

My Master 381

Chapter 381: You Finish Your Performance and Then He Takes the Stage_4

"I doubt where his confidence comes from, to actually..."

Elder Huan Kong's face turned unspeakably ugly as he listened to the disciples' remarks. Abruptly turning his head back to the crowd, he rebuked, "Shut your mouths! Before you stands a Peak Master, a Peak Master of the Hundred Peaks Sect. By right, he is your senior. How can you act so disrespectfully! Is this how we at the Thousand Caves Door teach you manners?"

So what if Cao Zhen doesn't understand musical rhythm? That's actually good!

But what's the point of you all saying it out loud?

If word spreads that the Thousand Caves Door debated with someone who doesn't understand musical rhythms, won't that be embarrassing!

However, if we phrase it differently, not mentioning that Cao Zhen doesn't understand musical rhythms, then if we win, it will be a victory over a Peak Master of the Hundred Peaks Sect.

Then, the people of the Hundred Peaks Sect couldn't criticize much, since it was Cao Zhen himself who claimed to be proficient in musical rhythms.

Don't these disciples understand that?

The disciples of the Thousand Caves Door, reprimanded by the elder, hurriedly shut their mouths and said no more.

In the rear of the Hundred Peaks Sect, the crowd began to panic after hearing the words of the disciples from the Thousand Caves Door. Lan Pili even secretly messaged Cao Zhen, "Peak Master Cao, you don't understand musical rhythm, you could have just said so directly. Why did you agree to debate with them?"

"Not understand? Who said I don't understand musical rhythms? I just haven't heard that particular piece of music," Cao Zhen replied to Lan Pili and turned to look at the people from the Thousand Caves Door, asking again, "Everyone, don't you even have a musical score?"

"Of course, there is one. Our Immortal Melody Hall collects most of the musical scores from the Guardian Immortal Imperial Dynasty, among which is the 'Breaking Formation Robe Swamp Melody'."

A Cave Master said to a disciple behind him, "Go and get the 'Breaking Formation Robe Swamp Melody' for Peak Master Cao."

One of his disciples quickly left, running to the bookshelf at the side of the hall and handed Cao Zhen a musical score.

Cao Zhen flipped through it.

Fortunately, it was a music score written in text; it would have been embarrassing if it had been purely notation. Gao Jianli's era did not have such simplified scores.

He read through word by word and quickly memorized the score.

Then he pointed to the various musical instruments around and asked, "Everyone, I did not bring my own instrument. May I borrow one?"

The Cave Masters across from him were stunned. He didn't even have his own instrument? This man truly seemed to know nothing.

Behind them, the members of the Hundred Peaks Sect were in despair. It seemed Peak Master Cao truly didn't understand musical rhythm. How could someone familiar with it not know the 'Breaking Formation Robe Swamp Melody' or not have their own instrument?

"Peak Master Cao, you may take any instrument you wish," a Cave Master replied with a wry smile, never having imagined that one day he would be debating with someone who knew nothing about musical rhythm.

If it had been anyone else, under different circumstances, he wouldn't have bothered to challenge them.

After all, he had his pride, and he didn't deign to bully those ignorant in the way of music.

But for the honor of the Thousand Caves Door, he had no choice but to engage in a debate with the opponent.

"By the way, since Peak Master Cao won't be using his own instrument, let's not use ours either. Let's all just pick something at random," he added.

Of course, one is most proficient with the instrument one commonly plays.

But right now, Cao Zhen was clearly a novice who didn't know anything, using an instrument from the Thousand Caves Door. If they used their own, it would be too much of a bullying act, and it wouldn't sound good if word got out.

"Alright, let's choose our instruments again," they agreed.

The Cave Masters from the Rhythmic Cave took turns choosing instruments they were skilled in, some casting unfriendly glances at Cao Zhen as they did so.

Cao Zhen obviously didn't understand musical rhythms, yet he claimed to excel in them and insisted on debating them.

What did this imply?

It was a clear disdain for their path of musical rhythm!

It's not just a disrespect to the Rhythmic Cave of the Thousand Caves Door but to everyone who pursued the path of musical rhythm.

What did he think? Did he assume that musical rhythms were so simple that a glance was enough to understand them, or did he believe that the path of musical rhythm didn't require respect and was just something for entertainment?

Surely, they must go all out shortly to show Cao Zhen what the path of musical rhythm was all about and to demonstrate that musical rhythm was not just for play!

Cao Zhen approached an array of instruments, looking them over one by one: zithers, flutes, pipes... Here, there were instruments he could name and those he could not, indeed a complete assortment.

He quickly set his eyes on a suona.

He really wanted to choose this suona. How did that saying go? "A thousand years for the lute, ten thousand for the zither. A lifetime with the erhu, but one blast of the suona and it's game over. At the first hearing, the suona's sound is unrecognizable; at the second, you're in the coffin."

If everyone played together, the suona would be the first choice; its sound could end it all.

Unfortunately, Gao Jianli didn't know how to play the suona.

It didn't exist in his era.

Though, with Gao Jianli's musical rhythm level of ninety-nine, a bit of practice would certainly make him proficient in the suona. But he couldn't just practice on the spot now, so he had to choose another instrument that Gao Jianli was familiar with.

His gaze swept around and finally settled on a set of chime bells.

'Breaking Formation Robe Swamp Melody' was an impassioned piece, so choosing the chime bells was appropriate.

Cao Zhen waved his hand, arranging the chime bells in an open space, then took a mallet in hand and looked toward the group of Cave Masters opposite him.

The Cave Master who had the disciple fetch the musical score glanced at the instrument Cao Zhen had picked, and chose not to comment further, only reminding, "Peak Master Cao, when I say begin, we will all start playing. If anyone makes a mistake, they must stop playing. Naturally, it also means they have lost."

Chapter 382: You Finish Your Performance and Then He Takes the Stage_5

Apart from that, since everyone's cultivation base is different, we are also only competing in pure musical rhythm, so the use of mana is also prohibited during the performance."

If it were somebody else, he wouldn't have bothered to mention this rule, as it's the most basic one.

But for someone like Cao Zhen, who obviously didn't understand musical rhythm, he couldn't help but remind him.

Looking at Cao Zhen's demeanor, he had to laugh at himself; a group of Cave Masters well-versed in the way of musical rhythm competing with someone who knew nothing of it was simply ludicrous.

"Alright, I understand, and I'm ready. Whenever you are, Cave Master, just announce the start," Cao Zhen said, eager to try as he waved the wooden mallet a couple of times. He might have connected with Gao Jianli, but he had yet to play even once. This time, he was going to see how powerful ninety-nine levels of musical rhythm could be.

In his expectant gaze, a voice signaled the start.

In an instant, the sounds of various instruments arose.

Cao Zhen also swung the wooden mallet at the same time, striking the bronze bells before him.

Although he possessed Gao Jianli's ninety-nine levels of musical rhythm, this being his first use, he could keep up with everyone's tempo thanks to the super high level of musical rhythm. However, his strikes lacked any emotion and were very stiff.

Many disciples from Melody Peak, upon seeing Cao Zhen's striking motion, couldn't help but show a surprised expression.

