

The Quest 24

Chapter 24: Seeking the Dao

Mo Hua went to see the plump steward again, only to be told that the market had changed.

The Blazing Fire Array and Earth Solidification Array were no longer accepted at Destiny's Shop.

Mo Hua looked astonished and suspiciously said, "The Blazing Fire Array is used for illumination, and the Earth Solidification Array for building houses. Unless no one lives in Tongxian City anymore, there should still be a market for them."

The plump steward internally complained about Mo Hua's cleverness, which was not always a good thing as it made him hard to deceive. Deciding not to make excuses, which only made it harder to justify himself, he simply gestured dismissively:

"How would I know? That's just the market now, and there's nothing I can do!"

Mo Hua was speechless; he had only saved half of the spirit stones needed for his cultivation technique and asked, "Then what arrays do you accept?"

The plump steward coughed and pulled out an array diagram with "Gold Stone Array Diagram" written on the cover.

"Now we're accepting the Gold Stone Array, which also includes four array patterns, not much different from the Earth Solidification Array."

Mo Hua examined the array diagram and asked, "Steward, what is the Gold Stone Array used for?"

The plump steward replied, "It's similar to the Earth Solidification Array, both are used to reinforce doors, walls, and dwellings of cultivators, except one reinforces wood and earth, and the other strengthens metal and stone."

Mo Hua frowned, "It serves a similar purpose to the Earth Solidification Array, which no one uses. Why would this one be in demand?"

The plump steward glared at Mo Hua and sternly said, "That's the market. Don't ask too many questions, kid!"

"Is this array also worth three spirit stones?"

It should have been...

The plump steward, feeling a bit reluctant, added, "By rights, it should cost three spirit stones, but it's been scarce recently, so the price has gone up to four spirit stones, though we're not collecting many, just five sets every half month."

Scarcity shouldn't stop us from making more, should it?

Mo Hua found the steward a bit odd, but since it was Destiny's Shop's business, he didn't pry further as long as he could earn spirit stones.

"If I successfully create all of them, I can earn twenty spirit stones every half month, which is quite substantial."

"Deal," said the plump steward, relieved, pulling out a storage bag from under the counter as if he had prepared it in advance, and handed it to Mo Hua.

Mo Hua received the storage bag, checked it, and confirmed it contained the "Gold Stone Array Diagram" and five sets of paper and ink, then bowed to the steward and took his leave.

As he was about to exit, the steward couldn't help but call out to him:

"Mo Hua."

Mo Hua turned back, and the steward hesitated before asking, "Do you find this array difficult?"

Mo Hua thought for a moment, noting the similarity to the Earth Solidification Array with its four array patterns, and replied, "It's manageable."

Mo Hua took a few steps, then turned back and added, "My brother should be able to draw it."

"Oh," the steward said, his expression complex, nodding, "Draw well."

"By the way," the steward called out again, "My surname is Mo, as in 'Do not get angry.' Just call me Steward Mo."

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

Mo Hua returned to Tongxian Sect and studied the Gold Stone Array whenever he had time. Thanks to previous consultations with Yan Jiaoxi on the Earth Solidification Array, it wasn't too difficult to grasp.

Before a class on array techniques, Yan Jiaoxi had someone distribute the previously corrected array homework. Mo Hua's diagram only received a "B" grade.

Mo Hua looked left and right, comparing it against the sect's "Detailed Explanation of Arrays" and found no mistakes. Why just a "B"?

Mo Hua was puzzled.

A disciple sitting nearby saw the "B" on Mo Hua's diagram and exclaimed, "Wow, Mo Hua, you only got a B?"

Mo Hua glanced at the "C" on the other disciple's diagram without a word.

That disciple quickly covered his "C" with his hand, chuckled, and then curiously asked, "How come you only got a B?"

Mo Hua also wondered aloud, "I didn't make any mistakes. I don't know why it's only a B."

"You didn't make any mistakes. How could the instructor give you just a B?"

