

Star Gate 211

Chapter 211: Qimei Staff, Victory! (I)

“As you wish!”

“ROAR!” The enormous ape reappeared, looking a bit different from before. It wielded chains and threatened to smash a hole in the sky when it flung them out. Meanwhile, a staff ran from the ground to the heavens.

The great battle was upon them. This was when the two sides brought their full strength to bear. Looks of shock and awe filled the faces beneath them. Summoner of Spirit!

The attacks that instantly felled a Solar were just a casual demonstration from these two powerhouses. In that moment, the audience also felt the might of flames that seared the heavens and broke the earth. Whether it was Hao Kong or the Yama delegation, both tried to find a way to contact the outside world.

The world as they knew it would change from now on!

Sun Yifei battled Yuan Shuo; Yuan Shuo had progressed beyond Dominator to become this era’s first Summoner. Martial masters in all ninety-nine provinces would certainly be startled and stunned when word spread. There really was a path beyond Dominator! Were those secluded martial masters greater than Dominator true Summoners or fake ones?

They didn’t know, but Yuan Shuo was absolutely a real one. A Dominator could not suppress a late Solar—particularly a Solar who’d ascended from being a martial master.

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Rumbling sounds roiled through the void like crashes of thunder or an erupting volcano. Two figures flashed through the air as they collided. The fire heart ape broke the sky with every wave of

its chains while the unparalleled qimei staff began fracturing the ground with every swing. One had to keep in mind that both opponents were still in the air!

Below them, Li Hao stared fixedly at the battle. His face tightened when he saw the fire heart ape being suppressed and sent flying with a sweep of the staff. The young man was so nervous that his internal force flared and sword qi leaked from his body. His teacher was strong, but had summoned only one spirit. In terms of supernatural levels, he was an initial Solar.

And yet, his opponent was a late Solar! Regular Solars wouldn't mean anything, but Sun Yifei was plainly cut from a different cloth.

A sudden impulse gripped Li Hao—he should break through to Dominator right this very moment and summon his five spirits so he could participate in this battle. He would fight the enemy with his teacher!

At the same time, he knew that his teacher wouldn't let him onto the field even if he summoned all five visceral spirits. This was Yuan Shuo's battle, the final dignity of a martial master! It was also a continuation of that glorious battle from his shared past with Sun Yifei.

As Li Hao scanned the premises, he smiled to see expressions of fear, worship, and envy. Perhaps this was the true motive in his teacher accepting the challenge. Silver Moon's martial world yet lived, it had not declined! Supernaturals cowered when enshrouded by martial master splendor!

You have to win, teacher! Li Hao called out inwardly. You must win!

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The duel continued; the two no longer fought over the bridge. Yuan Shuo operated the Five Styles to its utmost, as well as its breathing method. White smoke wafted from his body as he breathed—a sign of intense inhales and exhales. As the cooler air from the surroundings passed through his organs, the difference in temperature caused a certain amount of evaporation.

But to outsiders, he looked like a mythical being wreathed in clouds and emitting fog. Perhaps this was how some legends in the ancient times developed. Standing on high with white smoke billowing around him—didn't he seem to swallow the clouds and breath mist?

Meanwhile, Sun Yifei looked to be a god of fire. The flames didn't touch him, but the staff blazed with red. Swing after swing forced a Yuan Shuo wearing the fire heart ape form back. He was so strong!

Sun Yifei continued to walk the path of martial dao after entering the supernatural world. He was a martial powerhouse to begin with. Although there was no internal force for him to call on anymore, abundant mysterious power facilitated explosive strength for the qimei

staff.

Who said supernaturals could only use supernatural techniques?

Sun Yifei walked his own path along the supernatural way. He utilized mysterious power as internal force and employed his martial method's breathing method. It didn't give rise to too many drawbacks.

BOOM!

One side of the bridge remnants collapsed when the staff pounded the ground. Yuan Shuo stepped through the air like a bird. He pounced as a tiger, fashioning his hands into bird claws and grabbing for the staff!

A grand eagle swooping upon a rabbit!

Yuan Shuo was a majestic eagle as he loomed over Sun Yifei with hands outstretched. He clawed long streaks of sparks from the staff, whereupon Sun Yifei brandished his weapon and shoved it forward. It crashed through heaven and earth, forcing Yuan Shuo into rapid retreat. Despite his speed, the staff still pierced through his palm.

Momentum unabated, the staff slammed into a nearby cliff face and blasted a massive cave out of the stone. The force behind Sun Yifei's response altered the terrain!

The long staff flew back out of the cliff face when its owner beckoned to it; the fight increased in intensity!

Fiery qi frothed over Sun Yifei, giving rise to multiple suns around him. This was a true Solar—as searing as the sun and formidable beyond bounds. The gaping difference between him and Silver Moon's Solars was extremely apparent. They were lesser in terms of killing intent, battle consciousness, experience, and methods.

Having wrought a path of blood out of the province, then hacked his way out of the central region—Sun Yifei had spent the last dozen years in violence and gore. The brilliant color of his staff was not only that of fire, but also of blood!

Yuan Shuo roared, the fire heart ape flung its chains forward again!

The chain wrapped around the staff with a rattle so loud it could be heard throughout the land. At the same time, Yuan Shuo threw his head back with a howl.

Li Hao and the others on the ground swiftly covered their ears. A ferocious tiger had truly come prowling out of the woods in the mountain. A wild roar multiple times greater than what a tiger could bring to bear rang out—a massive monster was here!

“ROAR!!” The cry shook heaven and earth. Weaker supernaturals on the ground could not withstand it even though they flared their mysterious power. Blood trickled from numerous pairs of ears as their ear drums shattered.

Retreat, and retreat again! Horror-stricken, some supernaturals couldn't conceal their fear as they backed away. Some small organizations sped to a safe distance of a thousand meters. Finding it still dangerous, they quickly shuffled further out.

Only the Sword Sect was left of the mid-size organizations. Hong Yitang gestured for his people to move back, but he remained. He watched the two in the air with a fervent expression. Martial dao! The path of martial masters, the Silver Moon martial world...

He firmly believed that after this battle, martial masters of the world would flock to the province to continue their pursuit of a barely discernible future in martial dao. It would be their pilgrimage because the future was finally at hand!

Yuan Shuo had broken the limits of Dominator of Thousands!

After all these years, even Hong Yitang's heart blazed to life. Martial masters! Through martial dao could one reach the divine! Even though Yuan Shuo was yet to overcome Sun Yifei and looked to be suppressed instead, Hong Yitang couldn't douse the emotions running high. Old Demon Yuan was upon them again, Silver Moon's martial world was back!

"ROAR!!" A series of roars reverberated through the canyon, their echoes deafening to the ear. Yuan Shuo glided through the air, the Five Styles dominating in the extreme. He utilized the tiger style in conjunction with the ape style—the fire heart ape bore the demeanor of a bloodthirsty tiger and reared with killing intent.

The five auras melded as one!

Yuan Shuo commanded other auras apart from the fire heart ape. They swiftly integrated into a ferocious tiger that stood side by side with the ape. When the two auras collided, they exploded with greater power.

"HUP!" Yuan Shuo thrust both fists forward at the same time and launched himself at Sun Yifei's head. Joint hammer blows!

Sun Yifei detonated a sonic boom as he swept his staff outward, shaking the auras of the Five Styles. Yuan Shuo wavered as he stood against his opponent's frenzied barrage. Afterimages blurred

in the void as Sun Yifei hacked and chopped with his weapon, forcing his opponent back with each move.

The two constantly traded the upper hand; it was a very even match. As strong as Yuan Shuo's aura was, he couldn't withstand his opponent's incredible reserve of mysterious power. It was an opposite sight of the battles between their disciples.

When Li Hao fought Sun Moxian, his organs had been so strong that Sun Moxian's formidable aura couldn't break his organs. In the end, he was killed in turn.

In the same vein, there was no question of how colossal Yuan Shuo's auras were, but his internal force was not as abundant as his opponent's mysterious power. Sun Yifei's massive reserves greatly detracted from his opponent's attacks.

Not only could Li Hao read the situation, but so could others. Strange looks crept into their eyes. This was the opposite of how it should be! It had led to Li Hao killing Sun Moxian in the previous battle. If things continued to develop in this manner, Sun Yifei would kill Yuan Shuo instead.

The battles of masters and disciples ran in diametrically opposite directions!

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In the air.

No matter how Yuan Shuo shook his chains, he couldn't find an opening in the other's staff offensive. He roared and raged, the very image of a wild and violent ape.

Sun Yifei grew more aggressive the more he battled. A hint of joy sparkled out of his arctic glare, but more killing intent could be found within his eyes. He could die now that he'd seen the future of his dao, but that didn't interfere with him killing Yuan Shuo. It was enough that there was a way forward for martial dao!

After another violent collision, Yuan Shuo managed to grab the staff. He left deep claw marks in the weapon, but Sun Yifei still sent him flying with a punch. The latter stepped backward with his weapon, watching Yuan Shuo's blood spray through the void as he flew backward.

The professor's face was slightly pale when he found his footing; he looked a little tired.

Sun Yifei flushed red and coughed. "Is this all there is to you?"

Just this?

"Where's the second spirit?" he leered. "A Summoner who commands five auras, I see you've only nurtured one spirit! There would be no need for a fight today if you'd summoned all five, Yuan Shuo. I would be dead without a move! Just one spirit? That is not enough to kill me!"

Yuan Shuo heaved for breath as he looked at Sun Yifei. The man was too observant! He'd caught wind of some clues after the prolonged exchange. It would be a foregone conclusion that Yuan Shuo would be invincible against Solars if he nurtured five spirits. He wouldn't even need five—just three would give him unquestionable dominance.

But he didn't have those!

He only had one. That could power a tremendous offensive for a while and enable him to easily overwhelm ordinary Solars. But today, his opponent was Sun Yifei, a martial master undaunted by repeated disappointments. All his opponent needed to do was to weather the initial barrage before he could counterattack.

"Just listen to yourself!" Yuan Shuo grinned. "Look at you throwing your weight around! Not many who did so in front of me have ever lived!"

He transformed into a fearsome tiger with a roar! Waves of yin qi rolled off the tiger's back. Cloud and mist wrapped around its feet—a water aura. Of the Five Styles, the tiger corresponded to the yin and was attributed to water. Water hearkened to the kidneys. He'd summoned his second spirit!

The kidneys' element was the water. His weren't strong enough and hadn't been tempered enough. Forcefully summoning a spirit like this might shatter them, but so what?

Who could bear to concede at this point of the battle? He, Yuan Shuo, had dominated an era. The opponent in front of him was just someone he'd defeated! If one spirit was hard pressed to take him down, how about two??

Chapter 212: Qimei Staff, Victory! (II)

A tiger's roar shook the land. Fire and water intermixed with each other as Yuan Shuo's ape and tiger seemed to become one. He was a creature with a tiger head and ape body. When he punched, the fist morphed into a claw!

It was frighteningly fast and clawed Sun Yifei down from the sky. The blow sank into his ankle and ripped out pieces of blood and flesh. Instead of dismay, Sun Yifei was delighted!

The second spirit! He was witnessing the second spirit! If possible, he'd love to see all five spirits. However, he knew that wasn't feasible. This was Yuan Shuo's limit and he'd die before making a move if he summoned a third spirit. This was enough!

"Well met!" Sun Yifei barked with laughter. His power of fire erupted with full strength and concentration.

Li Hao sensed something a little different from before; the young man looked at Hao Lianchuan. The deputy director's expression was shifting rapidly. The phoenix in his body seemed to sense something and agitated wildly within. It wanted to rush out and greet this blaze of fire from Sun Yifei.

Li Hao watched solemnly—the enemy had utilized an origin weapon! His teacher was in trouble. This water tiger of his was truly a bit intangible. It lacked sufficient energy of water and his

teacher's kidneys were not strong enough. Prolonged battle would inflict great harm on the professor.

The young man looked around them; his eyes landed on certain things.

“Chief.” He swiftly turned to Liu Long. “Have the Night Watchers collect all of the mysterious power from the fallen supernaturals...”

Liu Long blinked, quickly understanding Li Hao's intentions. He trotted over to Hao Lianchuan.

Moments later, the deputy director commanded the Night Watchers to move out. The battle overhead continued and everyone watched with their hearts in their mouths, yet the Night Watchers began harvesting power from dead supernaturals.