"He actually knows how?"

"He's keeping up, not completely clueless."

"The bronze bells are rather unusual instruments. This Peak Master knows how to play them, which is quite skillful indeed."

"But all he's doing is keeping up with the rhythm without making a mistake. Listen to how he plays, there's no emotion in it. Music without feeling can hardly be called musical rhythm!"

"He's performing alongside the Cave Masters, and it won't be long before he's influenced by the emotional expression in their musical rhythm and then loses his own tempo."

Elder Huan Kong saw Cao Zhen strike the bronze bells with a smile. He had previously thought that it was very likely Cao Zhen knew nothing about musical rhythm.

They felt almost certain they couldn't lose, but actually seeing Cao Zhen's level and being certain of his defeat gave them a different feeling.

The people from the Hundred Peaks Sect, however, began to sigh to themselves.

Lan Pili sighed softly, consoling himself by thinking that Peak Master Cao had won in the ways of calligraphy and painting, and even if he lost in musical rhythm this time, it still counted as two wins and one loss, a victory overall.

Actually, this might not be such a bad thing. At the very least, it would let Peak Master Cao know not to be too arrogant in the future and refrain from making unfounded claims about things he didn't master.

Speaking of which, although Peak Master Cao was indeed a Peak Master, he was still too young, even younger than some disciples from their own peaks.

This defeat might be considered part of Peak Master Cao's growth.

The disciples from Thousand Caves Door, without realizing it, had become immersed in the Cave Masters' performance.

So many people playing together, with different instruments and styles. If it were someone else without practice, the produced music might be unpleasant or strange. But these were the Cave Masters, so adept in musical rhythm.

The disciples listened to the Cave Masters' performance and were completely immersed in it.

Such an opportunity for the Cave Masters to perform together was incredibly rare.

While the disciples were engrossed, Elder Huan Kong's expression gradually changed.

No, that's not right. How is Cao Zhen still keeping up?

And why does it feel like Cao Zhen's performance is becoming smoother? Moreover, from Cao Zhen's music, is there an emerging sense of being gallant and fervent?

"Ding..."

Suddenly, a subtle sound emanated, and a Peak Master who was playing the zither suddenly stopped, a look of astonishment on his face. He should not have made a mistake so quickly given his strength in the musical rhythm.

But just now, there came a very odd sound of a bell, filled with a spirit of generosity as if thousands of troops were charging ahead. His emotions were influenced in an instant, leading him to make a mistake!

How strange. Whose sound was that? None of the other Cave Masters used that style, to his knowledge.

Looking around, he froze upon realization that none of the other Cave Masters had made a mistake; they were all performing, indicating he was the first to falter.

This...

No, Cao Zhen!

He suddenly turned to look at Cao Zhen beside him, and in the next moment, his eyes widened in shock!

Cao Zhen was still playing, with no mistakes!

This... how is this possible?

And that voice, that stirring sensation, and those chime bells, the person who affected him just now was Cao Zhen!

How can this be possible?

"Ding..." Suddenly, another faint sound came, and a Cave Master who thought he was playing the erhu had no choice but to stop. Looking up, he saw not far away, another Cave Master who had also stopped, immediately revealing an expression of astonishment. Since everyone was playing music, it wasn't appropriate for him to speak up and interrupt, so he could only transmit his voice secretly and asked, "Yellow Cave Master, why... why did you stop before me?"

Yellow Cave Master's strength was also ranked mid-tier among all Cave Masters following the Musical Rhythm Dao. How could he be the first to make a mistake?

Yellow Cave Master sighed, helplessly saying, "Just now, a sound suddenly came, interrupting me, and it sounded like Cao Zhen."

"Cao Zhen? How is that possible? He... it truly seems to be him, no mistake, it really is him, I too was affected by his chime bells and made a mistake."

As the two Cave Masters secretly transmitted their voices between each other, one after another the surrounding Cave Masters also began to make mistakes in succession.

The disciples around, while immersed in the music, were not in that state of insight-driven absorption; they were also paying attention to their surroundings. Very quickly, one after another, the disciples noticed something was amiss.

"This... Yellow Cave Master has stopped."

"Liu Cave Master has stopped as well."

"And there's Ma Cave Master and Lu Cave Master..."

"That Cao Zhen, why is he still playing?"

"How could this be? Isn't he not proficient in Musical Rhythm?"

"Could it be that Cao Zhen made a mistake earlier but didn't voluntarily stop?"

"Impossible, with so many people watching, if he were to make a mistake, it would be immediately noticed."

"Listen to his music, why do I feel that the sound he plays is particularly infectious..."

"Have you noticed, it seems that the Cave Masters close to Cao Zhen have all stopped, they have all made mistakes."

The number of Cave Masters making mistakes kept increasing, and gradually, within the entire hall, including Cao Zhen, only a dozen or so people were still playing.

The masses of Thousand Caves Door slowly began to panic.

"He, he really understands Musical Rhythm, and he is even skilled at it!"

"How could he understand Musical Rhythm."

"He's not really going to win, is he?"

"We still have ten Cave Masters... no, now there are only nine Cave Masters remaining."

"Only eight left."

Elder Huan Kong watched as Cave Masters were being eliminated one by one and his expression grew increasingly somber. He couldn't understand how Cao Zhen, so young, could attain such profound expertise in the Painting Dao and Calligraphy Dao while also being so proficient in Musical Rhythm. Where did he find the energy?

At Hundred Peaks Sect, everyone watched as the number of Cave Masters on the opposing side dwindled, one by one, filled with great joy.

"Indeed, I knew it, there's nothing Peak Master Cao can't do."

"Since Peak Master Cao said he was proficient in Musical Rhythm, there naturally was a reason behind it."

"Five left, there are only five Cave Masters still holding on from the opposite side."

"Four, now there are only four people left on their side."

The disciples of Hundred Peaks Sect even began counting out loud.

On the other side, the disciples of Thousand Caves Door, listening to the orderly counting of the people from Hundred Peaks Sect, each had an extremely ugly expression, yet they had nothing to say in return.

What's wrong with counting?

People from Hundred Peaks Sect were also performing, and if counting affected anyone, it would also affect Cao Zhen from Hundred Peaks Sect. Therefore, they could only listen and couldn't use the counting as an excuse to accuse the other side of causing a disturbance.

Amidst the voices of the people from Hundred Peaks Sect, Cao Zhen's strength in wielding the mallet grew increasingly powerful, and unbeknownst to him, he too became submerged in the music.

Since the beginning of his performance, this was the first time he became so deeply absorbed.

As he became engrossed, all around him, the ambient noise of counting from the people of Hundred Peaks Sect, the discussions of the people from Thousand Caves Door, every single sound ceased.

Chapter 383: Don't Take Debating Too Seriously_1

In the Immortal Melody Hall, everyone was clearly listening to several musical rhythm experts perform, but suddenly, they felt as though they were standing outside their sect's mountain gate, and at that moment, their sect was experiencing a terrifying calamity, with demonic beasts charging and attacking.

Beside them, one comrade after another fell, yet even more valiantly charged out fearlessly to battle.

Fight!

