

The Quest 721

Chapter 721: Returning Home (3)

The sky was gradually darkening, and they could already vaguely see Tongxian City in the distance; stopping now would surely delay their journey.

Though Mo Hua's voice sounded tender, there was a hidden aura of unyielding authority that demanded attention.

Especially since throughout the trip, all the Monster Hunters had treated Mo Hua warmly and kindly. Such "popularity" shouldn't be underestimated.

"Little brother Old Zheng hesitated.

Mo Hua raised his finger to his lips and "shushed" him, signaling him to be silent.

Old Zheng was puzzled.

Mo Hua released his Divine Sense to scout the surroundings for a moment. His expression gradually turned solemn as he muttered, "It's... a Second Grade Monster Beast

Upon hearing this, Old Zheng's legs went soft, and he said with a trembling voice,

"Se... Second Grade?"

The other trader Cultivators also had a horrified look in their eyes, then one by one, they began to discuss:

"Impossible

"Second Grade Monster Beasts, with their strong Blood Qi, can be seen from afar

"We didn't notice anything

...

Before they had finished speaking, a suppressed and terrifying growl emerged from the gloomy forests on the right.

This low growl contained Evil Qi and a blood-chilling Blood Qi.

Their faces instantly turned deathly pale.

It was a Second Grade Monster Beast!

A Monster Beast stronger than Foundation Establishment!

Such a beast could feast on all of them!

With the speed of a Second Grade Monster Beast, there was no escaping!

Everyone drew their weapons, but the hands clutching the hilts couldn't stop shaking, and their faces were filled with despair.

It was then that Mo Hua cautioned,

"Don't move!"

Old Zheng also snapped back to reality and hurriedly spoke in a low voice, "Put away your swords, don't show any killing intent, don't look into the Monster Beast's eyes."

At this point, all he could do was pray that the Monster Beast was full and would overlook them.

If they didn't provoke the Monster Beast, they might have a slim chance of survival.

Otherwise, it seemed likely that today would be their memorial day.

As everyone was on tenterhooks, the dark shadows of the trees stirred.

From the woods emerged a Monster Beast as tall as a man, with deep brown pupils and an intricate mix of dark and white patterns on its body, and a regal “king” Character on its head.

"A Second Grade Tiger Demon

Old Zheng felt bitter inside.

This was the end...

Unfortunately, it was one of the bloodthirsty and savage Tiger Demons, known for their formidable strength among Monster Beasts...

And Tiger Demons had large appetites.

The faces of everyone present were as white as paper.

But Mo Hua was taken aback.

Big Tiger?

Why does it look so familiar...

Mo Hua looked intently for a few moments and suddenly realized something, with a flash of understanding.

Was this... the Big Tiger raised in the Black Mountain Stronghold for bloodsucking? The one he once fed dried fish to, the Little Demon Cat?

It was an old acquaintance!

No, an old “demon”!

The Big Tiger’s gaze wandered through the crowd, then settled on Mo Hua. There was a moment of bewilderment, followed by confusion, and then it seemed to recognize Mo Hua. Its big eyes blinked, and the ferocity in its eyes faded away.

It seemed not to be looking for food, but had come over simply because it sensed a familiar presence.

Mo Hua’s eyes brightened, and he quickly said,

"Old Zheng, give me that Monster meat."

Old Zheng was flabbergasted, “Monster meat?”

"The two we killed earlier

They had killed two Monster Beasts on the road, a Kui Wood Wolf and a Red-eyed Demon Sheep. Some of the materials were harvested, and some of the meat was also kept.

"Oh, oh... Okay!"

Old Zheng nodded repeatedly.

Mo Hua took the Monster meat and said, “You all go ahead, I’ll feed it.”

Old Zheng looked stunned, “Feed

"Yes,” Mo Hua nodded, “I’m familiar with this Monster Beast

Old Zheng opened his mouth wide and looked from Mo Hua to the fearsome Second Grade King-Character Tiger Monster before him, incredulous:

You say you're good with people, but this... surely can't be called 'people' connections, right...?

A Second Grade Tiger Demon...

This is...

Old Zheng's emotions were complex, difficult to express in words at the moment.

Mo Hua waved his little hand at him, "Hurry up and go, otherwise it will get dark

Old Zheng couldn't wait to leave, but he looked at Mo Hua and hesitated, "Then little brother, you

"Don't worry," Mo Hua said.

This Big Black Mountain was like his own backyard.

It was only that the yard had been renovated, and due to his unfamiliarity, he felt a little estranged for the moment.

Old Zheng looked at the sky and said through clenched teeth, "Little brother, for this great kindness, I shall be in your debt!"

"In our group, we'll be staying at the Orchid Inn, right opposite the Fulu Building

"If you come into the city, you must come find me there!"

Orchid Inn?

Was it newly opened?

He didn't recall such an inn in Tongxian City before...

Mo Hua nodded, "Alright, I'll remember that."

Old Zheng bowed to Mo Hua, and the other Cultivators also showed their gratitude with a salute before carefully making their way towards Tongxian City.

The Second Grade Tiger Demon indeed ignored them entirely and allowed them to leave.

Such a thing was unimaginable with a Second Grade Monster Beast...

Old Zheng found it hard to believe.

He couldn't help but glance back at Mo Hua, thinking in shock:

"Who on earth is this young Cultivator

...

As the trading caravan departed, there was no one around except for Mo Hua. The Big Tiger was no longer menacing but instead circled around Mo Hua twice, making a "roar" sound at him.

Mo Hua couldn't understand, but he could roughly get its meaning.

It seemed to be saying, "Follow me

Having reached Foundation Establishment, Mo Hua's Divine Sense had undergone a qualitative change, making him even more sensitive to killing intent. Sensing no ill will from the Big Tiger, he decided it wasn't dangerous and followed the Big Tiger using his movement technique, walking through the dim forest.

The Big Tiger would take a few steps, look back at Mo Hua to make sure he was following, and then continue forward.

Chapter 722: Return Home (4)

Just like that, he brought Mo Hua all the way to a cave.

The cave was spacious and somewhat damp, and it didn't seem like a permanent dwelling for the tiger, but more like a temporary shelter.

Mo Hua was a bit surprised.

A Big Tiger also practices “having more than one lair.”

It couldn't really have become a spirit, could it...

The Big Tiger glanced at Mo Hua, motioned for him to wait there and then burrowed deeper into the cave. Soon after, it returned with about ten storage bags in its mouth.

These storage bags, both new and old, varied in design—some were even very exquisite.

It was unclear whether the bags were collected or taken from slain victims.

The tiger placed the storage bags in front of Mo Hua.

After a long moment of stunned silence, Mo Hua slowly began to understand.

This Big Tiger... was it repaying a kindness?

He had saved it twice, and it had kept that in mind, gathering these storage bags to offer as gifts when they met again?

Mo Hua felt unexpectedly moved for a moment.

He looked at the storage bags again, most of which were not ordinary, and their designs differed from those of Monster Hunters, so Mo Hua felt relieved.

Mo Hua took out some Kui Wood Wolf monster meat and tossed it to the Big Tiger.

The Big Tiger sniffed it, found it sufficiently fresh, and began eating with relish, seated with the meat held in its two front paws.