Others would fight for this loot in ordinary times, but no one dared do so today. No one was to move before the two concluded their duel, not even Red Moon. Hao Kong was well aware that while Yuan Shuo might show some mercy to the Night Watchers, Sun Yifei would not do the same to his organization.

If they were accidentally disturbed in a moment of slight carelessness, Red Moon wouldn't be able to stand against their combined fury. In Hao Kong's eyes, only Violet Moon would be able to intervene in the battle now.

He was far from it.

Joint efforts from both Celestial and Yama might barely hold off the two. It would have to take the death of one and heavy injury to the other to benefit the assembly at large.

Li Hao's eyes reflected his rapidly shifting thoughts as he watched people collect mysterious power. He looked at Zhang Ting out of the corner of his eye. A Night Watcher and a mid Solar! She might have a water origin weapon on her. While he wasn't sure if it was an origin weapon, he was certain that his teacher's kidneys might explode after this battle, even if Yuan Shuo won. The light energy

within the mysterious power they were collecting might mend a thing or two, but it wouldn't be enough.

It should be sufficient if he added a water origin weapon to the mix!

Li Hao adamantly believed that his teacher could win, but swift recovery after battle was key. Otherwise, greater trouble might come for his teacher.

My apologies... Director Hou also said that it's up to us if we want to kill you or not...

Sunderer Li Hao was actually planning on killing someone for their treasure, and a mid Solar at that! It would shock the four corners of the world if this got out, but he really was planning on doing so!

Did it matter that Zhang Ting was from the central region and a plant in the Night Watchers?

The thought had just taken shape in Li Hao's mind when Liu Long pressed down on his shoulder. The captain seemed to have guessed something, or he might've simply detected the rise of killing intent in the young man.

"Hold your horses!" he rumbled. "Everyone's waiting right now, so you should too! The bird that takes the lead is the one targeted, I'm sure that Elder Yuan doesn't wish for you to take risks in this moment. Just stay here and recover from your wounds!"

Li Hao ducked his head without a word, trying to get a grip on his anxiety. A second spirit! Sun Yifei was stronger than anticipated. The young man had thought that his teacher would win with one spirit, but even the arrival of a second spirit didn't cinch a victory.

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Up in the sky.

Wearing a tiger's head and an ape's body, Yuan Shuo commenced another powerful attack. He broke through the air in domineering fashion; his fists and legs were invincible and his body unmatched in swiftness.

Punch followed punch, fully suppressing his opponent for once. Although Sun Yifei was forced to retreat, he laughed wildly through mouthfuls of blood!

“Is this all there is to you? Not enough, Yuan Shuo, this isn't enough!”

The second spirit was too insubstantial!

Despite that, blood ran freely from newly inflicted injuries and vital liquids bled profusely from his being. Sun Yifei laughed with utter joy and erupted with a counterattack, furiously laying about with his staff!

Bam bam bam!!

Enormous collisions resounded; both sides focused on offense. There was no defense! Attack and attack again!

Yuan Shuo snarled after a long interval and punched so ferociously that he snapped the staff!

The incredibly durable qimei staff finally shattered after hundreds of blows, after Yuan Shuo felt that his own fists were about to break!

PFFT!

Sun Yifei's chest caved in and he even up bits of his internal organs as he was thrown backward. His weapon had been obliterated by his opponent! And yet, he grinned. "How... much more strength do you have left?"

Yuan Shuo swayed in the air, coldly aloof in his refusal to answer. How much strength? Not much, what of it?

"Sun Yifei, you will always be someone who I defeated!" Yuan Shuo stepped through the air once more, keeping a steady pace.

Sun Yifei smiled even as he coughed up more blood. "It was a day like today when I lost to you... You broke my qimei staff, I was on the ground with heavy injuries, and you walked toward me just as you are now. I knew I would die, but I refused to die to you. Therefore... I jumped off Rift Bridge!

"Yuan Shuo, that will not happen today!" He flashed a radiant grin. "Not today! My disciple has told me that there is a chance of hope even in the most dire of circumstances. I will not give up, I have not lost as I am not dead!"

Unrivalled power of fire exploded from his body! This time, it was accompanied by gasps from the crowd on the ground.

Mysterious power!

Indeed, this was the same case as when Yuan Shuo gave up mysterious power upon realizing it consumed the internal force. Doing so meant cutting off his hopes of entering that world.

Sun Yifei, however, was already a supernatural. Mysterious power was the source of his strength and the origin of the supernatural. He held a new qimei staff in his hands again. Just as his disciple had utilized the last of his strength to coalesce a new staff, this one was made out of Sun Yifei's mysterious power.

If this one shattered, his mysterious power would break and he would die without a doubt. This was his last, mad dance!

“I will not concede! I did so once before and I will not do so again!” Sun Yifei roared with laughter. “Yuan Shuo, I will not lose today even though you’ve broken my staff again!”

The him from that moment was dead. Come break it again!

“KILL!” Sun Yifei roared and swung his staff forward. The gravely injured Qimei Staff King glowed with new vitality and emitted unparalleled strength. The qimei staff was upon them again!

He wanted to win!

Even if it was only one time and only for a split second, he wanted to win!

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“He’s insane!” Hao Lianchuan murmured to himself. Sun Yifei really had gone crazy! The late Solar had gathered his mysterious power into a qimei staff. If it was broken again, his mysterious power would disperse and there would be no other outcome for him other than death. He was putting his life on the line!

Although this was a duel, Sun Yifei would potentially be crippled if he won. Even if he wasn’t, he would fall to a lower cultivation level. Damage to mysterious power was too big of a loss to a supernatural.

Is this what it means to be a martial master? Hao Lianchuan wondered. Yuan Shuo had asked him if he was a martial master—he was not. Thus, Yuan Shuo said that he didn’t understand martial masters and that he wasn’t strong enough!

Martial dao had declined for twenty years, but who among the assembly would dare say that today?

No one!

Even the supernatural Sun Yifei demonstrated the bearing of a martial master in this moment. He didn't count as a pure supernatural in this battle against a martial master.

The other Sunflares next to Hao Lianchuan watched with unprecedented gravity. At this point in battle, it would be a pyrrhic victory. Yuan Shuo was plainly at the end of his tether and Sun Yifei wasn't much better. Either both would go down together, or one would die and the other be incapacitated.

They'd thought that danger for this trip would only start inside the ruins. Who would've thought that Light Island would be no more before they began? And now two powerhouses who might be top three in Silver Moon would either die or be crippled.

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Up in the sky.

A staff blow blotted out a ferocious tiger roar. Sun Yifei was growing ever more insane and berserk. Strike after strike—the staff illuminated the sky with fiery sparks.

“Concede!!” he howled. He just wanted to win for once! Why didn't Yuan Shuo admit defeat?! He wanted to hear Yuan Shuo forfeit even though that was an extravagant hope!

BOOM!

Yuan Shuo hit a cliff face and smashed a large pit out of it. Sun Yifei swept dozens of boulders into dust as the two brought their fighting into the canyon wall.

They instantly shot back into the sky, whereupon the cliff face beneath them collapsed with a rumble. The battle continued!

The fire heart ape and fierce tiger grew more resplendent, as did the staff. Both sides were exhausting their foundations and the fight turning ever more brutal.

“Yuan Shuo!” Sun Yifei panted. “Can you not break my staff? I know you can! C’mon, break it or I break you!”

BAM!

Another slam of the stuff!

“Pfft!” Yuan Shuo spat blood. He was lightheaded and a bit sad. “I’d wanted to hold a little back... and go explore the ruins with the others... But you really want me to put everything out there... The hell with this man!”

“Bastard!” Sun Yifei raged with utter disbelief. He hadn’t thought that Yuan Shuo really would have more trump cards left to play. His next blow carried unbounded fury, some reluctance, and more madness. “Come then! I want to die at my peak if I am to die in battle! I don’t want to slowly go downhill and be beaten to death by a barrage from your fists like I’m a city hoodlum!”

Chapter 213: Qimei Staff, Victory! (III)

Indeed, Sun Yifei was starting to fade, as was Yuan Shuo. Both of them couldn’t maintain their condition; they were no longer in the optimal status for combat. Sun Yifei could accept dying in peak form. He didn’t wish to repeat the events of yesteryear where he steadily faded in battle and then was out of strength to do anything but jump from the bridge.

Yuan Shuo spat out another mouthful of blood. He smiled at his opponent. Do I have a trump card? I sure do! The Incantation of the Blade of Blood! But he wanted to wait for the other to start declining. That would increase his odds of killing his opponent because he was a martial master, and martial masters excelled with the physique!

Supernaturals were strong when it came to power. Sun Yifei would not be able to maintain his current state once too much mysterious power dissipated. That would put the odds of Yuan Shuo winning at seven to three!

The professor laughed when he heard Sun Yifei's roar. "You... are... damned stubborn!"

So stubborn that I almost have the urge to give you the best treatment I can, even if the consequences will be very severe. Such was the impulse that threatened to grip Yuan Shuo. He glanced down at Li Hao's position and smiled apologetically. I wonder if that last bit of sword energy will be enough if I survive this...

Actually, it doesn't matter if it's enough or not. It will probably be depleted if I live through this. Yuan Shuo smiled. To hell with it! He would just find a way to get more sword energy or obtain a solution if his disciple ran out. I just want to run madly, just once, and keep this lunatic company. Let's go wild together!

Look at him being so adorable. He's so adorable that I want to kill him and send him on his way. Yuan Shuo tightened his grip on the stone blade and ruthlessly pulled on its energy. It instantly sank into his body. He rarely absorbed from the stone blade like this, but how could he bear to not let Sun Yifei witness his strongest state at this point in battle?

The fire heart ape and ferocious tiger vanished when Yuan Shuo drew on the sword. All five auras disappeared! The aura melded into the stone blade, as did blade energy with internal force...

Sun Yifei didn't stop him. Instead, he furiously heightened his condition and flared his fire energy with abandon. The staff in his hand was almost too red for this part of the world. He smiled with utter delight. He was so very happy!

Yuan Shuo, you old demon, you really kept something back! You think I can't take it? I can and I will! You think too little of Sun Yifei!

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Wind and clouds surged in all directions. The assembly shifted with disbelief. The presences in the sky were still rising!

"Is this... really the level of a Solar?" Hao Lianchuan didn't believe his senses—neither did the other Solars. Surely they were witnessing a battle beyond Solar! How were these two still growing in strength at this time? They didn't understand it at all! Did martial masters really possess unbounded potential?

Li Hao, however, knew the reason behind this. The Incantation of the Blade of Blood. His teacher had utilized it again—forcefully summoning a second spirit wasn't enough, he also used this secret method. Had his teacher gone crazy?? There wasn't enough sword energy left!

Unless...

The young man stilled when he thought of something and silently watched the battle.

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In the sky.

Sun Yifei shook—not from fear, but anticipation. Can you be even stronger, Yuan Shuo?

"I'll send you on your way then, Sun Yifei!" Yuan Shuo was ready now. The stone blade in his hand magnified to a blade the color of blood. He spoke in solemn tones, "Go well to the underworld!"

“The same to you!” Sun Yifei barked with laughter and struck with his staff!

This blow surpassed everything before and indeed, everything in this world. It seemed to rip through the void. Despite being very slow, it came with such prodigious pressure that those below felt they would suffocate!

“Die!” Yuan Shuo roared, slashing with his blade and leaving behind a bloody shadow that was several hundreds of meters long!

His blade struck forward! This stroke also exceeded his capabilities. Staff and blade slammed into each other in the air. They didn’t make a sound—only light glimmered around the combatants.

The staff suddenly broke. It didn’t snap from the middle, but was sliced into two. The blade cut right through the qimei staff that was made of everything Sun Yifei. Unabated, the keen blade qi continued forward and descended!

Sun Yifei grinned to see his opponent’s weapon come down on him. He suddenly seemed to lose his mind and teleport away from his spot. He vanished in the split second that the blade descended, before a bloody trail appeared on his head.

He magically reappeared next to a Yuan Shuo who was beginning to feel weakness set in. Sun Yifei’s grin broadened, the bright-red line on his head etching itself deeper. He stretched out a hand and punched Yuan Shuo in the throat.

It was such an impotent punch that Yuan Shuo didn’t even feel discomfort. He looked at Sun Yifei, who looked back at him. After a beat, the Qimei Staff King forced out with difficulty, “I... win... You... jump...”

