

Star Gate 291

Chapter 291: Return (III)

Li Hao grew frantic! Were mysterious power stones truly ineffective for the little sword?

He called upon the Breathing Method of the Five Styles when a new idea struck him. The sword sprang more to life and energy surged out of it—but Li Hao didn't absorb it. He directed the small sword to come in contact with earth energy instead.

There seemed to be some effect this time!

The little sword finally sensed the existence of this energy and took some in, but with an undercurrent of... distaste. It absorbed energy only for a little bit before leaving a muddled mess riddled with impurities.

Li Hao's eyes widened with understanding. Stellaris felt that the remaining tangle in the car was too contaminated! But... the hell, man! This was from a mysterious power stone, the most unadulterated form of energy in modern times. Many were those who couldn't bear to use the treasure. No wonder the little sword was never interested in mysterious power! It didn't even find mysterious power stones pure enough—mysterious power was probably unwanted dregs in its eyes!

The young man's head twinged with a headache! It'd absorbed some, at the very least. He could sense that energy was a bit denser in the sword now, but it didn't abruptly thrum with life like it had when absorbing the origin weapon.

"Ai!" Li Hao sighed with resignation. At least some use had come out of the stone. He could absorb the rest, it felt similar to regular earth mysterious power. If sword energy could distill the essence of power... would the little sword absorb whatever it extracted?

Hang on, I'm an idiot. The purpose of sword energy was to purify and strengthen elemental power. That process consumed significant sword energy to begin with. Even if the little sword was willing to absorb the results and recovered some energy, wasn't that just unnecessary consumption on both ends?

It would be a waste of both sword energy and mysterious power! He would reach parity with sword energy in the end, but be out of mysterious power. What was the point of that?

Li Hao dismissed the tempting thought and began absorbing the earth energy left from the fragments of the mysterious power stone. Wang Ming and Liu Long were already taking it in—what did it matter that they were not of the earth attribute? None of it should go to waste!

The young man cultivated all the way back to Silver City. Wang Ming drove the car and He Yong followed from a far distance without disturbing them.

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At the same time, as Li Hao and the others made their way back to Silver City.

There was a province neighboring Silver Moon named Near River. A large river threaded through it, one that traversed the entire province and a dozen others. The river covered a great deal of territory and its riverhead was in Near River.

The river was named Cloud River—a river upon the clouds. It stemmed from a towering mountain that seemed to sit within the clouds. The mountain was named Cloud Mountain. Enveloped by clouds and fog year round, it hosted few inhabitants and visitors.

An old man set foot on it today, covering dozens of meters with one step. The soaring mountain did not overtax his stride and he quickly climbed to a landing halfway up the mountain. It wasn't the cleanest as it was covered by fallen leaves and some rocks.

"Are you here, old friend?" called out the old man in a resonant voice.

A ray of sword light flashed through the air moments later as a sword fell from the sky!

The old man punched out with a mighty roar of a fearsome tiger. The fire heart ape manifested as well and dispersed the sword light with a deafening punch. A figure shimmered into view.

“Hahaha, the Jadelight Sword is as vicious as ever!” Yuan Shuo laughed uproariously. “Why so polite toward an old friend?”

A married woman less than forty years old stood in front of him with an arctic look in her eyes!

“You’re still alive, Old Demon Yuan!” she bit off.

“How would I die so quickly?” Yuan Shuo chortled. “Have you heard the news?”

“What?”

“That I’ve set foot beyond Dominator and become a Summoner of Spirit!”

“So?” she responded coldly, belying the stunned surprise in her eyes. No wonder he’d been so ferocious as to break her attack with one punch!

“So?” Yuan Shuo snorted. “So everything! Does the Jadelight Sword not wish to advance to Summoner and revitalize the might of the Silver Moon martial world? Will you continue to cower in Cloud Mountain and wait for old age and death to come?”

“I see that you haven’t given up martial dao yet. So come back out in the world and summon storms of blood and violence again!”

The old man cackled like he was possessed, a far cry from what he normally presented. There wasn’t a trace of the benevolence that he showed Li Hao on his stern face. “You’ve become a

Dominator and I see that your sword aura remains as impressive as ever. You don't seem to have let yourself go..."

"Out with it." The woman frowned. "Who do you want to kill and what do you want to do?"

"I want to hunt Red Moon powerhouses!" Yuan Shuo continued cackling. "And kill and strengthen ourselves! That little whelp Ying Hongyue is too big for his boots! Retribution is coming after he forced me to cower in Silver City for so many years! He raises a type of scarlet shadow that strengthens blood qi and internal force. All you need to do is eat thirty to fifty Sunflare level ones, or three to five Solars ones. Enhance your organs and I'll teach you what it means to be a Summoner!"

"Why me?" Completely indifferent, the woman looked at Yuan Shuo in an unfriendly manner.

"Why you?" The old man thought for a bit. "I have too many death feuds with those of the Silver Moon martial world. I don't have any other choice but you. The others are either too weak or they're dead, or they've crossed over. You've persisted with the Jadelight Sword all these years, it's a clear sign that your heart of martial dao has not died down. The key reason why is that I could've killed you back in the day, but I spared you in our fight because you were pretty. You owe me a life!"

"....."

Fine, there was nothing she could say to that! But was it correct to say that she owed him a life just because he didn't beat her to death once?

She supposed... that it was barely correct!

Jadelight took a deep breath. "Then give me a moment to pack up my things. Also, tell me where we're going..."

“Are you familiar with Red Moon’s movements in Near River?”

“A bit.”

“Then we kill the ones here first and make our way to the central region. If all goes well, you’ll be a Summoner by the time we reach our destination! If not, both of us will be dead.”

“I see.” Jadelight bounded upward and vanished from the landing.

Yuan Shuo guffawed. This woman’s figure was still so good after so many years... Ahem, what did martial masters think of this for? All that mattered was that her strength remained as before. It would be difficult if her abilities had declined.

The Jadelight Sword Wu Hongshan! One of the Seven Swords!

Three of the seven were confirmed to be dead. Only the Sky Sword, Earthturner Sword, and Jadelight Sword were still alive. Not even Yuan Shuo knew if the Light Sword was still around.

The Fists of North and South... The Three Spears of Silver Moon... There weren’t many of them left either. Qimei Staff was also dead, who knew if Deficient Leg was still alive?

Yuan Shuo thought of someone else as he walked down memory lane. Did Tyrant Blade yet walk the earth? There were numerous swordsmen and bladesmen in Silver Moon those years. Tyrant Blade dropped out of sight upon leaving Silver Moon. They could work together if he was still alive. That guy killed people in a wild torrent of violence and was unchecked in recklessness. It was beyond strange that there was no word of him. He was either dead or everyone who’d seen him was dead!

Wu Hongshan jumped down as Yuan Shuo ruminated, a small bundle on her back and a sword in her hand. She was ready to leave the mountain.

Her preparations were that simple! There was nothing to hesitate over after Yuan Shuo mentioned killing people and advancing to Summoner of Spirit. It was time to kill! Which of Silver Moon's renowned martial masters didn't have hands covered in blood? She was no exception!

"Let's go!" Wu Hongshan declared.

"You're fast," Yuan Shuo chuckled. "Martial masters are always quick and decisive. Who knows how many hours any other woman would take..."

"You say a lot of useless stuff!" snapped out Wu Hongshan. "I am not your match today, but when I set foot into Summoner, your head will fall under my Jadelight Sword!"

"Just listen to yourself..." Yuan Shuo threw his head back with laughter. "And my concern would be that you can't hack through my neck! To be honest, the Jadelight isn't known for its destructive abilities. You're not as strong as the dead Ambiguous Sword. I wouldn't call upon you if it wasn't for Sky Sword going to the central region!"

Wu Hongshan didn't say anything. The Sky Sword was the strongest of the seven. She was indeed no match for him. But another thought struck her and she said coolly, "Just you wait. My sword methods have improved greatly these years, and I've discovered a secret. My sword method is a family heritage—what we see is only the beginning!"

"A family heritage?" Yuan Shuo's interest was piqued. "Your sword method comes from your ancestors? But I've never heard that was the case. Your family isn't an ancient house of martial dao."

"I dug it out myself!" Wu Hongshan flicked a dismissive glance at him. "I didn't have money to bury my parents when they died in my childhood. I dug open the ancestral grave and buried my parents inside, then discovered a sword manual!"

Yuan Shuo was at a loss for what to say. Is that so? He really didn't know about this; she'd literally uncovered the secrets behind her sword method. Impressive! This woman was no kind soul or even a proper human, having dug up her ancestors' grave as a child.

He didn't say a word as they sped down the mountain, Yuan Shuo in the lead. It was an ideal day for killing people as the weather was clear. From today forth, his name would be known throughout Silver Moon and beyond the province. Everyone would know that he was back!

Wu Hongshan remained stony-faced behind him; her eyes brightened when she thought of some records in the sword manual. The Jadelight Sword was not an ordinary sword method, there were scattered mentions in the manual that it'd been an exceedingly powerful method in the ancient civilization. Its wielder was a follower of the Human King—it didn't matter who this king was or how strong he was. What mattered was that there was an even stronger sword method beyond the Jadelight Sword!