Mo Hua watched the Big Tiger for a long time, finding the sight quite novel.

It had patterns of white and mystical, with a “king” character on its forehead.

He had asked his father Mo Shan, Elder Yu, and some other veteran Monster Hunters, but never heard of a tiger-shaped monster beast like this.

Mo Hua also asked Mr. Zhuang.

Mr. Zhuang’s eyes sharpened, clearly knowing something but never said it outright—only commenting that “it’s somewhat rare, indeed unusual.”

To this day, Mo Hua still didn’t know exactly what kind of monster beast this was.

Moreover, it seemed that it truly didn’t eat humans...

And it was very clever...

Mo Hua watched the Big Tiger for a while longer, then shook his head, clueless.

He looked outside at the darkening sky and said to the Big Tiger,

"I have to go. In a few days, I’ll come to see you again and bring you some dried small fish

The Big Tiger clearly looked disdainful, as if it felt that its dignity as a Second Grade Big Tiger was being underestimated by Mo Hua.

Nevertheless, it did not refuse.

Mo Hua collected the storage bags and tucked them away.

After all, it was a kind gesture from the Big Tiger, it would be disrespectful to decline.

Plus, Mo Hua was quite curious about what the storage bags contained and to whom they belonged.

Afterward, Mo Hua waved goodbye to the Big Tiger and then began his journey alone, walking along the mountain path toward Tongxian City.

As he left the deep mountains and reached the Inner Mountain, the scenery became very familiar to him.

Memories from the past all surfaced.

Spiritual mines, the Qian Family, Big Demons... and the days when he followed his father to run up and down the mountains, getting to know Big Black Mountain, drawing maps, and setting up Formations...

Mo Hua couldn't help feeling sentimental.

It felt like a long time had passed, yet it seemed like just yesterday.

The sky had completely darkened, so Mo Hua quickened his pace. Relying on his mastery of the Water Passing Step, he took shortcuts, quickly passing through the Inner Mountain, and arrived at the Outer Mountain.

Along the way, he avoided monster beasts, miasma, and poison marshes.

Then he trekked for several more hours.

By the time he reached Tongxian City, the night was deep.

The sky was dotted with stars, and the lights of Tongxian City were faint.

Mo Hua slowed his steps and as he approached the city gate, he suddenly stood still, as he saw a familiar figure waiting there.

Graceful and gentle.

It seemed that ever since she had news from the Monster Hunter, she had been standing there at the city gate, eagerly watching the distant mountain road, expecting the small form she longed for day and night to appear.

Even as the sun set and the night draped over her, she continued her silent vigil.

Waiting for her child to come home.

Mo Hua saw her, but she hadn't noticed him; her face was full of expectation mixed with anxious longing as she stared into the distance.

A tremor went through Mo Hua's heart, and his eyes became misty.

He ran toward the city gate like the wind.

"Mother!"

Liu Ruhua, hearing this voice, trembled, turned around, and gazed fixedly at Mo Hua running towards her, feeling as if she were in a dream.

When Mo Hua reached her, she saw his face, which although slightly unfamiliar, was the face that haunted her dreams. His countenance was smiling, but tears could not help streaming down.

Liu Ruhua held Mo Hua tightly in her embrace, as if holding the most precious treasure in the world.

"Safe, you've returned

Liu Ruhua's voice trembled slightly, but it was soft, like a warm breeze.

"Yes."

Mo Hua's eyes were glossy with tears, and he nestled in his mother's embrace, nodding.

"Mother, I'm home."

Chapter 723: First Intentions (1)

Mo Hua returned home and has also completed his Foundation Establishment.

This news quickly spread throughout Tongxian City.

All Cultivators in Tongxian City, whether they heard the rumors early or learned of them later, were both shocked and overjoyed.

They had not expected that Mo Hua, after a few short years of travel, would have already established his foundation.

And since Mo Hua excelled so much in his studies of the Formation, given time, perhaps he could even become a Second Grade Formation Master.

A Second Grade Formation Master, ah, such a figure might not appear in Tongxian City even once in hundreds of years.

Elder Yu was so delighted, he couldn't close his mouth.

He had known early on that the child Mo Hua was highly talented and kind-hearted, and he was sure to have boundless prospects, but he didn't expect this "future" to come so soon.

A few years felt like closing and opening his eyes, and just like that, Mo Hua had established his foundation.

Now that Mo Hua had returned home, the usually somewhat stingy Elder Yu specially took out the Spirit Stones he had saved for a long time to hold a "welcome back feast" for Mo Hua.

Mo Shan knew that although Elder Yu was a Foundation Building Elder, he had taken care of most of the Loose Cultivators over the years and ended up with little savings, having not accumulated many Spirit Stones.

However, Tongxian City was no longer the same as before; the Loose Cultivators were now living more comfortably, and naturally, they could not allow him to spend his own money.

So Mo Shan said, this should be considered Mo Hua's "Foundation Establishment Banquet," and there was no need for Elder Yu to provide the Spirit Stones.

In Tongxian City, a Foundation Establishment Banquet is basically the most grandiose feast.

For Loose Cultivators, establishing a foundation is fraught with difficulties.

Success in Foundation Establishment is the greatest celebration, and it usually involves hosting a grand banquet and inviting a wide array of guests.

Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua had also fantasized in the past about one day holding a "Foundation Establishment Banquet" for their son, Mo Hua.

But until then, it was just wishful thinking.

It's not easy for Loose Cultivators to establish their foundation...

Mo Hua was born frail, his Spiritual Root neither good nor bad, and his path to cultivation was sure to be filled with hardships.

Even if Mo Hua truly had the day when he established his foundation, they might not live long enough to see it for themselves, to witness Mo Hua in the act of Foundation Establishment...

But what they never expected was that their fifteen-year-old Mo Hua had already succeeded in Foundation Establishment.

Mo Shan and his wife were surprised and overjoyed, and to this day, they still find it somewhat unbelievable.

Even when Mo Hua, who had already established his foundation, stood before them, it still felt like a dream...

Then came the preparations for the “Foundation Establishment Banquet.”

Liu Ruhua took out a considerable number of Spirit Stones and held a banquet at the Fulu Building.

These Spirit Stones were saved over the years for Mo Hua, originally intended to be used for when he would take a wife in the future.

But now that Mo Hua had established his foundation, Liu Ruhua was so happy that she decided to spend some to celebrate.

After all, Mo Hua was still young, and it was too early for him to marry. She could always save up more later on.

Besides, half of the Fulu Building belonged to Mo Hua.

With Mo Hua away, that half was all Liu Ruhua’s.

The “manager” of the Fulu Building, An Xiaofu, even called Liu Ruhua “master.”

An Xiaofu was also very close to Mo Hua.

So holding it at the Fulu Building was almost like holding it at their own home, and it wouldn’t cost too many Spirit Stones.

On the day of the Foundation Establishment Banquet, the place was bustling, with nearly every Loose Cultivator in the city in attendance.

These Loose Cultivators either watched Mo Hua grow up from a young age, had a particularly close relationship with Mo Shan, or had benefited from Mo Hua’s kindness...

Some of the prominent Cultivators in the city were also present, including members from the An Family, Master Luo, Master Qian, and some smaller Clans...

There were too many people, and the Fulu Building couldn't accommodate everyone.

