

The Quest 34

Chapter 34: Array Crafting

"It's actually a Magma Array..." Mo Hua remarked.

"Indeed," Master Chen nodded, recognizing Mo Hua's swift identification of the array and feeling somewhat affirmed, his tone became more solemn: "Young Brother Mo, take a look, is there something wrong with this array? I'm completely clueless about it and can't see any issues."

Master Chen had someone wipe the soot off the crafting furnace, and Mo Hua leaned over the furnace mouth, scrutinizing the Magma Array patterns on the furnace walls. Although he couldn't yet draw it perfectly, his night and day practice had made him very familiar with the drawing of array patterns, and soon he pointed out a few areas to Master Chen, saying: "The problem is indeed with the array; these array patterns have worn out, preventing spiritual power from transmitting, thus rendering the array ineffective."

Seeing Mo Hua speak so logically, Master Chen couldn't help but look at him with new respect, then furrowed his brow: "Then we'll have to ask an array master for help. Alas, business hasn't been great, and I don't know how many spirit stones this will cost..."

Mo Hua asked, "Is it expensive to have an array master repair the array?"

"Naturally," Master Chen replied, "Array masters are rare, and this type of specialized repair work requires extra spirit stones, otherwise others might not be willing to come."

Mo Hua pondered for a moment and then suggested, "How about I give it a try?"

"You?" Master Chen was astonished. "Are you already an array master?"

Mo Hua modestly waved his hand, "Not quite, I've just studied array crafting with the masters in the sect, and I have studied this particular array before."

Looking at the youthful and slightly naive face of Mo Hua, Master Chen gently declined: "Let's not trouble you, you're just a kid, don't overexert yourself."

Knowing Master Chen still had concerns, Mo Hua quickly added, "Master Chen, the ones you ask for help aren't necessarily real array masters, right?"

"That's... true," Master Chen admitted, "Some are merely apprentices, not quite array masters yet. But when asking for help, naturally, we'd speak well of them; regardless of their real status, calling them 'array masters' is favorable. They're pleased to hear it, and it makes things go smoother. We don't know much else, we just need the array fixed."

"Then every time, were they able to fix it?"

Master Chen thought for a moment, "A few times, it went smoothly and was quickly fixed, but sometimes they would patch it up half a day, and it still wouldn't work, and we had to change the person to finally get it fixed."

"That's exactly it, those who come are mostly apprentices, and even if their skills are higher than mine, they aren't that much higher," Mo Hua confidently said.

Of course, the skills of a proper apprentice should be higher than Mo Hua's, but indeed, some apprentices' skills might not surpass his.

Mo Hua continued, "If they repair and it's still a repair, I might as well try, and if it doesn't work, you can still ask them to come."

This logic seemed to make sense...

Master Chen was somewhat persuaded, but still hesitated. Seeing this, Mo Hua added, "Even if you ask for an array master, they can't come immediately; they have to be available. Delaying even one day means the crafting shop loses one day's income, and if it drags on, the expenses will exceed the income."

The business of the crafting shop was fair, but the profits weren't high, and Master Chen didn't want to skimp on quality, earning only hard-earned money. Moreover, he had to provide for several apprentices; a prolonged downtime really wasn't easy to manage.

Master Chen felt a headache coming on, finally gritted his teeth and said, "Alright, young brother, give it a try."

He then cautiously instructed, "But just try, don't force it, and don't ruin the array..."

Mo Hua assured him, "Don't worry, at worst, it just won't improve."

Master Chen felt somewhat reassured, yet not entirely.

Mo Hua asked Master Chen to wait a moment, went home to fetch his pen and Fire Elemental ink, and also brought the Magma Array diagram. At the crafting shop, he first showed the diagram to Master Chen.

Seeing that the diagram and the array on the crafting furnace were indeed similar, Master Chen felt somewhat relieved, at least it wasn't completely unreliable.

This was the first time Mo Hua was drawing an array on a spiritual tool, and he was somewhat nervous, but fortunately, having practiced the Magma Array many times before, his mindset calmed once he started drawing.

Repairing an array was different from drawing a new

one; it didn't require much spiritual sense since the array itself was already complete. He only needed to reconnect the damaged parts of the array patterns with ink.

What tested the array master was his eyesight, meticulousness, and familiarity with the array.

Mo Hua leaned over the stove, completely focused on his drawing.

In less than half an hour, Mo Hua had finished repairing the array, and then spent another tea time checking it over. Once he was sure there were no issues, he finally relaxed.