Jump from the bridge! When I lost, I jumped! I’ll give you a chance instead of killing you, jump!

Though his body was starting to fall apart, a hint of pleading entered his eyes. Jump! I win! Even though I'm already dead, I still win!

He wanted to see Old Demon Yuan fall at his feet and be forced into jumping off the bridge!

As Yuan Shuo looked at his age-old foe, he suddenly smiled and dismissed the strength in his body. He abruptly sagged with weakness and fell off the bridge.

Sun Yifei looked down, seeing Yuan Shuo jump and fall to the ground...

"I win!" He smiled, pieces of flesh dropping from him as cracks fractured his body. He'd won... Even if that punch wouldn't have killed Yuan Shuo, he was still confident of crushing the man's throat given the latter's condition. If Yuan Shuo didn't die from that, he would be even more greatly injured.

But... what was the point in that?

He saw Yuan Shuo smash into the ground—he saw it with his own eyes. He'd glimpsed the second spirit and witnessed the splendors of the next level beyond Dominator. He'd observed Yuan Shuo's strongest stroke and reduced the man to a bedraggled state...

It was worth it, even though he was going to forfeit his life here. He'd finally returned to his roots on this trip back to Silver Moon and defeated an internal demon of more than twenty years. There was nothing clouding his heart anymore.

Moxian, you and I bore witness to the rise of martial dao!

Finally, Sun Yifei gave voice to his last laugh. "Qimei Staff, victory!"

BOOM!

A ball of fire radiated the void with an explosion. The Qimei Staff King triumphed over the Five Styles Beast King and was rewarded with complete annihilation!

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Bleak silence filled the surroundings. Yuan Shuo broke an uncountable number of bones when he crashed into the ground, but he raised his head all the same. He, too, smiled at that fellow who'd given everything in that duel.

There was one less old friend that roamed the world now. You win! The Qimei Staff wins!

Yuan Shuo smiled radiantly and vanished in the next second. He disappeared on the spot—no one saw where he went. A startled gasp echoed in the canyon as a blade appeared on a cliff face.

The blade struck!

It was fast, impossibly fast, incredibly brutal, and unaccountably ruthless! It exceeded all the blows before it!

“Bastard!” Fear intermixed with a furious howl that rang through the perimeter. Red Moon!

Hao Kong of Red Moon looked on with dismay, his mysterious power exploding like it was worthless.

But it was too late.

His head hit the ground with a thud!

Disaster had come so quickly that a Solar hadn't been able to flee. He was decapitated in a split second!

Off in the distance, Li Hao remained impassive. He'd guessed this would happen. He guessed it as soon as he felt there wasn't enough sword energy for his teacher after the Incantation of the Blade of Blood was employed. His teacher would kill instead, and kill those of Red Moon!

What could teacher and disciple do without sword energy? The scarlet shadows were almost as good! If those of Red Moon didn't take advantage of this time to flee, they were consigning themselves to doom so long as his teacher had the ability to fight. Yuan Shuo would make full use of the lingering effects of the secret method!

"Yuan Shuo!" Powerhouses rebuked from all sides. The supernaturals of Celestial, Yama, and even the Sword Sect converged together instead of running. They were terrified and worried!

Yuan Shuo had gone mad to kill Hao Kong! Did he not want to stay in Silver Moon anymore?? The organization had a deep feud with him to begin with, but now he killed Hao Kong in broad daylight with complete abandon... Red Moon would take revenge, there would absolutely be a reckoning!

But did Yuan Shuo care?

Not at all!

He executed Hao Kong with one stroke and slashed his weapon through the air, slicing off head after head and executing supernatural after supernatural. He bared his teeth in a feral manner.

"I let Sun Yifei have that move, but what are you lot worth?" He swept the premises in an imperial gaze. "What are you lot worth?"

Who do you think you are? Are you worthy of watching me fight? I'll kill Red Moon members if I wish, what can you do about it? The Incantation consumes too many resources, how am I supposed to recover from that if I don't kill some of you?

He laughed wildly as the bloody blade burst with scintillating light. None of the others saw anything, but Li Hao's eyes captured the blade absorbing countless shadows. Plainly, his teacher had learned a few methods of how to use the stone blade from Hou Xiaochen. He was absorbing scarlet shadows directly from their handlers. Li Hao saw a particularly big one disappear—that one had belonged to Hao Kong.

Yuan Shuo laughed uproariously after slaughtering the Red Moon delegation and vanished into the air. His voice echoed in Li Hao's ears, "I can't deal with this, so I'm gonna run. Hou Xiaochen will take care of the ensuing danger!"

He was already gone. Li Hao stiffened with surprise. He's... gonna run?

"Oh, right, don't forget to create a memorial tablet for Sun Yifei..." came Yuan Shuo's last words.

Everyone around the perimeter was frozen with horror and kept completely quiet until they were certain that Yuan Shuo would not reappear. Only then did faint breathing sounds reappear—a complicated mix of mostly fear hung on everyone's faces.

The battles they'd witnessed today were hard to believe!

The Qimei Staff King died, the Five Styles King slaughtered the Red Moon delegation, Light Island was no more.... All of this would swiftly spread to the four corners and stun anyone that heard of them. It would shake even the central region!

There was Summoner of Spirit above Dominator of Thousands!

Chapter 214: Another Blaze of Fire in Chaotic Times (I)

The duel was over.

A clash that everyone thought would roll right over Yuan Shuo had instead demonstrated the domineering might of the Five Styles. Li Hao killed Sun Moxian and Yuan Shuo broke through Dominator to kill Sun Yifei.

The souls of powerhouses from the central region had finally come home. A falling leaf would eventually return to its roots. Sun Yifei's battle was destined to leave a deep mark on the martial world of Silver Moon.

And yet, the ensuring ripples from this duel were only just beginning. The surroundings were quiet for just a moment. Someone bounded into the air the next second and shot for the upper skies, to where Sun Yifei had died. The late Solar didn't leave anything behind when he died; there was only some powerful mysterious power that'd yet to disperse. However, a broken staff could be seen shimmering in and out of sight.

A qimei staff!

Not the first one he'd wielded, but the one later coalesced through mysterious power!

This was impossible to fathom! It was made from mental will so strong that it left part of the staff behind in the last possible second.

This was now a treasure!

Everyone knew that it stemmed from a late Solar and was crafted from powerful will and unparalleled battle intent in his last moments of life. Even though it wasn't a supernatural object, it exceeded many supernatural objects.

One person making a move for it was swiftly followed by many more. There were Solars and Sunflares—those weaker didn't dare attempt to claim it. Even Li Hao stirred with bloodlust.

None of you are worthy of touching it!

Indeed, they weren't worthy.

Although Sun Yifei had died in battle and although he was an enemy, Yuan Shuo had respected him after he fell. Li Hao also considered the man a striking martial master. What right did these people have to take the weapon of a grandmaster??

He sprang into the air with Stellaris in hand, throwing himself at a Sunflare. A loud roar split the air before he caught up to the other, "All of you, piss off!"

Hao Lianchuan soared into the void amid a pillar of fiery light. "How dare you! How dare you touch that?!"

He was enraged beyond belief, but he didn't know why. Perhaps it was because Sun Yifei had been a fire supernatural? Hao Lianchuan smashed out a fiery punch that illuminated the area. While the Sunflares backed away, there were a few Solars on the scene. Solars from Yama, Celestial, and the Sword Sect were present.

An aloof middle-aged man from Yama said coldly, "Yuan Shuo has left. Are you going to stop us in his stead? You think too highly of yourself, Hao Lianchuan, and think too highly of the Night Watchers!"

Hao Lianchuan was ready to unleash his fury—he wanted to bring out the Flaming Phoenix Spear and commence a glorious slaughter!

Damn it! Who do you think you are?? Do you think you still hold a great advantage after the elimination of Red Moon?

The Night Watcher deputy director glared at Hong Yitang. "Do you want to fight for it too??"

Hong Yitang's brow furrowed and he shifted away slightly. "I don't mean to vie for the treasure, I just don't wish to see big brother Sun disturbed in death. If that half of the qimei

staff goes to me, I promise I will not use it. I will have someone take it to the central region and deliver it to Sun Hongxiu!"

Hao Lianchuan frowned as well when he heard those words. They were not pleasing to the ear. Deliver it to Sun Hongxiu? Wouldn't that girl come for Li Hao if she really gained something from it, or was bolstered by Sun Yifei's dying intent? Her threat had been voiced for all to hear, there was a blood feud between the two youngsters now!

Although Hao Lianchuan pitied Sun Yifei, Yuan Shuo and Li Hao were the ones that belonged to the Night Watcher camp. Of that, he was well aware of. No matter if Hong Yitang truly meant to deliver the item to Sun Hongxiu or not, he could not have the treasure.

"The rules of the martial world apply, Hong Yitang! Sun Yifei died to Yuan Shuo, so his qimei staff is loot that belongs to the professor! Yuan Shuo has left, but his final disciple is still here. How does the treasure ever go to you?"

Hong Yitang's frown remained on his face and he nodded. "Very well, I do not have the intention to seize another person's possession. Whether you believe me or not, I would not have claimed big brother Sun's relics. We are both of the martial world!"

He stepped aside and shifted a sizable distance back. It might be out of prudence, it might be a true lack of desire to scrabble over the treasure. In this moment, he elected to give up the fight.

That left three Solars facing each other in the clearing—the cold-faced middle-aged man from Yama and a mysterious cloaked individual from Celestial. The latter scanned the surroundings and soundlessly disappeared on the spot. They reappeared in the middle of the Celestial delegation and waved their hand. The entire contingent swiftly vanished.

They relinquished their ambitions as well.

The Yama powerhouse paused with a frown. He wasn't afraid of Hao Lianchuan, but since the Celestial delegation had left and Hong Yitang of the Sword Sect watched from the side... Although Yuan Shuo had departed, he could potentially come back. Despite the crowd speculating that he'd had to flee due to severe injuries, one had to be on guard against the old demon.

"The Night Watchers... Yuan Shuo..." he murmured before breaking through the air. The Yama powerhouses on the ground also withdrew from the clearing. With their leader gone, they didn't dare linger.

They needed to digest the insights from today's battles and spread the word of everything they'd seen. As for the treasure that Sun Yifei left behind... the Night Watchers may not be able to retain possession of it either. Someone else would vie for it, if not them. There might be secrets to be gleaned from that half of the stick. Yuan Shuo's secrets, information about Summoner of Spirit, and why Sun Yifei was able to leave a portion of his mysterious power behind when he died.

There could be a significant portion of valuable knowledge to be discovered from the treasure.

The small organizations lost their nerve when Yama left as well. They scattered for safety and pelted out of the area. Who knew if the expedition tomorrow would still commence after how the battles ended today? Some of the small organizations already wanted to withdraw.

Should they retreat? It was too dangerous!

This was supposed to be a simple exploration of a ruin. The larger organizations would cut their share of the meat while they ate the scraps. But now look at the situation—Light Island was eliminated before they saw any sort of scrap! They'd become the meat, and Red Moon had lost two Solars in a row! If they added Brokensky from before, it meant that the organization had lost three Solars in Silver Moon in quick succession.

Solars were a rare sight before, but now that they appeared with increasing regularity, they didn't come with the expected air of invincibility. They were killed one after another, and by the same person!

It would seem that Old Demon Yuan's reputation was not snatched out of thin air. He'd gone from Brokensky to Sun Yifei and to Hao Kong. If the assembly also knew about Qiao Feilong, how horrified would they be to learn that Yuan Shuo averaged a Solar every ten days?

They'd already forgotten about one person—the master of Light Island! He was a renowned powerhouse and a Heaven Favored. However, he'd been too insignificant in the day's matters. Hao Kong commanded more mental space than he did. The latter had Red Moon in his corner; everyone knew that the organization wouldn't let things rest after his death. But the master of Light Island? Forget it. He was dead and his organization eradicated. Who cared about him?

Therefore, everyone forgot about him. A Solar Heaven Favored was less memorable in death than Sun Moxian.

.....

In the sky.

When Hao Lianchuan laid hands on the half of the staff, it struggled very briefly. As he landed on the group, someone approached him—Li Hao.

The young man looked at Hao Lianchuan, the deputy director looked back at him. After a moment, Li Hao said in a muffled voice, "Thank you, Director Hao!"

"....." Hao Lianchuan didn't know what to say. What did that mean?

