

## The Quest 68

Chapter 68: Practical Application

One morning, Mr. Zhuang called Mo Hua over, his expression inscrutable, and asked:

"Mo Hua, what kind of Array Master do you aspire to be?"

Mo Hua thought to himself that it would be nice to become a first-rate Array Master, earning a stipend each month, self-sufficient, surely making his parents proud.

But that probably wasn't what Mr. Zhuang meant.

"Sir, are there differences among Array Masters?" Mo Hua humbly inquired.

"There are countless arrays, and naturally, Array Masters who study them are equally diverse, each excelling in their own way."

"Oh..." Mo Hua was somewhat perplexed.

Mr. Zhuang continued, "Some Array Masters travel across the nine provinces, seeking lost forbidden arrays; others visit various sects to exchange insights through array challenges; some are devoted solely to their studies, unconcerned with worldly affairs, and yet others are more practical, seeking to revolutionize industries through arrays..."

Mo Hua found it difficult to choose.

The idea of traveling across the nine provinces to search for lost forbidden arrays was enticing—though he didn't yet know what a forbidden array was. Visiting sects to challenge array techniques sounded appealing; being devoted solely to the study of arrays was peaceful and quiet; and using arrays to revolutionize industries seemed meaningful...

Seeing Mo Hua's finely furrowed brows, Mr. Zhuang smiled slightly, then continued:

"However, it doesn't really matter which path you choose. The world has its strictures, but it is also free from prohibitions. No one dictates what kind of person you are or what kind of Array Master you should be."

"As an Array Master, your choice doesn't matter as much as your dedication to arrays, your understanding of the Dao of Heaven, and remember the four words 'observe, learn, think, apply.'"

"Observe, learn, think, apply?"

"Observing is to broaden your horizons, learning is to enhance your skills, thinking is to avoid rote memorization, and applying is to turn your knowledge into practice. Understanding of arrays starts with observation and ends with application."

Mo Hua nodded, feeling like he understood a bit, but not completely.

"You've done well with observing, learning, and thinking, but that's not enough; you must also learn to apply. Studying arrays without applying them is like hiding treasures in the mountains to gather dust, or having talents that you never reveal, ultimately failing to achieve greatness. To truly learn, you must apply your knowledge to perfect your learning," Mr. Zhuang advised.

"Then, sir," Mo Hua earnestly asked, "how should I apply array techniques effectively?"

"Array techniques are the cultivators' insights into the natural world; thus, everything in the world contains array techniques and principles for their application. With intent, everything, even the minutest detail or the simplest meal, is related to array techniques."

Mo Hua suddenly realized that his previous use of array techniques for refining tools and building stoves were indeed applications of array techniques.

"Disciple understands," Mo Hua joyfully said, "Array techniques are cultivators' perceptions of the Dao of Heaven, and naturally, they can be applied across all professions in the cultivation world. Every plant and tree contains the essence of array techniques, and with intent, all can be explored and applied. Sir, is that what you mean?"

"Exactly!" Mr. Zhuang expressed satisfaction. "There's also one more important thing, learning through application allows you to integrate and comprehend the vast array of techniques you study, solving your problem of learning about various arrays superficially."

Mo Hua's eyes brightened.

Mr. Zhuang explained, "Just drawing arrays on paper can lead to being theoretical without practical experience. The myriad forms of the natural world and array media are diverse; actively drawing and applying arrays deepens your understanding and intuition, and strengthens your ability to solve arrays!"

Mo Hua felt this made a lot of sense but was also a bit troubled, "Disciple may not have that much time..."

After all, drawing arrays on specific spiritual tools or stones was more troublesome than on paper, and considering the adjustments required in applying arrays, it would take much more time, preventing him from keeping his regular appointments with Mr. Zhuang.

"No worries," Mr. Zhuang laid the groundwork for a long time before finally expressing the thoughts hidden in his heart:

"I can give you some time off!"

Mo Hua sensed something amiss and looked at Mr. Zhuang with a hint of suspicion.

Mr. Zhuang looked up at the sky, explaining in a serene and clear manner:

"Typical disciples only learn one type of array and don't need to consider applying them so early. But due to your technique, you need to learn a wide variety of arrays, and the broader your studies, the harder it is to find a unified approach. Only through 'learning by applying' can you

integrate and master the various techniques."

Seeing Mo Hua's expression change from doubtful to thoughtful, and then to sudden realization, Mr. Zhuang took the opportunity to add:

"So you don't need to come to me every day. Just visit every few days, and if there's anything unclear, I'll guide you."

Mo Hua's doubts cleared, and he gratefully said,

"Understood, sir!"

After Mo Hua left, Mr. Zhuang lay back in his chair, leisurely shaking his fan.

Elder Gui appeared, giving him a glance and scoffed, "Leading the pupil astray."

Mr. Zhuang replied, "It's just a bit of forcing the sapling to grow faster, not leading astray."

"His foundation is still not solid, yet he's already considering practical application. I've never seen anyone teach arrays like this. Isn't that leading astray?" Elder Gui's tone was calm but slightly mocking.

Mr. Zhuang, with a profound look, responded, "How solid can a foundation be? Compared to his peers in Tongxian City, his foundation is very solid, especially compared to the children of the Bai family. Even if he studies for another ten or twenty years, his foundation would still not be considered solid. If he can never catch up with others, why not try a different path?"

"I thought you had some confidence, but it turns out you're just trying," Elder Gui remarked.

"The Dao of Heaven is constant yet elusive; how can those who stick to the rules glimpse the grand Dao?"

Elder Gui was visibly moved by these words and then nodded, "You're right."

Mr. Zhuang felt somewhat uneasy, "I'm just blabbering, not sticking to the rules might also lead to a bad end. You're old enough, don't bother yourself with changing your ways or altering your Daoist heart."

"I understand," Elder Gui said.

Mr. Zhuang glanced at him, then lay back down, murmuring, "Do you really understand..."

Elder Gui then asked, "How long do you plan to teach?"

Mr. Zhuang's expression became slightly serious, "Finish what you start; I'll wait until he becomes a first-rate Array Master."

"What about those two children from the Bai family? They both have exceptional talents; don't you think it's a pity?"

Mr. Zhuang flicked his fan, "What does that have to do with me?"

Elder Gui's voice turned wooden, "Your younger sister might not give up."

Mr. Zhuang, looking at the distant drifting clouds, said:

"She wants me to remember the past affection, but she's no longer that little sister, and I'm no longer that spirited second senior brother. She knows this too, but can't accept it in her heart, otherwise, she would have come to me herself..."

"And my senior brother, who has gone to great lengths to find me..."

Elder Gui fell silent, then suddenly said:

"Come back to the sect with me; otherwise, I can't protect you for much longer."

Mr. Zhuang, lying on the bamboo chair, gazing at the mountains, calmly said:

"Time alternates, with sunrise there must be sunset, the seasons change, with flourishing comes withering, life is normal, and naturally, there is death. Life and death are ordinary matters of the world; what is there to worry about?"

"I can enjoy days like this, eating meat, drinking wine, watching the scenery; then I desire nothing more."

Knowing he couldn't persuade him, Elder Gui no longer spoke, his figure gradually merging into the shadows.

