

## The Quest 64

Chapter 64: Unusual Practices

"This isn't something used for intellectual diversion."

Elder Gui appeared silently, speaking softly. After a glance at Mr. Zhuang and a slight hesitation, he added:

"At least not for normal people."

Mr. Zhuang frowned slightly, "Have you ever seen this technique before?"

Elder Gui shook his head slightly, "I have seen stranger techniques, but none as peculiar as this..."

"The bottlenecks involve spirit stones, spiritual roots, spiritual items, meridians, bloodlines, and even require killing—whether it be humans, demonic beasts, or demon cultivators. Techniques that draw on the living essence, spiritual power, and consciousness of others I have seen, but never one where the bottleneck lies in the Sea of Consciousness Riddle Array."

Elder Gui continued indifferently, "Such ancient and rare techniques are only preserved by your old-fashioned ancient sects."

Mr. Zhuang sighed softly, "This complicates things."

"I've told you before, there's no need to be different. Learning obscure techniques that no one else practices. Mo Hua's spiritual root is inadequate, and now with this obscure technique, his cultivation progress is hampered and will be much slower." Elder Gui's tone carried a hint of reproach.

"I'll figure something out. You have to start and finish well in everything."

"What will you do? Don't forget that you can't stay here too long," Elder Gui's gaze turned cold.

"I must teach him to decipher the array so he can independently unravel the riddles within his Sea of Consciousness," said Mr. Zhuang. "Given Mo Hua's comprehension, it shouldn't take too long. After that, it's up to his fate..."

"What about those two children from the Bai family? You're not going to take care of them anymore?"

"I've already made an exception by taking them as nominal disciples. It's impossible to take them as direct disciples. My fellow disciple has been scheming against me all her life; I can't let her manipulate everything."

"That's true. Your judgment in picking disciples has always been poor, and so is your choice of techniques."

Mr. Zhuang wanted to retort, but the words died on his lips, as he realized Elder Gui was right and swallowed his words.

Mo Hua eagerly started reading the jade slip he received from Mr. Zhuang.

"Arrays draw from the principles of heaven and earth, depicting the myriad aspects of existence, possessing the power to change the heavens and earth, with an unfathomable might. One who knows the ways of heaven and earth and understands the principles of arrays can both establish and solve arrays."

"An array consists of the array medium, array patterns, array hub, and array eye. Damaging the array medium or destroying the array eye is called breaking the array; solving the array patterns or reversing the array hub is called solving the array."

"All things have their nurturing and restraining forces, and so do array patterns. The interplay of yin and yang, the mutual opposition of the Three Talents, the control of the Four Symbols, and the Five Elements, where metal restrains wood, wood restrains earth, earth restrains water, water restrains fire, and fire restrains metal..."

...

The jade slip contained extensive descriptions on solving arrays.

Mo Hua seemed to understand some of it but was confused upon further thought. As he pondered with a frown, Bai Zisheng leaned over secretly, "Hey, why are you reading a book on solving arrays?"

"Master asked me to."

"Oh."

"Can you solve arrays?" asked Mo Hua.

"I know a bit, but I'm not very good at it."

Knowing a bit was still knowing, at least better than himself.

Mo Hua humbly pointed to a section in the book, "What's the difference between breaking and solving an array?"

Bai Zisheng didn't hold back and explained:

"Breaking an array generally means using brute force to destroy the array medium and the array eye essential for the array's operation, forcibly eliminating the array. Without the array medium, the array can hardly exist; without the array eye, the array cannot operate, and naturally, the array is broken..."

"Solving an array is more troublesome; it relies on understanding the generative and restrictive interactions within the array patterns. By drawing array patterns that counteract the existing ones, the original patterns are neutralized, and the array is dissolved. Usually, only an array master has the ability to solve an array."

"Do you not understand how to solve an array?" Bai Zisheng asked after explaining.

"No," Mo Hua said a bit shyly, "I don't quite understand the differences between the array eye, array hub, and array medium..."

Bai Zisheng exclaimed, "Wow, how do you not know this?"

"If I knew all this, would I still ask you? If I don't ask you, how would it seem like you know so much?"

Bai Zisheng stroked his chin, "That makes sense."

Turning his head and seeing his sister Bai Zixi's almost imperceptible smile, he realized something and then exclaimed:

"That's still not right, I can't just teach for free!"

"What if I bring you a plate of beef tomorrow?"

Bai Zisheng scoffed, "What do you think I am? I am a direct descendant of the Bai family, a favored child of heaven. Do you think a plate of beef is enough to satisfy me?"

"Two plates?"

"...Okay."

"What's the difference between the array eye, array medium, and array hub?"

Mo Hua seized the opportunity to ask.

Bai Zisheng, satisfied with the promise of two plates of beef, explained:

"The array eye is the core of the array's operation, providing spiritual power for the array's functioning. Generally, the array eye of a single array is a Spirit Gathering Array Pattern, and for a complex array composed of multiple single arrays, the array eye is a Spirit Gathering Array, the more powerful the array, the more spiritual power the array eye needs, and some family or sect's protective arrays might even require an entire spirit vein as the supply of spiritual power for the array eye..."

"The array hub is the pivot of the array and also involves the array's layout, which is more intricate, generally adhering to the concepts of 'heaven is round, earth is square,' the Dual Aspects and the Four Symbols, and the Eight Trigrams positions. Different attributes of array patterns must be placed in corresponding positions, otherwise, the array patterns won't take effect..."

"Different schools and heritages have different array hubs, and talking about that is too complicated. You shouldn't worry about it. With our current level of understanding of arrays, it's not possible to solve an array through the array hub..."

"The array medium is the medium of the array, such as array papers, stone tablets, copper, iron, wood, etc., that carry the array patterns. After array patterns are drawn on them, they become the array medium. Some spiritual instruments that need array patterns can also be considered as the array medium..."

Seeing Mo Hua's somewhat understanding, somewhat not, Bai Zisheng gave an example:

"Simply put, the array eye is like the heart's vessels, the array hub is the main channel for the flow of Qi and blood, and the array patterns are the branches of this flow. The spiritual power supplied by the array eye, channeled through the array hub, flows into the array patterns, just like blood flowing from the heart through the body's layout of various blood vessels to circulate throughout the body..."

Bai Zisheng rattled off a bunch of explanations, then feeling thirsty, Mo Hua personally poured a cup of tea for him.

"This...is this very basic array knowledge?" Mo Hua asked weakly.

"I suppose so, at least in our Bai family, these are common knowledge for learning array techniques." Bai Zisheng said with slight pride.

It was good that he had asked beforehand, otherwise bringing these superficial questions to Mr. Zhuang would have been quite embarrassing.

"I'll bring you a pot of osmanthus wine tomorrow."

"Uh-huh!" Bai Zisheng nodded repeatedly, delighted.

Mo Hua asked about a few other things, such as how arrays are usually solved, how they are broken, what specific schools of array hubs there are, and so on.

As the evening approached, Mo Hua bid farewell to Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi, packing up to head home.

"Mo Hua," Bai Zisheng suddenly called out to Mo Hua with a serious expression, "Don't forget the most important thing..."

"What?" Mo Hua looked at him puzzled.

"The beef must be spicy!"

Bai Zisheng said with a stern face.