An Xiaofu then rented out the entire street's storefronts temporarily.

Everyone feasted and drank merrily.

The whole Tongxian City was as if celebrating the New Year.

Cultivators who were traveling merchants from other regions, unaware of the occasion, thought Tongxian City was celebrating some festival.

Once they learned it was a "Foundation Establishment Banquet," and that the Cultivator who had established the foundation was a First Grade Formation Master as recognized by the Taoist Court, they were all astounded.

A Foundation Building Cultivator, a First Grade Formation Master.

In a Second Grade Immortal City like Tongxian City, this truly signifies a person of immense influence and renown.

These merchants also understood the principle of paying respects when arriving in a new place.

They prepared some "modest gifts," delivered them personally, to share a drink and bask in the joy, hoping to become acquainted as well.

Some merchants even spent a bit to personally offer toasts and congratulations to Mo Hua.

Since this was already a joyous occasion, they didn't mind these little considerations.

Old Zheng, using some connections, held a cup of wine, nervous about his encounter, and raised a toast to Mo Hua.

But when he looked up, he found that the “First Grade Formation Master,” the “Foundation Building Dignitary,” was actually the young Cultivator who had traveled with him, chatting away the entire journey. His mouth opened so wide, it could fit a duck egg...

During the Foundation Establishment Banquet, the toasts and drinks flowed endlessly.

Elder Yu was very happy, his face full of smiles, but in his eyes, there seemed to be a trace of melancholy.

Time urges one to age.

In the past, Tongxian City had only him as a Foundation Building Cultivator. He had to bear the pressure and stand against the powerful Qian Clan; Elder Yu could not afford to fall no matter what.

That’s why he was tough, harsh in scolding, and ruthless in his methods.

But now, with the living standards of Loose Cultivators improving, Elder Yu breathed a sigh of relief and suddenly felt somewhat old.

That spirit, no matter what, couldn’t rise up as before.

Now watching Mo Hua, who had established his foundation at just fifteen, Elder Yu felt gratified, and somewhat startled, though he remained composed on the surface.

Mo Hua, now with strong Divine Sense and sharper observational skills, noticed Elder Yu’s concerns.

He then went to have a drink with Elder Yu.

Mo Hua drank fruit wine, personally brewed by his mother, which was warm and sweet to the taste, had a hint of alcohol, but was not harsh.

Chapter 724: Initial Intention (2)

Elder Yu was still drinking strong liquor.

After drinking for a while, Mo Hua whispered,

"Elder, why are you still at the Foundation Establishment Initial Stage

Elder Yu was startled and couldn't help but glare at Mo Hua, "The Foundation Establishment Realm is like climbing a mountain step by step. How could it be easy to cultivate?"

"Oh," Mo Hua nodded.

Elder Yu suddenly sighed and said with a bitter smile, "I'm old, I can't cultivate anymore

Mo Hua shook his head, "How can you call yourself old? Think about it, if you break through to the Middle Phase of Foundation Establishment, you can live another hundred years, and if you break through to the Foundation Establishment Late Stage, another hundred years... If you keep breaking through, won't you never grow old...?"

Elder Yu couldn't help but chuckle, "It's not as easy as you think

"Then what is easy?" Mo Hua asked, "Opposing the Qian Family is not easy, and neither is making a living as a Loose Cultivator. Even if it's difficult, you still have to do it."

"If something needs to be done, then do it."

"It doesn't matter whether it's easy or hard, successful or not

Elder Yu became reflective, and after a moment, asked confusedly, "Who told you all this?"

Mo Hua patted his chest, "Myself!"

Elder Yu clearly didn't believe it.

Mo Hua's face turned serious, "Elder, I've already traveled outside. I am a Foundation Building Cultivator who has 'seen the world'."

Elder Yu saw that although Mo Hua had reached Foundation Establishment, his expression and manner were still the same as always—somewhat reasonable yet adorable. He couldn't help but shake his head with a smile.

Then he thought to himself, "What does it matter if I'm old

"I was too tired to cultivate before, but now that I can catch my breath and have some free time, isn't it the perfect opportunity to focus on pursuing higher realms and advancing my cultivation?"

"Cultivators, Cultivators, cultivate oneself and establish one's purpose."

"Without cultivating and tempering oneself, how can one even be called a Cultivator?"

"So what if I'm old?"

"So what if I'm of great age?"

"In a human lifetime, as long as one does not die, one should steadfastly pursue the Taoist Heart, single-mindedly seeking the Tao

Elder Yu suddenly had a realization, and his eyes gradually became sharp again, filled with a hint of fierceness and a trace of stubbornness.

Mo Hua 'reassuredly' nodded, then said, "Elder, this time you scrounged a meal from me, next time it'll be my turn to scrounge from you."

"Scrounge a meal?"

Elder Yu was taken aback, then realized that Mo Hua was talking about the "Foundation Establishment Feast."

"What meal do you want to scrounge from me?"

Mo Hua's face became solemn, "I want to scrounge the 'Golden Core Feast'!"

Elder Yu spat out a mouthful of old wine.

I'm this old and only at the Foundation Establishment Initial Stage, and you're already thinking of scrounging my "Golden Core Feast"?

Boy, you really dare to dream bigger than I do.

But after a pause, he thought, why can't one dare to dream? By what right should one not dare to dream?

If one doesn't even have this aspiration, what is the point of cultivating the Tao?

Elder Yu gritted his teeth and cursed,

"Fine! To hell with it, the Golden Core it is!"

Elder Yu's voice was a bit loud, with a "to hell with it" that everyone around him could hear, causing them to look over in astonishment.

Only then did Elder Yu realize he had spoken out of turn.

But he had a thick skin and pretended as if he had said nothing, clinking glasses with Mo Hua and drinking.

The others also tactfully turned their heads away, pretending nothing had happened.

But not far away, Yu Chengyi was a bit lost in thought.

His father... hadn't cursed at anyone for a long time...

Ever since their days in Tongxian City became better, his father's temper had become much "milder," and he hardly ever cursed like before anymore.

He was so mild that it even made Yu Chengyi feel a bit estranged.

But now, Yu Chengyi heard his father cursing again...

Though blunt and simple, with just a raw "to hell with it" that was all emotion and no finesse,

He felt inexplicably more at ease in his heart.

Indeed, this was the father he was familiar with...

Yu Chengyi silently thought.

Mo Hua actually wanted to curse along, but the words were already on the tip of his tongue when he looked up and saw his mother, Liu Ruhua, looking at him, so he swallowed his words back down.

I am a good child, I don't curse...

Mo Hua silently told himself.

...

After the Foundation Establishment Feast, Mo Hua got busy for a while.

Mainly because he was too well-known in Tongxian City, with too many acquaintances, and just wandering around took up several days unconsciously.

He met with Instructor Yan.

Instructor Yan was busy with Manager Mo, working on rebuilding the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect.

Starting from scratch, building a sect from the ground up is difficult, but Instructor Yan's will was firm, and he would not give up.

The bodies of the ancestors and sect leaders of past generations of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect had been turned into Iron Corpses by the traitor Lu Chengyun, helping the tyrant oppress others.

After the issue with the corpses was settled, these bodies that had undergone Corpse Transformation were cremated, and Instructor Yan brought them back to be buried on a hill near Tongxian City.