"Thank you for retrieving the staff for me, Director Hao!"

“.....” Ah, he understood now. This was shaping up to an awkward situation. He actually wanted to keep the item and send it to headquarters for the director to study. But... he’d just said that this was Yuan Shuo’s battle loot.

According to the rules, it belonged to Yuan Shuo and by extension, Li Hao.

“Ah, Li Hao, this...”

“Thank you, Director Hao!” Li Hao repeated in a muffled voice.

“.....”

The young man wanted that half of the qimei staff. Not because the item was a treasure—he had one himself and didn’t fully understand his sword yet. It was because the staff had been the weapon of his teacher’s enemy, a person who’d pulled his punch at the last possible second. The young man had seen it clearly.

This part of the staff... Li Hao wanted to take it and possibly send it back to the central region when the timing was ripe. He would return it to the heir of the Qimei Staff King.

Indeed! Even though he knew that she would not be grateful and even burn to take his head, he still wanted to send it back to her.

The person may be dead, but the heritage lived on. There was still someone to pass on the Qimei Staff King’s inheritance to. Was this desire trite and cliché?

It was as he thought before, very cliché. It was one thing to not fully eliminate the enemy, but to return an item that contained the Qimei Staff King’s lingering will? Was he a fool?

Yes he was, but weren't all martial masters like this? He was a martial master!

Li Hao's blood had not yet cooled at this stage in life.

Hao Lianchuan floundered for the right words. "There are too many people watching this right now. I'll give it to you when we return to headquarters."

"Thank you!" the young man expressed. He glanced up at the sky and then at Sun Moxian's grave in the distance. Li Hao walked over, looking for anything that could prove the Qimei Staff King's identity.

It couldn't be too precious, like that half of the qimei staff. There would be a daily stream of grave robbers if he buried that in there.

Li Hao found some scraps of cloth moments later; they were left behind from the earlier battle. There was also a tiny portion of a staff—the first one from the very beginning. It was such a tiny stub that it wouldn't draw any attention.

The young man buried all of these things into the newly wrought grave. He paused in deep thought after locating a large stone, then etched just a few characters on it.

Qimei Staff King Sun Yifei. Qimei Staff King disciple Sun Moxian.

There was nothing about their achievements, battle records, dates, or any other details. This was enough.

A person appeared by Li Hao's side—Hong Yitang. He was with his daughter and sighed at the tombstone. "Your wish was granted, big brother Sun." He inclined his body. "You witnessed the birth of Summoner of Spirit. I think you went willingly when the final moment came for you. The martial dao legacy of Silver Moon is not broken..."

A mixture of emotions assailed him. They were one more fewer now.

Chapter 215: Another Blaze of Fire in Chaotic Times (II)

“You’re not bad yourself.” Hong Yitang looked at Li Hao. “Don’t think too much. This is how martial masters should be! The martial world does not exist anymore, but it will spring to life again once your master walks out of Silver City. I believe that the legends of Silver Mono’s martial world will continue onward!

“Take care of yourself, Li Hao. Your master killed Sun Yifei and broke through the shackles of Dominator to reach Summoner. Now that he’s left, I’m sure that people will soon come for you if they can’t find him.

“Whether it’s to spar in a practice match or to kill you, they won’t let you rest easy. You must know that martial masters have declined!”

It was advice laden with meaning and some sorrow. Martial masters had been replaced. Their dao had been supplanted by the glorious supernatural world. Would it tolerate the return of their predecessors now that an anomaly had appeared?

Not necessarily!

The rise of the supernatural world was accompanied with murders of many martial masters, and many on the martial path were forced to cross over. If it was now proven that martial dao was instead superior... wouldn’t that be a slap in the face to many? Particularly the martial masters that’d switched to the supernatural track.

Not everyone was Sun Yifei and hoped for the renewed rise of martial dao. Some wanted nothing more than to avoid that possibility. They loathed the idea! It indicated that the choice they’d made all those years ago was wrong.

No one liked to admit they were wrong!

Thus, the full collapse of martial dao was much more in line with their desires. Hong Yitang was also a martial master-turned-supernatural and could fully understand the mentality. He left unvoiced the bit of regret that set in when he saw how strong Yuan Shuo had become. As difficult as the martial master path was, were they actually stronger than supernaturals?

The thought quickly dispersed, leaving behind regret that could not be erased.

He felt himself to be an open-minded individual who didn't nitpick at details. If he wasn't, he would've suffered from the humiliation of not answering Yuan Shuo's challenges back in the day. If even he felt a bit of regret at the path he'd chosen, what of the other martial masters who'd converted to the supernatural path?

"This junior understands!" Li Hao looked at Hong Yitang and slightly bent at the waist. "But I am not afraid if they come in an honorable and open manner! My master hacked his way to safety and so can I! If they want to assassinate or ambush me, then Swordmaster Hong thinks too little of the Night Watchers!"

The young man smiled faintly. "The Night Watchers are found throughout the ninety-nine provinces and it is still Skystar Dynasty that rules the world. Would-be attackers have to first get through the Night Watchers if they want to kill me, and even if the agency agrees, these people need to remember that my teacher is still alive!"

It wasn't like he was dead!

"So long as you have your own preparations in mind," Hong Yitang laughed. "The expedition tomorrow may not be smooth sailing. Even if it is, you best not enter the ruins. It's too dangerous."

"Thank you for your warning, Swordmaster Hong!" Li Hao turned to Hong Qing next to him. "Miss Hong Qing, I'm sorry that the sword broke. I will have a new sword forged when I return to headquarters and deliver it to you."

“It’s fine.” Hong Qing looked curiously at him and shook her head. “It’s just an ordinary sword, not a supernatural object. It doesn’t matter that it broke.” She couldn’t contain her curiosity. “Have you really only cultivated for three years?”

“Yes.”

“Impressive!” Hong Qing marveled. His tenure really was three years; he was a genius! It’d been more than ten years since she started cultivating as a young girl. Being a late Sunderer was very impressive, but the person in front of her was able to kill Sun Moxian after three years of training... Sun Moxian had been a genius who’d comprehended the aura and was about to set foot into Dominator!

What a pity that those two martial masters had died today. She would feel the same if Li Hao and Yuan Shuo had died. They were all geniuses and powerhouses on the path of martial dao. She would be saddened no matter who died.

“You praise me too highly!” Li Hao left without another word. He didn’t like chatting with strangers. As friendly as Hong Yitang came across, to know a man’s exterior was not to know his heart. Who knew what the swordmaster-turned-supernatural’s real thoughts were?

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The others were picking up the pieces when Li Hao returned to the Night Watcher camp. The Red Moon delegation was dead and the battlefield needed to be cleaned up. There was mysterious power to be collected. No one else dared conduct the task, but the Night Watchers didn’t mind. The blame for everything was falling on their heads regardless!

Outsiders didn’t think the same as Yuan Shuo, despite the professor saying that he wasn’t a Night Watcher. In their eyes, he became one of them when Hou Xiaochen took a stand to protect the old man. In that case, Hao Lianchuan would take full advantage of the situation.

No one could see the scarlet shadows that Yuan Shuo had taken after killing the Red Moon members. Therefore, they all thought that he'd killed for the sake of killing. Plenty of mysterious power could still be found in the field as numerous powerhouses had died today. Fire energy dissipated in the sky, but no one dared collect it. Even though Hao Lianchuan felt it a bit of a pity, he elected to give it up.

While Sun Yifei was part of Red Moon, Hao Lianchuan admired the martial glory displayed in battle today. A powerhouse like him should not be insulted or tormented after death. This had nothing to do with which faction everyone belonged to. It was simple respect.

Li Hao would hold the entire organization in high regard if they were all like this. Sadly, those like Sun Yifei were few and far in between.

.....

Wang Ming sidled up to Li Hao with a look of dejection. "Who would've thought that the duel would end like this, senior brother!"

"....."

Huh.

Li Hao was stunned, Liu Long was stunned. Liu Yan was stunned, and even Hao Lianchuan was stunned like he was meeting Wang Ming for the first time.

What was that? Senior brother?

"Senior brother," Wang Ming continued in worried tones, like he didn't see their expressions. "Did teacher leave because his wounds are too severe? We all saw the injuries he suffered. Once word of today's battle gets out, there's going to be an endless number of people who want to kill him or

force the secrets of the next cultivation level out of him. Teacher is in a very precarious position. Do you think we can help him, senior brother?”

“Ole Wang...” Li Hao responded with difficulty.

“Call me Little Ming!” Wang Ming corrected firmly. “The proprieties of martial masters cannot be abolished. I did not understand before, but I’ve felt it firmly today that the hierarchy of seniority must be respected. You are my senior brother, I am your junior brother. Even if I wasn’t a little younger than you, you still shouldn’t call me Ole Wang. Just call me Little Ming!”

The group didn’t know what to say, but was there anything to be argued about this?

No.

Wang Ming was indeed Yuan Shuo’s disciple. An honorary disciple was a disciple all the same. When Yuan Shuo wanted to pave the road for Li Hao, he didn’t anticipate his student progressing so swiftly. Neither did he think that he’d set foot into Summoner of Spirit this quickly. The three honorary disciples he’d accepted as an insurance policy now found themselves with a bit of fame.

Disciples of the Five Styles!

An odd look shone out of Hao Lianchuan’s eyes and he quickly smiled. “That’s right, Li Hao, let us know if there’s anything we can do to help. As for Wang Ming... converse with your senior brother often. There is still a bright future in martial dao.”

He was happy to endorse this development and even felt a bit of schadenfreude. He’d found it slightly inappropriate when Yuan Shuo forced them to acknowledge him as their teacher, but now look at the situation! Heh, Yuan Shuo, you didn’t think about this possibility, did you? Your honorary disciples are the ones sticking to you now.

Li Hao couldn’t be bothered with anything. This was how Wang Ming was sometimes.

“Don’t call me senior brother in front of others,” he said casually. “Don’t think it’s a good deal you’re getting. You should keep in mind that however many want teacher dead is however many want me dead too.”

Martial masters, supernaturals, Red Moon... There might even be Night Watchers who didn’t want Yuan Shuo alive. Li Hao thought back to the conversation with Hou Xiaochen—if those in charge continued to force his hand, he would rebel!

That would be a horrifying turn of events indeed. And now there was a mid Solar in their vicinity, silently keeping them under observation. It would easily raise attention if he said too much.

His teacher hadn’t absorbed sword energy when he left—he only took the scarlet shadows. Who knew if they could help him recover? And with the forceful summoning of the second spirit, his kidneys must be extremely damaged. Li Hao was rather worried.

He understood why his teacher had run. If Yuan Shuo didn’t run now and word spread before he returned to full health, he’d be a sitting target! It was too easy to be surrounded in the canyon.

“We’re in a difficult spot with the ruins then!” A solemn Hao Lianchuan also thought of these possibilities. “News may be spreading as we speak, so I need to report this to Director Hou immediately! Li Hao, you’re with me!”

He led the young man back to the Night Watcher camp. The matter seemed beyond his abilities now—not seemed, it was entirely beyond his abilities. They were in enormous trouble! Thank goodness Yuan Shuo had gone on the run. Trouble would be greater if he hadn’t.

If Yuan Shuo had stayed, the three great organizations might send their premier elites at the fastest speed possible. Reinforcements would come from neighboring provinces at the very least, if not the central region depending on the distance.

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At the same time.

The news had indeed spread.

At the foot of Mt. White Moon, in a tea house.

The Revolution King had just reached the foot of the mountain when a mirror in his pocket vibrated. He pulled it out for a look and grew more solemn the longer he looked at it. A leaden expression hung on his face at the end.

There wasn't much information, but it was extremely shocking.

Yuan Shuo had broken through to Summoner of Spirit. There was a path for martial masters beyond Dominator! He had slain Sun Yifei despite the latter utilizing an origin weapon. Yuan Shuo's strength approached the limits of Solar!

This was terrifying news!

There was an addendum that Yuan Shuo was heavily injured and fled. Before he ran, he slaughtered the entire Red Moon delegation, as well as Hao Kong.

That put a smile on the Revolution King's face. It wasn't Yama's people that'd been hurt. The three great organizations both worked together and against each other. It was always a cause for celebration when one of the others died. Granted, he wasn't going to jeer at Red Moon for their loss.

Moments away from ascending the mountain, he suddenly turned around and took to the sky, heading for Rift Canyon. Curbing Hou Xiaochen was no longer important, he needed to leave!