The method's owner—her ancestor—had a junior brother hailed as the Eternal Life Sword Sovereign. His feats in conquest were unmatched. I wonder if the Eternal Life Sword has been lost?

These were mere fragments mentioned in an ancient record, but they were sufficient to send Wu Hongshan's blood boiling. She would return the Jadelight Sword back to its former glory!

Chapter 292: Cultivation, Temporary Leave (I)

The neighboring province was too far away from home. Rift Canyon was the furthest that Li Hao had ever traveled thus far in his life. All he wanted to do was return to Silver City. It was small, but there was some warmth there.

He had his teacher after his best friend from childhood died. He wasn't too lonely even after his teacher was gone—he'd befriended the Demon Hunters. Everyone, including the captain, was nice.

The tattered car finally drove into Silver City boundaries. It was quiet as usual inside the small city. Few came to disturb its peace when both Li Hao and Yuan Shuo weren't present. At the same time, regular Darkmoons weren't able to leave the city after coming by for a look.

The sun had fully risen by the time they returned to Silver City. It was almost noon. There were no walls around the city as it wasn't an ancient metropolis. Accessible on all sides, anyone could enter.

Having just returned from the ruins, it took a moment for the trio to adjust to being back home. They warily considered the storefronts on the sides of the streets. It seemed possible that they wouldn't come back out if they ventured in.

The little car continued to the Inspectorate. Upon turning in, they saw Mu Sen before seeing anyone else. Was the inspector general waiting for them, or was this a chance meeting?

Mu Sen looked over the group when they alighted and smiled. "Welcome back!"

Liu Long inclined his head, neither enthusiastic nor dismissive toward the fatty. He treated his superior as a random bystander.

"Deputy Director Li." Mu Sen looked warmly at Li Hao. "I hear you're going to White Moon City in a few days? Congratulations!"

His sources of news worked fast. Not many people knew of what'd happened last night, but he knew ahead of time. He wasn't the inspector general for nothing!

"I'm just going there to be a figurehead. It's so much better being in your position, Inspector General!" Li Hao chuckled and quickly scanned Mu Sen. He hadn't been able to see anything before rising to Dominator, but now that he had and was summoning his spirits, he could begin to make out a thing or two.

The inspector general... possessed an aura! That made him at least a half step Dominator—Li Hao wasn't sure if he was a Dominator or not.

"Stop looking at me, Director Li." Mu Sen waved him off with a smile. "We're all on the same team in the future, there's no point in looking at me so closely. Allow me to reintroduce myself. This humble one is Mu Sen, a member of the Silver Moon Guards!"

“.....” Li Hao stared blankly at him. The Silver Moon... Guards? He only knew of the Skystar Guards—that was the government agency once with a mission of eliminating martial masters. It was said that Hou Xiaochen might be one of their three commanders. Hence, the young man was very confused by Inspector General Mu’s sudden mention of a Silver Moon Guards.

Liu Long frowned as well, but waited for the inspector general to explain.

“No questions, there’s no need for questions,” Mu Sen chuckled. “You’ll learn of all this when you go to White Moon City. It’s good that Director Hou thinks highly of you. You are both martial masters and we play for the same team. The dynasty knows how strong Silver Moon’s martial world is. Can it truly have been extinguished after twenty years?”

“Also, you’ll know after your visit to the ruins that the Night Watchers also own a troop of armor. You’ll know all about it when you join the Silver Moon Guards.”

Li Hao nodded with a smile and didn’t ask further. He could guess at the general outline of everything. There might be yet another organization inside the Night Watchers—or rather, a remnant of the Skystar Guards. It might be a force comprised entirely of martial masters and commanded by Hou Xiaochen.

Supernaturals joined the Night Watchers, martial masters joined the Guards. While it was said that Night Watchers did not accept martial masters, it only meant that martial masters stayed with the Guards so long as they were yet to ascend.

So Mu Sen was also one of them...

Upon further thought, it made sense as all members had to be at least half step Dominators. Except, was he speaking of it so openly because he was certain that Li Hao and Liu Long would both join? Er... Wang Ming was still standing here!

Wang Ming’s head swiveled quickly between the rest. Um... do I know too much?

Mu Sen didn't mind his reaction. "The public knows about the events of the ruins and Director Hou's background is almost general knowledge. Previous suits of armor have disappeared and he killed a Red Moon Nova... The Silver Moon Guards will probably come out of hiding after this. There's no need to conceal our presence, anyhow.

"It's not that we're that strong either, we're just similar to the royal family's Black Armaturas. There's not that many of us—less than one thousand. It's a significant force for Silver Moon, but a tiny provincial guard for the dynasty at large!"

"Did you wait here for us just to say this?" Liu Long couldn't help but interrupt.

"Not exactly," Mu Sen laughed. "I did want to greet you and give a brief introduction. The other reason was for Ole Liu. You didn't tell us when you ascended to Dominator. If we'd known, we could've sat down and had a few drinks..."

"I don't drink!" Liu Long retorted. "Out with whatever fart you're building up!"

"You really have a bad temper!" Mu Sen chuckled, completely relaxed. "What I want to say is that there aren't that many of us in the Guards and even fewer Dominators. We do have some, just exceedingly few of them. Ole Liu, Silver City might not let you stay after you've become a Dominator. Your mission might be different from mine and they'll send you to White Moon City..."

"I'm not leaving!" Liu Long frowned. He was going to safeguard Silver City!

"My word isn't law," Mu Sen chuckled. "Not to mention, you were simply worried about the city being attacked before. But now, everyone's gaze is on White Moon City! The Night Watchers here are strong and your team is here as well. You can fight for more opportunities and resources there..."

"Your personality and habits are just like Director Hou. Director Hou is being labeled as a traitor, are you sure you want to imitate him?"

“.....” Liu Long didn’t have a comeback. That... did indeed seem to be the case. Hou Xiaochen refused to leave when the central region sent him redeployment orders. If he did the same when White Moon requested his presence... Was he supposed to declare independence for Silver City?

“Alright now, this isn’t set in stone,” Mu Sen finished laughing. “I’m just mentioning it ahead of time. There aren’t many in the Silver Moon Guards and few Dominators. If you join, you’re probably... no, you’ll definitely be a centurion! Once you are, seek out my big brother for a chat. He has something he wishes to discuss with you...”

“Your big brother?”

“Mmhmm, the second-in-command of the Guards. He just barely made it to Dominator...” Mu Sen beamed merrily. “Be at ease, we’re not forming cliques. There’s only so many of us, what’s the point of further division? We eat out of the same pot, he probably has other matters to discuss with you. There’s nothing to be concerned about, would I act against your best interests?”

“Hah!” Liu Long snorted. That was hard to say, but he committed the task to memory all the same. “We’ll see,” he replied halfheartedly. “I haven’t decided I’m leaving yet. Silver City is my roots!”

“Whatever you wish, then!” Mu Sen didn’t care, he was just letting Liu Long know ahead of time and doing the man a favor so that he didn’t fly blind into a new situation.

“Inspector General,” Li Hao asked with curiosity. “What do the Silver Moon Guards do? Do they seize and arrest villainous martial masters like they did in the past?”

With the Night Watchers already in place and creating the Guards out of them... surely this group would be put to good use?

“You’ll know when you join,” Mu Sen chortled. “Good luck, Director Li. Do well. I’m sure you’ll be a centurion after two years as well. If your teacher comes back... I think the position of commander will be his!”

“My teacher probably isn’t interested...” Li Hao smiled.

Being a commander? His teacher wouldn’t want to be king! Granted, he would still put forth effort because he hadn’t finished everything he’d promised Hou Xiaochen after being rendered a favor. But the Silver Moon Guards... his teacher probably hated them with every fiber of his being. The Skystar Guards had been notorious back in the day; those of the martial world hated this army unit.

Li Hao didn’t care. Whether it was the Guards or Night Watchers, they were all the same. Hou Xiaochen might have long wished to separate himself from the system in creating the Silver Moon Guards. Who cared!

Mu Sen said nothing further and left with a few more words.

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“Don’t listen to the fatty,” Liu Long grumbled as soon as the inspector general left. “It’s just all talk! You probably have to go to White Moon, but I... will try to turn them down as much as I can! I don’t want to go there!”

He still wasn’t willing to move. Li Hao didn’t say anything. It would be very fine if Liu Long stayed. The young man didn’t want to leave Silver City like this. The eight trigrams, stone door, bloodlines, Red Moon... There were too many secrets here waiting to be uncovered!

How could he give up and leave? White Moon City was just a temporary shelter. He would return when the storm passed. If Liu Long stayed, he would be able to keep an eye on the ruins. The chief was familiar with that area.

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The trio entered the law enforcement building. It was eerily silent. There weren't that many left on the team after Li Hao and the others left. They didn't have any missions, so everyone was training in the basement. It was extraordinarily quiet in the building.