Mo Hua showed him the diagram, "Can you see any mistakes?"

That disciple confidently replied, "If I could see any, I wouldn't have gotten a 'C'!"

Other disciples around them also stretched their necks to look at Mo Hua's diagram and then said one after another:

"It seems like there aren't any mistakes."

"Mo Hua, did you offend the instructor?"

"Be careful, the instructor might punish you."

"Yan Jiaoxi isn't that kind of person, though..."

Before they could finish, Yan Jiaoxi entered the cultivation room, causing the group of disciples to quickly retract their necks and quietly sit like quails, not daring to breathe loudly.

Yan Jiaoxi conducted the class as usual and said at the end:

"Cultivation is like rowing upstream; not advancing means retreating. The way of array techniques is the same; you must not slack off, wasting your time and talent."

After finishing, Yan Jiaoxi scanned the room with a stern face and finally turned to Mo Hua, "Mo Hua, come with me."

"Yes," Mo Hua respectfully rose and followed Yan Jiaoxi out of the cultivation room.

Seeing Yan Jiaoxi leave, the disciples gathered their heads again:

"It's over; Mo Hua is done for now."

"The instructor said someone is slacking off. Was he talking about Mo Hua?"

"But I'm slacking off too. Why didn't the instructor come for me?"

"You and Mo Hua can't be compared. Mo Hua's array techniques are so good; the instructor values him."

"I'm glad the instructor doesn't value me like that. Please, never value me..."

Mo Hua followed Yan Jiaoxi out of the cultivation room, past the pill room, the artifact refining room, and finally left Tongxuan Peak.

As they walked, Yan Jiaoxi remained silent, only nodding or bowing in response when other disciples or instructors and sect elders greeted him.

Yan Jiaoxi led Mo Hua all the way to his residence on Tongming Peak.

Tongming Peak is where the sect master, elders, instructors, and inner sect disciples cultivate and reside. It was Mo Hua's first visit, and the environment was indeed much quieter and more beautiful, with many courtyards planted with vibrant spirit flowers and herbs, and various spirit birds leisurely strolling around.

Only on Tongming Peak could these spirit birds be so carefree. If they were on Tongxuan Peak, they wouldn't see the sun the next day.

Mo Hua remembered the charred chicken leg that the twins had given him.

Outside Yan Jiaoxi's residence, an array was set up, and there was a small Eight Trigrams plate on the door, probably arranged by Yan Jiaoxi himself, as other courtyards and residences didn't have this.

Yan Jiaoxi traced his finger over the Eight Trigrams plate a few times, and after a flash of light, the door opened.

Once inside, Yan Jiaoxi sat down at the desk and directly asked Mo Hua:

"Do you want to be an array master?"

Mo Hua humbly replied, "Disciple's talents are limited; I'm afraid I can't be an array master."

Yan Jiaoxi frowned, "Whether you want to or not is one thing; whether you have the talent is another. Don't lose your original intention just by looking at the results. All beings under heaven will die eventually; does that mean they shouldn't live?"

Mo Hua responded earnestly, "Disciple wants to be an array master!"

"Why do you want to?"

"Cultivation is difficult; array techniques can provide a livelihood."

"What else?"

"Cultivators seek the Dao to become immortals; understanding array techniques can help seek the Dao."

Yan Jiaoxi frowned, "The Dao is elusive, and cultivators might spend their entire lives unable to glimpse even a hint of it."

Mo Hua said, "As the instructor said, the Dao is in the heavens, but the pursuit of the Dao is in the hands of individuals. Since cultivators seek the Dao, regardless of whether they achieve it in the end, they must not lose the heart to seek it."

Yan Jiaoxi fell silent for a moment, then nodded, "From now on, come here every day after classes. You may go back today."

"Yes." Mo Hua was puzzled but bowed and took his leave.

Yan Jiaoxi watched Mo Hua leave and sighed after a long while:

"He's a promising young man."