At that moment, blood was furiously surging within everyone, driving them to slay all the demonic beasts before their eyes.

Even many had already shouted out loud.

"Kill!"

"Fight!"

"Die!"

Following the loud shouts, numerous disciples burst forth with their auras.

Suddenly, as the auras surged, one after another snapped back to reality.

"This... I was completely immersed."

"We were actually influenced, I truly believed that our Thousand Caves Door was facing a great disaster, preparing to battle the opponent!"

"Master, all the Cave Masters!"

At Thousand Caves Door, the remaining four Cave Masters had stopped playing at that instant, they too had been influenced.

"We won!"

"Peak Master Cao won again!"

The people of Hundred Peaks Sect, upon seeing the Cave Masters stop playing, immediately began to shout one after another, not expecting, truly not expecting, that Peak Master Cao was also so proficient in musical rhythm.

Now, they only had one feeling: there was nothing in the world that Peak Master Cao could not do, our Peak Master Cao is unbeatable.

Cao Zhen, hearing the cheers around him, also stopped playing and, with a smile, looked towards the crowd, saying, "I appreciate everyone's grace."

In the beginning, due to unfamiliarity, his performance was definitely not at the level ninety-nine, and moreover, he could feel that it was only towards the end, when he had immersed himself in the music, that he might have approached the standard of level ninety, but he had not yet reached the level of ninety-nine.

However, he was also confident that with a little more time, he could definitely reach the level ninety-nine musical rhythm standard.

It's just that these people were too weak, they didn't give him the chance to fully display his abilities.

Around them, one Cave Master after another hung their heads in shame; they had previously looked down on Cao Zhen, but what was the outcome? Each and every one of them was ultimately defeated by Cao Zhen.

They had once again disgraced Thousand Caves Door.

Lan Pili, seeing the mournful faces of all the Cave Masters of Thousand Caves Door, couldn't hide the proud smile blossoming on his face, and looking towards Elder Huan Kong, he said, "Elder, in this exchange of Dao, our Hundred Peaks Sect has won again. It seems that Thousand Caves Door's musical rhythm is nothing special after all."

Hearing this, the Cave Masters of Thousand Caves Door suddenly raised their heads.

"Lose? We lost, but it does not mean that our Thousand Caves Door's musical rhythm lost."

"We lost because we are not as skilled, but we do not represent our Thousand Caves Door!"

Lan Pili laughed disdainfully upon hearing this, "What's the matter, has your Thousand Caves Door also started to become sore losers? All the Cave Masters from your Rhythmic Cave are here, you all lost. What else can your Thousand Caves Door bring out?"

"Our Rhythmic Cave Masters have all lost, but the person who is most adept at musical rhythm in our Thousand Caves Door is not the Cave Master of Rhythmic Cave."

"Just like how the person who's most adept at musical rhythm in your Hundred Peaks Sect is not someone from Melody Peak, but Peak Master Cao from Four Treasures Peak, the most powerful person in our Thousand Caves Door's way of musical rhythm, is Master Liao Cave. Peak Master Cao, do you dare to debate with Master Liao Cave?"

Before Cao Zhen could speak, Lan Pili had already preempted him, "Fine, where is your Master Liao Cave? Let your Master Liao Cave come here for the discussion then."

"Master Liao Cave is not present here."

"Master Liao Cave is by Lone Duck Lake, if Peak Master Cao wishes to debate with Master Liao Cave, I ask that you make your way to Lone Duck Lake."

Lan Pili's brow furrowed immediately, "Your Cave Master wants to discuss with us, yet we have to go find him? Forget it, in that case, Peak Master Cao, shall we make another trip?"

Since they have to completely surpass Thousand Caves Door, they might as well truly convince them through victory. Cao Zhen had already won against so many people, he wouldn't mind winning against one more.

But, Master Liao Cave?

He had never heard of such a Cave Master in Thousand Caves Door before, which cave's Master could that be? A newly appointed Cave Master?

Cao Zhen looked irritably at Elder Huan Kong, "Elder, previously it was said that all the Cave Masters had arrived, but now there are still people missing. After I have this debate with your Master Liao Cave, you won't find someone else for me to debate musical rhythm with, will you?"

"There won't be," after Master Liao Cave, our Thousand Caves Door will not have anyone else debate musical rhythm with Peak Master Cao," Elder Huan Kong responded, while looking at Cao Zhen's face, which seemed more and more cunning. Cao Zhen obviously excelled in musical rhythm, but he had intentionally pretended to be ignorant, making everyone let down their guard, even feigning unfamiliarity at the start of his performance. Then, unexpectedly towards the end, he exerted sudden strength, causing the remaining Cave Masters to all fail.

Cao Zhen was truly cunning but, no matter the deceit and scheming, they would fail in the face of absolute strength.

Master Liao Cave, although not the Cave Master of Rhythmic Cave, had accomplishments in the way of musical rhythm that none of the other Rhythmic Cave Masters could compare to.

Even the supreme talent from the Guardian Immortal Imperial Dynasty's Heavenly Sound Sect, which is the most skilled in the way of musical rhythm, would often come to discuss the way of musical rhythm with Master Liao Cave.

That genius, who did not come down the mountain to debate this time, reportedly wants to wait until the end to come to Thousand Caves Door, to have a chat with Master Liao Cave.

To chat, not to debate.

Chapter 384: No Need to Take Discussing the Tao Too Seriously_2

Because that genius, in the path of Musical Rhythm, couldn't compare to Master Liao Cave.

Even a certain Elder of the Heavenly Sound Sect said that they couldn't compare to Master Liao Cave in Musical Rhythm.

Even the Deputy Sect Leader of the Heavenly Sound Sect had marveled, saying that Master Liao Cave's talent in Musical Rhythm was too high and that it was their Heavenly Sound Sect's loss for not having recruited Master Liao Cave.

How could such a Master Liao Cave possibly lose!

All around, a group of disciples heard that Cao Zhen was going to debate with Master Liao Cave, and hope appeared on the faces that were originally downcast because their Cave Master had lost the debate.

"With Master Liao Cave taking action, victory is naturally certain."

"Speaking of which, we should thank Peak Master Cao. If it weren't for him, we wouldn't have the chance to hear Master Liao Cave's celestial music."

"Yes, I've only heard about Master Liao Cave's celestial music but have never heard it."

"I was lucky to have heard it once, and I can only say, after listening to it once, for an entire month, every day I felt as though that celestial music was lingering in my ears."

"Having heard Master Liao Cave's celestial music, even eating the most top-notch delicacies felt tasteless to me."

Cao Zhen, listening to the words of the people around him, gently touched the chime bells beside him. What kind of music could be this divine? It sounded really formidable—should he take this more seriously so as not to mess it up?

He glanced around and quickly extended his hand toward a distant zither and pulled it close with a gesture. Gao Jianli's Musical Rhythm skill was level ninety-nine, but he was most skilled at playing the zither, where he was a MAX level presence.

Although it was just Cao Zhen scheduled to debate with that so-called Master Liao Cave in Musical Rhythm, Cave Masters and disciples from the Rhythmic Cave around joined the crowd, and along with the disciples of the Hundred Peaks Sect, a throng of people marched mightily toward the distance.

