

The Quest 89

Chapter 89: Insights

Mo Hua sighed, "I originally thought Qian Xing was just a brash young master at worst, a bully perhaps, but I never imagined he could stoop to such vile deeds behind the scenes..."

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lan's gaze sharpened, and he spoke earnestly, "Mo Hua, you often hear the phrase 'the human heart is fraught with peril,' right?"

Mo Hua nodded.

"The malice in the human heart can sometimes be invisible. Bad people don't have the word 'bad' written across their faces. Many despicable people appear just like everyone else on the surface, some even more so than ordinary folks."

"What people allow others to see are usually the respectable parts of themselves; what's hidden in the dark, the secrets they harbor, remain unknown..."

Mo Hua was taken aback by Zhang Lan's words, uncharacteristic of his usual carefree demeanor, and felt profoundly stirred.

"That is to say, for someone like Qian Xing, what is visible is hardly commendable, not to mention the hidden deeds, which are likely far worse."

Zhang Lan looked at Mo Hua, surprised, "You catch on quick."

"What a pity though..."

As Mo Hua seemed to regret something, Zhang Lan asked, "A pity about what?"

"The power of the array is still somewhat lacking..."

It hadn't killed Qian Xing.

Zhang Lan nodded, sharing the sentiment.

"Although it didn't kill him, it did wound him severely. The Qian family is now seeking a top-tier alchemist to treat him, but whether he can be fully healed is uncertain. If you ask me, it's just a waste of precious elixirs."

Zhang Lan added, then suddenly recalled something, "If Qian Xing survives, will he know it was you who acted?"

"I splashed Spirit Ink in his eyes; he shouldn't be able to see."

"Oh?" Zhang Lan thought to himself, aren't you admitting it now?

Mo Hua looked up innocently, pretending to have said nothing.

"What if he does find out?"

Mo Hua pondered and replied, "If he finds out, given his pride, he definitely won't tell his family. Being injured by a cultivator at the fourth level of Qi-refinement would be too embarrassing."

"And if he seeks revenge privately?" Zhang Lan couldn't help but ask.

"Then I'm even less worried. If he can be ambushed once, why not a second time? He was lucky the first time; he might not be so fortunate again..." Mo Hua shrugged.

He wasn't one to provoke trouble, but he wasn't afraid of it either. It had been an unexpected incident before, and he had been at a disadvantage. If he were prepared, he wouldn't fear Qian Xing as much.

Zhang Lan was stunned, "How can you be so sure his luck will falter the next time?"

Mo Hua pretended not to hear.

Zhang Lan whispered, "Even if you use the Earth Fire Array, it only injures him severely, not fatally. You're only at the fourth level of Qi-refinement, without any other means..."

At the fourth level, and without spell techniques, even if he had them, they wouldn't be very powerful.

Mo Hua wasn't one for physical cultivation; getting close would be suicidal.

Regarding arrays, drawing one containing seven array patterns at his level was already his limit; even more powerful arrays wouldn't be much stronger.

Even if there were such arrays, they would be secret formations held by major families, not shared lightly.

Zhang Lan couldn't think of any other methods Mo Hua might have.

"You're not planning to have those artifact-crafting apprentices come and beat Qian Xing to death, are you?" Zhang Lan suddenly said.

Mo Hua gave Zhang Lan a slightly disdainful look, whispering, "One Earth Fire Array can injure him; two could kill him..."

Zhang Lan: "..."

He was used to thinking from a cultivator's professional perspective, not expecting such a straightforward solution.

Mo Hua leaned closer to Zhang Lan, lowering his voice, "I've thought it through, just as you said. After the explosion, I'll wash away the ashes with water, pinch a spirit stone on the spot to confuse the spiritual energy. That way, they won't know it was done with an array..."

Zhang Lan nodded, then suddenly realized something was off, "Wait, what do you mean 'as you said'?"

Mo Hua sheepishly smiled, "Well, thanks to your earlier advice."

