

Star Gate 111

Chapter 111: The Silver City Branch (III)

“Then it’s settled!” This conclusion was the most remote possibility from Liu Long’s mind. On the other hand, Li Hao could barely contain his mirth. He was going to be a commissioner inspector!

Liu Yan ignored the chortling young man. “Chief, we need at least ten people according to our configuration. There’s only six of us now. Even if they send another deputy director, will they be assigning more supernaturals to us?”

“It’s hard to say!” Liu Long shook his head after some contemplation. “They might, they might not. If they don’t send more people, we’ll have to wait a while for rookies to cross over. White Moon is hosting their induction ceremony soon for the new recruits from various cities. We might get a few of them—Starlight.”

The team curled their lips with dismissal. What good were Starlight for? Darkmoon was far more useful.

“What if we recruit our own?” Li Hao recovered from his exuberant state.

“There are limited numbers of supernaturals. Those who can be recruited have long been spoken for.”

“I mean martial masters!” Li Hao explained. “Recruit martial masters! Silver City has some competent martial masters, no? If not, what about other locations? Although martial masters are weaker than supernaturals, they’ll be willing to work for us if we give them chances to become supernatural. Once a martial master crosses over, a Slayer is converted to Darkmoon. They’ll come with the benefit of experience, making them much better than newbies.

“We’re situated on the fringe of Silver Moon and may encounter danger any time. Rookies are actually very unsuited for us...”

You're a newbie yourself, look at you thinking less of others! Liu Long wanted to say. But what kind of rookie killed a Sunderer and Darkmoon as soon as they joined? Never mind.

Li Hao did have the right to look down on them!

"Let's give it a try!" Liu Long didn't refuse the young man's proposal. While it was possible that no martial master was willing to join them, this cohort was more open-minded to serving a larger organization.

Of course, this had been true in the past. Liu Long would no longer be a mere captain of the Demon Hunters after the new branch was established. He would be a right and proper branch director of the Night Watchers! This was a supernatural organization endorsed by the government; he would wield much more authority. They would also be allotted monthly caches of mysterious power. It was a much better situation compared to hunting and killing dangerous prey for their power.

A tittering Liu Yan patted Li Hao's head, making the young man uncomfortable again. What now? Why are you touching me? This old woman loves to take advantage of me!

"Little Hao Hao's got such good brains," Liu Yan breathed merrily. "If it wasn't for you being too weak, you could even be the branch director!"

Liu Long flicked a sharp glance at her. What gives?

"I don't mean anything by it. Don't misunderstand, chief! I'm just curious—Little Hao Hao absorbed mysterious power very quickly before. How many of your thirty-two cubes have you taken now? Where are you in Slayer of Tens? I've ascended to Sunderer and Yun Yao over there has become a Darkmoon. Wu Chao and Chen Jian are delayed by their wounds and only started two days ago. You weren't hurt, so what's your status?"

Even Liu Long found his interest piqued. Everyone could tell that the young man hadn't made the crossover. Had he further improved on the path of martial dao? Mysterious power was very helpful when it came to increasing one's strength.

“I’m the same as before and haven’t improved much,” Li Hao said bashfully. “I wasted a bit of mysterious power when I absorbed it.”

It’s not like you guys will believe me if I say I’m a Sunderer. If you do, you’ll be saddened because it’s only been a few days since I became a Slayer.

Liu Long didn’t press the young man for details since Li Hao didn’t wish to talk about it. Improvements? Perhaps he’d taken a step forward in the Slayer level. Mid Slayer? Late Slayer? Late Slayer at most!

The captain didn’t consider the possibility of Sunderer, that was almost impossible.

“Alright then, everyone should rest up. We’ll know what the specifics are when official documentation comes in two days. I’ll raise the matter of Li Hao becoming a deputy director.” Liu Long sighed with emotion when he mentioned this point. “Li Hao, it’s a pity that you don’t hold a civil post.”

All the kid cared about were promotions. He seemed far more suited for civil service—the future would be brighter for him there.

“This is all thanks to you, chief!” Li Hao quickly protested. “Where else would I have this kind of opportunity? Not to mention, credit goes to my big brothers and sisters. You guys know I’m young and poor, so you gave me this chance for a raise. I visited my house yesterday—it was where the explosives hit that night. My floor has almost caved in and I’ve been thinking about where to find a new place to live!”

While his home hadn’t fully collapsed, it was pretty much the same. It had been one of Red Moon’s targets during that operation. The multiple explosions in Silver City had been to lure Liu Long away. No one was injured, but the explosions caused the old building to sink in. The uncle and auntie downstairs had fallen off their bed with shock and broken their legs. Their son and daughter had taken them away for rest and recovery.

Li Hao would disturb no one if he trained at home now, but his house wasn't suitable for further residence. He was thinking of finding a new place since his teacher's wasn't a long term solution. A night or two was fine, but as the days dragged on, even a sneeze elicited a "young men should pace their needs". His teacher came and went like a wraith—Li Hao was at his wit's end.

"Come live with big sis!" Liu Yan threw a comely arm around his shoulders. "Big sis has a big bed!"

"That's alright, I'm afraid I'll disturb you, sis," Li Hao replied stiltedly.

"Never!" Liu Yan giggled and pinched Li Hao's cheek. "You're so cute, you would never disturb me."

Li Hao looked at the others for help, but they studiously avoided his gaze in favor of watching a good show.

"Alright, all of you are dismissed!" Liu Long ignored their antics. "Exercise more care in your actions. You too, Li Hao. Don't find a place too far from city center or you won't even have a chance to be rescued!"

"Understood!" The team filed out of the office and bumped into Mu Sen in the hallway. They greeted the inspector general, but didn't engage in conversation.

Mu Sen was the type to bring his own cheerfulness. He directed his attention to Liu Yan after greeting everyone. "Congratulations to Vice Captain Liu, or should I say, Director Liu!"

"Not at all." Liu Yan beamed. "You are a chief commissioner, inspector general. Not to mention, I will not be the director!"

She left with Li Hao. Mu Sen was undoubtedly here for this matter. I wonder what his reaction will be when he hears that Li Hao is being submitted as the deputy director? Her smile faded away when they were a certain distance from the inspector general.

“There’s much more to that fatty than meets the eye, don’t be bewitched by his smile! We think he became a Sunderer before chief! Who knows what plans he had in mind when he accepted the post to Silver City? But apparently his family has some foundations in White Moon, so don’t offend him if you can help it. Don’t get too close either though.”

Li Hao nodded. “Is the inspector general a peak Sunderer?” he asked curiously.

“We’re not sure, he might be. People say that he hacked through the flying supernatural with one stroke. That puts him at late Sunderer at least!”

The young man asked no further upon understanding.

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At the same time.

White Moon City.

The Night Watcher Silver Moon headquarters.

Wang Ming gaped with shock and took a while before asking, “I’m... going to be the deputy director?”

Silver City again?? I don’t want to go! I already made a fool of myself there, won’t people laugh at me even more with my return? It was also so remote that he didn’t understand why upstairs wanted

him to go. He was a Fullmoon, the equivalent of late Sunderer. He was a genius at headquarters, so was it really appropriate for him to be assigned to this post?

“It’s a joint director decision.” Huang Yun smiled. “Number one, as Yuan Shuo’s honorary disciple, it will be easier for you to find your footing. Number two, Liu Long will be more open to accepting you since you fought by his side once. Number three, keep an eye on Li Hao’s movements!

“Li Hao is the only heir to the eight great families! Although no one’s mentioning that anymore, it doesn’t mean we’re disregarding that! You two are familiar with each other—it’ll be easier for you to be in contact with him and possibly even his bodyguard! Red Moon won’t give up this easily! Although we have all of their powerhouses under surveillance, the organization is so big that we can’t possibly keep an eye on everyone!

“Wang Ming, you go with an important mission! Don’t worry about resources, reach out to me at any time!”

The handsome young man couldn’t find the tears to cry with! This sounded simple, but Silver City was so far away that it was possible lines of contact might fail at times. He was done for! Was he being exiled?

“Then what about Hu Hao and Li Meng?” he couldn’t help but ask. These two couldn’t be luckier than him, could they?

“Them? They’re going too.” Huang Yun’s smile broadened. “The Silver City Night Watcher branch isn’t strong enough, it’s staffed by too few. Three Darkmoons is a perfect addition to flesh out the framework. You’ll be a deputy director and the other two can be arranged as Silver City sees fit. You’re stronger than them!”

That’s true. Wang Ming comforted himself for a bit. I just... really don’t want to go, especially because I’ll have to face Li Hao and Liu Long! It’s going to be so uncomfortable! But he had no room to refuse since those at the top had decided.

“Can I come back whenever the situation there stabilizes?” he asked earnestly.

“Of course!”

“That’s good,” Wang Ming sighed with relief. Hopefully he could come back as soon as possible. Silver City was so small and the scene of his heartbreak.

Huang Yun’s smile deepened after he sent the young man away. “Finally got rid of him...” he murmured. “You can come back when Silver City is migrated!”

Upstairs had decided to commence with the migration plan, Silver City was included. It was just a matter of when and how.

Chapter 112: A New Official Wants To Make A Strong Showing (I)

The Silver City Night Watcher branch was ready to be established. Silver Moon’s provincial government sent out official letters and posted documents on July 28, readying the formation of a new Night Watcher branch.

Other cities were both envious and admiring. Of the thirty-two cities in the province, only nine possessed Night Watcher branches. Silver City would be the tenth. There were limited numbers of Night Watchers in the province; they were mostly concentrated in the big cities. White Moon contained a population of thirty million and Flare more than ten. It used to be that five million inhabitants were the baseline consideration for creating a branch.

Population size was a very important condition to be met. Branches were typically not considered for cities that were too small, out of concern that the agency would be spreading their resources too thin and opening themselves up to defeat by supernatural organizations.

A Night Watcher branch in Silver City was a jaw-dropping, unprecedented occurrence. The branch was ultimately approved out of consideration for Yuan Shuo and the secretive eight families. White Moon City paid it special attention all the same, assigning three supernaturals to the new branch—none of them rookies!

They were all Darkmoon, with one apparently of the Fullmoon level.

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July 28.

Li Hao didn't pay attention to the official documentation. He was wandering around a traditional compound with houses on four sides of a rectangular courtyard. It was enormous at four hundred square meters and another garden of one thousand square meters.

An individual compound for an entire family!

The young man couldn't stop gasping in shock as he walked around. He looked blankly at Liu Yan. "Sis, don't you think too highly of me?"

The vice captain had insisted on finding a house for him; Li Hao had no choice but to agree when he couldn't turn her down.

Just look at this! I asked you to find me a two bedroom apartment, preferably on the first floor. If not, then someplace with good soundproofing. But this was where Liu Yan led him to early this morning?

They were in the eastern district of Silver City, the affluent neighborhoods. Nearly all of the city's rich and famous lived here. The young man found the unit inappropriate as soon as they arrived. Housing prices were extremely elevated in this locale. Normal monthly rent ran about three thousand in Silver City, whereas the ones here reached five thousand.

When he'd been a third rank inspector, his monthly wages were roughly two thousand star coins. It was sufficient for Silver City. He could save roughly twenty to thirty thousand a year if he lived a frugal life, particularly as he was a civil worker. Many things could be written off for reimbursement and there were some bonuses he could work toward. All of that made saving approximately thirty thousand a year an easy enough task.