A furious roar echoed around the mountain moments later as a violet figure floated into the sky. Violet Moon of the Red Moon organization!

She'd also received word despite her delegation being slaughtered. One of the supernaturals at the scene had told her. It didn't matter who—Red Moon's intelligence network had always been strong.

Chapter 216: Another Blaze of Fire in Chaotic Times (III)

The peak of Mt. White Moon.

Hou Xiaochen was drinking tea in the gazebo at the mountain's summit when Manager Yu hastily brought a screen to him. "An urgent report from Director Hao!"

"Put him through!" Hou Xiaochen already knew something was amiss. He sensed it when Violet Moon and the Revolution King left. What was it that set them off in such a hurry? Had Hao Lianchuan taken out the Flaming Phoenix Spear and they were on their way to seize it?

This possibility had been among his calculations, so it was fine that they left! An origin weapon wasn't that easy to snatch; Hou Xiaochen wasn't that worried.

He still had the peace of mind to smile when his subordinate's face appeared on the screen. "How come you're not running yet?" What are you still doing there after the origin weapon's been exposed?

"Run?" Hao Lianchuan blinked, then hastily asked, "Should we retreat, director?"

"What else?"

"But..." Hao Lianchuan protested. "This is great timing. Red Moon has suffered heavy losses, so this is an opportunity for us."

“Give me a brief overview.” Hou Xiaochen seemed to be in complete control. He’d predicted a lot of things, so he had arrangements in place even if the unexpected happened.

“Director, Yuan Shuo has advanced to Summoner of Spirit and located the martial path beyond Dominator. He killed Sun Yifei, exterminated the Red Moon delegation, obliterated Light Island...”

Crack!

A tea cup snapped to pieces.

“Director?” Hao Lianchuan asked with confusion. Didn’t the director already know about this?

“Mmhhh.” Hou Xiaochen inclined his head without a change in expression. “What else?”

Shock roiled in his heart. What was this? Yuan Shuo... a Summoner of Spirit?

The professor triumphing over Sun Yifei hadn’t been entirely out of his expectations. He’d considered Yuan Shuo being able to draw on tremendous power with the Flaming Phoenix Spear in hand. That was a very real possibility.

Yuan Shuo erupting with one of the mysterious weapons of the eight families and defeating Sun Yifei was also a possibility.

On the other hand, Yuan Shuo falling in defeat and having to run for his life had also been a consideration.

The only eventuality that Hou Xiaochen hadn’t given thought to was that Yuan Shuo would kill Sun Yifei on the basis of pure strength. Indeed, no one, not even the gods, would’ve regarded it as a

viable likelihood. The professor had only just progressed and somehow swiftly found the path beyond Dominator a month later, then set foot in it!

Summoner of Spirit??

Hou Xiaochen was truly astonished, shocked, and incredulous. How was this possible?! And yet... he'd been so coolly unconcerned earlier that he couldn't display how taken aback he was now.

Only Manager Yu could see that the normally composed director had almost crushed his tea cup to dust.

“Director, Yuan Shuo has fled with grave wounds after he eradicated the Red Moon delegation. Do we give up the ruins, abandon the expedition, and retreat right now?”

Retreat?

Retreat your ass!

Rift Canyon would soon become the center of attention. They couldn't leave now—that would be the end of the ruins. There would be vast numbers of powerhouses coming along shortly to explore the secrets of the canyon. The Night Watchers had to complete their own excavation before outsiders arrived, and Hou Xiaochen needed to be there in person!

He had to give up even White Moon City. It wasn't just him—none of the three great organizations or his superiors had effort to spare for the capital now. Who in the world would care about White Moon City after all that?

They needed to find Yuan Shuo, or barring the professor, his disciple would do too!

“I’ll be there immediately!” Hou Xiaochen hung up and barrelled down the mountain. “Contact the local army headquarters!”

Manager Yu swiftly dialed the communicator and gave it to her superior when it connected. “Set everything aside. Move your camp to Rift Canyon and cordon it off. Cover the canyon with your weapons! In addition, go to level one combat readiness. You can use those things at critical moments and lay down a wide range of attacks!”

“Director Hou?”

“Trust me. There’s going to be some trouble this time.”

“Alright, understood, but... it’s just that if we do this, it might lead to negative consequences.”

“It’s fine, we’re ready. If worst comes to worst... we’ll just follow that particular plan.”

“Understood!”

Hou Xiaochen turned things over in his mind and contemplated for a bit. He dialed another number. “Make it widely known and publicized in all avenues that Yuan Shuo has broken through to Summoner of Spirit. He has set foot beyond Dominator and killed late Solar Sun Yifei with three moves! He is now headed to the central region to slay Ying Hongyue with the strength of a Summoner. Ying Hongyue is to clean his neck and scrub behind his ears so Yuan Shuo can take his head off!

“Also, Yuan Shuo is of the mind to re-form Silver Moon’s martial world. He is willing to pass on his knowledge to any who share his path and is willing to kill Red Moon members. He will accept them all...”

Manager Yu’s eyes darted around rapidly as she listened. Was this... appropriate? Of course, this would more than likely ensure that Ying Hongyue and his people would keep their eyes fixed on

Yuan Shuo and wait for him in the central region. Most of the martial masters in the lands would also seek out the professor there. Whether their goal was to kill Yuan Shuo or Red Moon members... that would be a tough call.

As for whether or not people would believe what they heard... why wouldn't they? This tone was straight out of Old Demon Yuan's playbook. Anyone who was familiar with him wouldn't suspect a thing.

Having fired off a series of instructions, Hou Xiaochen regained his calm. He wasn't as astounded or disbelieving as before.

"Patch me through to the central region!" he said after some more thought. "Tell them we need backup and have them send a couple Novas with origin weapons. We won't be able to hold off the onslaught otherwise!"

"Are we really going to send that kind of report?" Manager Yu shook with surprise.

"Yes!" Hou Xiaochen smiled. "Make the report just like that! Also notify them to support Yuan Shuo when he's in the central region. He's secretly sworn fealty to the Night Watchers. Tell headquarters that he's agreed to give us the complete method for Summoner of Spirit if we help him kill Ying Hongyue. Not only that, but he'll resolve some supernatural problems for us and teach us the more advanced version of the Breathing Method of the Five Styles..."

It was a bunch of random bullshit, but it sounded exceedingly like what Yuan Shuo would say.

"As for me, I am forced to travel to Rift Canyon in my injured state. Tell headquarters to bring a Nascent Soul Pill for my wounds when they come or I won't be able to hold on for long!"

Manager Yu swiftly took note of all of the commands; her veneration for the director deepened the more she heard. He was incredible!

“Finally...” Hou Xiaochen looked into the distance as he stopped halfway down the mountain. “Publicize another piece of news that the blood pearls of Red Moon are the key to Yuan Shuo breaking through. Anyone with an origin weapon can extract it—announce the method of how they can do so!”

He grinned widely as Manager Yu shivered with horror. Once this word traveled, any organization with an origin weapon would be tempted, no matter supernatural or martial master. Whether it was for study or hoarding, they would absolutely be enticed by the notion of the blood pearls.

This piece of news wouldn’t have been useful before because no one would believe it. But now? Everyone would!

“Make sure you’ve got the details straight. He killed Brokensky first, seized the blood pearl, then quickly advanced. After his grave injuries from the duel, he killed Hao Kong for another blood pearl. Yuan Shuo might be an even stronger powerhouse the next time he reappears in the public eye. All of this must be leaked. From the trajectory and speed of his improvement, this is the treasure that is most suitable for his breakthrough!”

Hou Xiaochen’s mind spun rapidly, creating scheme after scheme in a split second. They were impervious and could stand up to close scrutiny.

“Also, let it be known that the Night Watchers gifted him a Solar level blood pearl before. He went into closed door cultivation for many days after receiving it. All of this needs to be shared in great detail through the plants and covert agents we have in place!”

“Understood!” Manager Yu’s respect continued to reach new levels, as did her silent sorrow for Red Moon. Even if the organization could withstand the pressure, they wouldn’t be able to cause trouble for Silver Moon or Silver City in the short term. They needed to take care of themselves first!

.....

Li Hao was blithely unaware of everything, or he would've considered his teacher with even greater admiration. No wonder his teacher had said that the ensuing trouble would be Hou Xiaochen's to clean up. Plainly, his teacher felt that Hou Xiaochen was able to resolve these difficulties and lower danger to the greatest degree possible.

Hou Xiaochen lived up to expectations. It took only the blink of an eye for him to rattle off several courses of action. After all of the news was made public, it wouldn't be Yuan Shuo or Li Hao in the hot seat, but Red Moon.

Blood pearls helped one break through and killing Red Moon members would reap the method to advance. Anyone with ambition would take some action. How would they be willing to let Red Moon members go without killing some to experiment?

Even if the information was possibly false, there would still be powerhouses willing to experiment. There absolutely would be! It might turn out that Red Moon experts wouldn't be able to right the ship either.

.....

The news spread in certain circles before Hou Xiaochen arrived at Rift Canyon.

"Yuan Shuo has broken through to Summoner of Spirit and become greater than Dominator. He killed Sun Yifei who was almost a Nova!"

"Big news, huge news! The old demon of Silver Moon—Yuan Shuo who dominated the martial world twenty years ago—has risen above Dominator. He killed the Nova level Sun Yifei with one stroke! His breakthrough was facilitated by Red Moon themselves—their divine shadows are the key to martial masters taking a step forward!"

"No wonder! Didn't I say long ago that Red Moon's divine shadows are different? Ying Hongyue raises them, but never lets martial masters touch them. It's always his supernatural members, and the shadows are withdrawn after a period of time. Can it be that he's retained his internal force?"

“.....”

“The world is changing! There’s a martial master above Dominator, which puts him on par with a Nova supernatural! The most critical part of his ascension is the divine shadows of Red Moon. They’re treasures that carry humongous power! Many Red Moon members have them—we only need three Solar level ones to break through to Summoner of Spirit!”

“Really??”

“Absolutely, it’s known through all of the provinces by now!”

“Just their Solars are enough? C’mon, let’s get ready. We need the origin weapon, right? Bring that with us. We’ll kill a few before other people do the same!”

“.....”

All of Skystar Dynasty was in an uproar. It wasn’t a notable feat to kill a late Solar—it wasn’t as if that level of powerhouse hadn’t died in the central region before. Even Novas died in battle.

But a martial master behind the deed? That was tremendous news. Not to mention, the martial master had broken the limits of martial dao. Many people and organizations hadn’t fully forsaken martial masters because they knew how strong this group was after they made the crossover!

Chapter 217: Blinded By The Sight (I)

Many organizations raised martial masters—the three great organizations were no exception. Crossing over as a martial master made for a much stronger supernatural. Thus, certain people agitated into a frenzy when they heard that a cultivation level above Dominator was possible, that it rivaled the Solar or Nova level.

It was common knowledge that martial masters generally advanced an additional level when they crossed over. So if they ascended as a Summoner, wouldn't that make them a Nova or even stronger??

If the stories were true and Yuan Shuo matched a Nova, didn't that mean he'd be greater than a Nova when he ascended and reach an ultimate peak that was yet to appear in the current supernatural world?

This was a possibility that no organization would let slip through their fingers. Chaos descended, the aftereffects officially rippled through society!

Yuan Shuo, Red Moon, blood pearls... These were the keywords for powerhouses of all localities. Much of the momentum was secretly incited by Hou Xiaochen. Countless organizations began inquiring into the accuracy of the news. They utilized agents planted in Silver Moon or the Night Watchers in hopes of obtaining the real facts.

What Hou Xiaochen leaked was... particularly true, especially as Yuan Shuo had improved rapidly after setting foot into Dominator of Thousands and killing Brokensky. Hou Xiaochen had indeed sent over a Solar level blood pearl. After a few days in seclusion, Yuan Shuo met Sun Yifei in battle as soon as he emerged. All of this was as real as could be!

No matter who it was, no one could find any problems with the information that circulated.

Yuan Shuo's disciple Li Hao was a student of martial dao for three years and entered half step Dominator after taking a Sunflare level blood pearl. He then killed Sun Moxian—a martial master who'd grasped the aura. This piece of intelligence quickly appeared in many factions as well.

A rookie of three years swiftly advancing to half step Dominator further confirmed the veracity of the information!