Lush green mountains and clear waters became the resting place for the ancestors of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect.

Mo Hua went to offer incense and paid his respects.

Having learned the Spirit Pivot Ultimate Formation from the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect and benefitted from their heritage, of course, he had to pay his respects to show his gratitude.

Instructor Yan, looking at the now-grown Mo Hua, felt gratified, but being a man of few words, didn't say much.

After they chatted over tea for a while about the formation aspects, Manager Mo quietly pulled Mo Hua aside.

Manager Mo took out a stack of drawings and handed them to Mo Hua, saying with a worried expression,

"I've been stressed to death over this for days, help me think this through

As soon as Mo Hua looked at the drawings, he realized they were all portraits of female cultivators.

Mo Hua felt both familiar and unfamiliar with them.

Familiar because he had often received such "beauty portraits" sent to him privately by sects and clans, trying to entice him to marry into their families.

Chapter 725: Original Intention (3)

At that time in South Yue City, Lu Chengyun had done such a thing.

What he wasn't familiar with was the portrait of the woman, which was obviously more "mature", and didn't match his age at all.

"This is

Manager Mo, acting like a thief, whispered, "Helping my senior brother find a Dao Companion

Mo Hua thought to himself, as expected, and whispered back:

"Such a thing... shouldn't you let the Instructor pick for himself?"

Manager Mo curled his lips, "Dense as wood, an iron tree that won't bloom, asking him is pointless

He flipped through several portraits, laying them out before Mo Hua, "Help me take a look too

"How about this one? A woman of a certain age, yet still charming, enticing in appearance, and reportedly living alone with plenty of Spirit Stones

Mo Hua spotted a blind spot:

"These Spirit Stones of hers... how did she come by them?"

Manager Mo was stunned, then slapped his own head, "Right, right, this won't do

"That was close, almost misled by appearances."

"If I had shown this to my senior brother, he would have been furious

Manager Mo then pointed to another one, "This girl isn't as beautiful, but she comes from a good family background – the daughter of the Song family from a hundred miles away... it's just, reportedly, she has a terrible temper, which is why she hasn't married for a hundred years

"A bad temper wouldn't suit the Instructor, right

Manager Mo nodded, "Right, if my senior brother really married her, a mismatched personality would probably cause even more trouble

He shook his head and continued to mutter:

"This is the daughter of a Sect Elder, could probably help my senior brother if he wants to rebuild the sect

"This one... no, too worldly

"This one... the portrait is too fake, the artist was probably given a lot of Spirit Stones as a 'tip

"This one, makeup too heavy, a face painted deathly pale

...

Manager Mo ruled out several, finding none suitable, then suddenly his eyes lit up:

"This one's good! Although she looks ordinary, she has great temperament, and she's passionate about Formation. She hasn't married for over a hundred years, quite similar to my senior brother

Mo Hua leaned in to take a glance, saw a woman with her hair tied up and plain-faced, without any makeup, not particularly attractive, but her temperament was intelligent – indeed, she seemed to be a good match for the Instructor.

Manager Mo also felt more and more that she was suitable, but after a while, he murmured:

"It's just that with my senior brother's stubbornness, her blockheadedness, others might not take to him

"What's wrong with my blockheadedness?"

A cold voice suddenly rang out.

Manager Mo looked up and found Instructor Yan looking at him with an indifferent face.

Finished...

A chill ran down Manager Mo's spine.

Only then did he realize that while he and Mo Hua had been sneaking around to pick a "Dao Companion" for Instructor Yan, Instructor Yan had been standing right behind them, silently watching...

The criticisms he had spoken were most certainly overheard...

Mo Hua surreptitiously observed the situation, keeping silent.

His Divine Sense was strong, and he actually knew early on that Instructor Yan was coming, but seeing Manager Mo getting too absorbed in the task, with undivided attention, he didn't have the heart to interrupt...

Instructor Yan's face looked quite unpleasant.

Noticing the unfavorable situation, Manager Mo stammered:

"I just remembered... I... I still have some matters at the Formation Pavilion, I should head back

After saying that, he swiftly fled like the wind.

Mo Hua didn't even know that the plump Manager Mo had such impressive movement technique...

With Manager Mo gone, Mo Hua also felt it inappropriate to stay, so he got up and bowed respectfully:

"Instructor, I'll be heading back, I'll come to visit you another time."

Instructor Yan nodded, looking at Mo Hua expectantly, but also admonished, "Don't pick up that fatty's bad habits

The "fatty" Instructor Yan referred to was naturally Manager Mo.

"Yes, Instructor!"

Mo Hua agreed with a mouthful of assurances and then made his escape as well.

After Mo Hua had left, Instructor Yan sighed helplessly and bent down to pick up the scattered portrait papers, collecting them one by one.

But when picking up one of them, Instructor Yan suddenly paused.

The portrait was of a woman, her hair tied up with a plain face, no makeup applied, her gaze focused, immersed in her own world, a female Formation Master concentrating on researching Formation, capable of drawing a nine-Pattern Formation...

Instructor Yan was momentarily lost in thought...

...

After bidding farewell to Instructor Yan, Mo Hua went to visit Old Mr. Feng.

Old Mr. Feng had done Mo Hua a great favor.

As a child, Mo Hua had been weak and deficient in Blood Qi; it was Old Mr. Feng who had cared for him with Pills.

Later, when his mother fell severely ill, it was through the good fortune of relying on Old Mr. Feng that she had no serious trouble.

Old Mr. Feng had not attended the Foundation Establishment feast.

Old Mr. Feng was a Pill Master, holding a position at the Apricot Forest Hall, treating and saving people, constantly busy, and moreover, he preferred quiet over noise due to his old age.

Liu Ruhua prepared some delicate and light dishes for Mo Hua to take to Old Mr. Feng to taste.

Mo Hua also gave Old Mr. Feng some pill books and Pill Recipes he had collected on his travels, as a gift for their reunion.

Old Mr. Feng was overjoyed, stroking his beard and nodding incessantly.

He then looked at Mo Hua and could not help but feel a flood of emotions.

Mo Hua had truly grown up under his watchful eyes, from a tiny child, slowly growing up, and now although he was only fifteen years old, still not very old, he had become a famous first-grade Formation Master and a Foundation Building Cultivator...

And he had also used Formation to help so many Cultivators in Tongxian City.

"Good child Old Mr. Feng's eyes were filled with satisfaction.

Apricot Forest Hall was bustling with activity, and Old Mr. Feng was quite busy.

Mo Hua did not wish to bother any further, and after a short chat, and confirming that Old Mr. Feng was well, got up to take his leave.

Just before he left, Old Mr. Feng seemed to remember something, hesitated a moment, then spoke earnestly:

"Mo Hua

"At such a young age, to have such cultivation and mastery of Formation is truly rare, and your future is boundless

"But even if, in the future, your cultivation reaches such heights that all the countless Cultivators and all the living beings in this world are but lowly ants, mere dust beneath your feet

"You must never forget your original aspirations, never become aloof and indifferent."

"Do not forget, the most humble of people are still people, alive with joys and sorrows

Mo Hua was taken aback, then with eyes shimmering with understanding and a pure smile, he reassuringly said:

"Alright, Grandpa Feng, I'll keep that in my heart!"