Zhang Lan blurted out, "I didn't give you any advice!"

"Well, even if you didn't."

"What do you mean 'even if'? No advice means no advice!"

Mo Hua simply comforted him, "I was just speaking hypothetically. I, a mere fourth-level Qi-refinement

cultivator, couldn't possibly do something so risky."

"Let's drop it," Zhang Lan waved it off, fearing that further discussion might implicate him as the mastermind.

He was initially a bit worried about Mo Hua, but now it seemed he should be more concerned about that Qian Xing fellow.

The Qian family probably didn't want to escalate the situation, given they were at fault. Not only had their bullying backfired, but they were also left in a terrible state. If it became widely known, it would be their own disgrace.

Digging deeper might even drag out the shady deeds Qian Xing had done in private, which would give the Dao Court enough to deal with them.

As long as the Qian family didn't intervene, even if Qian Xing sought personal revenge, Mo Hua should be able to handle it, especially if he was cautious.

Mo Hua's concern was primarily the Qian family; as for Qian Xing, he verbally scorned him as useless, but deep down, he always regarded him as such. Unless unexpectedly ambushed and forced to react hastily, dealing with Qian Xing with prior preparation wouldn't be difficult.

"By the way, you've been studying array formations; you must have a master, right?" This question had been on Zhang Lan's mind.

In the realm of cultivation, mastering arrays is notoriously challenging, and the assessment and certification of array masters are among the strictest.

Most cultivators studying arrays have a lineage; the notion of self-taught mastery is virtually nonexistent.

Even the most talented array masters need guidance; without it, not to mention the vast sea of array formations, even grasping the basic array patterns would take a tremendous amount of time and insight.

Mo Hua, being a wandering cultivator not affiliated with any sect, yet skilled in arrays, must have practiced diligently. Zhang Lan guessed he also had some guidance.

"Not a master, just a teacher. I'm only his nominal disciple," Mo Hua didn't hide it.

"Does this teacher have a name?" Zhang Lan inquired.

Mo Hua shook his head, "The teacher lives in seclusion, enjoying tranquility, and prefers not to reveal his name."

Zhang Lan nodded, understanding that many cultivators in the daoist realm are like this; eccentric and averse to socializing, they find a quiet place to do what they love.

Mo Hua having met such a person was indeed his good fortune.

He didn't press further, knowing when to stop; probing too deeply into the affairs of such recluses is often frowned upon.

"But... this teacher didn't take you as a formal disciple?"

Zhang Lan still couldn't help but ask, finding Mo Hua to be a good kid, diligent and hardworking, with high aptitude, though sometimes his words were aggravating. If Zhang Lan were skilled in arrays, he might even consider taking Mo Hua as his disciple.

Mo Hua responded, "My talent is quite ordinary. I'm already happy that the teacher taught me array formations."

Zhang Lan nodded, saying no more. After finishing their meal and a few drinks, he gave Mo Hua a few more pieces of advice before leaving the restaurant.

Stepping outside, a gentle breeze brushed against his face, dispersing the slight intoxication and clearing his mind.

Zhang Lan suddenly pondered a question: "Fourth level of Qi-refinement, drawing seven array patterns, Earth Fire Array... Is that really considered 'ordinary talent'?"

"I'm at the fourth level of Qi-refinement; how many array patterns can I draw again? Four? No, surely I can manage five or six... Mo Hua can draw seven..."

"He aims to be an array master, so drawing seven is normal. I'm not pursuing that path, just dabbling, so five or six should be reasonable..." Zhang Lan nodded to himself.

"But, generally, how many array patterns can a fourth-level Qi-refinement array master draw? Four?"

Zhang Lan thought for a moment, then shook his head, still unclear.

He had always hated drawing arrays back at clan school; it drained his spiritual awareness rapidly, giving him headaches, so he never took it seriously.

"I should write a letter back home, ask how many array patterns a fourth-level Qi-refinement disciple can draw..."

Zhang Lan mused quietly.