Liu Yan most likely hadn't come back. It was too dangerous to travel on her own. She'd probably followed the Night Watchers to White Moon City. They didn't see her earlier, possibly because she was so weak that she was evacuated ahead of time.

The three went straight for the basement instead of heading upstairs.

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As expected, everyone was here—including Li Meng and Hu Hao.

General wariness hummed through the group when Liu Long pushed open the door; it was quickly replaced with joy.

“Chief is back!”

“The director is back!”

“.....”

They rushed forward with great excitement, but their faces dimmed when they didn't see Liu Yan.

“Liu Yan's alive, she went to White Moon City.” Liu Long smiled. “We came back first.”

Delight brightened the group's faces again. Good, good, she was alive! The Demon Hunters shared a tight-knit bond. They'd worked together for many years prior to Li Hao joining. Having braved life and death together, no one wished to see a teammate die.

Chapter 293: Cultivation, Temporary Leave (II)

Yun Yao walked out of the rear of the basement, wearing the glasses that she was tweaking. She glanced at a couple of people, ignored Li Hao and Liu Long, and looked at Wang Ming. Sunflare? her expression shifted slightly. So fast!

Despite the big mouth that he was, Wang Ming hadn't had a chance to mention that he'd made it to Sunflare before he left for the ruins. They'd departed straight from Yuan Shuo's house and he'd remained in closed door cultivation after ascending.

"Captain Liu, Little Hao..." Yun Yao greeted the others. She didn't say anything upon hearing that Liu Yan had gone to White Moon City.

Liu Long inclined his head at the group and smiled at Yun Yao. "We collected quite a bit of water mysterious power on the trip. I'll give you some later..."

"No need!" Yun Yao refused. "We didn't go and loot is divided according to contribution. We didn't contribute, so it's inappropriate to split your mysterious power."

Liu Long didn't protest. The team sometimes ardently coveted mysterious power, but were enormous sticklers for the rules other times. They were unwilling to receive someone else's gains if they didn't participate in collecting it.

Liu Yan's desire for revenge had been too urgent. She wouldn't have dared to take Li Hao's blood pearl otherwise.

"Director Wang... is a Sunflare?" Hu Hao suddenly asked.

Wang Ming finally found his place in the crowd and beamed widely. “That’s right, I ascended to Sunflare!”

“Really?” exclaimed an incredulous Li Meng. “So fast?”

“It’s not that fast, very run-of-the-mill, actually,” Wang Ming laughed heartily. “I’m only initial Sunflare and need a few more days for mid Sunflare. I didn’t improve that much this time.”

Is he even listening to himself? Li Hao flicked a glance at the young supernatural. This guy kept a very low profile in front of him and the chief, but immediately swelled with cockiness in front of the team. Granted, Sunflare was indeed worthy of admiration from Li Meng and Hu Hao.

Wang Ming finally had a chance to strut; he’d been taken down too many pegs before. When Li Hao and Liu Long both proved to be stronger than him as Dominators, he wasn’t of a mind to throw his weight around. Neither did he have a chance to. Now that there were two Darkmoons in front of him, it was time to put on a show!

Wang Ming took the stage for the subsequent duration of the reunion.

The group listened intently to soul-stirring and heart-shaking renditions of events in the ruins. Occasional shock and horror crossed their faces. Black Armors were peak Darkmoon and could kill Sunflare. Bronze Armors were Sunflare, Silver Armors could kill Solars, and the final Gold Armor...

The handsome supernatural understood the limits of propriety, at the very least, and didn’t mention Zhang Ting’s murder. Hence, Li Hao and Liu Long couldn’t be bothered to keep him in check.

Li Hao wasn’t interested in watching theatrics. He rose and headed for the lounge in the back. This was where he would refine mysterious power.

It would be safer at his teacher’s house, but his teacher wasn’t home. Here was just as fine. Liu Long and Wang Ming hadn’t appeared overly strong in the ruins, but Sunflare was still peak battle strength for Silver Moon.

With the large amounts of heavyweight that'd died this time, there was a newly developed power vacuum among provincial supernaturals. If it wasn't for reinforcements from the central region and curious visitors from neighboring provinces, Sunflares would reign supreme in the province.

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Inside the lounge.

It was very quiet. The soundproofing was good. Li Hao thought for a moment, then decided to absorb earth and metal energy first. He'd taken in the least amount of these elements.

Mysterious power wafted through the air as the young man began absorbing energy. Sword energy purified mysterious power; there was enough in the little sword for his purposes.

Time passed, bit by bit. Li Hao's spleen began to strengthen as he digested more earth energy. Pure earth elemental energy continuously enhanced the spleen, the effects trickling down to the sword of heavy earth inside as well. The chains grew stronger, firmly locking the sword in place!

The more it was thus, the harder it would be for the spirits to break out of the organs. It was also a demonstration of the depths of his foundation.

Li Hao had made up his mind to infuse his organs with one thousand cubes each. He would supplement with the mysterious power stones if he didn't have enough energy. He wouldn't leave seclusion until the organs were in balance.

Time was of the essence since he'd promised Hou Xiaochen that he would be at White Moon City in three days. He had to go as that one was terrifying. Of course, there was another reason as well—a Nova level scarlet shadow!

Hou Xiaochen had said he would give it to the young man, then withheld it out of concern that Li Hao wasn't strong enough to digest it. The latter was very tempted by it—how nutritious would a Nova level shadow be!

He actually wanted to cart it back to Silver City before eating it. The diagram of the eight trigrams had been visible before when his bloodline was activated through eating the scarlet shadows. Perhaps that was the side effect of the shadows, but it took a very powerful shadow to do so.

The first time he saw the diagram had been through a peak Sunflare shadow—Li Hao had been very weak then. The second time had been through a Sunflare level blood pearl and it proved exceedingly valuable for the young man. He witnessed that sword stroke!

Now that he knew the sword aura, Li Hao felt that he might gain new insights if he could see that same stroke again. His comprehension might deepen to the point of grasping other sword auras.

Although such thoughts ran through his mind, he didn't delay his conversion of mysterious power. Not only was he strengthening his organs, but hard at work practicing the Nine Forged Force as well. All he could manage was six layers at the moment, which was a far cry from Liu Long's nine layers. He wasn't planning on relinquishing the Five Styles, Nine Forged Force, or Ghost Shadow Sword. There was just too much he needed to do at present and many areas that he needed to improve upon. For the moment, he lacked the time to carefully study and research the secret methods.

Tendrils of energy unfurled within the lounge as he absorbed them. Mysterious power permeated the entire basement thanks to his cultivation. The rest of the team ceased their conversations and focused on cultivating as well. Mysterious power would soon disappear into the air if they didn't quickly absorb it.

Liu Long and Wang Ming had both emerged from the ruins with their own harvests. They buckled down to work when they saw how Li Hao was making use of time and entered closed door cultivation to digest their gains from the expedition.

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At the same time.

White Moon City.

Hou Xiaochen's matters were known far and wide after one night.

The southern quadrant of the city, Night Watcher headquarters.

The Night Watchers that bustled to and fro from their office building today were a little nervous, yet also proud. Plainly, they knew of what'd happened at Rift Canyon. Their boss had slain a legendary premier titan with one move. It was unbelievable!

Because of this, everyone within the agency treated him with even more veneration. It also represented that more danger was upon them.

Hou Xiaochen had killed a Red Moon elder. Violet Moon had made it out of the province, would the organization send more people? What kind of strength would they be if there were more newcomers?

Violet Moon was the weakest among the Seven Moons; the other six were no slouches. Ying Hongyue was so powerful that it was horrific! Thus, the agency couldn't help the general air of unease.

The Night Watcher building wasn't tall. Hao Lianchuan was calculating the gains and losses from the expedition, casualties and fatalities, taking inventory of the spoils, recording deeds of merit, and calculating distribution.

The door to his office opened as he made notes. There were very few in the agency who dared barge in without knocking first. Hou Xiaochen had said he was recovering from his injuries in seclusion, so it could only be Manager Yu who was paying a visit to his office.

Hao Lianchuan knew the identity of his visitor without needing to take a look. “Is something the matter again?” he asked with a new headache brewing. There was nothing good if this grand secretary had come in person. She would go to Hou Xiaochen if it was positive news.

A faint smile appeared on Manager Yu’s face before quickly vanishing. “Yes, there’s people from the provincial government who say they wish to hold a four-way meeting! Us, the Inspectorate, the military, and the provincial government. Since the director is resting, you must be our representative.”

“.....”

Hao Lianchuan greeted the statement wordlessly. Me? What good am I for? Can I actually make any decisions?

“There are more visitors in Silver Moon lately, which will lead to certain unrest,” the secretary continued. “Although there won’t be that many large-scale attacks, scuffles between supernaturals, martial masters, and the like will cause damage and loss all the same. We need you to handle some of the powerhouses.

“A group of martial masters have converged upon White Moon City. They wish to see Yuan Shuo. If not, they wish to see Li Hao!

“Representatives from organizations, aristocratic families, and the nine ministries in the central region have come with a desire to meet Li Hao. They would like to discuss the blood pearls and secrets of Summoner of Spirit.”