Chapter 726: Scarcity (1)

Afterward, Mo Hua paid a visit to Court Leader Zhou.

Court Leader Zhou was very enthusiastic and grateful.

He was of advanced age, and had served in his position for many years. Though diligent, his accomplishments had been modest, and he had been considering retirement to enjoy his remaining years in peace.

Yet, to his surprise, in just the last few years, Tongxian City had undergone remarkable changes.

With the opening of Refinery Shops, the establishment of Alchemist's Businesses, the construction of Large Formations, the slaying of Big Demons, and the safeguarding of the region, his achievements as Court Leader could truly be described as "remarkable."

Even with his busy schedule, Court Leader Zhou still found time to take out his treasured tea, brew and taste it with Mo Hua, chatting for a while.

They mostly talked about the various big and small stories of Tongxian City during Mo Hua's travels over the past few years.

Mo Hua chatted casually with Court Leader Zhou and after a while, he couldn't help but ask about Zhang Lan.

He was quite concerned about Zhang Lan, the "passing, unnamed, kindly" uncle.

Court Leader Zhou, somewhat comforted, told Mo Hua everything there was to know about Zhang Lan.

Zhang Lan had returned to his clan.

The Zhang Family was far from Tongxian City.

Zhang Lan had chosen to settle in the remote Little Immortal City of Tongxian to avoid his clan's complicated affairs.

Now that he had achieved Foundation Establishment, there was no avoiding it; he had to return.

As for what happened after his return, Court Leader Zhou didn't know the details of the Zhang Family's internal affairs.

Mo Hua felt regretful.

He really wanted to see Uncle Zhang Lan again and "by the way," show off that he had achieved Foundation Establishment too...

But now that he had returned to his clan, there's no telling when they could meet again.

He wondered whether, by the time they met again, Zhang Lan would have found a Dao companion...

Hopefully, he hadn't been forced into marriage by his family, only to marry a woman he didn't love and then fall for another woman he couldn't have on the outside...

As Mo Hua chatted with Court Leader Zhou, his little head began to work, recalling cliché romance stories he had read and vividly imagining a dramatic love and hate saga for Zhang Lan...

After a while, when the tea was finished, Mo Hua rose to take his leave.

With Court Leader Zhou busy with his duties, Mo Hua did not want to impose any longer.

Court Leader Zhou personally saw Mo Hua to the door and went back to his official duties. Moments later, he thought of Mo Hua and shook his head with a mix of regret and concern.

"Boundless prospects

"It's just... Tongxian City's waters are too shallow to nurture a great dragon

...

After parting with Court Leader Zhou, Mo Hua made time to visit some childhood friends who had grown up with him.

Most of them had become Monster Hunters and were gradually maturing and taking on responsibilities.

Dazhu was still apprenticing under Master Chen in Artifact Refining, becoming increasingly skilled, to Master Chen's great satisfaction.

Da'hu and the others were no longer in Tongxian City, though.

Upon asking Dazhu, Mo Hua learned the reason why.

As Tongxian City grew more prosperous and more Cultivators passed through, a Sect Elder saw the trio, noticed their aptitude for Body Refinement, and took all three as Disciples to the Sect for cultivation.

The name of the Sect, it was said, was the Great Wilderness Sect, located south of Li State, bordering the barbaric lands, and so far away they could only return once every few years or even a decade.

"Great Wilderness Sect

Mo Hua silently noted the name, unsure if he would ever have the chance to go there and meet Da'hu and the others again...

...

After wandering for several days and meeting everyone he intended to, with nothing particular to do, Mo Hua thought of the Big Tiger.

He had his mother prepare a heap of "big" dried fish.

The Little Demon Cat had transformed into a Big Tiger, a Second Grade Monster Beast, and small dried fish were hardly enough for it to munch on, so they had to make large ones.

Tongxian City was rich in mountains, but scarce in water; they couldn't produce big fish.

The fish, brought in from outside, varied in size, with the largest being taller than Mo Hua and the smallest at least a foot or two in length.

The fish had thick scales, looked peculiar, and had a strong fishy smell.

Cultivators seldom ate them, so they were plentiful and cheap.

Based on his experience as a Monster Hunter, Mo Hua guessed that the big feline-like tiger would like them.

Living creatures couldn't be put into Storage Bags.

Dead fish could.

Mo Hua used several large Storage Bags to pack several large bundles and, taking advantage of the early morning light, with the sunrise on his back and the dried fish slung over his shoulder, he entered Big Black Mountain.

After searching the deep mountain for a while, Mo Hua found the tiger in a cave, gnawing on the bones of some unknown Monster Beast.

Sensing the presence of an outsider, the Big Tiger instantly became alert, its gaze fierce.

When it saw it was Mo Hua, the Big Tiger hesitated for a moment before returning to its bone.

Mo Hua offered it the dried fish. The Big Tiger sniffed it, wrinkled its brow, and even let out a “roar,” seeming somewhat repelled.

It was a Big Tiger, not a big house cat.

Big Tigers have their pride.

"Doesn't suit your taste...?"

Mo Hua was a bit puzzled.

He remembered that when the Big Tiger was younger, it quite liked eating small dried fish.

But the Big Tiger didn't want to bother with him, continuing to lick the bones.

Mo Hua didn't insist and, with nothing better to do, just sat at the entrance of the cave, observing the mountain scenery.

As the Big Tiger licked the bone, unable to find any meat on it, it eyed the fish in front of it, hesitated for a long time, then smelled Mo Hua not looking its way and stealthily grabbed a fish, gulping it down...

It swallowed too quickly to taste anything, glanced at Mo Hua, then tried another fish...

Then, unable to resist, it tried yet another one...

Munching along, the Big Tiger looked up to find Mo Hua staring at it, smiling broadly.

The Big Tiger's gaze flitted about, and it quietly covered the fish by its mouth with its paws, hiding them from Mo Hua's view...

Mo Hua threw the rest of the fish to it, saying with a smile:

"Eat it slowly. Next time I have the chance, I'll bring you some more

Chapter 727: Scarcity (2)

Big Tiger was no longer reserved, chewing on the dried fish with big bites, its eyes squinting into slits, even rubbing its fluffy big head against Mo Hua...

...

In this way, the days of Mo Hua in Tongxian City gradually settled down.

Daily cultivation, learning formations, spending time with his parents, meeting friends for tea, occasionally going into the mountains to relax, and feeding Big Tiger some dried fish.

But sometimes when he was alone, there would still be a hint of desolation in his eyes.

This hint of desolation could be hidden from others, but not from Liu Ruhua.

After pondering, Liu Ruhua asked softly,

"Huar, you came back alone, what about Zisheng and Zixi?"

Mo Hua was taken aback, his gaze downcast, “Elder martial brother and elder martial sister, they went home, to the Bai Family, very far away

Liu Ruhua was somewhat regretful and asked again,

"Then... what about Mr. Zhuang?"

Mo Hua shook his head, not knowing how to start, and only after a long time did he speak in a low voice,

"Master he... has also gone to a very distant place, it's very likely that he'll never come back

In Liu Ruhua's eyes, a trace of tenderness appeared.