Due to this, Li Hao received a great deal of attention. If they couldn't find Yuan Shuo, then they could go to Li Hao. The prerequisite was that they killed a Red Moon powerhouse and extracted a blood pearl first. Otherwise, what could they do if he told them the method after they went to him?

Li Hao plainly didn't have any more—he would've used it a long time ago if he did. How could these organizations make the trip empty-handed?

.....

Further confusion engulfed the already disorderly Skystar Dynasty. Multiple Red Moon powerhouses vanished before the organization had a chance to react to the latest developments. Not dead—vanished. Their powerhouses vanished without a trace!

It was one thing if it was weaklings that went missing, but several Solars also disappeared without ceremony. There were no hints whatsoever as to their whereabouts or condition. It was only less than an hour since the information was publicized—a clear sign of how strong some organizations were in the shadows.

.....

The central region.

In a secret locale, an exceedingly handsome man with a slightly feminine cast to his looks narrowed his eyes.

“Bastard!” Ying Hongyue raged. If Yuan Shuo was here to see him, he'd laugh at the man for being too uptight. It'd been so many years, but Ying Hongyue still maintained the same appearance he always had. He was plainly an old geezer, but still played the part of young fresh meat.

As furious as he was, Ying Hongyue quickly hollered, “Hurry and withdraw all of our power in the various provinces. Everyone is to destroy our strongholds and go into hiding to await further orders!”

Damn it! His liver hurt from the force of his wrath. He'd simply responded a bit slower, but there was already no answer from several Solars in residence at other provinces. Why was that?

Did that bear asking??

Bastard!

Much of this had to do with the various larger organizations and the Night Watchers. How else would Solars disappear so easily? Origin weapons were also required, of which the small organizations didn't have any!

.....

Yuan Shuo's matter enticed many powerhouses to set course for Silver Moon. There would've been more to make the journey, but Red Moon suffered from their fair share of trouble as word spread. A portion of the heavyweights sought to hunt down Red Moon members, so fewer than expected came for the province.

Still, numerous martial masters set out for Silver Moon.

Greater than Dominator of Thousands!

Those yet to reach Dominator came with a reverential attitude. Dominators visited because the road ahead was broken for them. There was no path to walk! They could not cross over to the supernatural and there was nothing ahead of them. So now, even if there was only the slightest bit of opportunity, they desired a glance no matter how indistinct it was.

Yuan Shuo was gone—who knew if he'd actually gone to the central region? What they did know, however, was that his final disciple Li Hao was in Silver Moon. His whereabouts were publicly known and martial masters such as Yuan Shuo typically passed on his legacy.

Such was what was meant to be a martial master! They were afraid that they might die in the next second, so they passed all of their legacy onto one person. Rarely did one hoard experience and knowledge. Martial dao had declined, after all.

.....

Rift Canyon. The Night Watcher campsite.

Many people were nervous as they'd realized the issues at hand after the duel concluded. Yuan Shuo had broken the limits of martial dao. Just that secret alone would send countless people into a frenzy, to say nothing of Red Moon's revenge.

Hao Lianchuan's brows were deeply etched with a frown. The director said everything was fine when he contacted headquarters, but was everything really that under control? Did they move forward with the expedition? If they didn't, would the ruins remain theirs given the growing number of powerhouses that set their eyes on Silver Moon?

The more he thought about it, the more his head ached. He knew Yuan Shuo shouldn't have answered the letter of challenge! Now look at this mess! That old demon was born a troublemaker!

Hao Lianchuan glanced at the docile Li Hao. Will this little guy be a second Yuan Shuo? Is he a tiny demon in the making? Docile? Hah, he'd never believe that. The young man demonstrated some of the flair from a young Yuan Shuo when he fought Sun Moxian. He was quick, decisive, ruthless, and vicious. Sun Moxian was outstanding among martial masters, but he'd still fallen at Li Hao's hand.

Who would believe this quiet, biddable act now?

They stood in silence for a bit, until Hao Lianchuan broke it. “The director should be coming soon. Just us was enough at first, but looks like that’s not the case anymore!”

“Should we enter the ruins ahead of time?” asked a handsome middle-aged man. He wore a longsword on his back and was another Night Watcher deputy director. His surname was Zhou and he was a metal supernatural.

“We can’t!” Hao Lianchuan shook his head. “You weren’t here for the previous explorations, so you don’t know that we didn’t choose the 28th simply because it’s an auspicious day. It’s due to the fact that danger is most minimized on this date. It will be a lot more hazardous if we enter ahead of time! When we failed to pick the best time on prior excursions, it led to massive losses!”

“The 28th?” Director Zhou asked with surprise. “Is there something special about it?”

“Moonlight!” Hao Lianchuan hadn’t planned to keep it a secret. He only refrained from speaking about this to prevent it from becoming common knowledge. “The 28th is when Silver Moon sees the weakest production of moonlight. Some of the ruins’ mechanisms are possibly activated by moonlight! The weaker the moonlight is, the safer they are. You have a death wish if you choose to explore when the moon is full!

“The ancient city in the ruins has been buried for countless eons, but it still stands in pristine condition. Therefore, it cannot be drawing on internal stores of energy. Our joint consensus is that its inner workings are powered by moonlight.”

“Why not the sun? Wang Ming asked curiously. “The moon isn’t necessarily seen everyday, but the sun is. Shouldn’t the ancients have considered using the sun more when they designed these mechanisms?”

Indeed, why was it the moon? It was a very normal question, but anything from this fellow’s mouth bore hints of arguing for arguing’s sake.

Hao Lianchuan flicked a glance at him, but still explained, “Because the sun doesn’t come out at night. The ancients set guards on the city in the day and rest at night. Mechanisms are activated at this time to prevent trouble at night!”

That was why they needed a nighttime source of energy.

“Then are we free from the moon’s interference when we enter in the day?” Wang Ming still didn’t understand.

“Energy is accumulated.” Hao Lianchuan shook his head.

“So isn’t the sun better? It accumulates during the day, which makes its energy available at night!” He was really digging his heels in, but his rebuttals made sense. Hao Lianchuan’s theory of needing an energy source at night didn’t make sense.

The deputy director was stymied by the response. This kid has grown bolder after becoming a Sunflare!

“That’s just the way it is. Moonlight is most scattered on the 28th, which means the traps inside the ruins are at their weakest!”

Wang Ming wanted to continue, but quickly fell quiet when he saw an unfriendly look from Hao Lianchuan. Fine, you’re the big guy, whatever you say is right.

The group understood the 28th to be the most suitable time period. They would have to wait until the next 28th otherwise. However, it was difficult to say if the ruins would still belong to the Night Watchers after a month. Dismayed expressions spread across everyone’s face.

“Red Moon’s delegation is pretty much all dead.” Liu Long had been keeping quiet as he didn’t quite understand the situation. “Light Island is no more. Neither Yama, Celestial, nor the Sword

Sect are stronger than us on an individual basis. We should be in a better state than before. Even if they can call upon reinforcements, so can we!

“The Night Watchers holding our own against them in the central region means that we are still very capable in battle! If they redeploy people from the central region, our headquarters can do the same.”

Since they could maintain a balance before, there was no reason to think that their circumstances were more dangerous after killing some people, right?”

“The central region wants nothing more than for the major organizations to withdraw their people from the central region,” bit off the metal supernatural Director Zhou before Hao Lianchuan could say anything. “The borders being unstable is a border thing! The more people that die here, the better!”

Liu Long started and Hao Lianchuan rebuked, “Nonsense!”

“We’re all of Silver Moon, so what’s not to say?” Director Zhou replied coolly. “The dynasty has lost control over the border and has no time to devote to it. In the same vein, they need to worry about the border provinces declaring independence. Therefore, the more of a mess we are, the better! That gives them enough time to pacify the central unrest and slowly put their affairs in order here.

“The attitude from the central region is quite clear. It doesn’t matter how chaotic we get so long as we impede the enemy. However many and much we lose is not within their consideration.”

Liu Long looked on, dazed. He hadn’t heard of this before, so it was quite a blow to his worldview. The central region... wouldn’t support the borderlands?

Chapter 218: Blinded By The Sight (II)

Liu Long looked at those around him, particularly Hao Lianchuan.

“Director Hao, Silver Moon is part of Skystar Dynasty,” he said in a complicated tone. “Does the central region not care that we’ve run into trouble? The province is not undermined by unrest yet and we’ve always bowed our heads to dynastic rule. We recognize the government’s authority and consider ourselves part of Skystar. No one is calling for independence or a rebellion. Why has it come to this?”

Hao Lianchuan took a moment to gather his thoughts and answered slowly, “Perhaps it is not that they don’t care, but that they really don’t have the ability to. The chaos in the central region is preoccupying too much of their resources. They, too, wish for some breathing space.

“It’s good if some of the enemy is redeployed. Wouldn’t the government just be continuing the war, but in Silver Moon, if they sent more people to the province in response? As for Silver Moon itself... we are too far from the central region!”

Silver Moon was on the borderlands of the ninety-nine provinces. There were roughly twenty provinces that constituted the central region, demarcating an enormous domain. Silver Moon wasn’t immediately found outside that cluster of provinces. One had to draw a line all the way to fringe territory before reaching Silver Moon.

All that Skystar Dynasty wanted to do at the moment was to expel the various supernatural organizations out of the central region and consolidate their rule. They would then slowly turn their sights outward—it was a policy that conformed with keeping the bigger picture in mind. Otherwise, splitting up the army could result in losing the central region as well.

Their direction was correct and their strategy appropriate, but it represented forsaking the border provinces that remained loyal to the dynasty. For Silver Moon, seeking to migrate the smaller cities to larger ones was also a type of relinquishment. Not to mention, the central government was outright abandoning them. It was a blow that was immensely hard to swallow for many.

“We don’t need to pay too much attention to this,” Hao Lianchuan continued. “It’s not a bad state of affairs. All we need to do for peace in the province is to eliminate the enemies that come. The dynasty isn’t completely throwing us to the wolves. They sometimes send over supernatural resources and others...”

He still offered some placating words so that general disappointment wouldn't transform to anger. That would not be good. It also wasn't the best time to talk about this.

"Please hold your horses, everyone. All trouble will pass when the director arrives."

Hou Xiaochen.

The air of untargeted fear abated somewhat when people heard that the director was coming. Although it'd been many years since he'd taken the field, the director was a pillar of strength in many people's eyes. There wouldn't be much of an issue with him present.

Li Hao had been silently observing the crowd and came to a preliminary conclusion when he saw their expressions. Hou Xiaochen truly had a magnificent reputation in their hearts. I wonder if he won everyone over a long time ago because he wants to be independent one day? Or did he repeatedly disobey orders because he really wants to protect Silver Moon?

The young man was unfamiliar with the man, so he only half believed what the director said. Silver Moon's current straits were a result of dynastic indifference—that also stemmed from Hou Xiaochen refusing to listen to commands. In Li Hao's view, no superior would be satisfied with such a subordinate.

In the heat of battle, a field commander must make the decisions, even if they went against their liege's orders. The theory sounded correct, but the central region was caught in the grip of war and a general on the border refused to go back to help. This was no different from mutiny in the central government's eyes.

Each side had their own version of events. Li Hao wasn't aware of the particulars, so he could only stand on the sidelines.

The group was no closer to any good ideas after a while of discussion, so they decided to await Hou Xiaochen's arrival.

.....

They didn't wait long, but it wasn't Hou Xiaochen who came to Rift Canyon. Hao Lianchuan frowned and walked out of his tent when a towering presence shot into the sky.

A violet shadow flashed in from the distance and appeared in front of the assembly. The deputy director greeted it with solemnity.

“Violet Moon!”

Red Moon's leading representative in Silver Moon!

She wasn't wearing a ghost face mask and appeared to be a woman of moderate age—thirty at most. Her eyes were violet and lightning crackled faintly around her. A thunder supernatural!

She swept the crowd without a word and identified Li Hao standing at the back.

“Hand over Li Hao. You know the reason why, Hao Lianchuan!” she said calmly. Li Hao's master had slaughtered her delegation. Now that Yuan Shuo was on the run, she had to give her incoming superiors an explanation. Her voice was measured, but a wrathful rage brewed within. “I do not wish to declare open war on the Night Watchers right this minute, but that doesn't mean you can shelter disciples of the Five Styles!”

Hao Lianchuan cursed to himself. Where was the director? Why wasn't he here yet? Violet Moon was very strong—possibly stronger than Sun Yifei.