Hao Lianchuan’s headache morphed into a migraine that threatened to blow his brains up!

“Is there more?”

“Yes!” The faint smile appeared on Manager Yu’s face again; it disappeared just as quickly as the first time. “The Tiger Wings wish to commandeer Li Hao for themselves...”

“Fuck that!” Hao Lianchuan might not be able to call the shots in the other matters, but he could in this one. “Tell Hu Dingfang to get a life! Heh, does he want to ask about Summoner of Spirit as well?”

“He didn’t say, so it’s hard to tell,” Manager Yu replied calmly. “Besides, will Li Hao know? Chen Yuhua was also at Rift Canyon, she might already know about the secrets of Summoner. It’s probably not for this.”

Chen Yuhua had been at Rift Canyon?

Hao Lianchuan didn’t say anything. Perhaps Yuan Shuo had met his disciple in the canyon. Perhaps he hadn’t. Hao Lianchuan couldn’t be bothered to be concerned. He dropped the last topic after his flat-out refusal.

“There are so many matters to take care of and Director Hou won’t give me concrete guidelines. This is difficult to resolve,” he complained.

“Director Hou said that it’s all up to you when he entered seclusion!”

Up to me? What does that mean?

“It means that whether you agree to these matters or not, it doesn’t matter,” the secretary explained more plainly. “The director will admit to it if it turns out to be a good decision, and you’ll take the fall if it’s not. We’ll remove you from your post if it comes down to it, it’s not like we can kill a Solar like you. Therefore... do as you wish!”

The fuck?! Hao Lianchuan wanted to curse out loud. He understood now. So these were Ole Hou's thoughts. He was damned... shameless. When push came to shove, it was Hao Lianchuan who agreed to everything. It had nothing to do with Hou Xiaochen.

Chapter 294: Cultivation, Temporary Leave (III)

The deputy director glowered and didn't want to belabor his unfair treatment. "Right, I forgot to mention that Li Hao wants us to fulfill our side of the bargain as soon as possible! We promised him five thousand cubes of mysterious power."

"The director did mention that. We're out of mysterious power and he's spending the next couple of days compressing the blood pearl. That is sufficient to pay off our debt. A Nova-level blood pearl is worth much more than simply five thousand cubes of mysterious power! Countless powerhouses are purchasing blood pearls these days, so Li Hao shouldn't find this unsatisfactory."

Very well then! Hao Lianchuan could only tip his hat at his superior—Old Hou was definitely a wily old fox. He'd planned on outright giving the blood pearl to Li Hao before, but was now using it as their payment. Despite the bait and switch, Li Hao would have no grounds to lodge a complaint.

As for how the young man would choose...

Hao Lianchuan put himself in Li Hao's shoes for a moment and decided that he would probably choose the Nova-level blood pearl. Those things were expensive and impossible to purchase. There might not be more than a handful Nova blood pearls in all of Red Moon. Mysterious power was comparatively much easier to obtain. There might not be another chance for a crack at a Nova blood pearl if the young man passed up this opportunity.

"Is there still no one from central headquarters?" Hao Lianchuan asked after explaining his reasoning.

Faint derision appeared on the secretary's face, an emotion that also pulled a vanishing act. "Aren't you aware of whether or not they're here? They won't appear today, however. Perhaps tomorrow, or the latest the day after. You'll be in charge of receiving them!"

Me, again? Hao Lianchuan wanted to cry. He didn't want this lousy task!

Manager Yu was more or less finished with what she'd come to say. She was about to leave when another thought occurred to her. "The director says that the carrot and stick should be used in conjunction. The three great organizations, other supernatural organizations, nine ministries, and even the royal family can participate in future expeditions!

"But there is a limit to the number of representatives they can send and they need to pay the price of one mysterious power stone. You can just release this information!"

Damn, that's good! Hao Lianchuan clucked his tongue. The director was going to run a business with the ruins! If attendance was as if before, then a two hundred person team would mean revenues of two hundred stones!

The ruins were not a safe locale. What if the Gold Armor turned out like the Silver Armor and regained its memories at a critical moment? Would it be a... Nova?

Perhaps not just a Nova!

Of course, many had seen the Silver Armor awaken. The three great organizations knew about the possibility, but others didn't. They would suffer enormous losses if they weren't prepared.

"I see!" sighed Hao Lianchuan. There was so much random shit to get to.

The most pressing matter was the meeting between the four provincial bodies—that was the key. They needed to sort their internal matters first before turning to face the outside world. Everything would gradually dissolve into a mess otherwise.

There wouldn't be much trouble with the military or Inspectorate; Old Zhao at the provincial government was the obstinate goat. He was harder to deal with, and perhaps the difficulty would be even higher this time if he'd already been in contact with those upstairs.

Hao Lianchuan knocked on the table as he contemplated. He suddenly smiled when a thought struck him. Picking up a communicator, he made a phone call.

“Tell Silver City to have Li Hao come as soon as possible.”

Li Hao!

He’d thought of Li Hao.

The young man’s strength, status, and reputation were mediocre, but he had a strong teacher. His teacher was a Summoner among martial masters. The faster the kid came to White Moon, the faster he could help Hao Lianchuan with a task.

If he’d known of all this developing beforehand, he would’ve brought the kid back instead of letting him go home.

.....

Silver City.

Li Hao began feeling uncomfortable as he continued to absorb mysterious power. Was something going wrong with his cultivation? Surely not!

He put it out of his mind as it was just a small aberration. It’d been twenty-four hours since he entered seclusion. Nonstop digestion had filled him to the point of bursting. His organs were being swiftly fortified and had finally reached an equilibrium of roughly eight hundred cubes each. However, his sword aura wasn’t much stronger.

Auras were hard to enhance through simple energy absorption. Battle was key as well as the strength of one's enemies. Killing those weaker wouldn't result in noticeable improvement. Battling powerhouses would lead to a chance of development.

The energy in the sword was much depleted, it felt feeble once more. Li Hao sighed and crushed another mysterious power stone. What a waste. This sword had already eaten three stones! He wouldn't be able to keep supporting it if this continued—there was just too much mysterious power that he needed to convert at the moment. Thus, there was no choice but to be this wasteful.

The little sword sifted through a flood of energy and picked at the little bit it was willing to transmute to sword energy. Li Hao absorbed the rest, so as to not waste it.

As the spleen strengthened, so did the other organs by virtue of their equilibrium. The earth sword was very stable in his spleen. The organ didn't rupture at its agitation anymore, a sign that the five organs were sufficient to support a flare up by the earth sword.

Prior to this, Li Hao's organs were damaged each time it erupted. If that continued, he would become like Hou Xiaochen and cough up blood every time he used his power.

The young man sank into deep thought when his thoughts traveled here. Eruption... cough... blood... It was a sign of damage to the organs. Were the director's organs damaged?

This was highly likely, if it wasn't an act. Internal damage was always the most tricky to treat. If Li Hao didn't enjoy the benefit of sword energy, he would be stymied with how to treat his organs when they were hurt.

White Moon City... may be the heart of the storm! I need to keep a low profile when I'm there. Li Hao once more felt that he wasn't strong enough for the task, despite having taken in one thousand cubes per organ. He was at most an initial Solar if he deployed his earth sword. He might be a little stronger if his aura emerged from his organ and could bring even more power to bear if he utilized the Incantation of the Blade of Blood, but that still wasn't enough!

Summoner of Spirit!

Summoning just one spirit was too weak. His most pressing priority was to consider summoning a second spirit after he'd strengthened all five organs. He was going to treat the sword aura as a general outline, so the sword auras of the five elements could be the major topics explored underneath.

I already have the earth sword, so I'm missing the metal, wood, water, and fire swords!

No matter what aura he grasped, it was enough to have a general attribute assigned to it. He could hone it later and incorporate the sword aura into it.

He'd come across the earth aura through a fortuitous occurrence and wasn't familiar with other auras. While he'd melded two auras together, he treated them as one. It was also harder to comprehend other auras after becoming a Dominator because mind intent had already formed. His original aura would hinder the process of understanding more.

I do have some thoughts regarding the water aura... When the Nine Forged Force reaches its peak, I should be trying to comprehend it through the waves. That's the water aura. Perhaps I'll sense another type of sword aura when I perfect the Ghost Shadow Sword...

Secret arts were often relevant to sensing aura. It was very hard to grasp an aura without fully mastering its secret art.

I've practiced the Five Styles the most—it's my foundation. The ape style is my most versed style and the fire heart ape is a kind of fire aura...

Of course, if he were to summon a fire heart ape, it would be a sword instead of an ape!

Li Hao ran through various thoughts as he trained, finalizing his concepts as he mused over them. The path beyond Dominator was up to a martial master's own thinking. Southern Fists had

mentioned that he'd refreshed his blood three times and enhanced his bones and meridians. That was also a way to improve oneself.

Perhaps he could ask the old martial master for tips.