She gently embraced Mo Hua and comforted him,

"You are still young, and you have a long path ahead of you. If it's meant to be, you will meet again

"Mhm."

Mo Hua agreed softly.

The loss in his heart was slightly eased.

...

The next day, he went to South Mountain outside of Tongxian City.

South Mountain was secluded with beautiful scenery.

Atop South Mountain, there was the “Forgetful Residence.”

Mr. Zhuang used to live in seclusion there, and Mo Hua and his martial siblings had also come here to study.

But now, everything was gone.

The path leading to the former abode was empty and desolate.

Without the mountain residence, without the large locust tree, without the bamboo forest, without the pond, and without the fish in it.

On the path up and down the mountain, he could no longer bump into his elder martial brother and sister.

Nobody else would be resting in the Bamboo Residence on the mountain anymore, waiting for the breeze to blow over and wake them from their slumber, to teach him formations or to answer his many questions...

Beneath the locust tree, he and his elder martial brother would spar and frolic, with his elder martial sister reading on the side...

The master would be taking a nap, Old Kui playing chess...

These scenes gradually became blurry.

As if they were all just a dream, shrouded in a layer of fog that seemed both real and illusory.

The events of the past were all but forgotten...

With complex feelings in his heart, Mo Hua's clear eyes were tinged with a layer of faint melancholy, which then dissolved in a moment,

Like the morning mist driven away by the rising glow of the dawn.

"We will meet again

Mo Hua murmured to himself.

There was still so much he had to do...

The road was long, the Great Dao was vast, and what he needed to consider now was the path after Foundation Establishment...

...

Mo Hua sat quietly on the mountaintop, after calming his emotions, he fell into deep thought.

He had now established his foundation...

His Divine Sense had only fourteen patterns, mid-stage Foundation Establishment, but due to the qualitative change in his Divine Sense, refined like mercury, his Divine Sense was different in “quality” compared to that of other cultivators.

As for the use of this difference, Mo Hua had not yet studied it in detail.

But at least, it laid the foundation for his “Divine Sense Proving the Dao.”

And it was completely different from other methods of Proving the Dao with Divine Sense.

Beyond Divine Sense, however, Mo Hua found that his Foundation Establishment was basically “a complete mess.”

His Spiritual Power was very weak.

His Spiritual Root was not strong, and his cultivation technique did not focus on Spiritual Power.

Therefore, although he had established his foundation, compared to cultivators of the same realm, his Spiritual Power was much weaker.

Not to mention comparing with naturally gifted individuals like his martial brother and sister...

Weak Spiritual Power, even weaker physical body.

This did not come as a surprise to Mo Hua.

Born with a weak constitution, now after Foundation Establishment, his Blood Qi had strengthened, but it was only a slight improvement compared to Qi Refinement. Among Foundation Establishment cultivators, he was basically at the bottom.

Besides, the spells of Foundation Establishment were also troublesome.

Mo Hua followed the path of a Spiritual Cultivator, who relied on “Spells” to survive.

Being a Foundation Establishment cultivator, he naturally had to learn Second Grade spells.

But he had nowhere to learn Second Grade spells...

So far, the only Second Grade spell he had learned was the Fireball Technique...

Because the Fireball Technique was a basic spell, ubiquitous and the least scarce among all grades of spells.

In any state boundary, as long as there are certain grades, there will inevitably be corresponding grades of Fireball Technique.

When Mo Hua returned from the Dali Mountain State Boundary, he collected some Fireball Technique Secret Manuals along the way, cross-referenced them, comprehended on his own, and learned the Second Grade Fireball Technique.

Although it had not reached the level of perfection like his First Grade Fireball Technique, its power had increased, and it was barely usable.

He would study it further later and refine it.

Other than the Fireball Technique, none of the spells Mo Hua was adept at could be upgraded.

The Water Passing Step was the ultimate technique of the Zhang Family.

When Zhang Lan taught him, he only taught the First Grade, without considering the Second Grade.

At that time, Zhang Lan was only at the ninth level of Qi Refinement, and he did not expect that Mo Hua would advance to Foundation Establishment so quickly.

The Water Prison Technique was very obscure.

Mo Hua did not have a Second Grade Water Prison Technique Secret Manual.

The Concealment Technique was even more obscure.

Mo Hua also did not have a Second Grade Concealment Technique Secret Manual.

The strength of a cultivator is generally based on their realm.

First Grade spells, although usable, would greatly reduce both power and effectiveness when compared to Second Grade spells.

A First Grade Water Passing Step, no matter how exquisite, when executed, could at most rival the lowest of the Second Grade low-tier movement techniques.

A First Grade Water Prison Technique could trap a Qi Refinement cultivator and bind them for a few moments.

But against a Foundation Establishment cultivator, it would last only a moment, serving only as a disruption, unable to bind or limit their movements.

Chapter 728: Scarcity (3)

The First-Grade Concealment Technique is actually decent enough.

Because the core of the Concealment Technique relies on the Cultivator's Divine Sense.

Mo Hua's Divine Sense is extremely strong, so the effect of the Concealment Technique is also strong and not easily detected by others.

But with Mo Hua's current perspective at the Foundation Establishment level, he could see that his Concealment Technique still had many flaws.

It was usable, but only just passable.

If there's a chance, he still needs to find a way to learn the Second-Grade Concealment Technique.

Second-Grade Water Prison Technique, Second-Grade Concealment Technique, Second-Grade Water Passing Step...

These spells are either obscure or Ultimate Techniques; Mo Hua wants to learn them, but there's no way he could.

Mo Hua sighed.

He once again deeply realized the importance of "inheritance" for a Cultivator.

A typical Clan or a Sect and other Tao Cultivation forces would have "Scripture Pavilions", "Book Pavilions", "Formation Pavilions", and other Tao Cultivation buildings to extensively collect and treasure Cultivation canons ranging from low to high grades, all-encompassing, rare, ancient, or obscure from their Taoist Repositories.

Cultivation Techniques, Taoist Skills, Formation Methods, Pill Recipes, Artifice Manuals, and everything else you could think of...

The larger the force, the wider the collection, the more complete the trove, the deeper the inheritance's foundation.

Clan or Sect Disciples could then cultivate with a single-minded focus, not needing to seek high and low, painstakingly searching for these rare Tao Cultivation tomes.

But a Loose Cultivator could not.

They had to find all the canons for Cultivation Techniques, Taoist Skills, Formation Methods, and everything else on their own and learn them by themselves.

Even if some were found, wanting to learn them often came with a considerable cost.

Noble Clans monopolized these inheritances to profit, while also cutting off the paths of most Loose Cultivators in the world from seeking immortality and asking about the Tao, thereby consolidating their own power above the Loose Cultivators, remaining undecayed through thousands of years.

Without inheritance, progress is difficult.

Mo Hua sighed again.

Although he knew about these things before, he hadn't taken them to heart. Now, as his Cultivation improved and he became exposed to more of the world, he felt this even more deeply.

Apart from spells, the situation with Formation Methods is similar, yet somewhat unique.

Mo Hua does inherit extremely profound knowledge of Formation Methods.

Heavenly Secret Calculation, Heavenly Secret Tricky Calculation, Half positive and half weird, exhausting all of the Heavenly Secrets, are not just applications of Divine Sense, but also the supreme spell point for insight and control over Formation Methods.