Red Moon had seven representative characters—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. Red Moon was Ying Hongyue, Violet Moon was ranked seventh. Her placement didn't represent strength as she wasn't the first generation Violet Moon. Regardless, her status was very high all the same. It indicated that the organization quite valued Silver Moon.

It wasn't just Red Moon, but so did the other organizations also treat the province with this level of importance. Too many powerhouses had come from the province's martial world. Of course, this was the reason they gave before. Now it looked like it might have something to do with the eight families.

In any case, Hao Lianchuan knew he was no match for her, not even when reinforced with the Flaming Phoenix Spear. Violet Moon would have an origin weapon on hand as well!

There weren't that many origin weapons in the world, but some could be found in every province. They were categorized by level of strength and special effects. The one that everyone was fighting over in the central province was less valuable as it wasn't as powerful when it came to offense. Someone as instrumental as Violet Moon was sure to have one!

"Violet Moon!" Hao Lianchuan rumbled. "It is up to the director whether or not we hand over Li Hao! I cannot make the decision in this and don't think of seizing him either. Otherwise, there will be war between Red Moon and the Night Watchers when the director arrives!"

"So what?" Violet Moon speared him with a frosty look. "Are you threatening me? Hao Kong is dead, Brokensky is dead, Sun Yifei is dead. How am I to explain myself if I don't take Li Hao? Since it's trouble no matter how I look at it, let things be a bit more chaotic then!"

She grabbed at Li Hao as soon as she finished speaking! Her palm was as if a thunderclap, it blotted out the skies and brought incredible pressure to bear on everyone. She really was attacking!

Hao Lianchuan roared with outrage and punched with a torrent of fire. A massive explosion forced him back—his fist was covered with lightning that sizzled into his arm. Violet Moon remained unmoving and made another grab at Li Hao.

She wanted the young man firstly for Yuan Shuo and secondly for his identity as an heir to the eight families. Violet Moon knew that she might be able to redeem herself if she captured Li Hao. At the very least, she wouldn't be reprimanded when she returned to headquarters. If she didn't take him, she would be in grave trouble.

Her Silver Moon branch had suffered too many losses. Several Solars had died, including the Sun Yifei who'd just rushed here. Many provinces didn't have a single Solar in residence, just Sunflares, because they weren't important. Several Solars had been assigned here due to the eight families and Hou Xiaochen. Now that she was the only one left, those upstairs would be beside themselves with fury.

.....

Li Hao stood impassively among the crowd. He simply watched the woman repeatedly launch herself at him and Hao Lianchuan repeatedly fend her off.

You want to capture me?

He wasn't afraid of death—or rather, he wasn't afraid that he would die at this moment because Violet Moon would not be killing him right now. Silver City's matter was not yet concluded, the eight trigrams were still there, and there was the stone door...

Red Moon might know all this. They needed him and might even be waiting for the next rainy season so they could extract his bloodline. Thus, they wouldn't kill him now. Li Hao simply committed this person to memory.

And if Violet Moon was here, where was Hou Xiaochen?

Some Sunflare Night Watchers joined the fray. One Sunflare was naturally no match for a Solar, but multiple Sunflares quickly muddled the waters.

Violet Moon snorted; something seemed ready to surge from her body.

Li Hao watched silently, making out an indistinct beast that was ready to rush forward. It should be her origin weapon. That made for multiple origin weapons that he'd seen in a short period of time. He looked at Zhang Ting out of the corner of his eye...

The mid Solar potentially from the central region also wielded an origin weapon, but chose to retreat from action and hide among the crowd.

Next to Li Hao, Liu Long remained put all this time. He simply shielded the young man with his body. Yuan Shuo was gone and he'd brought Li Hao here. Right now, he was the young man's last line of defense. It didn't matter that he was an ordinary Dominator, not a grandmaster like Yuan Shuo.

Warmth briefly touched Li Hao's heart. Not everyone was like Zhang Ting at a critical moment like this. Hao Lianchuan and his men were all resisting. All it would take was handing the young man over for trouble to go away, but they refused to concede. It would seem that the Night Watchers still possessed some shreds of dignity and hot bloodedness.

Violet Moon halted her attacks just as the thunder beast was about to materialize and took a few steps back. Two figures walked in from the distance at a slow pace.

It was a man and a woman.

Li Hao recognized the man—Hou Xiaochen. He didn't know the woman. An arctic expression hung on her face and she helped the director along to the crowd.

“Director Hou!” Hao Lianchuan greeted them with delight. The director was here!

No one paid attention to Manager Yu. She'd taken care of Hou Xiaochen for many years and people couldn't be bothered to gossip if there was another layer of relationship between the two. Director Hou had no family and neither was the manager attached. Therefore, whatever might be going on between the two was boring fodder.

Violet Moon also looked at Hou Xiaochen. Even though the man was sickly and needed someone's help to walk, no one dared take him lightly. He'd killed a Red Moon Solar right in front of Ying

Hongyue back in the day. Ying Hongyue should've been a Nova then, but had no choice but to witness one of his subordinates die right in front of him.

"Hou Xiaochen!" Violet Moon addressed with a cool hint. "The Night Watchers stick their hands in far too much. Are you also going to shelter Yuan Shuo's disciple?"

"Li Hao is a Night Watcher, correct?" asked a smiling Hou Xiaochen.

"Yes!" Hao Lianchuan hastily called out.

"Then that's that." He turned with a smile. "Alright, don't be mad, Violet Moon the third. Wait for your organization's powerhouses to come before saying anything else. Why ask for trouble when you're here by yourself?"

Violet Moon's eyes narrowed dangerously!

Chapter 219: Blinded By The Sight (III)

"Don't look at me like that," Hou Xiaochen laughed. "I'm not afraid of you. I am not afraid even if I am less than who I was before. I killed Violet Moon the second, and I did so in front of Ying Hongyue. You don't want me to facilitate another handover among you Violet Moons, do you?"

Violet Moon's face colored slightly. Indeed, it was her predecessor who'd died in front of Ying Hongyue that year! It was hardly a pleasant thing to bring up again, but it was true that this was why she was wary of Hou Xiaochen.

A figure shimmered in and out of sight in another direction. Hou Xiaochen chuckled when he cocked his head at it. "Revolution, does Yama want a piece of the action? Red Moon has lost a great deal, but Yama hasn't suffered at all. Are you here because you wish to even the scales?"

Spooky laughter came back on the wind. "Not at all, this is a misunderstanding, Director Hou! I just happened to sense the supernatural ripples in this area and came for a look. Since Director Hou has come, we take our leave!"

Several figures vanished in the distance while Hou Xiaochen approached at a leisurely pace.

“Violet Moon,” he said softly. “There’s been no sight of Celestial’s Half Mountain to this day. Are you in contact with him? Where has he gone? Or is he in hiding and preparing to break through?”

Violet Moon regarded him coldly and vanished on the spot, disappearing like a bolt of lightning. She wasn’t willing to exchange further words with Hou Xiaochen.

“That youngster has good potential. What a pity...” The director didn’t mind her reaction. “What a pity she’s not the most polite. When it comes down to it, I am her benefactor. I am the reason why she was promoted to the third generation Violet Moon. Shouldn’t she be thanking me?”

Ringling silence answered him.

“Director,” Hao Lianchuan took a while to say. “How come you’ve just arrived?”

You were slower than the others!

“I’m sick.” Hou Xiaochen glanced at him. “So I walk slower. Don’t you know?”

“.....”

Fine, it was an airtight excuse. But also complete bullshit! The director shouldn’t be in this condition even if he was yet to recover from his wounds. It was common for powerhouses to nurse latent wounds, but they wouldn’t appear in such a frail state even if not at full health. It would at most affect their strength somewhat.

“The director’s here!” The rest of the Night Watchers started hollering with excitement.

“Let’s see if that Violet Moon will dare be so arrogant now. There’s no place for her after the director’s come!”

.....

By Li Hao’s side, Liu Long also looked at Hou Xiaochen. “Don’t say too much!” he muttered to the young man. “This man... is not an ordinary person and isn’t as easy to talk to as Director Hao.”

He could joke around with Hao Lianchuan and even pull the wool over the deputy director’s eyes for a little bit, but when it came to Hou Xiaochen, the man was as his reputation. Taking a stand against Ying Hongyue all those years ago had crafted striking renown for him. Even their enemy, Violet Moon, didn’t dare remain on the scene and swiftly departed upon his arrival.

Li Hao didn’t say anything. He simply looked at the figure shaking moderate length hair, slightly disheveled from multiple days of travel, and looking a bit wan. Hou Xiaochen wasn’t too tall—he even seemed slightly shorter than Li Hao. His Night Watcher uniform looked brighter than the black of Li Hao and the others as it was more of a navy blue.

Hou Xiaochen seemed to be in his thirties, but Li Hao knew that he was more than forty. The young man wasn’t sure if he was fifty. In any case, he wasn’t as young as he appeared to be. The faint smile on his face and pallid complexion made for a very genteel effect. But it was this one who said last night that he was ready to declare independence!

As he observed Hou Xiaochen, the director turned to Li Hao. He approached the young man with a smile. “Yuan Shuo’s disciple? Heir of the eight families?”

Very few people mentioned the eight families, but Hou Xiaochen directly brought it out in the open.

“I am a disciple of the Five Styles. As for the eight families...” Li Hao ducked his head. “I’m not sure. I’ve just heard about them. Red Moon seems to think I am, but I’m not certain of the particulars.”

“Mmhmm, not bad!” Hou Xiaochen inclined his head and turned to Hao Lianchuan. “Send people to Yama, Celestial, and the Sword Sect campgrounds. Invite their delegation leaders to come for a chat. If they don’t come now, we’ll access the ruins and be the only ones to enter tomorrow!”

“Now?”

“Now!”

“Understood!” Hao Lianchuan immediately sent runners with invites.

Hou Xiaochen looked at Li Hao without issuing further instructions. “Do you have time to accompany me to the previous battlefield?”

“To the bridge?” Li Hao asked.

The director nodded.

“This way, director!” the young man quickly responded. He had no reason to turn down Hou Xiaochen.

The man waved off others who wanted to follow and had only Manager Yu support him. He followed Li Hao to the dueling grounds and didn’t say a word along the way.

.....

Li Hao was very curious about Hou Xiaochen, but he suppressed his curiosity. He wouldn't say what he shouldn't and wouldn't ask what he shouldn't. He was just a Sunderer in the company of the leader of the Silver Moon Night Watchers. The difference in their positions was great.

They arrived at the site before long. Hou Xiaochen looked at the far off grave, then at the sky. With a gentle cough, he floated into the air. He conducted himself as if he was strolling through a garden. The director occasionally reached out for a handful of air, sensing what had taken place earlier.

Moments later, he landed back on the ground, a bit emotional. "Old Demon Yuan did not quietly live out his days in the end! He set foot into Dominator overnight, then made it into Summoner a few days later. The amalgamation of five auras is impressive indeed!

"The fire heart nurtures the ape, the water kidney nurtures the tiger. So Summoner of Spirit is to nurture the five visceral spirits? Are the five auras used to summon the spirits of the five visceral organs?" However, the man then frowned. "But this way is not suitable for others!"

Hou Xiaochen was keenly observant, yet also felt that Yuan Shuo's path could not be walked by others.

"If this is the case, then the rise of martial masters remains a dream. The strength of one does not mean the strength of all!" He shook his head. "Not everyone is Yuan Shuo and not everyone can nurture five areas! He killed countless people to finally manage their melding and almost severed his own path to Dominator."

This path was not available to others! If that was the case, Yuan Shuo's strength was not sufficient for the world to rise in an uproar.

Hou Xiaochen seemed faintly regretful. A strong Yuan Shuo wasn't much cause for attention if he was the only one strong. He wished more that the professor had truly laid a new path for everyone, so that all martial masters had new hope.

Although Dominator was an obstacle that disqualified many people, that level was vast and unbounded. Martial masters improved ever more quickly with the presence of mysterious power and there was certain to be many who'd sensed the aura. Martial dao would prosper if everyone could become a Summoner of Spirit!

"Teacher has just set foot into this level." Li Hao kept his head down. "He is attempting to make it available to all."

Hou Xiaochen nodded and smiled kindly at the young man. "And you?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you should be setting foot into Dominator as well. Although your foundations are not on par with your teacher's, I don't think Sunderer is where you'll be content to stay for the rest of your life. What are your plans for the future?"

