

The Quest 63

Chapter 63: The Mystery Array

"An array curtain?" Mr. Zhuang also looked slightly astonished.

Mo Hua recalled the spirit screen in his mind and described it in detail:

"The spiritual energy was pale blue, like spirit ink, forming patterns that intertwined like array patterns, crafting the spirit screen into a whole array. However, the spiritual energy was flowing, and the patterns shifted, displaying various arrays on the screen."

"Interesting."

Mr. Zhuang's eyes brightened a bit, then he took out paper and pen, spreading them on the table in front of him.

"Do you remember those patterns? Draw some for me to see."

"I remember some of the patterns, but they keep changing..." Mo Hua replied truthfully.

"No matter," said Mr. Zhuang. "Draw them as you saw them."

Mo Hua's small hand took up the pen and dabbed ink, and as the pen tip moved across the paper, several array patterns soon sprang to life on the paper.

Mr. Zhuang glanced at it and remarked, "These look like ordinary array patterns, nothing special."

Mo Hua asked, "Did the predecessors who practiced this technique before me never encounter this situation?"

Mr. Zhuang pondered for a moment and replied, "Not that I know of."

Mr. Zhuang further explained, "Even if it's the same technique, different cultivators might encounter different issues, especially with such rare ancient techniques that have few inheritors and even fewer practitioners. When problems arise, it's hard to find good precedents to follow."

Mr. Zhuang mused, "The technique mentioned that the bottleneck is in spiritual awareness. Previous cultivators probably encountered problems at that level, but if it were the same issue as yours, it surely would have been noted in the jade slip. Matters concerning the transmission of internal sect techniques; our predecessors within the sect wouldn't keep secrets or withhold information."

Mo Hua frowned slightly, "Then, sir, what should I do? It seems I can't continue my cultivation now."

Mr. Zhuang gave a carefree smile, "If it's just about arrays, it's hardly anything to worry about," and then instructed, "Go home and jot down all the patterns and arrays displayed on the spirit screen, and bring them to me tomorrow."

"Alright, sir!"

Mo Hua breathed a sigh of relief, then remembered Mr. Zhuang's words.

Just an array matter, so it's nothing?

Just how profound was Mr. Zhuang's mastery of arrays?

Could he already be a third-grade array master?

What kind of arrays could a third-grade master draw?

Mo Hua harbored some admiration but then thought better of it, "I shouldn't aim too high for now; even becoming a first-grade master is still a long way off..."

Mo Hua gathered his thoughts, remembered Mr. Zhuang's instructions, and after returning home, immersed his spiritual awareness into the sea of consciousness, observing the patterns and arrays on the spirit screen.

Mo Hua recognized many of the array patterns on the spirit screen, though most of the arrays were unfamiliar, and some obscure patterns he couldn't possibly remember at once. He had to keep

watching and practicing on the stone tablet until he memorized them well, then emerged from the sea of consciousness and copied the patterns onto array paper.

He continued this until midnight, when suddenly feeling dizzy, Mo Hua knew he had overused his spiritual awareness and decided to rest.

Just as he relaxed, Mo Hua felt his stomach growling, only then realizing he had skipped dinner, too engrossed in recording the array patterns.

"At this hour, my parents must be asleep."

Mo Hua worried, "I wonder if there's still anything to eat at home."

Mo Hua stood up, about to open the door, when he noticed a small table by the door, on which a few bowls and dishes were placed, covered by a large bowl.

Lifting the cover, Mo Hua found a small pot of white porridge, a dish of mixed small vegetables, two steamed buns, and a small dish of sauce beef.

The vegetables and meat were cold, the buns warm, but the porridge was still hot.

"Mother must have been worried that I hadn't eaten and didn't want to disturb my study of arrays, so she specifically placed it at the door. And she must have reheated it before sleeping, otherwise, the porridge would have cooled."

Mo Hua felt warmed up after a sip of porridge.