A house that was one hundred square meters cost at least three hundred thousand. He could afford it even without being promoted for ten years. It would be easier now that he was much more highly ranked. However, a complete complex like this cost at least four or five million, and he wasn't inflating his estimate! It would cost at least that much!

He didn't have any money! It was illegal to sell mysterious power to other supernaturals and his colleagues didn't have any money if he were to sell to them.

Liu Yan also looked around the premises. "What am I thinking too highly of?" she answered blithely. "You're going to be a deputy director of the Silver City Night Watchers soon. You're going to be someone of note! Are you supposed to be jammed like a sardine into a high density apartment complex? When it comes to houses... you're a commissioner inspector, how can you not have a house?"

"...through embezzlement? Corruption?" asked a speechless Li Hao.

"Pfft!" Liu Yan looked contemptuously at him. "Is that all you know? What corruption? These are spoils of war, do you understand? Loot is handed in and divided according to Night Watcher rules! This house is from our last operation!"

Loot? Li Hao blinked.

"Have you forgotten Zhou He?"

"Oh, oh yeah!" Li Hao did remember the name. It was the first person that he'd killed—no, the martial master that Captain Liu and the others beat to death during their interrogation.

"He owns this!" A peal of tinkling laughter came from Liu Yan. "And a car as well, you've seen it before. It's in the Inspectorate garage—you can drive it away anytime! You're the one who arrested Zhou He, so keep his house and car now that you've been promoted!"

So this was the background of the house!

“How does a Slayer have so much money?” Li Hao couldn’t help but ask.

“What kind of bullshit is that? He was a martial master of many years, how would he not have a few million? Just think about it, you’d be a multimillionaire right now if you were willing to sell the mysterious power that you got!”

Earning money was very easy for them, but what good was wealth? The truly good stuff couldn’t be bought. It was easy for Zhou He to gather five million, but could he buy the same equivalent of mysterious power?

That would be very difficult!

And even if he did, he might not see that much benefit after absorbing it all.

Li Hao’s worldview was so small that Liu Yan found it impossible to further converse with him. Although she lacked money, she didn’t fret over it like the young man. All he worried about from day to night was how to get a raise! People would laugh at him if word of this got out! He would already be a laughingstock for wanting a promotion because his wages would increase.

Li Hao laughed dryly. It was true that he was yet to see the world. The richest he ever was in life was when he received his monthly pay from the Inspectorate. He’d looked at his accounts last month—his savings totaled twelve thousand!

But now... forget that.

He gazed upon the massive garden, then walked inside to take in the opulent interior. The exterior was done in a vintage style, whereas the inside was very modern. There were two floors in total as

well as an underground garage. A pool could be found in the backyard, just like in other villas. A residence with enormous outdoor space like this one suited Li Hao's tastes more.

"So huge!" the young man murmured and happened to look back at Liu Yan.

The woman grinned at the staring young man. "So you've finally come to your senses!" She thrust her chest forward. You finally know to compliment other people! Not bad, you've got good taste!

Li Hao immediately came to his senses and looked elsewhere with resignation. "Sis, do the others... really not need this? Is it okay if I just accept it?"

"It's fine!" Liu Yan really thought nothing of it. "We live in the Inspectorate most of the time. You're young and just joined the team, so you still have the habit of clocking in and out of work. We're different. It's been many years since we joined and typically, we stay at the Inspectorate in our free time."

They rarely returned home as there was no one home. What was home? Just a house! Their homes were long gone. Liu Long once mentioned that there was a story behind every Demon Hunter. They never mentioned family, significant others, or children...

Wu Chao and Chen Jian seemed to live in the basement, as did Yun Yao. She was there whenever Liu Long saw her. The captain disappeared at times, but who knew if that was to go home or go elsewhere? Perhaps he had no home either and simply went out for a walk.

Liu Yan was the same! These people treated the team as their home.

Li Hao said nothing further. He didn't care either, he just needed a place to absorb mysterious power and train. Some of his secret arts could not be revealed to outsiders unless his teacher approved. If he practiced in the team basement, the Breathing Method of the Five Styles might be exposed. That was completely unacceptable!

Li Hao continued to stroll around for a look. There was a living room, guest room, restroom, and a gym on the first floor. The second floor held the primary suite, study, children's room, and others. He had no use for most of the rooms and the furnishings weren't new. It'd previously been occupied, but this suited his purposes more. He didn't need to do or renovate anything—he didn't have the money to either.

All was in order; he just needed to bring a few changes of clothing. The more he appraised the complex, the more he liked it. He'd yet to reach the team's level, he still had a need for materialistic objects. It'd been uncomfortable at Openlight before to be admonished for running through a boxing technique. Things were perfect now!

The front and back yards were ridiculously large. He could do whatever he wanted!

Liu Yan was already on a couch on the first floor. She winked coquettishly at Li Hao when he came down the stairs.

"The house is really big, Little Hao Hao. Are you afraid to be in it by yourself? How about big sis come and keep you company?"

Li Hao looked around calmly. "Sis, do you think I should host a housewarming or something?"

"Whatever you want!" Liu Yan grumbled. Are you ignoring me, little guy?

The delighted young man didn't want to waste time discussing these sorts of things. "Sis, they say that they're sending three Night Watchers of the Darkmoon level. This puts our team at six Sunderers and Night Watchers!"

Not including him. If counting him, that made for seven. It was quite a mighty force, putting Silver City's branch on par with the other cities—if they overlooked the lack of Sunflare.

“Meh, that’s good enough.” Liu Yan shrugged carelessly. Thank goodness she’d ascended to Sunderer, or she might feel some pressure.

“There’s nine of us now. Recruiting another will pretty much fulfill the lowest requirements,” the woman remarked. “Chief says he wants me to be the team captain. Other than the one coming to be deputy director, the other two will join the field mission team. I wouldn’t be able to keep them under control if I wasn’t a Sunderer!

“Chief wants to make a five person field mission team. Wu Chao as scout, Chen Jian as shield, I’ll be primary offense. The other two will be assigned based on their abilities.”

A five person team could indeed satisfy some basic needs. More would require stronger leadership ability. There were no more resources for Liu Yan to draw on.

“What about me?” Li Hao asked with confusion.

“You’re top brass!” Liu Yan smirked. “One principal and two deputies! You’ll spend your days drinking tea, reading reports, and listening to debriefings. What, is our top brass supposed to go to the frontlines?”

Chapter 113: A New Official Wants To Make A Strong Showing (II)

Li Hao blinked wordlessly. Liu Long had been the team captain before!

Liu Yan broke into laughter at the young man’s confusion. “I’m joking! You don’t need to accompany the regular missions, but of course you’ll be with us when danger comes. Chief wants you to be in charge of basic administrative work. We have more people on the team and our official structure is complete. We’ll need to handle and file various documents, as well as obtain intelligence for our cases.

“You’ll be the one to compile and assign resources, contributions, the treasury, and others. You’ll be very busy!”

Support work wasn't any easier, it was just relatively safer. Liu Long could set and portion out rewards for accomplishments when it was just them. But now that they'd joined the Night Watchers, the outsiders might not be satisfied with this set of rules. It would fall to Li Hao to carry out the job.

The young man didn't say anything when he heard his responsibilities. Support work was support work, he didn't mind. He'd been shouldering a heavy load of text archival lately. His teacher's method of text archival was storing all abstruse material in his brain. Li Hao felt his brain grow more numb by the day.

His teacher wanted him on a daily regimen of memorizing new things; he had no choice but to comply. If he had to carry out field duty on top of that, Li Hao felt that he might collapse.

"Let's go back if you're finished!" Liu Yan stood up. "We received our documents this morning! The Night Watchers are decently efficient, so the new guys might arrive this afternoon. We should greet them. Your official appointment might arrive then too."

Li Hao nodded; the two left together. Despite Zhou He's car being his, it was still at the Inspectorate, so he didn't have a car for now. Liu Yan had one—it belonged to the Inspectorate. The young man wasn't aware of whether or not she owned one herself. It was parked at the entrance to the front garden, but could also be driven in if that was the desire.

The surroundings were very lovely. While there were neighbors, they were at least two hundred meters away. Each complex was afforded the maximum privacy possible.

Li Hao and Liu Yan were about to enter their car when a gleaming black sedan stopped in front of them. A man's head poked out when a window rolled down.

"Captain Liu! What a coincidence to run into you here!" The genteel man seemed thirty years old at most and was easy on the eyes.

Li Hao didn't recognize him, so he looked at Liu Yan. The woman flashed a smile so dazzling that it gave the young man pause. It was... truly radiant. She walked over before he had time to ask, beaming all the while. Li Hao had no choice but to follow in mystified fashion. Was there a need to be so enthusiastic?

It wasn't that he had any thoughts toward the vice captain, just his manly ego at play. I will begrudgingly accept you being nice to me, but I'll be unhappy if you're nice to anyone else.

Liu Yan reached behind her as his thoughts ran wildly and slapped a pair of handcuffs onto the other's outstretched hand. "You're following me!" Her smile vanished.

"Liu Yan, you..." the man retorted hotly. "I live here and happened to run into you! What are you doing?!"

"You're following me!" Liu Yan repeated coldly. "How can you so coincidentally run into me? I suspect that you have dealings with certain illegal organizations! Come with me to the Inspectorate. With your background, you may know that a Night Watcher branch is about to be established in Silver City. Thus, I have reason to believe that you are conducting reconnaissance on Night Watcher movements. You're dead meat this time!"

"Don't try to frame me, Liu Yan!" the man flew into a rage. "Don't try this with me! You should know when to stop! I said that this is a coincidence..."

"We'll see about that after you meet the Night Watchers!" Liu Yan snorted. "You can tell me all about it when you make it out alive! Come here, Li Hao, and escort the suspect for questioning!"

The young man was rather confused; his earlier thoughts were nowhere to be found. Only one idea occupied his mind. Was there a need for this?

It was one thing to scare off unwanted attention. It looked like the other was pursuing Liu Yan, but she didn't welcome his advances. However, it didn't seem that appropriate to really take them to the Inspectorate.

Despite his doubts, he dared forward, grabbed the handcuffs, and growled, "Out of the car!"

“How dare you!” snarled the man as he turned around to glare at Li Hao. There was none of his earlier ease. If he really was slapped with the crime of prying into Night Watcher movements, he’d have the skin stripped off him, if not more. “Don’t go over the line, Liu Yan...”

“Keep talking tough!” Liu Yan’s expression was frosty. “Keep talking and I’ll take it that you’re resisting arrest. I’ll execute you on the spot!”

The man instantly shut up. A wise man did not fight when the odds were against him. He corralled his temper and grit his teeth. “Fine! I’m sorry! Liu Yan, I wasn’t prying into your affairs, I was just passing by! You know that I live up ahead! Plus, the Night Watcher branch hasn’t been formed yet, so what am I prying into?”

“See, you knew everything as soon as the official documents arrived. What is this, if not prying?”

The man shut up without a word. There was no point in saying anything else.

Liu Yan sneered at him. “Open his handcuffs, Li Hao. But keep an eye on the guy and execute him as soon as he violates proper behavior!”

“Understood!” Li Hao barked before undoing the handcuffs. He quickly followed Liu Yan to the Inspectorate car, using their rearview mirror to train his eyes on the man. The latter’s face contorted with fury and he stared fixedly at them.

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In the car.