"I'm still young..."

"Twenty isn't that young," Hou Xiaochen chuckled. "There are twenty year olds in the central region who've made their way to Solar! With the advent of the supernatural and appearance of mysterious power, supernatural ascension is easy. Heaven Favored progress so quickly it feels like they're anointed by the heavens themselves. Even martial masters have it ten times easier than before if supplementing with mysterious power during their cultivation. You should have some plans as a twenty year old."

"Not to mention, you're Yuan Shuo's student and the heir to the eight families. You'll be caught up in a lot of trouble if you don't grow stronger."

"And another thing, everyone has their own intrinsic value. You are not my student or my child, but I am still willing to help you here and here because you are a Night Watcher. If the trouble you attract one day exceeds your value, do you think a stranger will continue to help you without bounds?"

It was a very pragmatic question. Li Hao pondered silently for a bit.

“My teacher is gone, so I am the only one with the core heritage of the Five Styles. I am also the only one who knows the process of breaking through to Summoner of Spirit and its theory.”

“Is that it?” Hou Xiaochen asked with disappointment. “If that is it, then there’s not much value to your knowledge. It’d be one thing if it was a road that could be applied to all. As it is, it seems useful for one person only.”

The young man fell silent again. After an indeterminate period of time, when Hou Xiaochen prepared to leave, he suddenly said, “I am the heir to the eight families!”

“.....” Hou Xiaochen smiled and turned around. “Weren’t you uncertain?”

“I’m certain!” Li Hao ducked his head with embarrassment. “Teacher says not to speak of it to outsiders, but I am! The eight families were possibly extraordinary in ancient times. They may have something to do with certain secrets and ruins!”

“That passes muster.” The director nodded after thinking it over. “Then it’s settled!”

He set out for the campsite, Manager Yu at his side like an invisible person. She didn’t say anything from beginning to end. Li Hao followed quietly by their side. He couldn’t read the director—or rather, he didn’t really dare look at the man. But the manager, he could see a thing or two. She was such an enormous sun that it almost blinded him.

Poor Hao Lianchuan!

The first deputy director was less than a woman. This Manager Yu was far more than met the eye, but she willingly lowered herself to be a housekeeper of sorts. It was plain to see that Hou Xiaochen

was the true final boss of the Silver Moon Night Watchers. Therefore, Li Hao kept his head lowered from beginning to end. He'd be blinded by the manager before even seeing the director if he lifted his head.

The young man thought about a lot—he was more confused regarding Hou Xiaochen than anything. Why... didn't he sense too much mysterious power from the man? Was he keeping everything in his body? Or was he actually a martial master? Surely not?

Numerous questions floated in his mind, but Li Hao chose to stay quiet. It was best to pretend he was ignorant of everything when he was with these shrewd, calculating personages.

Chapter 220: Hu Dingfang (I)

Li Hao reverted to a prudent and cautious state in his teacher's absence. It was always a good idea to keep a low profile in front of top brass. Thrusting himself into the spotlight might earn him Hou Xiaochen's high regard, but was there a need for that?

The young man wasn't familiar with the Night Watcher director and they didn't have a relationship. He didn't need the man to think well of him. All he needed was for Hou Xiaochen to resist a bit of pressure for him in the short term. It wasn't a deal between him and the director, but an agreement that his teacher had reached with Hou Xiaochen.

Thus, Li Hao judged that the director wanted him to display his value not because it had to do with whether or not the Night Watchers would continue to protect him. After all, would Hou Xiaochen hand him over if the young man proved uninspiring?

No!

Someone who spoke of independence would destabilize his own Night Watchers if he gave up Li Hao. Even if everyone understood that yielding the young man would save them a lot of trouble, it was an incontrovertible truth that Li Hao was a Night Watcher. Who would be loyal to a ruler who handed over his own in exchange for temporary peace?

Revealing some secrets would result in more resources at most, but that might cause him to pay a higher price. This was what Li Hao was weighing up. Therefore, he kept his nose down in front of Hou Xiaochen and didn't demonstrate anything special. As for the strength of a half step Dominator, the director might not think much of it.

Li Hao was not the Yuan Shuo who'd dominated half an era. He was just a rookie young man.

Having comprehended the aura of the sword and earth, Li Hao was in a state of strengthening his auras. He was also attempting to meld the two together. While it felt that he could break through to Dominator at any time, he was in no hurry. He would only become the next Liu Long if he did so now. That was the last thing he desired.

His teacher had fused five auras together, so he would have to manage at least two. That would ensure he could swiftly develop after becoming a Dominator, putting him on par with mid to late Sunflare or even peak Sunflare. He didn't want to be capable of defeating only a few initial Sunflares. That would be such a waste of time.

These were the thoughts running through Li Hao's mind as he followed Hou Xiaochen. He then thought of the ruins again.

The expedition should move forward, Hou Xiaochen and them won't give it up. There won't be any opportunities left if they wait until there's too many considering it with interest. Therefore, the excavation should still commence tomorrow. It's just that the people entering...

Li Hao thought for a bit. There might be a few more or a few less powerhouses. Would Violet Moon join the expedition after the death of her entire delegation?

It was just as well if she decided to attend. He rather hoped she would as that might mean he would have an additional helper at a critical time. As of now, Red Moon did not wish for Li Hao to die in the ruins. It would depend on whether or not Ying Hongyue had given different commands to Violet Moon.

I need to quickly begin preparations for the Summoner level after I enter Dominator. Teacher nurtures five auras—I can concentrate on one for now. Whether it's the one of the sword or of the earth, I just need sufficient earth or metal energy.

The sword corresponded to metal and the earth to earth energy. His teacher's fire heart ape had taken almost a thousand cubes of fire energy—the full vitality of a Solar—before it was satiated. While Li Hao had absorbed some energy before, he needed at least one thousand cubes for his purposes. All that he considered now was how to obtain so many cubes of earth or metal energy.

I need one Solar or five Sunflares. The Night Watchers are out of the question and only Violet Moon is left of Red Moon. Light Island is no more and it's hard to move against Sword Sect since I don't know their particulars. Celestial or Yama? Yama's the first target...

Li Hao thought of Yama—that organization might suit his purposes best.

I'm in no hurry to foster a water aura, but I can prepare for it ahead of time since Zhang Ting's a good candidate.

I know Li Dahu is an earth supernatural on the Yama side, but he's just an initial Sunflare. Their leader, on the other hand, is a Solar...

Would the newly arrived Revolution King participate in the expedition?

Li Hao's thoughts were traveling far upon the wind. He was just a Sunderer, but had his sights set on Sunflares and Solars. Anyone who knew what he was thinking would think him nuts.

"Li Hao!" Hou Xiaochen suddenly called out from ahead.

The young man swiftly caught up and kept his head down. "Director!"

A smiling Hou Xiaochen turned to look at him. “You seem to have a lot on your mind, are you feeling some sort of pressure?”

A lot on my mind? Li Hao suppressed a jerk of surprise. I’m just thinking things over, can you see even that?

“Not much, I’m just worried about my teacher.”

“Ah, Yuan Shuo... Don’t worry, he’s been through the trials and tribulations of life. He won’t suffer a setback for something as minor as this. Not to mention, he must have made preparations for his departure ahead of time. This was not an impromptu action.

“Do you have any good ideas for extracting and absorbing blood pearls?” The director talked as they walked.

“I wouldn’t say good ideas,” Li Hao immediately responded. “The director knows the way to extract blood pearls. Absorption is even easier. If martial masters take them, they will absolutely see an improvement. But the efficacy of ordinary breathing methods is a little lower. The Breathing Method of the Five Styles is more efficient than the norm.”

“Low efficacy?” Hou Xiaochen sank into deep thought. “Will your teacher mind it if others learn the Breathing Method of the Five Styles?”

“That won’t do!” Li Hao shook his head. “I don’t know his thoughts since teacher didn’t speak of it, but I cannot teach outsiders the method if he didn’t approve beforehand.”

He didn’t know what Hou Xiaochen was planning, but it was not a suitable moment to propagate the Breathing Method of the Five Styles. Of course, if his teacher successfully revised the method and turned it into something beneficial for nurturing the five visceral organs, it would be suitable to make available for others.

Just as Yuan Shuo had taught others the simplistic breathing technique after he created the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, this was the core of martial master legacy. They always kept something behind that was exclusively reserved for their core disciples. They weren't so selfless that they freely disseminated the heart of their knowledge.

"Mmhhh." Hou Xiaochen didn't speak further on this. "Do you wish to join the expedition tomorrow? The ruins are dangerous and your teacher tasked me to keep you safe. I won't insist on your participation if you don't wish it. You can stay in the canyon with me."

"Are you not going, director?"

"I won't be," Hou Xiaochen chuckled. "No one else will dare go inside if I do. I'm also worried that when I emerge, the Night Watchers will be no more on the outside."

He had to hold down the fort outside and wait for other reinforcements to arrive. His presence would be a deterrence. If he entered the ruins and lost contact with the campsite, the entire supernatural system of Silver Moon would be rocked with unrest.

"What about Manager Yu?" Li Hao asked.

"She won't be going inside either." Hou Xiaochen smiled. "She's just a civil secretary and not a superhuman heavyweight. Is she supposed to go inside just so she can be protected by others?"

Next to the director, Manager Yu flashed a faint smile. Li Hao nodded without saying anything. It's whatever you say, man.

.....

Li Hao parted ways with Hou Xiaochen after returning to the campsite. He returned to his tent. His teacher had been here this morning, and now his whereabouts were unknown. Would he recover from his wounds? How many powerhouses would come in pursuit of his teacher this time?

As strong as his teacher was, the rise of the supernatural meant that just a few more late Solars would prove too much for Yuan Shuo to handle, to say nothing of those beyond Solar.

His teacher had protected him before, being Li Hao's final backer even when facing enemies and assorted danger. Who could he depend on now?

Li Hao sat on a simplistic stone bed and thought over everything.

Moments later.

Liu Long entered the tent. He saw the young man sitting blankly on a bed, deep in thought. "Don't join the excavation tomorrow."

"I need to!" Li Hao lifted his head and smiled at the captain. "Why shouldn't I? Chief, do you also think that I should tuck tail after teacher's departed? That it's best if I hide so thoroughly that I find a place with no one else in it and take cover until teacher appears again?"

"That's not it, it's just that you're in a very dangerous position right now..."

"I know!" Li Hao interrupted. "Chief, can you do me a favor?"

"Speak."

"Teach me how to extract mysterious power."

Indeed. Li Hao didn't know. Liu Long might know, even though it was Yun Yao who oversaw the deed. The young man felt that it shouldn't be too hard and there should be quite a few who knew how. He didn't ask the Night Watchers as he felt more at ease asking Liu Long.

The man frowned slightly, but quickly responded, "The old methods were an extreme hassle—it's much easier now. After all the Sunflares and Solars that died this time, their bones are the best storage items!

"Also, you know about the storage boxes that are a recent invention. Energy does not disperse that quickly after a supernatural dies. It remains concentrated in the flesh and blood. If you have a storage box, you can shove it directly into the box.

"Break the flesh and bones when you need it, the energy will naturally seep out then."

Li Hao nodded. It was much easier with the storage boxes. In that case, he should look to bring one in with him.

"People from the Sword Sect, Yama, and Celestial have come!" Wang Ming rushed in as they conversed. "It looks like the expedition is going forward."

Li Hao swiftly walked out of the tent. There was a group of people in the distance. They hovered outside the campsite perimeter and waited for the Night Watchers to emerge. The young man trotted in their direction, too fast for Wang Ming to grab him.

"What are you doing?" whispered the handsome supernatural as he quickly caught up.

"To check out the fun!" Li Hao fobbed him off. More like to pick his target!

Earth and metal powerhouses were his priority pick. He needed to first understand which of these heavyweights fulfilled his needs. He also needed to determine if there were any hidden powerhouses that he needed to stay away from.

This was perfect, they all presented themselves to him here. They'd been too far away when teacher fought Sun Yifei. He could see balls of light, but not too clearly. Now they were front and center and very clear to his eyes.

Take Violet Moon, for example. He could see that she was very strong and carried an origin weapon. She was stronger than Sun Yifei, so she might be peak Solar or greater than Solar.

It wasn't likely that she was greater than Solar, so she was probably peak Solar.

He saw a similarly shaped ball of light in another direction. That was probably the Revolution King.