Every veteran martial master shared some commonalities as a Dominator, even if they didn't locate the path to the next step. Improve blood and qi, strengthen the body, enhance the organs. Everyone was enhancing their organs, they just didn't dare brashly meld auras, lock auras, and nurture their auras without experience as a guide.

.....

The night of September 2nd.

It was the second day after they'd returned to Silver City. Li Hao had broken six mysterious power stones to convert them to sword energy. He finally reached his goal at midnight! All of his organs had absorbed one thousand cubes each, making for a total of five thousand cubes!

It was an astronomical number, but a sum that the young man felt was put to good use. He'd consumed seven stones in addition to the one he'd tried in the car. He had eighteen left—more like twelve, as some were larger than the others and measured beyond one stone.

Li Hao had digested most of his gains from the ruins. He didn't know how much his strength had improved—who had a handle on that unless they fought in battle?

.....

Morning of September 3.

Li Hao walked out of the lounge. He was much refreshed after a shower and a change of clothes. There was a new pendant around his neck—the chain that'd once held Stellaris now held a bronze mirror. It wasn't too big and came from Qiao Feilong. The mirror had the effect of concealing the presence.

Martial masters weren't typically exposed that easily. But once they entered Dominator of Thousands, they could easily sense the other's aura! It was noticeable to martial masters alone as ordinary people couldn't sense the aura. Meanwhile, no one detected Li Hao's auras because of this item.

He hadn't given it much thought at first, but didn't dare let the mirror stray out of sight as he came across more and more Dominators. Otherwise, those such as the Southern Fists could easily notice some difference in him. Even veteran martial masters turned supernatural like Hong Yitang had vaguely sensed something different.

Li Hao suspected that the bronze mirror had come from the stone door. It looked ordinary, but its function was anything but. It excelled at obscuring presences and might not be fully activated yet. It could be another origin weapon that was sealed.

The possibility occurred to him after seeing Zhang Ting's Shadow Snake Sword. The sword served a similar function to the bronze mirror, but the mirror could easily conceal presences without needing to recognize an owner.

Therefore, in Li Hao's eyes, the bronze mirror might be better than the Shadow Snake Sword!

The mirror swung on his chest and the Earthturner Sword was stuck at his waist. He'd tied Stellaris inside his boots with special wrappings. The storage ring from Celestial was placed on his fingers and completely devoid of energy.

Chapter 295: Cultivation, Temporary Leave (IV)

Li Hao's remaining mysterious power stones should be kept a secret, so he swallowed them once more. A martial master's stomach was essentially a storage ring when they reached Dominator of Thousands. It just couldn't hold much.

Twelve stones the size of glass marbles weren't too big, he just had to throw them up each time he wanted to use them. That was disgusting, so Li Hao urgently wanted to get his hands on a storage treasure. As the number of his valuables grew, he was quickly running out of space to store them.

"Li Hao!" Newly clad in a trench coat, Liu Long swiftly walked over after the young man was done freshening up. "Go upstairs for a bit. Southern First refuses to budge from the front doors—it's getting annoying! Also, you should make up your mind if you want to go to White Moon today or tomorrow. You've never been, so I think it's better to have Wang Ming take you there. I won't be sending you off.

"He's familiar with the city and his family wields certain respect and power in White Moon. He can help you with a thing or two, you won't be floundering in the dark. Also, Liu Yan is there too. Have her stay there for now," Liu Long spoke rapidly. "Two heads are better than one. Liu Yan isn't very strong, but she's still a late Sunderer and useful for certain tasks. You'll need extra personnel or people you trust for various missions.

"White Moon is not like Silver City. There's danger and traps everywhere. She'll be useful when it comes to errands and such."

"Chief." Li Hao didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "I'm going there to report for work and might be back in a few days. Why do you make it sound like I'm going up a mountain of blades or down a sea of flames?"

"Do you think White Moon City is a peaceful place?" Liu Long snorted. "The ruins are opening next month again—those who've arrived recently will not be leaving before then. Who knows how lively White Moon is right now? You're someone who makes people worry!"

"Chief, I never get into trouble and I have a silk banner of thanks!" Li Hao protested. "Everyone knows my reputation in Silver City! I love to help people, I'm diligent and hardworking. Go ask people in Classified Affairs—they'll all say I'm a proper and honest person!"

What do you mean I make people worry? This is an injustice!

“Since you know your reputation, keep living up to it!” Liu Long rolled his eyes when the young man mentioned the silk banner. “I know you’ve filled out your wings and have become stronger, but consider whether or not you can withstand Director Hou’s blow. If not, continue to maintain a low profile!”

“Don’t worry about Silver City, I’m here unless a Solar comes. But even if one comes, we still have some ways to fight against them.” The man lowered his voice at this point. “Do I need to take any precautions for the mines?”

“No.” Li Hao shook his head. “Just let everything proceed as normal.”

People wouldn’t be able to open the stone door even if they found it.

“I’m going home to pack a few changes of clothing and pay a visit to my teacher’s house.” The young man smiled. “I’ll see if there’s anything that needs to be packed there. If not, I’ll set out tonight and be at White Moon tomorrow morning.

“Heh, if Southern Fist stays with me, that gives me an additional bodyguard. That’s not bad, so I’ll take him with me!”

“Be careful.” Liu Long nodded and kept his voice down. “Southern Fist... may not be as simpleminded or foolish as he seems! Don’t be too trusting of others when you arrive in White Moon City. Someone like Hou Xiaochen isn’t taking care of you out of the goodness of his heart. There’s more of mutual profit and benefit in your relationship. Your teacher, yourself, and your bloodline are all main reasons why he protects you and looks out for your development!

“But don’t think that it’s bad either...”

“I understand all that, chief!” Li Hao chuckled. “He’s not my father, why should he take care of me? My teacher takes care of me because I am his student and final disciple. Our relationship is as if father and son. Chief looks out for me because I am your team mate. We protect Silver City together and have fought side-by-side. We are as if blood brothers. I don’t know anyone or anything at White Moon. Who’s going to look out for me for no reason at all?”

Liu Long grinned and patted the young man on the shoulder. This was one good thing about the young man—he saw things very clearly. It was good that he understood. Otherwise, over reliance on Hou Xiaochen would lead to problems sooner or later.

“Then I’ll be off, chief. Oh, right, I won’t be able to extract that energy for you while I’m gone. Just take in whatever you can and don’t be the death of yourself during this period. I’ll take a look at your injuries when I’m back!”

The team could only strengthen themselves through absorbing mysterious power or mysterious power stones while he was gone. Regardless, that would all lead to a certain degree of injury. But it was fine, he could heal them with sword energy when he returned.

“Don’t think that mysterious power stones are too precious to use,” the young man reminded. “Raising our strength is the true task at hand. The treasures might become someone else’s battle spoils if we just endlessly hang onto them!”

“Do I look like I don’t get that?” Liu Long couldn’t help but laugh. “Don’t worry!”

“Then I’m leaving, chief. I won’t be coming back to say goodbyes!” Li Hao waved a hand and breathed out. He would be back, so he didn’t want to say farewell to the team. Let’s just treat it as a simple field excursion.

After another wave, he decisively strode out of the basement. Yun Yao and the others didn’t emerge until the young man was gone.

“Li Hao’s going too,” Chen Jian said with some dejection. “Captain Liu’s gone, and Director Wang’s going with him. Chief, our team is getting smaller and smaller.”

“What are you whining about, they’ll come back!” Liu Long was completely unruffled. “Silver City is the heart of Silver Moon. You guys need to focus on cultivating. These days, Dominator... no, Summoner of Spirit is needed to properly walk the streets!”

He didn't look at Li Hao as he believed that the young man would be back, as would Yuan Shuo! There were too many secrets buried in Silver City. Just the ruins in the mines alone was something that master and disciple wouldn't relinquish.

.....

Outside the city.

Three people and three motorcycles traveled through the land. Li Hao and Wang Ming didn't drive a car this time. As for why it was three people... Other than bringing along Wang Ming who was very familiar with White Moon, Southern Fist had to be part of the group since he followed Li Hao like he was the young man's shadow. The two Night Watchers decided to imitate He Yong in riding motorcycles for their trip.

As elderly as the man was, he was very fashionable. Motorcycles were apparently all the rage in the central region. There were very few in Silver City, but some of its larger factions held some in storage. With Li Hao and Wang Ming's identity, it wasn't a problem to get their hands on two.

The three made fast time as they zipped over the terrain. The wind was strong and they picked their way out via starlight, but that didn't affect their conversation.

"This vehicle is nice, Senior South. Do they all ride these in the central region?" Li Hao was very curious about the central region as the name was a broad category. There were roughly twenty provinces in the center of dynastic territory that all counted as the central region.

"It's more convenient than a car and consumes less energy!" He Yong shouted back. "Also, my surname isn't South, so don't call me Senior South!"

Southern Fist was just a moniker. Whether it was Li Hao or Liu Long, both suspected that he followed them not just to look for Yuan Shuo. There might be other motives at play; he might even be keeping an eye on the eight families on behalf of the royal family.