This is a method that can be used at any grade.

Although Mo Hua's realm is low and his experience shallow, and he hasn't attained high proficiency in Formation Methods to use them to their extremes,

Heavenly secret Tricky Calculation and Heavenly Secret Calculation surely have even more profound knowledge.

Yet being able to study both Heavenly Secret Calculation and Heavenly Secret Tricky Calculation is already considered incredibly outlandish.

Not to mention Heavenly Secret Calculation for now.

Heavenly Secret Tricky Calculation is the basis of Gui Tao's people, which is to say the foundation of Gui Tao's cultivation belonging to Mo Hua's Uncle.

Demon Sect's Gui Tao's people are proficient in Gui Tao, with extraordinary Formation Methods, capable of planting devils in the Taoist hearts of Taoist Court Cultivators, making them lose their nerve at the mere mention.

Even having learned just a little has brought significant benefits.

Not to mention, Heavenly Secret Tricky Calculation could never be considered "just a little

Beyond the applications of Divine Sense, Mo Hua also possesses the Five Elements Formation Flow Map...

Stored within are the "Five Elements Source Patterns" deduced by the ancestors of the Five Elements Sect through the Back Origin Calculation method.

The Source Patterns contain a vast Formation System that encompasses the Five Elements.

All of these elements are, without exception, among the most top-notch Formation inheritances.

But the problem is, they are too top-notch.

What Mo Hua now lacks is the most basic and simple type of inheritance, which is...

Introduction to Second-Grade Formation Methods...

He needs to understand what exactly a Second-Grade Formation Method is.

How to draw Formation Patterns, how to arrange the Formation Pivot, how to construct the Formation Eye.

What is the essential difference between a Second-Grade Formation and a First-Grade Formation?

Although he has some understanding of these matters, his grasp is not deep.

Now that it has come to this point, Mo Hua has realized he still has many gaps and deficiencies.

And he, too, must find a way to become a Second Rank Formation Master, to draw out a truly Second-Grade Formation...

Chapter 729: Second Grade (1)

Divine Sense Proving the Dao, using Divine Sense as the foundation and establishing oneself with Formations.

To learn Second-Grade Formation and become a Second Rank Formation Master was the only capital to establish oneself in the vast Cultivation World, across the Vast Nine Continents.

But Mo Hua lacked the basic inheritance of Second-Grade Formation.

After some thought, he decided to visit Instructor Yan.

Instructor Yan hailed from the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect.

Although the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect had declined, it had still produced Second Rank Formation Masters before, so it should have passed down some Formation Diagrams and Formation Books of Second-Grade Formations.

However, Mo Hua came up empty...

Instructor Yan was not home, and only Manager Mo was leisurely drinking tea alone.

"Where's the Instructor?" Mo Hua asked.

Manager Mo shook his head, "I don't know, these past few days, the Instructor seemed preoccupied, muttering to himself, and he's been leaving early and returning late. I have no idea what he's busy with

"Then when will the Instructor be back?"

"Later Manager Mo said, and then looked at Mo Hua with curiosity, "Do you need the Instructor for something?"

Mo Hua nodded, "I wanted to ask about some things regarding Second-Grade Formation

"Second-Grade Formation, huh

Manager Mo was a bit surprised and somewhat envious.

When he first met Mo Hua, Mo Hua could only draw a Bright Fire Formation with three Formation Patterns, coming to his Formation Pavilion to draw some Formations and earn some hard-earned money.

He even lied about his age and fabricated a non-existent older brother due to his youth.

Little did he expect, in just a few years, Mo Hua was already about to learn Second-Grade Formation...

In those same years, his own understanding of Formations hadn't even improved by a single Pattern.

Yet Mo Hua had made leaps and bounds, skipping over an entire major grade...

Indeed, comparison is the thief of joy...

Manager Mo grumbled to himself.

"Manager Mo, do you know how to draw Second-Grade Formation?"

Mo Hua asked curiously.

Manager Mo was Instructor Yan's junior brother and also a disciple of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect, and by rights, he should also be considered a proper Formation Master with a sect background. *R*

Manager Mo hurriedly shook his head, "Don't flatter me, I struggle even with drawing Formations that have seven or eight Patterns

He was a normal Cultivator, also a normal Formation Master.

He couldn't compare himself to the likes of "little monsters" like Mo Hua...

"However

Manager Mo stroked his chin, "Now that you've mentioned Second-Grade Formation, I do remember a Formation Master who was not very skilled, spoiled nine out of ten Formation Diagrams, couldn't afford to compensate with Spirit Stones, and ended up giving me an ancestral Second-Order Formation Pattern Atlas as compensation

"Second-Order Formation Pattern Atlas?"

"Yes," Manager Mo nodded, "It contains some basic Second-Grade Formation Patterns and variants related to these Patterns."

Mo Hua was surprised, "Isn't that quite precious?"

Manager Mo shook his head, "Not really, this kind of material is something any family with a Formation inheritance would have; it's considered a kind of... more niche Formation knowledge."

"May I take a look?" Mo Hua asked.

"Just wait here

Manager Mo put down his teacup, heaved his plump belly, and got up, "I'll go look for it. It's been a while, and I don't remember where I kept it

Manager Mo hurried back, and only after about two hours did he return with an ancient book in hand.

"Take a look

Manager Mo handed the book over to Mo Hua.

"Thank you, Manager!" Mo Hua said happily.

The cover of the book had "Second-Order Formation Pattern Catalog" neatly handwritten on it.

Mo Hua opened the book and skimmed through it quickly.

Indeed, it contained several Second-Grade Formation Patterns, mainly focused on Five Elements Patterns and interspersed with other systems of Patterns that Mo Hua had never come across before.

Besides, it detailed the differences between First-Grade and Second-Grade Formation Patterns and the variations that evolve from First-Grade to Second-Grade Patterns.

With illustrations and text, while not profound, it was very detailed.

The owner of the catalog must have been a very conscientious and meticulous Second Rank Formation Master.

However, the legacy of their ancestors was probably thin.

So, any bit of Formation knowledge was meticulously recorded and treasured.

It ranged from simple to complex, rich and detailed.

This was a great help to Mo Hua.

Mo Hua thanked Manager Mo again.

Manager Mo waved it off quickly, “No problem, it’s nothing!”

But being able to help Mo Hua also made Manager Mo very happy.

Afterward, Manager Mo drank tea while Mo Hua read the book.

After a while, Instructor Yan came back, bustling about. Seeing Mo Hua, he looked somewhat surprised.

Mo Hua explained his purpose.

Instructor Yan considered for a moment, then nodded, “I do have them, just wait

He went back to his room and after searching for the time it took to burn a stick of incense, he found two Formation Books.

One was “Introduction to Second-Order Formation”, and the other was “Illustration of Second-Order Formation”.

"The ‘Introduction’ talks about the basic knowledge of Second-Grade Formations, it’s about the Formation principle; the ‘Illustration’ is about explaining through practical Formation Diagrams on how to draw Formation Patterns and form Second-Grade Formations

"These are the legacy of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect, orthodox Formations techniques. Though perhaps a bit lean compared to those of the great clans and Great Sects, but they won’t have any errors

"It’s just a pity

Instructor Yan sighed, “After all these years, no one in the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect has been able to use them

Including himself.