“Sis, who was that?” Li Hao asked curiously.

“Qiao Peng!” Liu Yan responded calmly as she drove. “He lives in the complex ahead of you, keep an eye on his every moment! He has another identity as the vice president of the Qiao Mining Industries. His dad is the boss!”

Qiao Mining Industries! That immediately jogged his memory. “He’s a huge entrepreneur of Silver City, a really rich person. Apparently their company is worth several hundreds of millions... is that true?”

And how were he and Liu Yan at odds with each other?

“There is so much more to Qiao Mining Industries,” Liu Yan said lowly. “They appear to be in the mining industry, but they’re actually in the business of secretly excavating ancient ruins! Qiao Mining Industries has a professional mining team, or should I say a team of robbers and thieves? Granted, the sites of ancient civilizations are not that easily plumbed. I just suspect them of having dealings with a supernatural organization, it might be Red Moon!”

Li Hao frowned. “What makes you say that?” This family business needed to be uprooted if that was the case!

“Qiao Mining Industries has operated for many years and was founded in Silver City. You know our city, there’s nothing here. They say that there’s ore in the mountains outside the city, but bah! Bullshit! I haven’t seen them mine anything over these years, but here they stay without shifting their ass! I didn’t think much about them before, but ever since Red Moon’s attack and the eight families of Silver City came to the forefront, I suspect these guys have something to do with the supernatural organizations!”

Liu Yan paused, then added, “It might not be Red Moon, it could also be Yama!”

Why’d she change her mind? Li Hao found the swing difficult to process.

Liu Yan snorted. “I’m not far from the truth, but it’s all speculation. I have no proof. Chief may have mentioned my affairs to you before. Let’s put it this way. My husband was an engineer for

Qiao Mining Industries. He was in charge of random bits and ends. He came home one day to tell me that they'd uncovered something unusual in the mountains, possibly an ancient site. Those were different times then, what ancient sites did Silver City have? I didn't pay much attention to it...

"He was dead shortly thereafter, murdered! His killer was a captain of the security team. Apparently they had an argument in one of the sites, the guy lost his temper, and smashed my husband dead with a rock!

"I brought a team to arrest him as soon as I heard. The guy fled arrest. When we next heard of him not long after, it was that he'd joined Yama and absorbed enough mysterious power to become a Darkmoon!"

"Sis, are you saying that there's a connection between Qiao Mining Industries and Yama?" Li Hao frowned. "That they could be Yama territory and here to excavate ancient sites? That tour husband stumbled upon one of their discoveries and was silenced for it?"

"More or less!"

"Then... why don't you tell the Night Watchers?" Li Hao raised. As useless as the agency seemed, they were the only official supernatural organization.

"Having just offended Red Moon, do you think they can afford to offend Yama?" Liu Yan saw things more clearly than he did. "The Night Watchers may not be as strong as any of the three and they're already in open hostilities with Red Moon. Can they withstand another fight with Yama? And I might accidentally reveal myself to Yama if I make a report of this. It'll result in more trouble for myself."

Li Hao nodded. Upon further consideration, it really wasn't something to be mentioned. But he doggedly continued forward. "Then... with how you treated the guy today, sis, aren't you worried that he'll suspect something?"

“You don’t get it!” Liu Yan suddenly smiled. “He would suspect that I knew something if I ignored him. My sudden antagonism toward him as soon as I join the Night Watchers will actually put him at ease. It’s indirect proof that I don’t know anything. If so, I should be biding my time instead.

“Li Hao, sustained concessions and patience isn’t the best thing sometimes. It might arouse greater suspicion instead,” the vice captain suddenly offered some advice. “You are also the only heir of the eight families of Silver City! I’ve confirmed it, there is no one alive from the other seven. Those who left for other cities have all died of various accidents.

“Therefore, there must be more secrets in Silver City. I suspect the ruins of the eight families are here. If so, then they might be digging into your ancestral grave, Li Hao!”

The young man regarded Liu Yan wordlessly. Ancestral grave...? Now that sounded awkward.

Chapter 114: A New Official Wants To Make A Strong Showing (III)

“Red Moon caused such a disturbance that those who didn’t know about the eight families before do now,” Liu Yan waxed eloquent. “Yama, Celestial—but I have a feeling that these two might’ve known already. Some mid-sized organizations might be newly aware, as well as the Night Watchers.

“Everything might seem calm and tranquil, but that’s hardly the case. All eyes are probably on you. Danger lurks in the shadows so long as you remain in Silver City. It’s not out in the open for now because of Elder Yuan. Once he leaves, we will certainly become the most chaotic place in all of Silver Moon!”

Chaos! It was inevitable!

Liu Yan was no fool and had drawn her theories long ago. All was quiet now due to the presence of an expert who could kill Solars. But once said expert departed, the city would promptly dissolve into utter pandemonium.

Just you wait.

“Sis, why don’t you guys leave since you know that troubled times are coming?” Li Hao asked after a long period of silence.

“Leave?” Liu Yan chuckled. “Where to? And why? Trouble is good! From danger comes opportunity! As a martial master yet to make the crossover, I crave large amounts of mysterious power! Once the Night Watcher branch is formed, we’ll be rewarded for killing enemy supernaturals. My monthly salary and additional power from killing enemies is where my opportunity lies.

“Otherwise, having just set foot into Sunderer of Hundreds, I’ll never be able to ascend.”

She knew how dangerous the city might be in the near future, but so what? She wasn’t afraid! This was precisely her gamble, that Silver City would be treacherous. Without the chances to be had from these circumstances, how eternally long might it take for her to make the crossover as a Sunderer?

“I owe you thanks for my breakthrough,” she suddenly said. It was a meaningful statement as one couldn’t make out if she was happy or resigned. Indeed, Li Hao was the primary reason why she’d advanced to Sunderer. After the large quantity of special energy he sent into her, she returned home to discover that her physique had grown stronger and her supernatural locks even more secure. It was why she’d broken through.

She didn’t speak of it to anyone.

Li Hao paused. Me? Ah, sword energy!

“I just wanted to heal your wounds,” he said with embarrassment.

“It’s alright.” Liu Yan continued driving with a smile. “Sunderer is just as well, this means I have some ability to protect myself now. Otherwise, Slayer is completely insufficient if I’m still stuck on the martial master path.”

Li Hao didn't respond as he was busy thinking of things. So the eight families were catching attention, were they?

He knew this would happen, but since everyone had avoided the subject before, he thought no one cared. Looks like they did care. Despite the eight families being an old legend, post the awakening of the supernatural, the sword of the Lis being presented to the Night Watchers, and Red Moon losing a Solar in Silver City, perhaps powerhouses of other provinces were also paying attention to them now.

Nothing resulted from their scrutiny so long as Yuan Shuo was in residence, but the storm might descend as soon as his teacher left.

That's fine! Like Liu Yan said, this was an opportunity. Li Hao had just set foot into Sunderer, but his strength continued to improve. His teacher had withdrawn his share of mysterious power from the treasury and mentioned that he would obtain some of the five elements for his student.

Yuan Shuo's loot of mysterious power focused on metal energy as the Solar had been a metal supernatural. The Sunflare was a thunder supernatural. While they could help Li Hao, they weren't as useful as the balanced nature of the five elements. The professor needed time to trade his cubes with others.

These days, I can sense that I'm on the verge of succeeding with Thrice Forced. It's a small improvement, in a way. The young man saw Qiao Peng's figure slowly disappear in the rearview mirror.

Qiao Mining Industries! Potentially a fringe Yama organization. Li Hao committed it to memory.

.....

The Inspectorate.

Li Hao and Liu Yan returned like nothing had happened.

The large conference room.

Mu Sen was also present; Li Hao was surprised by some familiar faces when he entered the room. Wang Ming didn't say a word when he met Li Hao's eyes. He'd told the latter to leave for White Moon as soon as possible, that Silver City was too small. Yet here he was, back before long. How mortifying!

"We're all here, good!" Mu Sen smiled when he saw Liu Yan and Li Hao return. "The documents and people from the Night Watchers have arrived. Everyone take a seat, I'll announce the appointments!"

The group sat down where they would. Wang Ming didn't greet or talk to Li Hao as he found the situation too humiliating. Could everyone just pretend that he didn't exist?

"After careful study, the senior council has decided to formally establish a Night Watcher branch in Silver City! Liu Long, formerly captain of the Silver City law enforcement team, is promoted to chief commissioner and will serve as the branch director!"

Liu Long rose, walked up to accept his letter of commission, and snapped a salute. Everyone applauded their new director. There weren't that many present, just the Demon Hunters and a few outside Night Watchers. It was a secret agency, after all. Although quite a few knew about it, they should keep it confidential where they could and avoid the public eye.

"Wang Ming, formerly commissioner inspector of the White Moon Night Watchers, will serve as deputy director!"

Wang Ming walked up and accepted his letter without a smile on his face. He'd come all the way from White Moon to be the new branch's deputy director, but he was still an outsider to these people. What was the point of this? He was a commissioner inspector to begin with and wasn't promoted for his new title, making it all the more pointless.

“Li Hao, formerly first rank inspector of the Silver City law enforcement team, is promoted to commissioner inspector and will serve as deputy director!”

Wang Ming stared at Li Hao, beside himself with humiliation. The kid was the other deputy director? He really hadn’t known about this. Holy fuck, I’ve done poorly for myself in life. I’m the same rank as Li Hao?!

Li Meng and Hu Hao looked at each other, finding the situation too awkward for words. So Li Hao was to be their superior? My word, if they’d known that Li Hao would be the deputy director, they would’ve resisted this transfer with every fiber of their being. They thought it would be Liu Yan!

The vice captain was older than them and with a longer tenure. Other than not being a supernatural, she was an acceptable deputy director. But Li Hao??

“Director Liu, this... uh... Li Hao...” Wang Ming couldn’t resist muttering. “Hasn’t it only been a while since he joined the Inspectorate? And he’s not a supernatural...”

How is this reasonable?

“No worries, Li Hao is primarily in charge of back office support,” Liu Long replied evenly. “We look to Director Wang when real battle is upon us. Director Hao is a Fullmoon supernatural and the strongest in Silver City...”

Wang Ming flushed beet red. This was stark humiliation! What do you mean by this, Liu Long?! Everyone knew what’d happened in the previous battle. Liu Long could take on three by himself, whereas Wang Ming couldn’t handle solo combat. There was also Yuan Shuo within the city walls, so what was this talk of the strongest in the city, if not degradation of the worst kind?

“Director Liu!”

“Oh, I mean first among supernaturals!” Liu Long corrected calmly.

Wang Ming blinked, then quieted down. That was accurate enough. Forget it, he wasn’t going to argue with a blockhead.

“Liu Yan, formerly captain of the Silver City field mission team...”

The appointments continued. There were nine altogether for the new branch—four were executives, if they counted Liu Yan. Yun Yao, Wu Chao, and Chen Jian didn’t mind the new hierarchy. Hu Hao and Li Meng looked around them, suddenly feeling very alone. They were two Darkmoons reporting for work in the minor Silver City, yet at the end of the day... they were just more substantial soldiers.

They hadn’t even finagled a position of team captain!

The two almost broke out in sobs. If they’d known this would be the case, they should’ve requested a transfer to Flare City. Even if they weren’t part of the leadership team there, there would still be some Starlight who could be their minions. Look at the situation they were in now! Other than the two of them, only Wu Chao and Chen Jian were weaker than them. And the key thing was, they were of a completely different path as they were martial masters. They were also directly from Liu Long’s faction!