Then, like a whirlwind, he finished the other food, sweeping away his fatigue, rejuvenating his spirit.

Mo Hua re-entered the sea of consciousness, continued tracing the patterns on the spirit screen, and then copied the remembered patterns onto array paper.

He continued until the hour of the tiger, when his spiritual awareness was exhausted again, and he carefully stored the copied array paper and went to sleep properly.

The next day, Mr. Zhuang looked at

the copied array paper Mo Hua brought and his eyes narrowed slightly:

"This is actually a riddle array."

"A riddle array?"

Mo Hua had never heard of such a thing.

Mr. Zhuang patiently explained, "You know what a lantern riddle is, right?"

Mo Hua nodded.

"A riddle array is similar to a lantern riddle, only using array patterns as clues and arrays as the riddle surface. If you don't get the trick, naturally you can't see through the truth," Mr. Zhuang elaborated.

"Oh." Mo Hua nodded.

"This was something long-standing sects and noble families used to amuse and intellectually engage their disciples, but it's not very common anymore."

Mo Hua thought about the intricate and headache-inducing patterns, his expression becoming complicated.

This was for intellectual amusement?

"Does failing to solve it mean I'm rather dull?" Mo Hua asked delicately.

Mr. Zhuang, seeing Mo Hua's concern, smiled wryly, "Not really, this one's a bit tougher, not everyone can solve it."

Mo Hua felt Mr. Zhuang was trying to comfort him but not quite hitting the mark.

Not everyone can solve it, which probably means many can, and few cannot.

And he was among those who could not...

Since it's meant for intellectual amusement, it should be solved—face must be maintained!

Mo Hua couldn't help but ask, "Then how should I solve this riddle array?"

Mr. Zhuang casually tapped his bamboo chair, "Your situation is different from others. For others, failing to solve it might just be a bit depressing, but for you, this riddle array involves cultivation. If you can't solve it, and your cultivation stagnates, the trouble is significant."

"There are two methods: one is you learn to solve it yourself; the other is you jot down all the patterns, copy them out, and I'll help you solve it."

"The second method is the fastest and most straightforward. After all, cultivation is the foundation of a cultivator, without which all else is futile talk, not to mention becoming an array master; the first method requires you to learn on your own, which, while beneficial for your array learning, takes time and delays your cultivation. The choice is yours."

After Mr. Zhuang finished, he watched Mo Hua with interest.

Mo Hua was a bit conflicted.

For a cultivator, the consequences of stagnant cultivation were too severe. His cultivation was naturally not as advanced as that of the Bai siblings or those great clan youths, but among his peers in Tongxian City, he was still considered a standout—though also a standout among the less gifted.

If the bottleneck in the early stages of Qi cultivation took too much time, his cultivation would likely fall behind.

Mo Hua thought it over and finally decided, "Sir, I choose the first one."

Problems that could be solved by oneself were best dealt with personally.

Falling behind in cultivation was acceptable; his spiritual roots and techniques were inferior to others anyway, and this gap would only widen further with time. Falling behind early or late made no difference.

One shouldn't covet a temporary sense of superiority.

Besides, having Mr. Zhuang solve an initial stage of Qi cultivation bottleneck wouldn't help later stages, middle and late Qi cultivation periods. Mr. Zhuang couldn't always be by his side, and Mo Hua was only a disciple in name, not someone who could trouble Mr. Zhuang for everything.

There was another reason, the phrase "intellectual amusement" bothered Mo Hua greatly.

"Oh? Are you sure about your decision?"

Mr. Zhuang asked meaningfully.

Mo Hua nodded, "I have made up my mind."

Mr. Zhuang nodded in approval, "I have some books and jade slips here that outline the basics of riddle arrays. Take these and study them first. Once you're done, come to me, and I'll teach you how to solve arrays."

Mo Hua solemnly accepted them, "Disciple takes his leave."

Mr. Zhuang watched Mo Hua depart, his leisurely demeanor fading, his expression turning slightly grave.