As people passed by and learned that Master Liao Cave was going to make a move, even more followed, and within a short time, the number of people doubled.

Cao Zhen looked at these people, and he felt more and more like they were star-chasing fans headed to see their idol.

Lan Pili, looking at the continuously increasing disciples of the Thousand Caves Door, asked Elder Huan Kong curiously, "Elder, which Cave's Cave Master is Master Liao? How come I've never heard of a Master Liao Cave?"

Elder Huan Kong spoke softly, "Master Liao Cave is the Cave Master of Sunset Clouds Cave."

"Sunset Clouds Cave? Wasn't the Cave Master of Sunset Clouds Cave Master Mu?" asked Lan Pili with a slight stun, "Wasn't Master Mu...?"

"Half a month ago, Master Mu was appointed as an Elder of Thousand Caves Door. Therefore, Master Liao Cave took over as the Cave Master of Sunset Clouds Cave," said Elder Huan Kong without concealing anything. This matter didn't need to be hidden, as it wouldn't take long before the people of the Hundred Peaks Sect would naturally come to know.

"I see."

Lan Pili nodded slightly and telepathically whispered to Cao Zhen, "Sunset Clouds Cave ranks forty-sixth in the Thousand Caves Door. It is also the one Cave in the top fifty with the fewest disciples.

Throughout its history, Sunset Clouds Cave has never had more than ten disciples, and all of them are female. Despite that, as far as I know, it has never fallen from the top fifty."

If it were any other Peak Master, he wouldn't bother to communicate this information secretly, but over the course of his recent interactions, he found that Cao Zhen wasn't much concerned with many things and knew very little about the outside world, thus he took the trouble to explain.

Cao Zhen was surprised for a moment. A Cave with only a few disciples was a bit like his Four Treasures Peak, wasn't it? However, his Four Treasures Peak ranked at the very bottom of the Hundred Peaks Sect, while Sunset Clouds Cave had only a few disciples yet ranked in the top fifty of the Thousand Caves Door, which was quite impressive.

He asked curiously, "So the Thousand Caves Door must also have its ranking competitions, right? Do they not need to compete in the Six Arts and such?"

"Compete, how could they not compete? The grand competition of the Thousand Caves Door is different from the one held by our Hundred Peaks Sect, but overall, it's similar; they compete in the Six Arts and in duels. Naturally, the more numerous and stronger your disciples, the bigger the advantage," Lan Pili telepathically informed, "That's why Sunset Clouds Cave, with only a few disciples, has always remained in the top fifty. It shows how dominant they are.

Their disciples practice the Six Arts, but their level is only average, very average. The strength of Sunset Clouds Cave lies in their fighting prowess. They can really throw a punch, simply put, they are very good at fighting.

So this time, for the Thousand Caves Door to choose someone from Sunset Clouds Cave to debate with you on Musical Rhythm, I find it odd. I've never heard before that people from Sunset Clouds Cave understood anything about Musical Rhythm."

As Lan Pili spoke, he glanced at Cao Zhen again and added, "However, then I think about your Four Treasures Peak, and somehow, it seems normal that someone from Sunset Clouds Cave would know about Musical Rhythm."

Four Treasures Peak was a place lacking everything—no heritage, a scant number of disciples, and it sat at the very bottom of the Hundred Peaks Sect ranks.

But what of it?

Peak Master Cao Zhen was proficient in calligraphy, music, and swordsmanship, even versed in Military Law, each skill nearly at the peak of mastery.

Compared to that, a Cave Master from Sunset Clouds Cave merely understanding Musical Rhythm seemed trivial.

After all, Sunset Clouds Cave was still within the top fifty of the Thousand Caves Door.

Thinking about it, Lan Pili added, "As for the Cave Master of Sunset Clouds Cave being appointed as an Elder of Thousand Caves Door, it must be because of the approaching Qiankun small epoch.

Before the arrival of the Qiankun small epoch, the most top-notch experts will fall into a deep slumber, so each Immortal Sect would make some adjustments. After all, if those in charge of key positions were to sleep, it would greatly affect matters."

Chapter 385: Discussing the Dao Needn't Be Too Serious_3

So, it might be that a certain expert from Thousand Caves Door has recently decided to hibernate, which is why they relinquished their position and had it taken over by one of the Elders, who was then replaced by the former Cave Master of Sunset Clouds Cave."

Cao Zhen nodded slightly, his thoughts involuntarily turning to Lv Chaoqiong. Back when she wanted him to become the master of Hidden Dragon Observatory, it wasn't just because she thought he was better suited for the position; it seemed likely she was also preparing for the approaching Qiankun small epoch.

Together, the group made their way toward the distant parts of Thousand Caves Door and gradually arrived at a gorge. Outside the gorge, a huge stele could be seen — carved upon it were the three large characters for "Sunset Clouds Cave".

Looking at the stele, Cao Zhen was somewhat surprised; it seemed that the other Caves were built upon mountains, yet Sunset Clouds Cave was within a gorge — could it really be built underground?

Moreover, there weren't any disciples guarding the entrance to Sunset Clouds Cave.

If there were few people, then setting up a couple of artificial humans, Mechanism Warriors or something similar, should suffice.

As he pondered this, he followed Elder Huan Kong into the gorge.

Upon entering the gorge, they saw a stream flowing gently past, originating from a lake whose waters joined with the distant sky, seemingly endless. On the mountainside beside them, a vast waterfall cascaded into the lake.

After walking a few steps more, Cao Zhen noticed a young woman in a light purple dress dipping her fair, delicate feet into the lake and gently swaying them to and fro.

Hearing the commotion, she turned her head, revealing a lovely visage, her willowy eyebrows knitting slightly as she asked in a soft voice, "What is this...?"

Her voice was melodious and crisp, like the light warble of an oriole.

Elder Huan Kong gestured toward Cao Zhen and introduced him, "This is Peak Master Cao from Hundred Peaks Sect, of Four Treasures Peak, who has come to our Thousand Caves Door to exchange ideas. Peak Master Cao is extremely skilled in the art of musical rhythm..."

As Elder Huan Kong said this, he glanced at the surrounding Cave Masters of Rhythmic Cave without continuing, though the implication was quite clear.

He was giving the Cave Masters of Rhythmic Cave some semblance of respect.

The young woman glanced at the Cave Masters of Rhythmic Cave, who were hanging their heads in shame, and she quickly understood that they had all been defeated, which was why Elder Huan Kong had sought her out.

"So, Elder Huan Kong, you wish for me to exchange ideas with this Dao Companion?" the young woman asked as she stood up. She seemed to step on the grass, but not quite—her feet appearing to float just above the blades of wild grass.

Cao Zhen was slightly taken aback. So this girl was the something-something Master of Sunset Clouds Cave? It wasn't strange for a girl to look like a Cave Master.

After all, in the world of Immortal Cultivation, one couldn't simply rely on appearance to guess another's age.

Looking as young as a girl, someone could very well be hundreds of years old, or in some cases, due to practicing special cultivation techniques, they might appear youthful even after thousands of years.

Yet, the way this Master Liao Cave spoke and behaved gave him the impression that she truly wasn't very old.