The two of them were the lowest on the totem pole!

“Congratulations, everyone!” Mu Sen smiled as he finished announcing the appointments. “Particularly Li Hao, congratulations! I said so before that a student from the Veteris Institute would stand out from his fellows sooner or later! I hadn’t thought that you’d make a commissioner inspector so quickly.”

He was both surprised, yet not so surprised. It made sense that those upstairs had agreed—they needed to show Yuan Shuo’s face.

“The formation of a Night Watcher branch is a wonderful occasion for both the Inspectorate and me!” said the merry inspector general. “You will be in charge of all cases involving the supernatural and martial masters in the future. The Inspectorate will handle only the mundane cases. Of course, feel free to temporarily commandeer anyone from the Inspectorate whenever you need help.”

There were too few Night Watchers and there would undoubtedly be many supernatural cases to come. Mu Sen granted them leniency in permitting them to bolster their ranks whenever needed.

Liu Long didn’t care about that. He thought for a bit before saying, “According to my knowledge, the Inspectorate has the most detailed files on all supernaturals and martial masters in the city. Just give me a copy of that, including a listing of all supernaturals and martial masters in the various corporations, Veteris Institute, and agencies.”

Mu Sen looked at him without saying a word.

“What, can you not do that?” Liu Long asked placidly. “Inspector General Mu, you and I are of the same rank now! The Night Watchers have the right to request these files. Please hand them over.”

“I don’t mean that!” Mu Sen frowned. “Liu Long, what do you intend to do?”

“A new official wants to make a strong showing. I’m going to light a fire with my showing, is there a problem with that?”

Mu Sen opened and closed his mouth. He was the only one who could read those files because they involved all of the superhuman existences within Silver City. Slayers, Starlight, Sunderer, Darkmoon...

Did Silver City have those?

Yes, but very few and concentrated within a few corporations and powerful organizations—such as the Veteris Institute. There was a martial master in residence there, and it wasn’t Yuan Shuo.

Chapter 115: Origin Weapons (I)

Mu Sen said nothing further in the face of Liu Long's insistence. "I'll give the list to you when I get back." He nodded.

"Don't delete anything!" Liu Long continued in his calm tones. "Those have nothing to do with you. Don't worry, I'm not a bad guy. We're all protectors of Silver City and won't do anything irrational."

"Do as you wish!" Mu Sen left without another word. It was best to limit his interactions with Liu Long. The guy was not a logical person and would drag him down sooner or later.

"We can finally flex our muscles with complete freedom!" Liu Long suddenly smiled.

Though no one knew what he meant, they were all seized by excitement. Wang Ming joined them in this thrilling sensation, but soon sensed something different. Liu Long was looking at him... strangely.

The fuck! Wang Ming cursed subconsciously. What you looking at me for? I'm just an outsider, you don't have something in mind for me, do you?

"Let's all go to Li Hao's place after work tonight to celebrate the formation of the new branch!" Wreathed in smiles, Liu Yan called everyone together for the group's first social occasion. Liu Long wasn't the enthusiastic type and everyone left in the conference room would be eating out of the same figurative pot in the future. "Little Wang, Little Hu, Little Li, are you three okay with that?"

"....." The three looked at her. Li Meng and Hu Hao quickly turned to Wang Ming. You're the boss, what you say goes. They are three outsiders unfamiliar with this group. It was up to Wang Ming if he wanted to lay down the law in this very moment, or forever bow his head.

Wang Ming didn't care about any of that. This was all transient and temporary to him. He would leave soon, so there was no point in expending effort to fight Liu Long for power! Besides, Huang

Yun wanted him to get close to Li Hao. This mission had to be accomplished, so the handsome young man quickly nodded in acceptance.

“Very well, let’s go to Director Hao’s place!”

The turn of events left Li Hao speechless. My place? I have no idea where the kitchen is in my new place. Liu Yan seriously knows how to make things a hassle. Why don’t we go out to eat?

“Then it’s settled.” The beaming Liu Yan didn’t care what the young man thought. “The Inspectorate should’ve arranged lodgings for the three of you. It’s been a long and arduous journey. Why don’t you get settled in first, we’ll come pick you up later.”

“Thank you for going to the trouble!” Wang Ming left without another word. He didn’t want to stay a single second longer than he had to. It was too uncomfortable! Although Li Hao and Liu Long couldn’t care less, the same couldn’t be said for him. His pride was too strong and he couldn’t bear it. It curdled his insides to think of how those supernaturals had injured him with one blow and he’d needed Liu Long to save him.

The three newcomers left together. Liu Long snorted with laughter the moment they disappeared from view.

“Not bad!”

Liu Yan nodded and smiled as well.

“It’s those three.” Yun Yao inclined her head in approval. “At least we’ve fought together before. They have some fire to them. While they’re newbies, they’re not complete rookies. They’re all Darkmoon and not some of the oily supernaturals that we’ve seen...”

The team was quite satisfied with these three. Lack of battle experience wasn’t a problem. The Demon Hunters had been mostly concerned about being sent stubborn, lone warrior types or those who wanted to vie for authority. That would make for a difficult time then.

Not all supernaturals turned a blind eye to mundane power. Some wouldn't mind committing detestable acts in the name of fame and wealth. But not these guys, these guys were fine.

"They're good!" Chen Jian proclaimed with a broad smile. "They helped us with the supernaturals last time, so we're all acquainted. Wang Ming is stronger than us, so it's all good!"

Liu Long nodded. This was why he was at ease. He didn't care about power or authority either, but he would defend his territory to his last breath if someone came for it. He understood how important this team was—they were all trusted people who'd gone through life and death together. He wasn't willing to place their lives in anyone else's hands. That made an easy environment for fatalities.

"Sis, I don't have anything to make food with," Li Hao muttered with the onset of a headache. He ignored what the team was talking about.

"Are you an idiot?" Liu Yan rolled her eyes. "Order in! Have the restaurant deliver! We're just eating at your place, who's cooking there?"

"....." Li Hao's jaw dropped. Was this what it meant to play host? I've learned something new today! So it's just borrowing my place, huh? Here I was, bashing my brains out on how to handle this!

"Let's do as Liu Yan says," Liu Long laughed. "We can just eat whatever, the food doesn't matter. Hosting a welcome dinner for them is a show of goodwill. You can grow closer to Wang Ming as we eat, Li Hao. Chat with him, especially about the supernatural affairs to come." The chief paused. "Especially about the eight families!"

Li Hao stilled with seriousness. He needed to pay attention to this!

He truly wanted to understand more about the eight families, but neither his teacher nor the others knew much. Who knew if the Night Watchers knew more? The best way to learn more might be to interrogate Ying Hongyue. A pity that that was impossible. Right?

In that case, Wang Ming was the next best alternative.

Li Hao nodded and set out to look for restaurants when Liu Long waved him back. “Don’t be in a rush to leave! Now that we’ve officially become a Night Watcher branch, we can’t continue to operate from the basement! Go find an office building for us to move into. We don’t have many belongings or equipment...”

“Sure, I’ll have the law enforcement team move out of this building so we can take it over. That saves us the hassle of a move!”

The rest of the team stared at him. Damn, son! You’re as blackhearted as they get! Make the law enforcement team move? Look at how many we have and how many they have!

“What?” Perplexed, an embarrassed Li Hao scratched his head. “Our headquarters are here and it’s not that easy to move a treasury. So have the law enforcement team move, their stuff is easier to move. I can call for a moving company.”

“.....” Liu Yan burst into giggles and Liu Long waved an extremely exasperated hand. “You figure it out! But it’s all on you if people complain!”

Truly blackhearted! The new branch was only just formed, but here they were going to take someone else’s place like a dove occupying a magpie’s nest! Li Hao was showing his true colors now, wasn’t he? He could look forward to curses thrown his way!

The rest of the team ignored the young man and chatted for a while before heading downstairs.

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The group blinked when they reached the first floor. A hotbed of activity, the law enforcement team bustled to and fro as they moved items in perfect harmony. Liu Long looked around with astonishment. Since when were these guys so easily persuaded? And they all wore smiles on their faces? Had something good happened?

This location had been their office for a very long time and they were suddenly being told to move. Wasn't that a hard pill to swallow?

"Captain!" greeted inspectors passing by. The team was still used to calling him captain. Liu Long grabbed a nearby bulky man.

"Old Zhou, why are you guys being so proactive? The kid didn't threaten you guys, did he?"

"How could he?" chortled the old veteran. "And would Commissioner Inspector Li ever do such a thing? Didn't you say that if we finish the move today, we can all choose a gun from Captain Liu or your office? That we can even take the cannon if we want?"

He paused, a weird tone creeping into his voice. "You two... know about that, right?"

Liu Long and Liu Yan looked at each other with resignation. The hell they knew about! The kid seriously knew how to bullshit.

But the more they thought about it, the more it didn't matter. They could always get more weapons; the ones in their offices were kept there for easy access. Not to mention, since they were now part of the Night Watchers, they needed to turn in the Inspectorate weapons. Night Watchers were rarely equipped with conventional weapons.

"We do!" Liu Long answered gruffly. "That's all it took for you guys to bounce up and down like this?"

“Of course not!” Old Zhou laughed loudly. “Captain, Commissioner Inspector Li is a highly educated person, alright! He’s someone meant for big things! He says that moving away now is so that we can return with our heads held even higher. I hear... that um... they... are recruiting new members?”

He looked expectantly at Liu Long. The Night Watchers were not a secret to the law enforcement team. Law enforcement members had personally participated in the supernatural battle of Silver City a few days ago. Everyone knew about the existence of supernaturals.

Based on Li Hao’s words, this building was being requisitioned as Silver City also hosted a branch of that agency now. Everyone on the law enforcement team had a chance to join it, but there would be a selection process. Anyone who moved away now could move back once they passed through the process. They would come back with a raise, increased benefits, and the chance to become supernatural!

The team was highly excited about this possibility.

“Old Zhou, that domain is very dangerous. You’re a veteran inspector, so you should know more about what we’re talking about.” Liu Long furrowed his brows. Why could the inspector barely contain his excitement like some of the young’uns?

“Captain, I’m not hoping to become one of those!” Old Zhou smiled easily. “Commissioner Inspector Li says that he can recruit a few people for administrative duties. Our rank will increase by one level and our salary double. The salary comes from upstairs, anyhow, not your pockets. The commissioner inspector also says that it’d be a waste not to take advantage of this, since it’s no skin off our backs. Under normal circumstances, Night Watchers... ahem, can set up a mundane help center that requires a bit of staff. It’d be a shame to not take advantage of a gig that offers a promotion and a raise, wouldn’t you say so?”

Liu Long felt a bit awkward. Is that so? I don’t know, I’ve never thought about this before. I see! So the Night Watchers also have an administrative back office for support duty? He’d originally assigned those tasks to Li Hao, but to think that the young man would outsource his work in the blink of an eye. The young man was really something!

Liu Yan and the others busily suppressed laughter. Chen Jian was the first to break. “Li Hao’s got some good thoughts in him and knows how to obtain benefits for our brothers. It’s true, we don’t care about promotions, but Old Zhou and the others do. Any that get promoted is a good thing since it’s upstairs picking up the tab.”