Instructor Yan handed over the two Formation Books to Mo Hua reverently, reminding him:

"Read them well and learn well

Passing on these legacies to Mo Hua was sort of repaying Mo Hua for helping the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect remove a traitor and retrieve the bones of their ancestors.

Instructor Yan silently thought to himself.

"Yes!"

Mo Hua nodded earnestly.

With the Formation Pattern Catalog and the “Introduction” and “Illustration” of Second-Grade Formations, he should be able to get an initial understanding of how exactly Second-Grade Formations were drawn.

However, before that, there was one thing that Mo Hua was quite curious about...

Chapter 730: Second Grade (2)

"Instructor, where did you just... go?" Mo Hua asked in a hushed voice.

The normally stern and rigid Instructor Yan showed a moment of guilt in his expression.

Looking into Mo Hua’s bright, curious eyes, Instructor Yan coughed and averted his gaze, mumbling ambiguously,

"Nothing... just needed to clear my mind."

"Oh

Mo Hua looked puzzled, but he did not press further.

...

...

After returning, Mo Hua began to study the method of drawing Second-Grade Formations by consulting three Formation Books.

Second-Grade Formations are composed of more than ten Second-Grade Formation Patterns.

Second-Grade Formation Patterns are somewhat similar to First-Grade Formation Patterns but are different.

By perusing the Second-Order Formation Pattern Catalog, Mo Hua found that Second-Grade Formation Patterns are more like the fusion of two First-Grade Formation Patterns into one, through a peculiar form, similar to Daoist Skill.

The Second-Grade Formation Patterns are more complex, more profound, with more lines and strokes, encompassing more variability and stricter requirements on directionality than the First-Grade Formation Patterns.

Drawing Second-Grade Formation Patterns also consumes twice the Divine Sense as ordinary First-Grade Formation Patterns.

"So that's how it is Mo Hua murmured to himself.

After Foundation Establishment, the Divine Sense doubles.

In Formation arts, going from nine patterns of the First Grade to ten patterns of the Second Grade, the required amount of Divine Sense also doubles, as does the power and effect of the Formation.

Under the standard Formation Method Classification, a ten-pattern Formation is by default considered a Second-Grade Formation.

A First-Grade Formation Pattern cannot form a Formation with more than ten patterns due to its simpler structure.

Only Second-Grade Formation Patterns, with more sophisticated Divine Sense requirements, stronger structures, and more complicated pathways, can serve as the foundation for a Formation containing more than ten patterns.

Ultimate Formations are an exception... They contain Dao Laws and transcend category limitations, differing from ordinary Formations...

Mo Hua furrowed his brow.

By this logic, a First-Grade Ultimate Formation and a Second-Grade Formation might have the same number of patterns, but the grades of the patterns are vastly different.

For example, a First-Grade Ultimate Formation with ten patterns like the Reversed Spirit Ultimate Formation and a Second-Grade Formation with ten patterns are both ten-pattern Formations, but one is composed of First-Grade Formation Patterns while the other is built with Second-Grade Formation Patterns.

Clearly, Second-Grade Formation Patterns require twice the Divine Sense as the First-Grade Formation Patterns.

However, for these two ten-pattern Formations, the required Divine Sense seems not to differ much.

After pondering for a while with no conclusion, Mo Hua decided to set the issue aside for now.

He thought that once he truly learned the Second-Grade Formations, he would carefully compare the differences at the level of Divine Sense between the First-Grade Ultimate Formations and the Second-Grade Formations.

Next came the actual learning of the Second-Grade Formations.

To learn Formations, one must first learn the patterns.

Mo Hua first went through the Second-Order Formation Pattern Catalog several times, memorizing several basic Second-Grade Five Elements Formation Patterns in his heart and making simple sketches of them on paper.

Then he began to attempt to draw the first Second-Grade Formation based on the Illustration of Second-Order Formation:

The Second-Order Bright Fire Formation.

The Bright Fire Formation, a Fire-series Formation, is used for heating and lighting and is essentially one of the most basic of all ranked Formation Formations.

The first formal Formation that Mo Hua ever drew was also a Bright Fire Formation.

But that Bright Fire Formation, with its three Formation Patterns, did not qualify for ranking.

Now, the Bright Fire Formation was a Second-Grade Formation with no fewer than ten Formation Patterns.

Of course, for Mo Hua, now with a Divine Sense quality change at fourteen patterns, ten Formation Patterns were not particularly difficult.

The challenge lay in his still rudimentary understanding and mastery of the Second-Grade Formation system.

Mo Hua focused and memorized the Formation Diagram of the Second-Order Bright Fire Formation.

At ten minutes past 1 p.m., he practiced the Second-Order Bright Fire Formation on the Taoist Stele in his Sea of Consciousness.

Alone, with a stele, with a Formation.

As it had been when he first learned to draw Formations.

Mo Hua felt a momentary trance.

It was as if he had learned many, many Formations, yet it seemed as though he had not learned many at all.

The more he learned, the more he realized how little he knew.

Now that his Formation skills were nearing the Second Grade, everything was starting anew.

He had to learn entirely new Formation Patterns, understand deeper Formation principles, and delve into the more ancient aspects of the Great Dao...

Mo Hua took a deep breath, calming his emotions, maintaining a humble and tranquil state of mind, and with his original aspiration intact, he started drawing his very first Second-Grade Formation on the Taoist Stele:

The Bright Fire Formation.

Second-Grade Formation Patterns are more intricate, require more precision in drawing, and consume more Divine Sense.

The structure of the Formation also involves many more variations.

Starting off unfamiliar, Mo Hua made errors multiple times.

Either a stroke of the pattern was off, the Formation Pivot conflicted, or the layout was not controlled well...

Mo Hua had no choice but to erase the Formation Patterns, retract his Divine Sense, and continue drawing.

Again and again.

Tedious and mechanical.

But Mo Hua was long accustomed to it.

His drawing became increasingly skilled, his understanding of the Formation Pivots deepened, and his grasp of the composition of Second-Grade Formations progressively became clearer...

If he did not know, he would learn; if he was not skilled, he would practice.

Draw the 'Formation' a hundred times, and its meaning will reveal itself.

Mo Hua continued drawing, over and over, until he had drawn the Second-Order Bright Fire Formation dozens of times, having stumbled into every possible pitfall, before feeling a sense of Sudden Enlightenment.

Pattern and Pivot merged seamlessly.

The details of his strokes became clear in his chest...

His pen moved more confidently, with purpose and measure.

Finally, after who knows how long, Mo Hua made the last stroke, and the Formation was complete.

On the Taoist Stele, the Second-Order Bright Fire Formation's Patterns glowed, shining brilliantly, flickering with bright light.

This light was more refined, dazzling.

Just as before, it lit up the first step of the path for Mo Hua, the Second Rank Formation Master...

Mo Hua sighed in relief, a smile spreading across his face.

Second-Grade Formation!

He had finally drawn one!

Mo Hua couldn't help feeling a bit of pride as he admired the Second-Order Bright Fire Formation he had drawn on the Taoist Stele, before reluctantly erasing it, awaiting the retraction of his Divine Sense, and continuing to draw.