Elder Huan Kong nodded slightly and said, "Please go ahead, Master Liao Cave."

Master Liao Cave gave a slight nod and, looking at Cao Zhen, said after a moment's contemplation, "Here in Thousand Caves Door, there are many more of our disciples, so if both of us were to perform separately and let everyone judge, it would hardly seem fair."

Pointing at the lake before her, she continued, "Here, there are a hundred whistling ducks. These ducks are particularly fond of musical rhythm; they move according to the rhythm and take flight in its wake.

Peak Master Cao, if we both play music in turns, whosoever can make more ducks move to the rhythm and do so more distinctly, shall be deemed the victor, how about that?"

Upon hearing this suggestion, many disciples around them expressed their admiration.

"What a good idea, to think of letting the whistling ducks judge!"

"People have their biases, so having them judge is not fair, but these whistling ducks are absolutely impartial."

"Master Liao Cave could think of such a unique way to compare arts!"

"This way, we get to hear Master Liao Cave's music and spare her Immortal Melodies from being disrupted by others."

Cao Zhen was speechless; it was just a regular way of exchanging ideas, and they could hype it up so much?

Are you sure your Cave Masters won't beat you for praising other Caves like this?

The way I discussed with your Cave Masters before wasn't good or fair? This is just blatant flattery.

A bunch of sycophants!

He took another look at the so-called whistling ducks in the lake and said, "So, wild ducks are to be the judges, huh? Alright, I have no problem with that."

At his words, many people around him furrowed their brows.

"What wild ducks!"

"How vulgar! Truly vulgar."

Cao Zhen immediately didn't understand and asked the people, "Are ducks not wild ducks? Oh, they're called whistling ducks, so I should say whistling ducks, right?"

Having said that, he ignored the sycophants and turned back to face Master Liao Cave to ask, "Master Liao Cave, who should play first?"

Master Liao Cave stepped back slightly and said, "Please proceed first, Peak Master Cao."

With a slight nod, Cao Zhen took out the musical instrument called a "Zhu" that he had received from Immortal Melody Hall.

"A Zhu?"

Upon seeing Cao Zhen's instrument, Master Liao Cave was slightly taken aback. A Zhu looked like a zither with thirteen strings over bridges. To play it, one would press one end of the strings with the left hand and strike the strings with a bamboo ruler in the right hand to produce sound.

Although she was not the Cave Master of Rhythmic Cave, she was well-versed in various musical instruments. Yet, within the entire Thousand Caves Door, no one seemed to use a Zhu.

Chapter 386: Discussing Dao Need Not Be Overly Serious_4

Legends say that thousands of years ago within the Thousand Caves Door, there was a predecessor whose instrument of choice was the zheng; however, for some unknown reason, the techniques of playing the zheng gradually became lost.

According to her friend, even in the Heavenly Sound Sect, very few used the zheng. Even her friend could not play the zheng.

Unexpectedly, this Peak Master from the Hundred Peaks Sect opted for such a rarely seen instrument.

Master Liao Cave, with eyes bright as the shining moon, looked at Cao Zhen with great interest, and even a hint of expectation could be discerned.

Even she had never heard the zheng played before.

Cao Zhen gazed at the surface of the lake, composed and focused, and slowly reached out to pluck a note.

A soft sound emitted, but it seemed nothing special.

Around him, those who had never heard Cao Zhen play before revealed looks of surprise, thinking the music felt quite ordinary and couldn't discern anything remarkable. Could such music really have defeated the masters of the Thousand Caves Door?

But no, there seemed to be something intriguing about it.

Cao Zhen had previously rung bells but never played the zheng. Now, playing it for the first time was inevitably somewhat clumsy.

But gradually, he became more and more proficient, and the pace of this proficiency surpassed that of when he had played the bells.

After all, Gao Jianli was more adept at playing the zheng, and besides, this was not his first time making music.

Slowly, waves of sorrow and exhilaration spread with the sound of the zheng, rippling around the area.

By the lake, people who had been chatting ceased their conversations and involuntarily closed their mouths, listening intently to the zheng's music.

Waves of woe, of fervor, and of boldness permeated the space.

In the lake, several mandarin ducks fluttered their wings, taking off one after another, soaring straight towards the sky...

The more Cao Zhen played the zheng, the more engrossed he became, gradually losing himself in the music.

Eventually, he even forgot himself, forgot the exchange of ideas, and became wholly immersed in the musical rhythm, gazing at the lake before him; he couldn't help but sing aloud.

"The wind howls, the lake water cold, a hero departs, never to return..."

The piece he was playing was the one Gao Jianli had played to bid farewell to Jing Ke.

The tragic emotion rose within everyone, affecting disciples from both the Hundred Peaks Sect and Thousand Caves Door alike.

Before long, many disciples couldn't help but shed tears uncontrollably as a vivid scene of tragedy emerged in their minds.

The very air in this part of the world seemed to grow more oppressive and heavy.

When the piece concluded and Cao Zhen withdrew his hands, the crowd around remained in a daze.

"Ladies and gentlemen..."

Cao Zhen, seeing everyone still in a stupor, had no choice but to speak up.

At his voice, people finally snapped out of their trance, returning from the grip of the music.

"I... I was completely absorbed."

"You're crying..."

"No, it's the wind... You're crying too."

"It was so powerful — do you know? Just now, an image unexpectedly appeared in my mind. I seemed to be standing beside a river I'd never seen before, bidding farewell to a heroic stranger."

"You felt that too? The scene that came into my mind just now was the same as yours."

"Me too."

"It seems we all had the same image in our minds."

"How... how could it be the same?"

The crowd, visibly shaken, looked at each other in astonishment, when suddenly, a Cave Master cried out, "Master Liao Cave..."

"Master Liao Cave, she... she has achieved enlightenment!"

Floating above the green grass, Master Liao exuded an intense aura of sadness that vibrated through the surroundings. Though she held no sword, onlookers had the illusion that she stood brandishing a longsword, poised to assassinate a great figure in the heavens.

Cao Zhen looked on dumbfounded at Master Liao Cave, bewildered. Wasn't it said she wasn't the master of Rhythmic Cave and didn't follow the path of musical rhythm? How had she achieved enlightenment?

No, what she'd realized wasn't musical rhythm; it was the aura of solemnity and an unyielding spirit as though she'd pass through the masses to her destiny.

This was she...

It seemed like she had projected herself as Jing Ke, and so, just now I became the one playing the zheng for her, leading her to enlightenment.

So, are her Sunset Peak and her path about the defying spirit of an assassin?

Master Liao Cave's moment of enlightenment lasted considerably longer than most. It took a full incense stick's time before she concluded her profound realization.

With both hands raised towards Cao Zhen, she proclaimed, "Thank you, Peak Master Cao, for the enlightenment."

Upon seeing this gesture, Cao Zhen didn't wait for Master Liao Cave to finish and blurted out, "You mean you can't repay the favor, right? I know."

Saying this, he gestured towards a group of mandarin ducks in the distance, "All these ducks have settled down. How do we account for this? When I played the zheng, they all took flight."