Master Chen watched nervously by the side, afraid that Mo Hua might have damaged the array. Seeing that Mo Hua was done, he anxiously asked, "Is it... fixed now?"

Mo Hua, with clothes dirtied and several streaks of soot on his face, uncertainly said, "It should be fixed, shall we light it to test?"

Master Chen's expression was complicated, but he still joined a few apprentices in sealing the array again, setting up the crafting furnace, and then embedding the spirit stones to activate the spiritual power and light the fire.

However, the fire didn't ignite.

Mo Hua was startled, touched his chin, his already dirty face now even dirtier, "Why isn't it igniting? The array should have been repaired."

Master Chen asked, "Young brother, are you sure there's no problem with the array?"

Mo Hua pulled out the Magma Array diagram, carefully compared it again, then nodded, "The array is fine."

Master Chen felt the crafting furnace, sensed the temperature, and told the apprentices, "The spiritual power isn't sufficient, put in a few more spirit stones, and throw in a branding iron."

The disciples did as instructed, and indeed, the temperature of the crafting furnace gradually rose.

Soon, a fire "whooshed" out.

Master Chen was overjoyed, "It's fixed!"

The apprentices also cheered. The crafting furnace was operational, they had work to do, and could continue learning from their master, hence they looked at Mo Hua with admiration.

Mo Hua was also pleased, "Let's try crafting a spiritual tool to see if there are any issues."

Master Chen casually threw a knife into the furnace, crafted for a while, and then slightly regretfully said, "Using it, there's no big problem, but the firepower is a bit less than before, crafting might take a bit longer."

Mo Hua was puzzled, "The same array, why would the firepower be less? Could it be that the effectiveness of the array decreases after repair?"

Master Chen shook his head, "It's been repaired a few times before, but the firepower didn't decrease much."

"Then why is that?"

Mo Hua frowned, wondering if there was something not quite right in how the array was drawn.

Master Chen pondered for a moment, then pointed at the inkwell on Mo Hua's desk, "Maybe it's the ink? The ink used by those who came to repair before was clearly much darker, a bright red, looking like it was burning."

Mo Hua realized, he had bought the cheapest Fire Elemental ink available to save money, which was fine for practicing arrays, but when actually drawn on a spiritual tool, the effect was certainly inferior.

"For the array's effect to be good, higher grade spiritual ink is needed."

Mo Hua silently noted this, then somewhat embarrassedly said, "Then it must be the ink issue. I bought the cheap stuff, the stimulation of spiritual power might not be very good."

Master Chen said, "Why mention that, the firepower is a little less, but it's still usable, after all, old man me still has to thank you."

Master Chen thought for a moment, then gritted his teeth and said, "That stove you wanted, the crafting fee need not be given, I'll help you craft the stove for free. Of course, I can't refund the material cost, after all, I still need to feed a whole bunch of lads."

Mo Hua looked around the spacious but simple crafting shop, then at the dusky Master Chen and the apprentices covered in sweat and soot, knowing they earned their spirit stones with difficulty, he said, "Master Chen, just give me a fifty percent discount on the crafting fee."

Master Chen shook his head, "That won't do, even this is me taking advantage, asking someone else to repair this array would cost at least a hundred or two hundred spirit stones."

"It doesn't need to be that much."

Master Chen stubbornly said, "We cultivators speak of honesty, a spit and a nail, how can we lightly retract what's been said? Since I said I won't take your spirit stones, then certainly I can't take them!"

Such integrity...

Mo Hua had no choice, thought for a moment, then smilingly said, "Then how about this, I won't give the crafting fee, after the stove is crafted, I'll give some spirit stones, as

a tip for you and the others' hard work."

"That..."

Master Chen was momentarily confused, crafting fee and hard work fee seemed the same, but felt a bit different.

"It's like giving a tip to a friend who helps out." Mo Hua added.

"Well... alright."

Master Chen felt this made sense.

The apprentices also looked at Mo Hua gratefully.

Their families were not wealthy, and being apprentices and doing chores allowed them to earn a little to supplement their family income. If they couldn't earn spirit stones, their already difficult lives would be a bit harder.

But earning spirit stones, even just a few more, made life a bit easier.

"Then it's settled! It's getting late, I need to go home for dinner!"

Mo Hua waved goodbye.

Master Chen cautioned Mo Hua to be careful on the road, then added, "If you want to craft tools in the future, just come to me, I'll give you a discount!"