Chapter 116: Origin Weapons (II)

Old Zhou looked up excitedly from the boxes he was moving. “That’s right! Captain, I thought you were looking out for your old brothers! Is that not the case?”

He was a bit disappointed. Had the captain overlooked them for such a nice gig? So it was Commissioner Inspector Li who truly had their backs!

“Bastard!” The awkward Liu Long quickly returned to his customary aloofness. “Of course I did, I was just worried that you’d be afraid of danger...”

“Just listen to yourself, captain! Forget it, I’m going to ask the commissioner inspector if there’s a spot for me. I’m not talking to you anymore, captain.” Old Zhou ran off happily to search out Li Hao, leaving a resigned Liu Long in his wake.

Tea cools down as soon as someone’s gone, but I’m right here still! These guys are too materialistic.

Li Hao returned before long and raised his voice when he saw how busy everyone was working.

“Move faster, folks! Let’s try to be done by tonight! The new place is nice and I’ve just come from talking to Inspector General Mu. He didn’t want to see everyone go, so I only managed to wrangle ten spots! I can only promote you guys one rank higher, it was too hard to get any commissioner inspector titles. Therefore, I recommend having second rank inspectors in the first round. That will maximize our benefits!

“If third rank inspectors wish to apply for this opportunity, please wait a bit longer! Once the branch grows bigger and we have more people, I’ll recruit some more big brothers and sisters from the law enforcement team to help!”

“Commissioner Inspector Li is the best!”

“As expected of a top student from the Veteris Institute!”

“Cheers for the commissioner inspector!”

“.....”

A chorus of flattery rose from the inspectors. This was a very exciting announcement! Not all of them were able to undertake exhausting missions like Liu Long and the rest of his Single Hunters. Those guys fed their entire family when they ate for one. Some of the law enforcement team, like the rest of them, had families to feed!

Advancements and raises were an occasion of absolute delight.

.....

Liu Long watched silently off to the side, turning to Liu Yan after a while.

“We’ve focused on pursuing the supernatural all these years,” he whispered. “And forgotten what a mundane life feels like. No wonder Law Enforcement was such a hot mess.”

They’d forgotten what these brothers and sisters needed. So long as one didn’t ascend beyond this system, advancement and raises were what everyone sought after. Liu Long had failed to give these to them over the past few years.

Meanwhile, Li Hao still viewed himself as a mundane. He knew what they wanted, so could satisfy their desires. Therefore, they were happy to hail him as a commissioner inspector despite being newly promoted. Currying favor cost them nothing. Being able to join the new branch’s back office meant striking rich.

“It’s nothing to do with me, I was just a deputy,” Liu Yan chuckled. “This is your oversight, chief. Don’t try to drag me into it.”

“Everyone’s willing to move!” Li Hao ran up to them excitedly. “I told the inspector general about our needs and he said Law Enforcement can use the building next door. It’s empty anyways, all it needs is a bit of cleaning up. Look, chief, we have our own station now!”

“You definitely know how to take care of things!” Liu Long broke out into laughter. And he’d thought the lad would give rise to general discontent! “How did you think of this, and to recruit a bunch of people into the back office?”

“Wang Ming told me about it.” Li Hao still recalled their final conversation. “When he told me to move to White Moon, he said it was fine that I’m mundane. White Moon Night Watchers need mundanes for administrative work, so I asked around. As it turns out, Night Watcher branches can recruit mundanes so long as they aren’t on the frontlines. There’s no set number—but generally fewer than the Night Watchers.”

“You’ve got a good memory!” complimented Liu Long. “But don’t forget the proper task at hand! Don’t be preoccupied with the minutiae of your position—being obsessed with the trappings of power isn’t good. Remember to keep increasing your strength. You’re a deputy director now and your strength is quite unfit for the task!”

“Don’t worry, chief,” Li Hao laughed dryly. “I’ve been working hard and will make the crossover as soon as possible!”

My strength? Sunderer of Hundreds. That’s good enough, right? Sharpening the ax did not delay cutting up firewood. Li Hao didn’t want to be forever bogged down by administrative detail. Identifying people to split his load now would give him adequate time to train later.

.....

The day passed in a busy flurry.

Night.

Nine Night Watchers drove two cars, one of them Liu Yan's and the other the one allotted to Li Hao. S 7219. Liu Long and the others were in the first car, whereas Li Hao took the new arrivals.

Wang Ming hadn't wanted to sit in the passenger seat, but also didn't want to squeeze with Li Meng and Hu Hao after they plopped themselves into the back seat. He reluctantly sat down in the front.

It wasn't long before he shifted uneasily.

"Li Hao, do you know how to drive?!" he couldn't help but cry out. He'd thought of a plan of attack before getting in, of how he'd avoid conversing with Li Hao. Yet why was the guy driving the car??

"Yeah!" Li Hao answered eagerly. "I've driven cars before, but not ones as fancy as this one. Driving is so easy! All you need to do is handle the steering wheel, step on the pedal, and brake! Don't you know how to drive, Ole Wang?"

He didn't hail Wang Ming as "sir" anymore because they were of the same rank. Li Hao was twenty and Wang Ming seemed to be the same age, possibly even younger since he used to say "Brother Hao". Therefore, a younger moniker was appropriate. However, calling someone "little buddy" seemed a bit rude, so Li Hao settled for "Ole Wang".

Wang Ming didn't know what to say. I don't know how to drive? It's more like you don't know how to drive! Is messing with the steering wheel, gas pedal, and brakes all you need to do? I mean, it's not like he's wrong, but the way this guy drives is too damned terrifying!

Wang Ming reined himself in, trying to distract himself. If not, he'd throw up from being so carsick.

“Li Hao, how come Silver City put you forward to be the deputy director?”

“Oh, chief said I’m more suited to it and that the others aren’t, so he chose me.”

Bullshit!

Wang Ming wanted to curse.

“Li Hao, you’re not Slayer of Tens yet, right?” Li Meng bounced so badly in the back that she had to join the conversation to divert her attention. “Did you find any mysterious power that suits you from the portion you were distributed?”

“No!” Li Hao answered morosely. “Teacher says that maybe my constitution is unique and it’s hard for me to find my proper match. I need to keep waiting and start from martial dao. Martial masters are quite something and just as strong as supernaturals!”

“Have you entered Slayer of Tens?”

“Pretty much!” the young man chuckled. “I’m almost there, I think I can resonate my bones and meridians! It’s just... I’ve yet to try in actual battle. Teacher says that martial masters and supernaturals who cannot fight are all trash!”

Expressions turned dark on all three faces. Thankfully, Li Hao included himself among that, or they’d think he was getting a secret jab in at them.

Wang Ming was close to erupting with anger and forced down the awkwardness he felt. “Have you visited Elder Yuan lately?”

“Yep.”

“What’d he say to you?”

“A lot, why?”

“Nothing.” Wang Ming dropped the topic. It looked like Yuan Shuo had indeed not said anything about taking honorary disciples. That was good. But... on the other hand... if the professor couldn’t even be bothered to mention them... that showed how worthless honorary disciples were!

Unnamed jealousy agitated in his heart!

They wouldn’t be happy to see Yuan Shuo announce their arrangement to the world, but the professor didn’t even tell his own disciple! The gap between the final and honorary disciples was too big. The professor hadn’t said anything to the trio after they moved to Silver City. It truly broke the heart.

Li Hao had his own agenda in mind. “Ah yes, Sis Li and Brother Hu, teacher said that you guys were here last time to escort him to a ruin. Where is it? Why’s it been canceled?”

“Not canceled, delayed!” Being the forthright sort, Li Meng kept nothing a secret. “A lot of people have their eyes on it. Before Elder Yuan broke through, we arranged for Director Hao to lead the team. The other factions were also going to send Solars for their expeditions to keep all sides in check.

“At the same time, Elder Yuan’s presence is a necessity. The other parties would want him to go even if we didn’t want him to because he’s very knowledgeable about that site.

“When the Night Watchers probed it three years ago, we ended up with severe losses and casualties. Three Solars and multiple Darkmoon died. Elder Yuan also suffered grave injuries from that expedition. The Night Watchers and other organizations have sent in their own people over the years, but always ended up losing a lot of personnel. Therefore, Elder Yuan being there is a must since he’s an involved party. That also means everyone needs more time to prepare now that he can kill Solars.”

Li Hao understood the situation now.

“You keep talking about other parties—is it Red Moon, Celestial, and Yama?”

“More than that!” Li Meng explained. “Those are only the three biggest supernatural organizations! Various smaller ones spring forth like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. New ones appear every year—some are eliminated, but some grow into their own!”

“The Night Watchers and three biggest ones are the first tier of the supernatural domain. There are some weaker ones below that.”

“Wow, it’s that complicated?” Li Hao stomped on the brakes, nearly flinging everyone out of the car. Thankfully, they were all supernaturals and could catch themselves, but it was an absolutely ridiculous situation. He’d almost driven the car into the river!

“Sis Li.” Li Hao was fully engrossed in the conversation. “Don’t the Night Watchers care about that, sis? Either kill them all to establish our authority or recruit them to our cause. Why are there so many other organizations?”

An irritable Wang Ming cut in before Li Meng had a chance to respond. “It’s not that simple! Latter-day supernaturals are easy to take care of, but the Heaven Favored start off as supernatural. Their rate of improvement is horrifying, even faster than the Night Watchers! They’re Sunflare or Solar before you even know it!

“They haven’t broken the law, so are we supposed to pay the price of killing them just because they’re supernatural? We do think of recruiting them, but what can we do about those who don’t want to accept? They can run anywhere and be everywhere in this vast world. Forcing them to join results in more trouble as that just creates dissension and discord,” Wang Ming sighed. “The key thing is that we lack attraction for supernaturals! The three great organizations are much more alluring!”

Chapter 117: Origin Weapons (III)

“And why is that?” Li Hao was curious. Why wasn’t an official, legitimate organization preferable to an underground, supernatural organization? It didn’t make sense.

The government held all the advantages and the reinforcement of hot weapons at first. How did they still end up with fewer powerhouses among their ranks than the three great organizations? What kinda trash was that?

“Ai!” Wang Ming sighed. The straightforward Li Meng couldn’t hold her sentiments in.

“It’s all because of mysterious power! The founders of the three great organizations were supernatural before the Night Watchers were formed. They secretly accumulated their resources and seem to have occupied several large ruins or other treasures. Whatever it is, they can produce vast quantities of mysterious power.

“Being latecomers, our agency missed the best timing. We don’t have any ancient sites that can produce power or own any precious treasures that can collect energy. Even if we do, we have very few,” she explained despondently. “You tell me, are we an attractive proposition to supernaturals if we don’t have as much mysterious power? The turmoil in the central region is because of this, and we are the main reason for the disturbance!”

Wang Ming coughed slightly.

“What, I’m telling the truth!” Li Meng brushed him off. “In the Night Watcher headquarters... and I’m talking central headquarters—not Silver Moon, there are powerhouses who are unwilling to be limited by the three great organizations. They secretly eliminated a few smaller organizations and seized some treasures and sites that can produce mysterious power.

“Unfortunately, they were discovered as they weren’t very discreet. The three great organizations rose in revolt and waged battle after battle in the central region. They want to force the Night Watchers to hand over the killers. Add to that some people fishing in troubled waters... it’s almost all out war over there!