"Peak Master Cao jests," Master Liao Cave shook her head immediately, looking at Cao Zhen with admiration, "The music you played is the most moving I've ever heard.

Even someone of my level would not dare to critique your piece, let alone engage in a philosophical debate with you, Peak Master Cao."

Conceding defeat.

She had openly conceded defeat.

Around them, not a single disciple from the Thousand Caves Door voiced any objections.

They had all heard Cao Zhen's music, and even those who were not versed in musical rhythm could feel the profound sorrow in it. Long after the music had ended, they were still deeply affected and had yet to shake off the sense of lamentation.

Chapter 387: Discussing Dao Does Not Require Over Seriousness_5

Even if they had all been immersed in the melody just now, so much so that they hardly noticed whether the heron had taken flight, it no longer mattered.

Their Thousand Caves Door was one of the top ten Immortal Sects, and if they lost, they lost. They would admit it.

But now, they had already lost three matches in a row.

Elder Huan Kong's face was filled with utter despair. He simply couldn't understand how Cao Zhen, the Peak Master of the Hundred Peaks Sect ranked last, could be skilled in both painting and musical rhythm. What else was he capable of?

It seemed he was also adept at...

Poetry...

Elder Huan Kong's gaze suddenly fell on several Cave Masters amidst the crowd.

The Cave Masters and Disciples of the Rhythmic Cave had come together, but here, the number of Cave Masters and Disciples from the Poetry Grotto was by no means less than those from the Rhythmic Cave.

After all, many people would mention "poetry and songs" together when it came to poetry, and singing is also a form of musical rhythm.

And the scholars who loved poetry also liked musical rhythm.

Therefore, at this moment, quite a few Cave Masters and Disciples from the Poetry Grotto had arrived.

Cao Zhen, he had said before that he was also skilled in poetry.

He didn't believe that Cao Zhen was so powerful in both painting and musical rhythm, reaching such an exalted level that he could also be that strong in poetry!

Just Cao Zhen, calling the heron a wild duck, that coarse expression, he didn't believe that Cao Zhen had much understanding of poetry.

Thinking about this, he strode up to Cao Zhen and said, "Peak Master Cao is truly a dazzling talent. Oh yes, you said you were good at poetry. It just so happens that here we have several Cave Masters from the Poetry Grotto. Why don't we discuss our respective arts right here?"

After speaking, he didn't wait for Cao Zhen to refuse or agree but quickly looked aside to a scholarly middle-aged man holding a paper fan, "Master Pan Cave, what do you think?"

Master Pan Cave nodded slightly and gestured to the side, "Dao Companion, since you have come to our Thousand Caves Door to discuss the Dao, we naturally wish to exchange ideas with this Dao Companion."

He had personally witnessed their Thousand Caves Door lose in the musical rhythm discussion to a member of the Hundred Peaks Sect, so he clearly understood what Elder Huan Kong meant. Having just lost, they definitely wanted to win a match back.

He gestured around and continued, "Peak Master Cao, this place is so beautiful. Why don't we take this scenery as inspiration and compose a poem? Naturally, poetry also takes time.

In the Guardian Immortal Imperial Dynasty, there is a rumor that the Hall Master of the Poetry Palace once composed a poem in nine steps. Why don't we follow the example of that Hall Master and compose a poem within nine steps, taking this scenery as the theme?"

"Here?" Cao Zhen couldn't help but laugh. Were it any other theme, he might need to think it over, uncertain of what poem to compose in nine steps.

But to write a poem about the scenery before him? Was there a need to ponder? This was simply an easy question.

Cao Zhen looked at the setting sun which was beginning to descend in the distance, pointed at the lake in front of him, and towards where the water met the distant horizon, and said directly, "The sinking sun and the solitary heron fly together, the autumn water far-reaching as the sky in one color."

His words fell, and silence enveloped the surroundings!

"The sinking sun and the solitary heron fly together?"

"The autumn water far-reaching as the sky in one color?"

One by one, the Disciples from the Poetry Grotto were spellbound, continuously savoring these two lines.

And around them, even though they were Disciples of the Rhythmic Cave and other specialties who did not primarily study poetry, they too could perceive the boundless implications of those brief lines, especially the scene before their eyes, which corresponded perfectly to this sentence.

Many Cave Masters even began to appreciate it.

"The sunset, the solitary heron, the autumn water, and the vast sky—these four images sketch a picture of serene transcendence, exquisitely beautiful."

"The 'sinking sun' and 'solitary heron' in the former phrase contrast with the 'autumn water' and 'vast sky' in the latter. What's more profound is that within each phrase, the elements also pair off, creating harmony within the line itself. The sinking sun pairs with the solitary heron, the autumn water with the vast sky."

"In fact, the masterstroke is the tableau, harmonious and enchanting, the first phrase animated with the gliding sun and heron, while the latter phrase is tranquil with water and sky creating a unity. One dynamic, one static, the motion enhancing the calm..."

"Under the setting sun, the twilight is flamboyantly dazzling, and the heron's feathers are dark. With the backlighting, the heron nearly becomes a silhouette, and the twilight cannot possibly cover half the sky..."

"The solitary heron is flying while the clouds and mists are falling..."

One Cave Master after another could not help but express their admiration.

Hearing these Cave Masters' praises, Cao Zhen simply wanted to say, "Thank you all." Repeating those classic lines of poetry was no problem for him, but articulating precisely what was so beautiful about them—that, he could not improvise.

Fortunately, these Cave Masters, with their genuine talent and learning, provided the answers for him.

By the lakeside, Master Liao Cave gazed towards the distant horizon and murmured to herself, "The sinking sun and the solitary heron, the sinking sun and the solitary heron... flying together..."

The next moment, her body abruptly soared into the sky, a vast and limitless aura spreading from her to the surroundings as if to cover the earth, to fill the entire horizon...

"Enlightenment!"

"Master Liao Cave has had another enlightenment!"

Cao Zhen looked at the enlightened Master Liao Cave, completely speechless. What was going on?

How had Master Liao Cave experienced enlightenment once more?

Was it just a casual remark from him that triggered her enlightenment? What kind of talent was this?

He couldn't help feeling like he had been shortchanged.

After you've finished your enlightenment, are you going to offer yet another 'nothing can repay your generosity'?

This time, however, Master Liao Cave's enlightenment was much quicker than the last. In just a moment, she descended back to the ground, looked at Cao Zhen once more with a bowed gesture, and sincerely thanked him, "Thank you, Peak Master Cao, for the grace of enlightenment..."

Chapter 388: Discussing the Way, No Need to be Too Serious_6

As she spoke, she paused herself, then added, "Liao Luoxia will certainly commit this to memory."

Cao Zhen was annoyed, thinking you just changed one word, but there's still nothing substantial.

No, this won't do. If I let one or two of you have an enlightenment, that's manageable, but I've facilitated an enlightenment for so many from Thousand Caves Door; it would be unreasonable not to get anything tangible in return.

Besides, when I made people from the Hundred Peaks Sect achieve enlightenment, I received benefits. Now at Thousand Caves Door, if I help you achieve enlightenment and don't receive any rewards, wouldn't that be betraying my own sect?