But at the moment, He Yong chose to follow them openly. It meant that he didn't intend to harm or kill anyone for the time being. Granted, Li Hao wouldn't be afraid if that was on the man's mind.

In the meantime, it was sweet to have a free bodyguard and lackey by his side. How much would one normally have to pay in order to hire a Solar?

"This is a fine mode of transportation, it's different from previous generation cars," He Yong continued. "It only needs to consume internal force or mysterious power to run. Therefore, any martial master or supernatural who lays hands on one can use it!

"The central region is much more prosperous than you can imagine!" he suddenly waxed eloquent. "It's completely different from the border regions. If we say that the border regions are in an isolated state of partial innovation, then the central region is a completely modernized country!

"The structure of society there is different from what can be found here! There's even supernatural academies where countless supernaturals receive systematic teaching and development!

"There are also martial master academies. Although martial dao has declined, some of the old guard still hang on!

"There are also powerful financial institutions who rise quickly after excavating ancient ruins. The three great organizations that you know of develop much faster than you think in the central region! Although they've yet to form their own nation or truly take over a province, some of the provinces in the central region have started to accept them and even establish supernatural academies just for them!"

These words were as if another language. An incredulous Wang Ming couldn't believe his ears.

"How is that possible?!" he roared as he drove. "The three great organizations are evil! The central region is the heart of the nine ministries and dynasty, to say nothing else. How would they let the three great organizations recruit new members?"

That was impossible and shouldn't take place!

"Strength is king!" He Yong replied evenly. "You should know that the three great organizations are too strong to be fathomed. Take Red Moon for example, other than Violet Moon, the rest of the Seven Moons are all Novas. There's another group of Novas in their elder council! Ying Hongyue might even be beyond this level!"

"The supernatural has developed swiftly over the past twenty years and will absolutely enter the next stage in the subsequent three to five years. Starlight, Darkmoon, Sunflare, Solar, Nova... that's only five stages thus far. However, more than five supernatural locks have been discovered in the body. As more ancient ruins are excavated and more treasure brought out into the light, the central region will be vastly different from before!"

"Silver Moon dithers in the phase it was in twenty years ago. Truth be told, it's a bit behind the times and turning unreasonably obstinate..." He Yong sighed with resignation and sorrow. "But it's not just Silver Moon—this is the case in the entire dynasty other than the central region. There seems to be a class division developing between the border lands and the central region."

"With increasing powerhouses in the central region, so does their contempt for the border grow. It's called the border, but more like the savage, undeveloped frontier in their eyes!"

A... savage frontier?

Both Li Hao and Wang Ming blinked at the term. Why... savage? They understood the words, but couldn't comprehend the meaning. Why was Silver Moon a savage region?

Chapter 296: First Visit To White Moon City (I)

Some books introduced savage territory as places where the natives ate raw meat and drank blood! So that was the primitive state that those of the central region assigned to Silver Moon!

"Silver Moon's martial world was indeed mighty twenty years ago," He Yong announced loudly. "But with the speed of supernatural development, Silver Moon is now so far behind the times that it

cannot be seen. Other than Hou Xiaochen, there's only a few Solars barely propping up the province.

"Novas might be the premier existence in the central region today, but they might be replaced tomorrow! Anyone or any organization might discover the mysteries of the next level! There are even supernatural cities in the central region!"

"What are supernatural cities?" Wang Ming asked blankly. He didn't understand.

Or rather, he did, but he refused to believe it.

"Cities that are made wholly of supernaturals!" He Yong yelled. "Supernaturals are very mysterious in your eyes, are they not? But do you know how many provinces and people make up the central region? More than two billion! Silver Moon is a barren land for supernaturals, but one appears out of every one thousand in the central region..."

Wang Ming made some quick calculations. One out of every thousand meant ten thousand out of every ten million, meaning one hundred thousand out of every hundred million...

So there were more than two million supernaturals in the central region?!

Two million!

His jaw dropped and the look in his eyes was dazed. He knew a bit about the central region, but he'd never been himself. He'd learned a little about it through those who'd visited. Two million supernaturals?!

That... wasn't possible! How was it possible?

There weren't many Night Watchers in Silver Moon's entire Night Watcher system, including the various branches in cities. There were at most one thousand, and many of them were just Starlight.

The three great organizations, Sword Sect, Light Island, and some other smaller organizations had amounted to one or two thousand at most. That made for a maximum total of five thousand supernaturals in Silver Moon!

This was a number that included the military, Inspectorate, and provincial government. There was a population in the hundreds of millions in Silver Moon. The central region saw one out of a thousand being supernatural, Silver Moon saw one out of twenty thousand. It was a twenty times difference!

“Why is this?” Li Hao was also surprised. “Other than the Heaven Favored, supernaturals need to induct energy into their body. Not everyone can make the crossover. Perhaps Silver Moon does lag behind the times, but a difference of twenty times is too much! Why are there so many more supernaturals in the central region?”

Two million didn’t seem like much when compared to the size of the population, but two million supernaturals was more than the combined population of two Silver Cities.

Li Hao had dismissed the concept of a supernatural city. But now that he thought about it more, was it hard to construct a city for supernaturals to gather?

Supernaturals were domineering and ran the gamut from metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. If they were truly of a mind to, they could instantly forge a city in the wilderness. There were so many talents they could draw upon.

“First,” He Yong laughed to see the other two stunned speechless. “Silver Moon avoids the topic of supernaturals. Barely any mundanes know about the domain. In the central region, everyone knows about it due to the continued war. The supernatural world is not shrouded in mystery and everyone wishes to become part of it.

“Second, the key limitation to energy induction is reserve of mysterious power. The various organizations, nine ministries, and heart of the royal family are all in the central region. There is no shortage of mysterious power there and supernatural deaths are a constant occurrence due to endless

battles. Mysterious power emanates from their bodies upon death and many mundanes find themselves accidentally making the crossover.

“Third, the central region has excavated numerous ancient ruins and even discovered a few unpublicized caches of mysterious power stones. Some strategic locales in the ancient civilization were filled with stores of stones!

“Fourth, news travels extremely fast there. Supernatural technology is swiftly disseminated once it is invented, including new variations of the induction method. Silver Moon is still stuck on the method that you invented yourselves, the one that has yet to depart from the system of martial masters!”

Silver Moon’s Energy Induction Method was a revision of a breathing method. The central region used a wholly different method that was more suited for inducing energy!

“Fifth, that area is the heart of the entire Stellar World. Mysterious power is more densely concentrated in the central region. Silver Moon is a border territory, after all.”

“.....” Li Hao and Wang Ming sank into prolonged silence with the senior’s explanation. Was the central region... truly that strong?

“If they’re so strong, how come their representatives aren’t worth much?” Wang Ming quickly refuted. “Look at that Nova, he was stabbed to death in one move by our director! You martial masters are still less than Teacher Yuan!”

Stop running your mouth! You may have two million supernaturals, countless geniuses, endless powerhouses, but you still die in one move!

“Pipsqueak, you should know that Yuan Shuo is the essence of all martial masters from the previous generation. That’s why he’s so strong. There are so many Dominators in the central region and some have shut themselves away in closed door cultivation to search for the next step forward. All I can

say is that Yuan Shuo enjoys first mover advantage, but he's not necessarily invincible among his peers!

“As for supernaturals, someone like Hou Xiaochen is one in hundreds of millions. He might've been a Dominator in his early days and been a martial dao genius. He benefits from many years of accumulation as the supernatural has developed for only twenty years. However, this doesn't mean that he'll always be this strong!

“There will be geniuses or perverse talents in any place, but we can't draw conclusions from them that an entire region is strong. We can only say that those ones are beyond the ordinary, do you understand?

“The geniuses and powerhouses of the central region think that the border territory is beneath them. They're unwilling to come here. Keep in mind that some Heaven Favored start as Sunflare and they quickly set foot into Solar. They're Novas before long. A portion of Heaven Favored have walked far down the path of being a Nova and are within reach of breaking their sixth supernatural lock. They'll soon be the next level of powerhouse beyond Nova!”

Li Hao smiled. He Yong might be speaking the truth, but what was he saying all this and so much for?

“Senior, since the central region is strong, why care about Silver Moon? The three great organizations have stationed many people here and so are you also present. There are a lot of others assigned to the province, and now they're afraid of Hou Xiaochen's next steps. If the central region is so confident of swiftly resolving all issues, would it still care about Hou Xiaochen—a powerhouse of an uncivilized waste?”

Why be afraid of this if you're as strong as you say?

“It's not fear...” He Yong grinned. “Forget it, there's no need to belittle Silver Moon. It's our home, after all. Hou Xiaochen and the others are indeed remarkably extraordinary. I say all this just so you youngsters will understand that it is not a good thing to look at the sky from the bottom of a well!

“To put things bluntly, I might still only be a half step Dominator if I hadn’t left Silver Moon. My horizons have broadened after I left, so while I haven’t set foot into Summoner of Spirit, I still have some of my own unique experiences on the path of Dominator!”