“Because of that, we keep a very low profile elsewhere—such as places like Silver Moon. The Night Watchers don’t dare rashly stir up trouble because they’re afraid of also losing control over the borderlands. There won’t be much help forthcoming from the central region. It’s enough that they’re holding the line against the three great organizations and others.”

Li Hao was rather taken aback by this new knowledge.

“Are you saying that we robbed people in the central region and then were... embroiled in a gang fight?”

“Yep!” Li Meng couldn’t stifle her laughter, despite the embarrassing description. “You’re right, it’s a gang fight! I hear that those above Solar have gone for several rounds! The central Night Watchers can’t hold off the mob by themselves, but they seem to have gone completely mad. They’ve even fired a few city annihilation missiles. Of course, a lot of people have died, so both sides are wary of each other. It’s utter mayhem over there.”

“Interesting.” Li Hao grinned. “So that means we’re rather domineering in the central region?”

Secretly exterminating entire organizations and taking their treasures! He’d thought that Night Watchers were all pretty incompetent—ahem, pretty resigned to the status quo. Take Silver Moon, for instance. They were being forced to give up cities!

Yet, the agency was starting the fight in the central region? How unexpected.

“We’re not that domineering,” Wang Ming took over the conversation since Li Meng had said everything she should, and then some. “We don’t come off well in this incident, to be honest. It’s not that we specifically wanted to clash with the various organizations—that only leads to enormous losses—but that some of the younger Heaven Favored are out of control. They fear nothing and feel that there’s not enough mysterious power to go around, so they banded together and picked a small organization as their target!

“No one was aware at first, it was later exposed to the world. But with how things have developed, no one can take a step back. And so battle began.

“The situation was a powder keg to begin with, one that almost exploded. This was the fuse that ignited the entire central region,” Wang Ming sighed emotionally and shook his head. “Those Heaven Favored are not to be overlooked! I hear that both sides sat down at the negotiation table before war broke out, but those guys went and slaughtered the grandson of the Yama leader. They seized one of Yama’s treasures and thoroughly enraged the organization. Obviously, negotiations were a bust after that...”

Li Hao’s jaw dropped. “These guys are... really fierce, aren’t they? Or did they start this war on purpose?”

“I don’t know, I don’t think so, but even so... it’s not a big deal anymore,” Wang Ming coughed drily. “Apparently, that treasure is extremely important! Yama’s grandson only snuck it out to show off, but the Night Watcher Heaven Favored killed him and brought the item to headquarters.

“Those at headquarters hadn’t planned on waging a war, but couldn’t contain themselves after seeing the treasure and pounded the drums of battle! The chief commissioner says that the treasure can possibly produce large amounts of mysterious power, even unique mysterious power, and it can appraise one’s constitution!”

Appraise one’s constitution? What’s that?

“If I use the treasure on you, I can immediately tell what kind of mysterious power you’re most suited for and just give you that one. It will raise your chance of success to ninety percent! Keep in mind that’s incredibly high. We use a random induction process right now, it’s completely unsystematic if someone crosses over or not.

“Who has that much mysterious power to waste??

“If this treasure performs as the rumors say and nine succeed out of ten, then our strength will increase explosively! We have a greater population size, our internal structure is more stable, and we have a selection process to pick from the best.

“This may have been why the three great organizations were so powerful in the past. Being able to determine one’s constitution, to identify which mysterious power is the best match, and to almost ensure success with one induction... You tell me, isn’t this an extremely valuable treasure?”

Li Hao sucked in a sharp breath and nodded emphatically. Very valuable indeed! The Night Watchers drifted below the three great organizations likely because they lacked this. If he was part of the Night Watcher senior council, he would never give back the treasure. To war it was then! They could have their battles! They would fight even in the face of casualties, the treasure would never be returned!

No wonder the situation in the central region had become so bad that cities were being leveled.

Li Hao felt that he’d truly enriched his knowledge during this car ride. He swiftly understood the core of the central region turmoil. People from the big cities knew more, alright! His teacher didn’t know about this, much less Liu Long. A Darkmoon like Wang Ming, however, knew all of the specifics.

“So is that treasure... still with the Night Watchers?”

“Of course, or they would’ve stopped fighting a long time ago,” Wang Ming chuckled. “As crazy as the conflict may be over there, chaos also serves a purpose! I hear that improvement comes very quickly there because there’s so many clashes. There used to be very few Night Watchers above Solar, but a new face has ascended recently and they’re not very old.

“All of the various organizations are involved in the war. The three great organizations don’t want the Night Watchers to grow stronger, the mid and smaller organizations want a chance to seize the treasure. They want a piece of the pie. If they can lay hands on an item that can identify the constitution and strengthen them, they’ll have the ability to stand up to the three great organizations!”

Therefore, enormous amounts of supernaturals were involved in the central region. Battle meant opportunity and many climbed higher. Darkmoons died everyday, too many to be counted. People also made the crossover to the supernatural domain everyday, so the losses didn't matter.

"This war better not stop too quickly," the quiet Hu Hao suddenly spoke up. "Otherwise... trouble will come for Director Li and Professor Yuan!"

Red Moon powerhouses didn't have time to spare for the duo because they couldn't afford to send more powerhouses to Silver City. But once the central war was over, a puny Silver Moon and a singular Yuan Shuo wouldn't be able to stand up to them.

Li Hao didn't care. "Come if they will, we're not weak!" He grinned.

"....." The trio ignored him. He did not know the immensity of heaven and earth! Did he think a few Darkmoons and Sunderers could withstand Red Moon?

What a joke. This guy really didn't understand the cruelty of the supernatural domain.

Li Hao didn't continue the conversation; he was very satisfied with the sudden amount of information he'd obtained. Red Moon most likely wouldn't be able to deploy large numbers of experts for the next rainy season because they were embroiled in the central region. They couldn't easily extract themselves from it.

If only a few came, perhaps he could butcher them one by one for meat.

As for the central region... Li Hao hardly nurtured a death wish. He'd heard the trio loud and clear. Those above Solar constantly clashed in battle and sometimes died. The situation was terrifying. His teacher would be going to his death if he went. But when it came to the treasures, ruins, and those that could produce mysterious power—those Li Hao were very interested in.

Could his jade sword produce an endless flow of unique mysterious power? Or was it depleted after it was all consumed?

“Right, is that mysterious power limitless?” he suddenly asked. “Those treasures, for example, can they produce more energy after it’s absorbed?”

“The various organizations have their ways to resolve this issue,” Wang Ming explained. “Some can convert other things into mysterious power or replenish what was inside. These treasures are needed as the intermediary. They have a special name in the supernatural domain—origin weapons! Any organization that possesses an origin weapon is worthy of attention. It means they can continuously raise new supernaturals!”

Origin weapons! They can be replenished and convert energy... Li Hao’s thoughts flew rapidly. Why did he think that the weapons of the eight families were possibly all origin weapons? Surely not!

There might be eight weapons, or there might not be since the folk song mentioned some of them didn’t use weapons. If they were origin weapons and eight at a time...

Damn!

“Then... is the sword I sent over last time an origin weapon?” Li Hao asked probingly.

“How is that possible?” Wang Ming broke out in laughter. “Origin weapons aren’t that easy to come by. But... your sword is sealed, so it’s hard to say. If it is, then that’s frightening. Red Moon has taken an uncountable number of them so I hope... it’s not. It’d be too terrifying if their strength increases so much again.”

However, Li Hao thought it highly likely that it was one.

Chapter 118: Origin Weapons (IV)

Origin weapons!

In that case, the eight families were truly forces to be reckoned with in the ancient times. If every family possessed a family inheritance that was an origin weapon, that was the foundation for a massive organization! No faction would last for long without a steady source of mysterious power or having to rely on killing and looting power from others.

The closest example at hand was the Demon Hunters. If it hadn't been for Yuan Shuo's involvement in the last battle, they would've been exterminated early in the night.

Li Hao committed the term "origin weapons" to memory and thought back to the dwindling energy in the jade sword. How could he replenish it? That power was too useful and he'd be pained by its depletion.

"Ole Wang, do the other branches have origin weapons?"

"Are you kidding me? Only the White Moon branch has one out of all of the Silver Moon. That's why we can raise a new batch of supernaturals every year. The three of us come from that origin weapon." Wang Ming explained further, "And that's why there are always powerhouses in residence at White Moon. Director Hou never leaves headquarters—he holds down the fort there to prevent the treasure from being stolen."

The Director Hou he spoke of was the top dog of the Silver Moon Night Watchers, the true top brass. A definite Solar!

"Origin weapons do more than produce mysterious power," Li Meng interjected. "Based on what I know, they seem to be able to produce a special type of mysterious power. I don't know what makes it special, but I heard some seniors say that when the supernatural domain first appeared, some people directly absorbed that mysterious power from the origin weapons because they didn't know how precious it was. It proved to be an extravagant and wasteful action! The effects are particularly pronounced as many current Sunflares and Solars are those who took in that kind of power."

Origin power! Li Hao kept the same expression on his face, but his heart trembled. Is what I'm absorbing from the sword and blade... this so-called origin power? Origin weapons produced unique mysterious power. Why did his sword sound more like an origin weapon the more he heard?

"The older supernaturals knew nothing and were just flailing around!" Wang Ming complained. "No one does that kinda stuff anymore, not unless everyone has an origin weapon. Those can spawn a massive organization by themselves! Who would treat a weapon like that??"

Li Hao, however, thought of his teacher. Did his teacher not know about these weapons? He thought his teacher knew everything. If he did, he would've long guessed that both sword and blade were possibly origin weapons.

"Does everyone know about origin weapons?"

"And how is that possible? No one knew about them—possibly only Director Hou did in our province. It wasn't until the war in the central region that news of that kind of precious treasure got out. Now it's become common knowledge and we know about origin weapons too."

Li Hao nodded, that made sense. His teacher probably hadn't known anything before. Word had just started spreading and his teacher was cut off from sources of news while he remained in Silver City. The Night Watchers wouldn't tell him everything.

The young man rejoiced. He knew something that his teacher didn't; he had to go back and tell him! Origin weapons! He and his teacher both had one!

I wonder how to make them produce infinite mysterious power? Or maybe that's not what I need. I need to figure out how to infinitely resupply their unique power.

Once he had an inkling of an idea in mind, that was the precursor to solving it. Li Hao grew more elated the more he thought of this until—BAM! He crashed the car!

Wang Ming, Li Meng, and Hu Hao sighed. They should've expected this! They shouldn't have started talking to the guy, now look at the straits they were in. It would've been more convenient to have Hu Hao fly with him.

Li Hao awkwardly alighted from the car to take a look. "It's fine, we ran into a block of stone. Car still works!" He quickly returned to the driver's seat, restarted the engine, and continued on their way.

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The three supernaturals wobbled off the car when they reached the front door of Li Hao's new house. They were all weak at the knees. Meanwhile, Li Hao's new car was a mangled mess. The front fender, grill, and head lights were all gone.

My car! Li Hao sighed inwardly. It looked like he was destined not to be rich in this life. How much would it cost to fix this car? He probably wouldn't be able to afford it until he got paid.

.....

Li Hao was distracted during dinner. The group thought he was anguished over his car. He wasn't—or just a tiny amount if he was. He cared more about origin weapons and the eight families. If Red Moon knew about this and had found a way to use the eight weapons, then they would never give up.

Just one origin weapon was sufficient to ensure they'd never forgo the pursuit, to say nothing of the eight trigram diagram in the skies. The central region was being blown up for a singular origin weapon!

