path of the Immortal God Technique"...

These techniques' names alone were profound, their effects extraordinary—some could enhance spiritual power, others could repair the spirit and body simultaneously, and some even reduced bottlenecks in cultivation. All required the usage of various spiritual items from heaven and earth, many of which Mo Hua recognized, suggesting that even though these items were rare, they were not unobtainable treasures or inherent spiritual items of mythical beasts.

It was evident that Mr. Zhuang had put considerable thought into selecting these techniques.

Mo Hua kept this kindness in mind as he focused on choosing a technique.

First, he picked the cheapest, requiring the fewest heavenly and earthly spiritual items. Then, he looked for those that allowed for the cultivation of the most complete cycles of spiritual power. Next, he sought those best matched to his attributes, and finally, those with the most practical effects.

After much deliberation, Mo Hua selected a few relatively suitable techniques, then hesitated again.

The required spiritual items were the least expensive, but that did not mean they were free. In reality, they would still cost thousands of spirit stones.

Considering the techniques he had seen in the past few days, some requiring tens of thousands of spirit stones for their items, a few thousand was already the cheapest.

But then Mo Hua realized that even a few thousand spirit stones were more than he could afford.

Suddenly, Mo Hua felt quite stuck.

At that moment, Mo Hua flipped through a rough, archaic-looking jade slip that stood out awkwardly among the elegant or refined books and slips. Holding it in his hand and immersing his spiritual sense, the words "Heavenly Proliferation Technique" appeared in his mind. As Mo Hua read further, he felt something was missing in the technique's description.

After some thought, Mo Hua realized that there was no mention of required spiritual items from heaven and earth.

Did that mean this technique required no additional spiritual items?

This thought struck Mo Hua deeply, exciting him beyond measure.