

The Quest 66

Chapter 66: The Thousand Arrays

When Mo Hua arrived at Mr. Zhuang's mountain residence, the Bai siblings were already there, engrossed in their books and cultivation under a tree beside the pond. Aunt Xue usually didn't enter the residence but waited outside the gate.

Seeing Mo Hua, Bai Zisheng hurriedly dropped his book and ran over excitedly.

Mo Hua handed him a small portion of a food box and a little jug of fruit wine, "Have it later, you just had breakfast."

Stuffing his mouth with meat, Bai Zisheng said with satisfaction, "It's fine, I told Aunt Xue I didn't have much appetite this morning, so I ate less."

Shaking his head, Mo Hua then handed some pastries and osmanthus wine to Bai Zixi, who thanked him in her crisp, melodious voice, then gracefully and dignifiedly nibbled on the pastries and sipped the wine.

Looking at Bai Zisheng and then at Bai Zixi, Mo Hua thought about the vast difference in dining manners between the siblings.

Bai Zisheng, who had earlier maintained the demeanor of a noble family's disciple, abandoned all pretenses of decorum upon getting familiar with Mo Hua. His current dog-like eating was a waste of his handsome appearance.

Mo Hua also delivered some wine and food to Mr. Zhuang and Elder Gui, then started to ask about solving arrays.

Mo Hua had already asked Bai Zisheng some basic questions; the remaining were more challenging, beyond his own understanding of cultivation.

For instance, how to use the array eye and array hub to solve arrays, the basic principles of array solving, and how to solve incomprehensible arrays.

Mr. Zhuang was quite pleased with the questions Mo Hua posed: "Asking these questions shows you've thoroughly read the texts given to you."

"Solving using the array eye is tough, learning the reverse spirit array patterns is even harder, and they are usually family secrets not easily shared. Even if learned, they're hard to apply because the spirit-gathering patterns differ with each array, and applying the reverse spirit array must be adapted to the specific array, which is difficult to gauge. Using the gathering patterns can easily lead to loss of control over the array's spiritual energy, destroying the array and potentially harming the cultivator."

"Don't even consider using the array hub for now, at least not until you're above a third-grade array master. Solving with the array hub requires deep foundational knowledge of arrays, and familiarity with the structures used by various families, sects, or schools, otherwise, you'd be clueless with unfamiliar arrays."

"So, for you, just focus on solving with array patterns, which might seem complex but is actually the most basic and straightforward method."

"Oh," Mo Hua nodded repeatedly.

"Mo Hua, do you think it's better for an array master to specialize deeply or to have broad knowledge?" Mr. Zhuang suddenly asked.

"Isn't it best to be both broadly knowledgeable and deeply skilled?" Mo Hua replied timidly.

"Both are what mature cultivators choose."

Mr. Zhuang chuckled, "The great path is endless, but our lives are limited. We can either choose to specialize in one type of array, seeking depth over breadth, or accumulate a wide knowledge, seeking breadth over depth."

"In that case, it's definitely better to specialize in one type of array," Mo Hua said.

"Why?" Mr. Zhuang asked, intrigued.

"Array techniques are profound and vast. Merely seeking breadth will only skim the surface. Specializing in one type allows for deeper understanding and application when encountering complex arrays..."

Mr. Zhuang nodded, "Well said. Family traditions in array techniques value specialization over diversity."

Mo Hua understood some but was still unclear about the relevance to himself.

"In fact, not just families, all orthodox array traditions value specialization over diversity. First master one type of array thoroughly, then explore other types," Mr. Zhuang explained, pausing briefly before looking at Mo Hua again: "But you are different, you need to learn broadly, not just specialize in one type."

Mo Hua was momentarily puzzled, then asked, "Because of the cultivation technique?"

Mr. Zhuang looked approvingly, "Correct. You've learned the 'Heavenly Proliferation Technique.' To advance, you need to solve riddle arrays. Only by solving these can you cultivate the technique, increase your cultivation, and elevate your realm. Without solving the riddle arrays, all is baseless."

"Solving riddle arrays requires understanding sufficient array patterns and mastering numerous arrays. Many riddle arrays aren't hard, it's about knowing the related patterns and arrays. If you know them, solving is easy, but if not, even if your natural talent and knowledge in arrays are exceptional, it's futile."

"As the saying goes, 'even the cleverest housewife cannot cook without

rice.' Facing an unfamiliar riddle array, even the most profound array master is helpless."

Enlightened, Mo Hua then scratched his head, asking, "Then, sir, what should I do?"

Mr. Zhuang handed Mo Hua a book titled "Collection of Thousand Arrays."

Opening it, Mo Hua found it densely packed with various arrays, all below the first grade, with most having less than nine array patterns, though a few included nine.

Most were five-element arrays, with some peculiarly functional ones Mo Hua had never seen before.

Mo Hua gaped, "This is..."

"This is a collection of arrays below the first grade, documenting the names, grades, and purposes of arrays. Browse through it yourself, and if there's something you want to learn, look for the corresponding array diagrams on the first floor of the library."

"I've taught you the basics of array techniques, you can learn on your own now. If you have questions, come and ask me. Just remember one thing, return the array diagrams you've checked out, and do not lose them," Mr. Zhuang instructed.

"I will remember," Mo Hua solemnly nodded.

"Alright, off you go," Mr. Zhuang waved.

Mo Hua bowed respectfully to Mr. Zhuang, treasuring the "Collection of Thousand Arrays" as he tucked it into his bosom. As he was about to leave, Mr. Zhuang called out.

"Mo Hua," Mr. Zhuang hesitated, then said, "I should have chosen a more secure cultivation technique for you, one that wouldn't require so much effort... This was my oversight."

Elder Gui, who had been resting with his eyes closed, opened them slightly, looking surprised at Mr. Zhuang.

Mo Hua looked astonished, then shyly smiled at Mr. Zhuang, "My family is ordinary, and I don't have many spirit stones. This cultivation technique doesn't require spiritual items for breakthroughs and uses few spirit stones, which is perfect for me. In my eyes, the technique you chose is the best in the world."

"Is that so..."

Mr. Zhuang looked at Mo Hua's youthful and handsome face, his eyes clear and sincere, and couldn't help but smile, his demeanor returning to his usual carefree nature, though his voice grew softer: "Go study array techniques."

Mo Hua politely bowed again and then scampered off on his little legs.