Li Hao didn’t say anything; perhaps the man was right. Seeing more of the world and advancing one’s outlook could indeed make one more open-minded. Take himself, for example, he’d become the strongest person around a long time ago if he compared himself to the Demon Hunters. But after witnessing that stroke, seeing the back of that figure, and watching that bloodthirsty fiend...

The young man suddenly felt that even Hou Xiaochen wasn’t worth speaking of despite being so strong that he shook the world. What of it?

Nothing of it.

Li Hao wasn’t moved, he was just astounded at how deeply Hou Xiaochen hid himself. The man was indeed pretty strong, but to say that he was invincible? That was an enormous joke.

Whether it was his ancestor’s stroke or the ancients he saw, any of them would easily crush Hou Xiaochen beneath their fingers. If such a person appeared right now to slap the director to death with one palm, Wang Ming and the others might lose their minds with shock. But all Li Hao would think was that okay, so powerhouses like these exist in this day and age as well.

Therefore, he thought it to be a good idea to go out and see the world like He Yong said. However, was the world they saw so much more vast than Silver Moon?

Not necessarily!

Silver Moon possessed some very special ruins that Li Hao thought even the central region might lack. The stone door, for example, and the city of Battle Heaven. Were the ruins in the central region as impressive?

.....

Three motorcycles sped over the land. Though he operated a car clumsily, Li Hao was as if a fish in water when it came to this mode of transportation. Wang Ming couldn't extract himself from the world that He Yong had painted and was beginning to stew in self reproach.

Li Hao had forgotten their conversation long ago. So what about the central region?

He Yong kept an eye on them after his speech and grinned when he saw Li Hao drive on without a change in expression, as if the young man hadn't been affected at all by his words. "Li Hao, do you want to take a look around the central region? You don't have to go to White Moon City, you can come with me directly to Skystar City if you want.

"You should know that Skystar is the center of the world! There will be plenty of inventions that you've never seen before. Something you find utterly precious today might be a trinket there...

"There are many martial masters in Skystar and even more supernaturals. It's a gathering point of countless powerhouses. There's the famous Royal Institute of the Supernatural, as well as academies by the nine ministries. Endless Heaven Favored and representatives from the various large factions spar and exchange moves with each other, advancing the development of the supernatural domain..."

"Nah, I'm from a small place and have never seen a society like this," Li Hao replied calmly. "I might go in the future, but right now, I'm just a country bumpkin who hasn't seen the world even in Silver Moon. I've never been to White Moon City. Visiting the provincial capital is enough to broaden my worldviews."

He was a country bumpkin, a bumpkin of bumpkins! He'd only been to two other cities in his life, both of which were similar to Silver City. He'd never even been to White Moon City, a metropolis of thirty million people.

Was it very prosperous there?

He didn't know.

What was a place of thirty million like?

He didn't know either.

Chapter 297: First Visit To White Moon City (II)

It was already too prosperous for the imagination when inhabitants of White Moon City spoke of their home. Skystar City was too distant for Li Hao to fathom. They would have to cross multiple provinces to get to the city. It already took Novas three days of travel to arrive in Silver Moon.

Based on what He Yong said, they needed to take a plane, a fast car, transfer a few times in between, and then ultimately fly their way to the destination. He didn't mention flying the entire way as that would be the death of the Nova. Ten thousand kilometers was an exceedingly far distance.

He Yong shut his mouth upon seeing that he didn't draw any interest from the young man. He was just shooting the breeze, it would be jaw dropping if Li Hao really did go. Meanwhile, the latter wasn't interested in asking anything more.

"Senior South." Wang Ming recovered from his surprise and couldn't help his curiosity. His ego was ready for round two. "I hear that you battle constantly in the central region and that it's incredibly chaotic. People are frequently displaced from their homes and wander aimlessly. Why does it sound like such a thriving territory in your words?"

"The central region is too big!" He Yong chuckled. "The chaos you mentioned is just one portion and the battles are decreasing in frequency. They don't really affect the common people anymore. Even if a large battle erupts, it's not worth mentioning in the bigger picture of things!"

"Silver Moon has only thirty-some cities, but the central region has almost one thousand. The battle of a city causes a great sensation in Silver Moon, but who cares about one city falling into disorder out of a thousand in the central region?"

Wang Ming nodded and almost crashed his bike in his distraction. “There... aren’t that many twenty year old Sunflares in the central region, right?”

I’m only twenty years old!

“Um... there’s quite a few!” He Yong roared with laughter. “Of course, they’re mostly Heaven Favored. Some seventeen or eighteen year olds start as Sunflare in the supernatural academies—but there’s not too many of them. You’d barely count as a minor genius in the central region.”

A minor genius? Wang Ming struggled to come to grips with that label.

“Senior may be speaking the truth.” Li Hao was as composed as ever. He decided to speak up when he saw how much Wang Ming reeled from all of the new information. “But the supernatural academies that you speak of, those Heaven Favored, all live under the protection of powerhouses, don’t they? There’s not that many who forge their strength in fighting.”

He Yong didn’t reply.

“Silver Moon’s martial world boasted of a big reputation back in the day. Everyone said to go to Silver Moon if you wished to fight! Perhaps this is the savage frontier’s only advantage in their eyes—we’ve all seen bloodshed!”

Shouldn’t that be the case for those who ate raw flesh and drank blood? Whether it was Silver Moon’s martial masters or supernaturals, they didn’t feel much when they killed. Violence was something that existed in the depths of their bones. Neither Li Hao nor Wang Ming had experienced significant ripples in their emotions the first time they killed someone.

It wasn’t just them, but a common trait across all Silver Moon denizens. As numerous as the battles in the central region were, those geniuses slowly developed under the auspices of stronger protectors, didn’t they?

“That’s true enough—there are still advantages to Silver Moon,” He Yong chuckled.

“As a martial master from Silver Moon, senior mentions that there are many Dominators in the central region,” Li Hao continued. “That there are many even in the royal family, yet senior is able to find his footing amid the royal family like a duck taking to water. I think that has much to do with your experience from Silver Moon, correct?”

“That’s right!” He Yong replied approvingly. “You’re right on this point—there are plenty of Dominators in the central region, but it would be speaking too highly of them to put them on the same footing as us. Of course, the same can’t be said about later generation Dominators from the martial world. Your chief, Liu Long, may not be the top of the top in the central region. But your master, I, and any of the famous martial masters in Silver Moon during our times would be everyone’s martial granddaddy in the central region!”

That was enough. Perhaps Li Hao’s new bodyguard was a little too full of it, but it was true enough that he was respected in the royal family. How else would they let him run around with complete freedom and maybe even give him some missions?

Li Hao didn’t want to say anything else—there was no need to. The central region was too far away.

.....

It was one thousand kilometers from Silver City to Rift Canyon. It was another one thousand kilometers past the canyon to White Moon City, making for a total trip distance of more than two thousand kilometers.

The newly fashionable motorcycles made quick work of the distance. They had no problem driving one hundred kilometers an hour, but the group only just made it past Rift Canyon when the sun dawned on the 4th. It would be evening before they reached White Moon.

On the other side of Rift Canyon.

The trio was strong enough that they could carry the bikes down the canyon, ride them through it, and carry them back up. Ordinary people weren't able to accomplish the feat.

They were all tired at this point. Their bodies weren't tired after a night of traveling, but they were tired on a mental level.

Roads could be glimpsed in the distance after they passed Rift Canyon. They appeared very neat and well-kept; buildings were outlined in the even further distance. Those belonged to other cities, White Moon was still far away.

In contrast to the bleak desolation around Silver City, the environment was no longer as stark around these cities. Li Hao could even see people working the fields, whereas any place too far away from a city on the other side was devoid of people!

The three sat down on the ground to rest, drink water, and eat some cookies. Seeing that Li Hao was staring into the horizon, Wang Ming sidled over.

"The closest city on this side is Rift City—it's only a few dozen kilometers away from us. We'll pass by Flare City next, then ride another two hundred kilometers to finish at White Moon!"

Li Hao inclined his head as he'd read the map before they started. "There are thirty million inhabitants in White Moon, but I made some calculations after looking at the map and see that the city isn't that big. It's not thirty Silver Cities, at the very least. Don't you find it crowded when you live there?"

Wang Ming laughed, as did He Yong.

"How would we ever?" Wang Ming grinned with mirth. "You think too little of White Moon, Li Hao. Let's put it this way—the buildings you see in Silver City are mostly three stories tall, with tall being defined as six stories, and tallest at ten stories at most. But in White Moon, buildings that are thirty stories tall are everywhere!"

“I get it,” Li Hao chuckled as well. “You build upwards to alleviate the pressure of limited space. Doesn’t that still feel uncomfortable in its own way? Living among high buildings... that would make me claustrophobic.”

“I don’t think so!” Wang Ming shrugged.

“White Moon is decent,” He Yong interrupted. “Skystar City has buildings over one hundred stories tall and there are even supernatural buildings now. An earth Nova can create a skyscraper more than one hundred or even one thousand meters tall in a day...”