I am not your son-in-law; these benefits are a must for me.

Just wait, when the time comes for me to leave, I'll definitely make a hefty demand.

To the side, all the grotto masters from the Poetry Grotto were staring straight at Cao Zhen. Watching Cao Zhen remain silent for a long while, they eagerly asked, "Peak Master Cao, what about the rest of it?"

Such beautiful poetry, how can there only be one line? By now, they had forgotten all about philosophical debates; they just wanted to hear the rest of the poem.

"The rest of it..." Cao Zhen said with a rogue's air under the expectant gazes around him: "I've forgotten."

"Forgotten?" Everyone was dumbfounded.

"Yes, just forgotten," Cao Zhen readily admitted. He had genuinely forgotten. He had memorized "Preface to the Pavilion of Prince Teng" back in school, but after so many years, he could only remember a small part at the beginning and the very last line "The setting sun with solitary ducks in flight; autumn waters merge with the sky in one color." He had truly forgotten the rest of the content.

Liao Luoxia felt a pang of guilt upon hearing what Cao Zhen said, and in a low voice, she said, "It is my fault. It must have been my enlightenment that disturbed Peak Master Cao and broke his train of thought.

Such magnificent work was interrupted because of me..."

Although she did not practice the Path of Poetry, she could feel the beauty of its ambiance. She couldn't even imagine how much more beautiful it would be if Peak Master Cao composed the entire poem.

Around them, the others heard this and also nodded in regret. Poetry was like that, sometimes inspiration would just come and brilliant lines would flow naturally.

But once the train of thought was broken, that special feeling was gone, and it was impossible to produce such lines again.

Hearing the others' comments, Cao Zhen himself was dumbfounded. I really did forget the rest, and you all can spin a story around that?

The truth is, I just blurted out that line upon seeing the scene before me.

Forget it, I should change the line again. Luckily, there's a waterfall here.

Cao Zhen turned his head, looking towards the nearby waterfall, raised his hand, and pointed as he declared: "Sunlight upon the incense burner produces a purplish smoke..."

As he said this, he paused himself.

Sunlight? That seems to imply daytime, but it's already evening, with the afterglow, it doesn't seem to fit, does it?

Forget it, these people can interpret it on their own, I'll just continue to recite.

With that in mind, he took another step forward and continued: "From afar, I watch the waterfall hang before the river. A flight of rapid currents falling three thousand feet, it seems like the Milky Way cascading from the heavens."

The work of the great poet should certainly overawe them.

As his words settled, silence fell once again, and the attention of everyone was drawn to the waterfall nearby.

"A flight of rapid currents falling three thousand feet, it seems like the Milky Way cascading from the heavens. What a line, truly a wonderful line, every word powerful and resonant..."

"So imaginative..."

"But where is this incense burner?"

Among the group, someone voiced their puzzlement.

Cao Zhen suddenly realized, it seems the incense burner wasn't what I imagined as a pill furnace... rather, Li Bai was looking at Incense Burner Peak at that time...

This...

It seems I've been in this world for too long, influenced by its ways, and took for granted that the incense burner referred to a pill furnace.

What am I going to do?

How am I going to explain this later?

As he suffered from a headache, someone had already begun to explain: "Look at the waterfall, from a distance, doesn't the mountain behind it resemble a pill furnace?"

"So that's it, it makes sense."

"However, it's evening now, so 'sunlight upon the incense burner'..."

"Evening also has its light, besides, haven't you noticed? The 'sunlight' part, doesn't it correspond with the 'setting sun' that Peak Master Cao mentioned earlier? And since we are at Sunset Clouds Cave, this 'sunlight' must bear a deeper significance..."

"Right, I also feel it holds a profound meaning."

"Didn't you notice? Master Liao is wearing a purple dress, this 'purplish smoke'..."

Cao Zhen listened to these disciples' interpretations, completely bewildered. You all are really stretching it. I think even Li Bai's coffin lid can't hold him down now.

Otherwise I give you the brush, how about you write the continuation?

Yes, let them do it.

Reacting to this, Cao Zhen addressed the crowd: "The poem, I have composed. Now, isn't it time for you to take over?"

As he finished speaking, the crowd exchanged looks, you eyeing me and I eyeing you, with no one stepping up to compose.

They were all masters from the Poetry Grotto, they could certainly compose poetry, making poems in nine steps without any issue. Yet with such an exquisite piece preceding them, none dared or had the face to compose their own.

Eventually, the crowd looked at each other helplessly and sighed, then they all turned to Cao Zhen with cupped fists saying, "Peak Master Cao, your talent outshines us all, we humbly concede and won't embarrass ourselves further."

Chapter 389: Discussing the Tao Doesn't Have to be Too Serious_7

"I admit defeat!"

Elder Huan Kong painfully covered his eyes. They had admitted defeat!

No, that's not right. Poetry was all they lost at, the round of word compositions was still to come.

It wasn't that Thousand Caves Door couldn't afford to lose; poetry and word compositions were meant to be competed in separately. It's like calligraphy and painting—although everyone talks about them together, in the end, they are judged separately.

Though poetry and word compositions are more closely related than calligraphy and painting, with most poets likely able to compose words at a comparable level, there are still differences. There was still a chance in the coming word composition round.

He hurriedly looked at a Cave Master and transmitted a message discreetly, "Cave Master Shi, there are still word compositions left to compete in."

Upon hearing this, Cave Master Shi quickly caught on and addressed Cao Zhen, "We admire Peak Master Cao's poetry. We wonder if we might have the pleasure of experiencing Peak Master Cao's word compositions as well. Shall we still take this place's scenery as our subject?"

Cao Zhen suddenly panicked. When it came to word compositions, he didn't remember many. There was "The Red River" and Xin Qiji's "Writing Proud Words to Send to Chen Tongfu in Breaking the Formation."

The problem was, they didn't fit the current situation.

It seemed there was also Su Shi's trump card.

The day was also swiftly turning to night.

Cao Zhen's heart lightened, and he whispered, "I'm willing to compose words as well, but I haven't yet had the pleasure of enjoying everyone's masterpieces. How about letting the others go first?"

Upon hearing this, the people of Thousand Caves Door looked at each other and nodded in agreement, "Then we shall humbly present our work first. How about Cave Master Shi begins?"

Cave Master Shi was obviously exceptionally adept at word compositions, and everyone was pushing him to go first.

Not shirking the responsibility, Cave Master Shi began to compose his wordpiece, "Rugged rocks pierce the sky, the lake..."

After a long while, Cave Master Shi looked towards Cao Zhen and asked, "May I know what Peak Master Cao thinks?"

Rather than responding, Cao Zhen turned to the others and asked, "How about everyone else? All of you came, all have composed; let's share before discussing, shall we?"

He only prompted these people to compose as a delaying tactic. He couldn't care less about evaluating them; to do so would be to give himself away!

The surrounding crowd frowned upon hearing this. What did Peak Master Cao mean by this? No evaluation, no appreciation—did it mean he didn't think much of Cave Master Shi's word composition?

But Old Shi's composition was already quite outstanding.

At that moment, everyone became even more cautious, and the speed of their compositions slowed.

