

## The Quest 93

Chapter 93: Intimidation

The Bai Residence, Early Morning

As dawn was breaking, Bai Zixi rose early to begin her cultivation. Her daily routine was packed—cultivating techniques, studying array talismans, and learning both alchemy and artifact crafting.

The Bai residence, specially constructed by Aunt Xue for the Bai siblings, was equipped with various rooms like an alchemy room, a crafting room, a library, and a practice room. Despite being smaller, these rooms mimicked the Bai family's layout and had all necessary facilities. This arrangement was at the behest of Lady Bai.

Even though the Bai siblings were away from home, they were not to neglect their cultivation. Aunt Xue, following Lady Bai's orders, took care of their daily needs and their cultivation matters.

Lady Bai held high hopes for her children, hence her strictness.

Bai Zisheng, though a bit mischievous and active, was generally obedient. In contrast, Bai Zixi was a relief to look after. She completed her daily lessons without fail, her innate talent and dedication to the path of cultivation were impeccable, hardly a worry to anyone.

Bai Zixi, having risen at the hour of Mao, sat in the bamboo pavilion in the courtyard to meditate for an hour.

Aunt Xue had just returned and stood quietly in the nearby bamboo grove, waiting.

The early morning was draped in a light mist, the greenery lush and dripping, the flowers radiant and on the verge of blooming.

Bai Zixi, dressed in a snow-white robe, her skin luminous and her features flawless, was a picture of serenity amidst the misty backdrop.

The morning sun filtered through the mist, touching the greenery and the petals, casting a soft golden glow over Bai Zixi.

Aunt Xue sighed, content to sit and watch such a scene all day if she could.

Bai Zixi's long lashes fluttered as she opened her eyes.

Aunt Xue approached and relayed the information she had gathered. This included Mo Hua being confronted by Qian Xing, the words exchanged, the conflict that ensued, and its resolution. She mentioned that after his recovery, Qian Xing harbored resentment towards Mo Hua and had sought him out with threats.

This was the scene Bai Zixi had witnessed the day before.

Bai Zixi frowned slightly, murmuring, "We seek to study under Mr. Zhuang undisturbed."

Aunt Xue nodded and then withdrew.

However, as she left, she pondered over Bai Zixi's use of "we." Did she mean just her and her brother, or did it include Mo Hua as well?

Mo Hua had sought advice from Mr. Zhuang and, as usual, had brought beef, osmanthus cake, and sweet fermented rice for the Bai siblings, while also discussing some array techniques.

As they spoke, Mo Hua felt Bai Zixi's gaze on his neck.

He turned, curious, and met her eyes.

"Did your neck get injured?" Bai Zixi asked.

"Uh, yes," Mo Hua nodded. "It was a minor injury, but it's healed now."

No more was said on the matter.

Bai Zixi tasted the fermented rice, bite by bite.

Returning home from Mr. Zhuang's, Mo Hua went back to his cottage and began reviewing array manuals.

Knowing Qian Xing's hostility was unlikely to end there, Mo Hua started preparing to counteract Qian Xing's tactics. While he couldn't yet learn spells, he focused on arrays, especially.

He chose a few arrays to master diligently.

One was the Wood Binding Array, which, upon activation, released pale green wood-elemental energy like vines to bind an opponent—useful for trapping enemies.

Another was the Fireworks Array, similar to the Illuminating Fire Array he had previously used for lighting, but the Fireworks Array, when activated, shot a dazzling red firework into the sky.

The Fireworks Array was typically used for celebrations. During cultivator festivals, it created a spectacular display of colorful fireworks. Mo Hua planned to use it to attract attention in sudden dangers, to avoid being isolated and helpless.

He also prepared the Iron Armor Array, drawn onto a set of lightweight vine armor which could turn as hard as steel in emergencies, potentially saving his life.

Originally, the Iron Armor Array was used to strengthen metal armors, already tough due to being forged from fine steel. With the array, they became nearly indestructible. For body cultivators who fought in close quarters, wearing such array-imbued metal armor made them nearly invincible.

However, such armor was expensive, requiring a lot of fine steel and effort to make—beyond what Mo Hua could afford. Among all the demon hunters in Tongxian City, only a few had metal armor; most used cheaper vine armor instead.

Mo Hua's vine armor, tailored specifically for him by Master Chen, was compact and exquisitely made. Mo Hua was small, so the armor didn't require much material, and Master Chen even waived the cost of the spirit stones.

Since Master Chen didn't take spirit stones, Mo Hua could only offer flattering compliments, which Master Chen outwardly dismissed but inwardly enjoyed.

When Mo Hua tested the vine armor, it could block most swords and knives, but it couldn't withstand heavy blows. While it wouldn't cause external injuries, internal injuries were still a risk.

This was unavoidable; vine armor was designed for body cultivators who were tough enough to ignore such blunt force impacts, but Mo Hua was different.

He had no choice but to draw an Iron Armor Array on it. While it couldn't completely stop the force, it was significantly more effective than before. Moreover, with the Iron Armor Array, the armor itself became much more durable. Previously, swords and knives could leave marks, but now they left none.

The vine armor was meant for self-defense, and wearing it wasn't comfortable. Mo Hua stored it in his storage bag, ready to be used in emergencies.

As for offensive arrays, he only had the Earth Fire Array for now. Its power was decent, and other arrays likely wouldn't be much stronger. More importantly, the Earth Fire Array activated three breaths before exploding, while most other arrays had an instant effect. If they exploded, Mo Hua would also be caught in the blast.

Such powerful arrays could severely injure Qian Xing, but if Mo Hua was too close, he would certainly perish.

Mo Hua also kept a variety of smaller arrays ready for unforeseen circumstances.

Two days later, Zhang Lan found Mo Hua and immediately said, "Qian Xing has gone mad; he won't trouble you anymore."

Mo Hua was stunned.

Seeing Mo Hua's expression, Zhang Lan felt relieved and explained:

"While Qian Xing was sleeping, someone drenched him in fresh demon blood and gory innards. He was soaked in blood all night and by the morning, he had completely lost his mind."

Mo Hua was shocked and asked, "Was he scared into madness?"

"It's not that simple," Zhang Lan shook his head. "The blood and viscera could indeed scare someone, but normally, burning some Calming Spirit Incense and resting would suffice; it shouldn't drive someone mad."

"What happened then?" Mo Hua asked.

"I suspect that in addition to using demon blood and viscera to frighten him, someone might have employed an illusion technique," Zhang Lan suggested.

"Illusion technique?"

"Apparently, when Qian Xing woke up, he was panic-stricken and kept screaming 'Don't eat me'. If I'm right, someone used an illusion technique to make him believe he was being eaten by a demon beast bite by bite in his dream. When he woke to find himself surrounded by the remains of demon beasts, he thought he was inside a beast's stomach and had indeed been eaten. The agony and terror drove him completely insane."

Mo Hua listened in awe, fascinated by such a potent technique, and couldn't help asking:

"An illusion technique... Can I learn it?"

Zhang Lan glanced at Mo Hua and flatly said, "You can't!" effectively quashing Mo Hua's naive hope.

"Illusion techniques are a very special kind of spellcraft that require unique meridians and constitution, as well as a deep familial heritage in cultivation. Most cultivators can't learn them; they neither have the resources nor the capability," Zhang Lan explained.

Disappointed, Mo Hua then asked, "Uncle Zhang, can you learn it?"

Zhang Lan choked up a bit, "I... can't either."

Mo Hua felt somewhat comforted by this.