Perhaps Red Moon hadn't mobilized on a mass scale because they were worried about bringing others in.

In that case, I need to be more careful. They want to kill me not just for the eight trigrams, but also for the weapon. I hope the sword at the Night Watchers can pull the wool over their eyes a bit longer.

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As Li Hao and his new colleagues ate dinner.

White Moon City.

“How dare you! You seek death!” A commanding shout broke through the air, followed by a massive explosion.

A group of people swiftly gathered in front of an important treasury door. A powerhouse with long hair flowing over his shoulders looked in the four directions with a frosty expression.

“Dismissed, everything’s fine!” he said after a long time.

The group returned to their posts. When they left, the man turned to the nearby Hao Lianchuan.

“There doesn’t seem to be any valuables here,” his tones were arctic. “Just the sword that you brought back from Silver City!”

These was the Night Watcher provincial headquarters! The enemy had dared follow them here! They were entirely too bold!

“Director Hou, are they dead?” Hao Lianchuan asked lowly.

“They ran!”

Hao Lianchuan’s eyes widened. Someone could flee from Director Hou’s grasp?

“An earth powerhouse!” the man snapped. “The eight families... weapons... Red Moon... It may not be someone from Red Moon, it looks like a lot of people are keeping an eye on the weapons of the eight families. You need to keep a closer eye on Silver City. Now that sword and person are separated, the more powerful existences might not find it worth their while to visit Silver City. However, we should bring Li Hao to White Moon as soon as Yuan Shuo leaves. Those people won’t sit still.”

“Understood!” Hao Lianchuan nodded. “What’s... the situation with the eight families?”

“It’s tough to say, it’s been too long. We’re unable to uncover all of the secrets,” sighed the man. “The leader of Red Moon might have obtained a few ancient tomes regarding the eight families. Regardless, keep a close eye on their movements! And that Li Hao, give him more attention when appropriate!”

His tone suddenly turned remote. “If these people don’t give up, then... it may be a good opportunity to purge some of these troublesome fellows.”

Hao Lianchuan nodded. It was a good opportunity; their only concern was that the Night Watchers weren’t strong enough to claim this delicious pie.

“And, tell Yuan Shuo that the excavation is scheduled for the end of next month.”

“Understood.” When Hao Lianchuan reached the door, he suddenly turned back with a question. “Director Hou, can central headquarters deploy more powerhouses from the central region to reinforce us here?”

“No!” The man shook his head. “Impossible, they’re barely holding on as it is. They wanted me to join them a few times, and with the origin weapon. I refused their requests. If I leave, you’ll be hard pressed to maintain the situation in Silver Moon.”

“Ai!” Hao Lianchuan left with a helpless sigh.

Both sides were in a tense situation! Otherwise, there would’ve been more to join this excursion to the ancient ruins. It shouldn’t be just him, one Solar. This might be a very unsettling expedition.

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The second day after the establishment of the new Night Watcher branch.

Li Hao once more rode his tattered bike to work. There was no helping it, the car was too ugly after crashing last night. It’d also failed to start this morning, angering the young man so much that he nearly smashed the vehicle to scrap metal.

Such a piece of crap!

Compared to his old apartment, the new house was located further away from the Inspectorate. It was roughly half an hour by bike. But Li Hao was a Sunderer now, this distance didn’t tire him out. He leisurely pedaled over the path of blue stone laid in front of his door.

A luxury car purred over the neighborhood’s road before long; the road ran parallel to the path of blue stone. The car was much fancier than the one Li Hao had received. When the young man didn’t turn his head, the car window rolled down instead, revealing the features of the man who’d clashed with Liu Yan yesterday. He wore a faint smile on his face and appeared quite genteel.

Of course, he hadn’t been as composed when Liu Yan handcuffed him yesterday.

“Remember me, little brother?”

Li Hao flicked a quick glance at the man and inclined his head. “I remember, VP Qiao of the Qiao Mining Industries. Sis Liu told me about you.”

“Going to work?”

“Yes.” Li Hao kept a calm expression as he wasn’t too willing to converse with the other.

“Riding your bike there? How about taking my car?” Qiao Peng smiled at his demonstration of generosity. “I was just joking with Liu Yan yesterday. I happen to have some business to take care of at the Inspectorate. It’ll take you too long by bike, so hop into my car.”

“That’s alright!” Li Hao declined politely. “Sis Liu said that your head of security killed her husband. Stay away from me or I might not resist the urge to arrest you!”

“That really was an accident.” Qiao Peng raised an eyebrow with a sigh. “I’ve been trying to make up for it these years. To put it bluntly, I pursue her because I want to compensate her for this. Otherwise, with my status, I can have any woman I want.

“You don’t understand, little brother. She’s been hurt too deeply, so she needs a sense of security. And I... I can soothe her hurts.”

Li Hao frowned and pedaled faster, ignoring the man. You putting on an act with me, huh?

Chapter 119: Undercurrents in Silver City

We’re on the same page here!

Li Hao was also putting on an act. Since the guy in front of him was potentially associated with Yama, there was no need to erupt in open hostilities at this particular point in time and fully offend the guy. And he'd sought the young man out for a conversation...

Did it have to do with the eight families?

Did he want to build a relationship because Li Hao was the heir to the eight families?

"Forget it, perhaps you don't understand," Qiao Peng chuckled when the young man ignored him. "You might when you get a bit older. Youngsters don't understand matters like these. We're neighbors now you can come by for a visit when you have time."

As for why Li Hao could live here, he wasn't that perplexed. Was it hard for a Night Watcher to find a decent place? Not to mention, he'd received word that this fellow had recently become a deputy director. That wasn't a big surprise either, on account of Yuan Shuo.

The luxury car slowly drove away. Li Hao followed it with his eyes for a while before pedaling faster on his bike.

Qiao Peng!

He would remember the name. Perhaps the guy was one of those who'd dug up his ancestors' tomb.

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Law Enforcement.

It was now the Night Watcher branch.

There were only nine official members of the Silver City Night Watchers. Li Hao recruited an additional ten mundanes from the Inspectorate to manage day-to-day and administrative support. They were officially open for business today.

Li Hao had his own office in this building and a silk banner hanging from one of the walls. He was a man of his word and really did bring Zhou He's silk banner over to his new office, hanging it up like the commendation it was. It was the first silk banner in his life and thus, worthy of respect.

Zhou He had given him a house, a car, battle experience, and his life. Li Hao needed to remember his kindness, no matter what!

He'd just entered his office when Liu Yan knocked and pushed open the door without waiting for a response. "Time to go, stop looking at your silk banner. Chief wants us in for a meeting!"

"This early?"

"Chief has always been efficient!" Liu Yan smiled winsomely. "How did you sleep last night? Were you afraid?"

"Nope." Li Hao hastily shook his head. I wouldn't dare say so. Are you going to move in if I was? That would be the really scary thing!

The two chatted as they headed upstairs to the conference room.

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The conference room.

The others were mostly assembled when Li Hao arrived. Wang Ming was hot on his heels. They'd all just sat down when Liu Long swept in with his customary decisive air and trench coat.

"The Silver City Night Watcher branch has just formed. We should do whatever we need to do while there's still a Dominator in residence!" Instead of sitting down, he cut straight to the point. "I'll cut a long story short!

"Silver City did not have an official supernatural agency before. It'd always been the Inspectorate in charge of the entire city's security. The government does not have troops stationed here either. The Inspectorate is the city's largest law enforcement agency and its only law enforcement agency!

"Not everyone is mundane in a city of one million. Silver City has martial masters and supernaturals among the citizenry. We don't have many Darkmoon, but we have Starlight!

"There are several areas in Silver City that need to be emphasized. First, the Veteris Institute. Li Hao is familiar with that. Second, the city government. They are in charge of civil administration. We handle military affairs, they handle civil. We do not interfere with each other."

The city government was in charge of all matters that did not require force. More than a law enforcement agency was required for the peace of a city; many other departments were necessary as well.

The city government was not the same system as the Inspectorate, but they were all governmental systems. They did not infringe upon each other. Civil did not intermix with military, while military did not interfere with civil.

"Third, the eighteen martial dojos of Silver City. I mean the ones opened by official martial masters!

"Fourth, the six major corporations of Silver City!

“These people are more or less meeting points for martial masters and supernaturals. Or they might work for other bigger factions, or they wish to start a faction themselves. They are all the main sources of instability for the city!”

The Inspectorate possessed its share of martial masters. Liu Long and his people were all martial masters, as did Mu Sen command his own force. As for supernaturals... the agency really didn't have any. If they did, they sent the talents to the Night Watchers unless the supernatural themselves was unwilling. However, inspectors who made the crossover were almost always willing to join.

This gave rise to a peculiar situation. Some of these other places might have a few supernaturals, but the Inspectorate didn't have a single one. Well, now they did, and more than one.

Everyone looked at each other. Wang Ming was willing to say a few words more after eating with Liu Long last night. “Director Liu, do you mean...?”

“Tidying up and putting things in order!” Liu Long answered crisply. “The Inspectorate didn't have sufficient authority or strength before. We had to give certain people a longer leash! Now that the Night Watchers have been formed, we must let the city's various factions know that Silver City is still under official rule!”

Wang Ming said nothing more.

“Then what goals do we need to accomplish, chief? Simply establish our authority?” Li Hao asked.

“If that's it, chief would've done so with his previous action,” Liu Yan chuckled. “They can't possibly be unaware that chief killed three supernaturals!”

There was indeed no need to exert themselves just to reinforce their authority.

“It’s not just that,” Liu Long rumbled. “But that... a portion of the factions shelter evil and condone corruption! We didn’t have the ability or excuse to clean these vermin out before, but we do now that we’re Night Watchers!”

Having broached the topic, he continued without reservation. “And also, this is to earn a little extra on the side! Killing supernatural criminals and stripping their mysterious power is another important source of power. Don’t just look to upstairs for our resources. Headquarters only allots ten cubes to Silver City every month! Three cubes for the chief commissioner, one cube for commissioner inspectors, half a cube for inspectors, and the rest to be distributed among ourselves.”

With nine people in the Silver City Night Watcher branch, there was one chief commissioner, three commissioner inspectors in the form of Li Hao, Liu Yan, and Wang Ming, and the rest who were inspectors. The two supernaturals were also first rank inspectors.

Based on the standard wages, 8.5 cubes a month were sufficient for Silver City. Ten cubes were a generous allotment. According to black market prices, Li Hao’s monthly salary was in the millions!

No matter what, one cube of mysterious power a month was a significant amount. It was why countless people scrabbled after a spot in the Night Watchers.

However, it was too little for Liu Long.

Three cubes would’ve been sufficient before, particularly as it was a steady source of income. Thirty-six cubes a year was quite a lot.

But now, he didn’t find it enough because everyone was stronger. One cube a month was nowhere near enough for someone like Liu Yan. That tiny amount could barely strengthen a Sunderer’s body, to say nothing of crossing over to the supernatural.

Therefore, he needed more energy.

Wang Ming and his comrades widened their eyes at such a naked admission. Liu Long was talking about killing people for their mysterious power! This was too... cruel! Were the powerhouses of this locality all like this?

“But this also creates an atmosphere of danger!” Li Hao ignored the supernaturals’ obvious dismay. “The Night Watchers aren’t invincible. We’ll have mishandled our duties if we end up forcing supernaturals to join enemy organizations.”