Thus, as one Cave Master after another composed their words, night had completely fallen.

Cao Zhen cleared his throat lightly and said, "Everyone, is it my turn now?"

Now, for the trump card to make its appearance.

He pointed towards the darkened sky and began, "When will the moon be clear and bright? With a cup of wine in hand, I ask the blue sky... People experience sorrow, joy, separation, and reunion, the moon has phases of waxing and waning... We share the same moonlight across a thousand miles."

Silence!

In an instant, the surroundings fell eerily silent!

"This word composition..."

"This..."

The Cave Masters from Thousand Caves Door were at a loss for words.

"Never knew such a masterpiece could exist under the heavens!"

"I don't even know how to evaluate it!"

"We are not worthy to judge such an exquisite piece."

Without needing anyone else to say it, Elder Huan Kong knew that Thousand Caves Door had lost again, once more to the same person from Hundred Peaks Sect.

What was with this Cao Zhen? How could he, the Peak Master who ranked last in Hundred Peaks Sect, possess such literary talents?

He excelled in calligraphy, musical rhythm, poetry, and word compositions. What else did he previously claim to be his specialty?

He couldn't possibly be telling the truth about being skilled at everything, could he?

Elder Huan Kong's gaze towards Cao Zhen grew speculative.

He couldn't believe that a person could be so adept in so many areas, and yet, Cao Zhen proved time and again that such geniuses exist in this world.

The problem now was that Thousand Caves Door had lost again. If they continued to lose like this, people would no longer debate whether Thousand Caves Door or Hundred Peaks Sect was the leading Immortal Sect of the Mixed Clan—everyone might just turn to Hundred Peaks Sect.

Therefore, at all costs, they couldn't lose again.

That Cao Zhen was somewhat bizarre, but the people of Hundred Peaks Sect who had come here weren't limited to just Cao Zhen. There wasn't just one Peak Master; there was also Lan Pili.

Perhaps they could start by dealing with Lan Pili.

Chapter 390: Can't Run Away_1

Lan Pili found that after arriving at Thousand Caves Door, he barely had to exert any effort, as all he did was lie back and watch Cao Zhen perform.

To his surprise, as he watched, the matter unexpectedly landed on his shoulders.

"You wish to debate agriculture with me?"

Upon hearing Elder Huan Kong's words, Lan Pili himself was stunned for a moment before he realized that, as a Peak Master of the Hundred Peaks Sect, it was natural for Elder Huan Kong to assume he came to engage in debate, as they had asked him before about his strengths.

This...

Why did I have to say what I was good at when Huan Kong previously asked me?

Couldn't I have just said I'm not good at anything? What was I thinking!

Lan Pili was now filled with nothing but regret. He was representing the Hundred Peaks Sect and had previously claimed proficiency in agriculture. Hence, if he refused the challenge, it would seem like the Hundred Peaks Sect was afraid of the Thousand Caves Door.

But if he accepted...

He truly had no confidence.

Yes, he was adept at farming, and he believed that his level of knowledge in the "agricultural" arts could rank near the top among the Thousand Caves Door.

But could he defeat all those skilled in agriculture at Thousand Caves Door?

That was utterly impossible.

As far as he knew, there were at least two people in Thousand Caves Door who were more skilled in agriculture than him.

Many within the Hundred Peaks Sect knew that previously their Lightning Peak had little heritage in the way of agriculture, which was brought to the peak by the former Peak Master.

However, few knew how the former Peak Master acquired those teachings.

As the current Peak Master of Lightning Peak and the disciple of the former Master, he naturally knew.

Years ago, his master had ventured out and, by chance, discovered the ruins of an annihilated sect.

Xingnong Gate.

A minor sect that had not drawn much attention and was likely annihilated during the last Qiankun small epoch.

Inside the Guardian Immortal Imperial Dynasty, there were many small sects. After a sect was destroyed, people naturally began to forget about it as time passed.

It was only after his master entered the ruins of Xingnong Gate that he learned of its past existence.

While Xingnong Gate was not strong, it was particularly adept at agriculture, one of the Six Arts.

His master obtained the agriculture heritage from Xingnong Gate, but there was another discoverer of the ruins besides his own master. That person was White Cave Master of Silver Circle Cave from Thousand Caves Door, who, in fact, had received a slightly more extensive heritage than his master. To this day, that Cave Master of Silver Circle Cave was still the same White Cave Master.

He had no confidence that he could beat White Cave Master.

But knowing he was no match, he could only accept the challenge.

"Regarding the debate on agriculture, may I ask how you gentlemen would like to proceed?" Lan Pili turned to address the people from Thousand Caves Door.

Within Thousand Caves Door, White Cave Master and another Cave Master exchanged glances before stepping forward. Looking at Lan Pili, he said, "Generally, there are two methods for debating agriculture. One is to use the same soil and Spirit Grass, placed in the same location and under the same conditions. Whoever can cultivate better Spirit Grass is naturally the winner.

However, this method takes too long.

"We'll use another approach. How about we each set challenges by damaging the other's Spirit Field and reviving each other's Spirit Grass?"

Lan Pili's face grew solemn as he listened. Setting challenges meant employing techniques to cause some damage to the Spirit Fields. Because the Spirit Fields get damaged, the Spirit Grass grown on them would also be affected.

This was how challenges were set.

The other person would then have to solve it, figuring out how to restore the Spirit Field to normal and likewise recover the health of the Spirit Grass.

Of course, while they were setting challenges, they couldn't just wantonly destroy.

For instance, if you damaged the Spirit Field such that the other party couldn't restore it, you would have to restore it yourself.

If you yourself couldn't restore a field you had damaged, that would be considered a violation, a reckless destruction of the Spirit Field, and naturally, you would be deemed the loser.

Furthermore, such actions, if publicized afterward, would destroy one's reputation completely. Therefore, reputable sects usually refrained from acts that would cause irreparable damage to a Spirit Field.

Lan Pili knew that if it were about cultivating Spirit Grass, he might still have a slight chance, but if it was about setting challenges, he would be destined to lose.

His lineage, of course, came from his master, and the heritage his master and White Cave Master had obtained was the same. However, for some reason, White Cave Master had received a somewhat more comprehensive heritage at the time than his master.

Therefore, everything he knew, White Cave Master also knew, but there were things White Cave Master knew that he did not.

The debate could not continue here in the gully of Sunset Clouds Cave, especially as night had already fallen and it was not suitable to debate any longer.

However, even the damage to the Spirit Fields would require time and preparations.

Today, as the two parties in the debate, Lan Pili and White Cave Master each divided a plot of Spirit Field to prepare in advance, with the formal debate set to commence tomorrow.

As one of the top ten Immortal Sects, Thousand Caves Door naturally couldn't lack hospitality. They had arranged a separate compound for the people of the Hundred Peaks Sect to rest.

Throughout the night, Cao Zhen did not see Lan Pili at the compound.

The next morning, he led the disciples of the Hundred Peaks Sect to the Spirit Field for the debate.

On the way, he noticed an increasing number of Thousand Caves Door disciples gathering around.

Yesterday, Cao Zhen alone had managed to demoralize the people of Thousand Caves Door completely.