Liu Long frowned. His word had been unquestionably accepted before. What did the kid mean by this? Was this opposition to his proposal?? He was just notifying the group of his decision; all the team needed to do was follow orders. He was used to this style and didn’t like being contradicted, not even from Li Hao.

The young man grinned innocently, seemingly aware that Liu Long was dissatisfied. “Chief’s primary goal is the peace and safety of Silver City. At the very least, we need to ensure that no trouble arises internally.”

Liu Long inclined his head.

“Therefore, I think that we should show them courtesy first!” Li Hao suggested. “We can send official notices to each faction, inviting all official martial masters and supernaturals to meet with the Night Watchers. They will be given special permits after they put themselves down in the official record.

“Those who bear our special permits can freely go about their business in the city. We’ll spin it as we need to pay particular attention to them because their destructive abilities are more powerful than the norm. I’m sure that those who don’t intend on causing trouble won’t mind this.

“This is how they do it in White Moon, right?” Li Hao looked at Wang Ming.

“Yes.” The handsome young man nodded. “However, there are many powerhouses at White Moon. The Night Watchers don’t pay them much attention so long as they aren’t too out of line. Everything is fine as long as they don’t make trouble inside the city.”

“Then it’s proof that this measure is very appropriate!” Li Hao smiled. “We construct order for the supernaturals! Silver City was too small before and lacked an official organization to execute this policy. This time, I recommend officially putting it in motion!”

Liu Long looked silently at the young man for a while. “Continue!”

“Those who have entered themselves in our systems and carry the special permit are up to code. Those without are stowaways with ulterior motives. At that point, we’ll have a right and proper excuse to carry out the law!”

“You’re farting after taking off your pants!” Liu Long frowned. “I’m not saying that this is a bad idea, but that there’s no need for it!”

“Chief, we’re official personnel and not members of those supernatural organizations. We still need to stand at the highest peak of law and morality to judge and sentence others. We can’t view ourselves as supernaturals in the wild!”

Such was Liu Long’s style—rough around the edges. That hadn’t been a problem before when the Demon Hunters were a fringe organization. Things were different now that they were part of the regular troops. The old ways could not be perpetuated!

After spending a few years at the Veteris Institute and another with the Inspectorate, Li Hao was well aware that falling within the confines of the law sometimes saved quite a bit of trouble. They needed to stand at the highest peak of the system before pronouncing their verdict, not make a mistake that could be exploited by others.

After all, Silver City possessed mediocre strength and needed support from their superiors. They weren’t an independent nation—they could do whatever they wanted to then.

Chapter 120: Undercurrents in Silver City (II)

Silver City was not wholly separated from White Moon. The senior council in Silver City could speak to their counterparts in White Moon.

“Additionally, I believe that most people still hold justice in their hearts!” Li Hao continued. “Chief means that we should charge in with guns blazing! That’s too bloody and violent. It will make people uneasy. I don’t think it’s the time for this yet, we can absolutely leverage other force against force. We don’t have to do it ourselves.”

Don’t have to do it ourselves? Liu Long looked at the young man again.

“Technically speaking, the martial masters and supernaturals at the city government and Veteris Institute are on the same side as us! The Night Watchers have one rule—all supernaturals and martial masters in their jurisdiction can be dispatched by the Night Watchers. We can borrow their martial masters and supernaturals to jointly suppress these transgressors!

“That will share the load and not concentrate all of the pressure on us. Otherwise, our actions will easily lead to joint resistance from all superhuman powers within Silver City. It will be detrimental to us finding our footing in the city!” Li Hao concluded with, “Of course, we follow the chief in everything. If you think that kicking in their doors is the best, then I will carry out your orders!”

Liu Long mused with deep contemplation.

“Chief, it is indeed time to change some of our thought patterns,” Liu Yan chuckled. “We used to do these things in the dark and we’re not used to suddenly being in the light! Li Hao’s right, we represent the government now. We are on the side of justice, so let’s not act like robbers!”

“Chief, perhaps it’ll be sweeter to directly enforce the law!” Chen Jian laughed. “We were above board when we were in the law enforcement team, then moved to the basement when we became the Demon Hunters. Honestly, for a period of time I thought we were the villains!”

Headquartered in the basement and surviving in the darkness... It really did feel like they were the wrongdoers instead. They mouthed calls of justice and righteousness, but sometimes, that was just to comfort themselves.

Liu Long and the others didn't immediately register the implications of Li Hao's words. They were used to it, after all. This was how things had been for many years.

But upon further thought... and upon recalling how they once proudly held their heads beneath the sun when they were in the law enforcement team... Liu Long became lost in thought. He'd never thought about this before because he'd grown used to striking from the shadows. This was also the Night Watcher style.

The Night Watchers!

As their name indicated, they appeared at night. They kept watch and patrolled the night—hence, Night Watchers. Thus, everyone was used to slinking through the shadows. It wasn't just Liu Long, but even Wang Ming and the others who were unused to Li Hao's proposition that they should haul everything out into the open.

Li Hao cautiously ventured when Liu Long remained silent, "And another thing, chief, I recommend not pushing all of Silver City's factions to the opposing side. It will help us to use some of them for our purposes.

"We are the bane of crime, but some people have only committed misdemeanors or engaged in minor misconduct. We can consider showing leniency to the supernaturals who may have done the same."

Liu Long didn't respond as he was thinking. Moments later, he looked at Wang Ming. "What do you think, Director Wang?"

What do I think? I don't know anything, I don't think!

"I have no opinion!"

“I also have another small suggestion,” Li Hao continued.

“Speak.”

“Chief also knows that we’re very short on mysterious power. How much can we gain from killing people? Some of the corporations have leaders in high positions that secretly trade for mysterious power on the black market. Sometimes they even transact with the Night Watcher or other supernatural organizations. This is why we continuously see new supernaturals in Silver City.

“My thoughts are if we can—”

“No!” Liu Long interrupted before he finished.

“We cannot aid and abet this kind of practice.” Wang Ming also frowned. “I understand your desire to obtain mysterious power, but we cannot encourage under-the-table transactions. Even less permissible is having Night Watchers endorse it! That will easily cause the supernatural to rage out of control.

“People used to go about their business secretly. Enormous trouble will appear once you openly support it. You must keep in mind, Li Hao, that some people are willing to do anything in pursuit of personal profit! The darkness is the darkness. Order will be difficult to maintain once it becomes the light!”

Li Hao nodded thoughtfully and refrained from continuing his line of thought. He did indeed have that kind of idea in mind and wanted to collect more mysterious power from those channels. But their objections made sense, so he didn’t insist. Silver City would be in grave trouble once it was out of control.

“Then I’ll send notices to the relevant parties!” Liu Long decided. “It’s best if they can step forward and register themselves. If not... we need to make an example of them! Some problems have cropped up inside the city over the years. We can’t even find the killer for some of our cold cases—

I'm sure you're most familiar with those, Li Hao. They were most likely committed by these people, and they've covered their tracks so cleanly that we can't find any evidence.

"So we'll start with putting the city's personnel list in order. It'll be easier to locate them if we have questions in the future."

"Chief, I can deliver the notices as a demonstration of sincerity!" Li Hao volunteered.

"You?"

Li Hao nodded. This was a chance to fully understand how many powerhouses there were in Silver City because he could see them!

Yes, the balls of light! He saw balls of light where there were supernaturals. Whether they were Starlight or Darkmoon, the stronger they were, the easier to detect. He was much more reliable than that supernatural probe.

The probe's effective range was too small and only picked up on active mysterious power ripples. Although weaker supernaturals would find the ripples more difficult to control, it wasn't impossible.

Since he'd decided to temporarily stay in Silver City, Li Hao wished to thoroughly understand the city's situation. He also wanted to see how many powerhouses were in hiding. Of that, he was certain of, particularly after Red Moon and the eight families were exposed. It was a given that many supernaturals had flocked to the city in recent times.

He might even be able to conduct some reconnaissance at the Qiao Mining Industries. That was one of Silver City's six largest corporations. He wouldn't have a reason to visit under normal circumstances. This was the perfect excuse.

"Alright! Do you need our help?" Liu Long nodded.

“Yes! Have Director Wang come with me!” Li Hao grinned. “He’s a supernatural from White Moon, a mover and a shaker! Most people won’t dare refuse him. His appearance will also demonstrate our sincerity and resolution. Everyone needs to listen up unless they want to publicly oppose us!”

“Very well!”

Wang Ming wanted to protest, he didn’t want to go. The hell man? Li Hao, why do you have to drag me into this? Aren’t Hu Hao and Li Meng right beside me? They’re also from White Moon.

Life was truly difficult these days. He didn’t want to do anything and was happy to follow Liu Long’s lead. Now look at things, they wanted to involve him in everything.

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After the meeting.

Li Hao grabbed Wang Ming and walked outside. The handsome young man followed unwillingly and complained, “Li Hao, get anyone you want for a small matter like this. What are you involving me for?”

“To the able falls more work!” Li Hao laughed. “Ole Wang, don’t you want to accomplish something big and get back to White Moon as soon as possible?”

“How?” Wang Ming looked intently at him.

“Figuring out the secrets of the eight families, for example. Or finding the Silver City gathering spot of the three great organizations. Or killing some fugitives. Or even reaching Sunflare. There are so many ways.”

“Does this have something to do with you bringing me to deliver notices with you?”

“Yes!” Li Hao nodded with a smile. “This will help us understand the city’s secrets more! Are clues supposed to present themselves to us while we sit in our offices? Ole Wang, we’re both young and I want to be promoted. So c’mon, let’s work together.”

Wang Ming was tempted. “...fine!” He barely nodded his head after a while.

Li Hao smiled. I knew this guy was easy to fool—convince. If circumstances permitted, he did want to take a look at the mountains that the Qiao Mining Industries operated in. Liu Yan had mentioned that they’d discovered something there. Being in the outskirts, the corporation wasn’t too far from the city. They’d excavated the mountains for many years and seemed to have found some ore.

But for such a large corporation to focus on such small mountains for so long... It wasn’t that they didn’t make money, but that their profits fell short of expectation.

Some people said that the corporation liked giving back to their home, that they opened mines in Silver City to provide more employment opportunities and to pay taxes to the city. Li Hao hardly believed that. Merchants pursued profit, there was no reason for the Qiao family to be so good-hearted.

But that could not be their first stop.

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Afternoon.

Li Hao and Wang Ming sat in a car together. It was Wang Ming driving this time. He absolutely refused to let Li Hao drive. That guy’s driving skills were too much, even for a supernatural.

“Where to?”

“The Veteris Institute!” Li Hao chuckled. “That’s my alma mater. Although I’ve withdrawn, I’d like to see how strong it is. I remember that the Institute’s own security detail protected my teacher on some early expeditions.”

The school ought to have some strength to its own name, not including his teacher. There might be some powerhouses in residence. While the Institute focused on studying ancient civilizations, there were also numerous other important businesses at play. Li Hao had vaguely heard of such research and development when he was still a student.

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The Veteris Institute.

Li Hao was too familiar with this place. He was here on business this time.

The vice principal’s office.

The elderly vice principal sighed with emotion when he heard why Li Hao was here. “I was regretful when you withdrew from school. To think you’d join the Inspectorate and forge your own path! You’ve done well for yourself.

“We do indeed have a security detail, your teacher is very familiar with it. He personally taught some of their members as well.”