“Li Hao, don’t lose face for yourself when you arrive in White Moon,” Wang Ming continued. “It’s different from Silver City. There are a lot more cars and people in the capital. Another major difference is that while the Inspectorate calls the shots in Silver City, the provincial government, Inspectorate, Night Watchers, and military are essentially on the same footing in White Moon. The Night Watchers aren’t involved in the day-to-day administration, so it’s the provincial government that makes the decisions.

“What’s nice about a small place like Silver City is that there’s not really anyone we have to steer clear of. We should keep a low profile in White Moon so we don’t accidentally bump into a commander’s son or get into a fight with the director general’s grandson. Apart from that, there’s a lot of large business groups in White Moon that are developing in the direction of a consortium. They’ve recruited a lot of supernaturals too...”

Wang Ming was highly concerned that Li Hao would easily run afoul of trouble if he didn’t know about the environment of his new post, so he painstakingly introduced all of the moving parts to his colleague.

“Of course, no one will dare provoke you since the Night Watcher director himself has personally recruited you. At the same time, we can’t rely on the director for everything, right?”

Li Hao nodded in agreement.

“But don’t worry, you have me!” Wang Ming chuckled. “My family has a bit of power and authority to its name.”

Li Hao hadn’t inquired more closely before—he grew curious now. “Is your family also in the Tiger Wings?”

“Nope,” Wang Ming explained. “The local army is split into three divisions, the Tiger Wings is just one of them. There’s also the Silver Moon Division, which is the central division of the three. The other is the White Dragons, where my family is stationed.”

The White Dragons.

“Is your dad a commander like Hu Dingfang?”

“Ahem...” Wang Ming coughed. “Of course not, commander? Would I be part of the Night Watchers if my identity was that amazing? My dad... my dad isn’t much. It’s my grandpa—he’s the vice commander of the White Dragons.”

His grandpa was the highest ranked out of his family. It wasn’t a bad post—it was actually quite impressive! Li Hao just didn’t find it as monumental because he’d met Commander Hu Dingfang of the Tiger Wings.

No wonder the commander hadn’t recognized Wang Ming when the young supernatural greeted him, it made sense. His counterpart was the commander of the White Dragons, and he’d know the vice commander of course. But his grandson? That truly wasn’t worthy of attention.

“Hu Dingfang doesn’t seem that old, how is he the commander of the Tiger Wings?” Li Hao wondered, was it simply due to superior strength? Did the military only judge competency based on strength?

“Commander Hu is indeed young. He’s around forty.” Wang Ming thought for a bit. “That does make him the youngest among the division commanders. He assumed control of the Tiger Wings eight years ago, which made him a commander in his thirties.

“I’m not certain of the details, just that something happened with the Tiger Wings about ten years ago. I don’t know if there was a mutiny or ambush by supernaturals... but a lot of them died during that time. Commander Hu almost died as well.

“Unrest simmered in the Tiger Wings after that and continued for several years until the commander stepped forth and decisively quelled the disturbances with overwhelming strength. The army division was reconstructed and he oversaw it after that. Quite a few lost their heads in the process.

“Due to the deaths of their veteran leaders, Hu Dingfang enjoys a high prestige in the Tiger Wings despite his age!”

Li Hao pondered over the fact that Hao Lianchuan had mentioned Hu Dingfang knew the Five Styles and its breathing method... Had he improved so quickly to late Solar because of the breathing method? Who’d taught it to him?

It couldn’t be his teacher, his teacher would mention it otherwise. His senior sister?

Chapter 298: First Visit To White Moon City (III)

Li Hao furrowed his brows. He knew that he had a senior sister in White Moon City. She was in her thirties, but he wasn’t sure what her name was. Something... Hua? His teacher had mentioned it a few times, but always quickly changed the topic afterward. It was like he’d subconsciously mentioned it, then refused to speak anymore on it.

Hao Lianchuan knew why Hu Dingfang knew the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, didn’t he? Since the commander was still alive after gaining that knowledge... Was it out of lack of strength or another reason that Li Hao’s teacher didn’t kill him? Or perhaps he’d tacitly agreed to the commander retaining his knowledge, or maybe he felt there was no need to raise the topic.

Whatever it was, Li Hao nodded without asking further.

“Hu Dingfang is a good sapling from the military,” He Yong piped up. “But when it comes down to who is the most prestigious from the military in Silver Moon, that would be Commander Yu of the Silver Moon Division!”

The veteran martial master knew that Li Hao wouldn’t recognize the name, so he explained with a smile, “Commander Yu is an old general and has overseen the Silver Moon Division for thirty years. He was the commander-in-chief of the entire Silver Moon military when I left!

“He’s the one you need to keep an eye out for, if just for the fact that he was quite well known through Silver Moon’s martial world back in the day.”

“He’s part of the martial world?” Li Hao blinked.

“No, but he’s a martial master!” He Yong shook his head. “Your master dared to fight everyone and anyone when he rampaged through the land in his prime. After your master sparred with Commander Yu though, he completed a few missions for the military. We don’t know the results since neither of them spoke of it, but everyone guessed that he walked away owing a favor or that a brotherhood blossomed in the arena.

“There are reasons why someone might befriend your master after a fight. Or rather, there’s a reason why each person survives. Of course, he might not have dared to kill the commander as Commander Yu wasn’t an ordinary individual.

“We’re not too sure when it comes to that one’s strength. He doesn’t need to suppress the martial world through strength—the martial world and military steered clear of each other back in the day. But you can indeed pay more attention to him. We’re not certain if he’s a supernatural or martial master.”

Li Hao nodded.

“That one really keeps a low profile,” Wang Ming added. “But he does command a lot of respect. My grandpa usually mentions Commander Yu in a reverent tone. Out of the three divisions, only the Silver Moon Division has participated in war. The others aren’t as tested in the battlefield.”

“War?” Li Hao suddenly felt ill-informed again. “Why was there ever war?”

“Ah, you don’t know,” Wang Ming explained. “There was war roughly twenty years ago when a few provinces rebelled and wished to secede from dynastic rule. Since we were the closest, the Silver Moon Division received orders to march south—Commander Yu led his men in battle against the rebels. The dynasty’s army was yet to advance when Commander Yu defeated the allied army of three provinces. I don’t know what the particulars were, but there were only one hundred some thousand in the Silver Moon Division then, compared to five hundred thousand in the rebel army. It was incredible, he quelled the uprising with fewer numbers!”

“It also had something to do with the three great organizations,” He Yong added. “There were shadows of the three great organizations in that insurrection. They might’ve started the rebellion because they’d discovered clues of the supernatural domain, we’re still not sure why. It was better to keep a low profile then. But after that, people say that the three great organizations might’ve already formed then, discovered something important, fought over it, and that ultimately led to the three provinces rising up!

“The central region has some information on how Commander Yu defeated the mutiny despite being outnumbered, but it’s all classified. Based on what I know, he might’ve killed some of the organizations’ powerhouses. He’s the only one who knows the details.”

“.....”

The two filled in the gaps in Li Hao’s knowledge. Wang Ming’s good intentions were clear, but who knew what ran through He Yong’s mind? Some of his information came from the royal family, but he freely revealed them to Li Hao without any concern.

The young man slowly came to know White Moon better—it was a hundred times more complicated than Silver City! A lot of people who he couldn’t afford to offend were here and the heart of the province was here.

Other than current heavyweights, there were also others who'd retired from the central region. In addition, some had family members that occupied important positions in other provinces. There were numerous similar instances, making them all personages that Li Hao could not afford to offend.

Hou Xiaochen wasn't his father, and even if the man was, there were still existences that the sons and daughters of the powerful could not afford to upset. Hou Xiaochen was yet to rebel. So long as he didn't do so, his status in Silver Moon wasn't the highest.

Li Hao quickly committed everything to memory.

Wang Ming thought of something at the end and mentioned before they got into the car, "Oh, right! There's also the Night Watchers themselves! Remember that Director Hou is the biggest inside the Night Watchers, but number two isn't Director Hao, it's the secretary, Manager Yu!"

"Manager Yu... the woman by Director Hou's side?"

"Yep!"

Li Hao already knew that the woman was very, very strong! A Nova! He hadn't been certain before, but knew after Red Hair died. "Is she Director Hou's wife?"

"Nope."

"But they look very close." Li Hao found that odd.

"Who knows? Just don't say anything about it," Wang Ming chuckled. "Manager Yu's been taking care of Director Hou all these years, so she's pretty much fulfilling the role even if she's not..."

Director Hou doesn't personally get involved in most Night Watcher affairs, it's usually the secretary giving the orders."

"I would've quit a long time ago if I was Hao Lianchuan," He Yong sneered. "A woman lording it over me, hah!"

Wang Ming completely ignored the man. "Third highest is Director Hao. He's a nice guy and easy to talk to, everyone usually goes to him if they have an issue. They only go to Manager Yu if it's something unresolvable.

"Manager Yu can be a very harsh person, but if she says she can take care of something, that usually means she can! Director Hao... agrees easily, but can only resolve half what he promises."

Li Hao burst out laughing. Even he was starting to feel sorry for Hao Lianchuan. This was what his subordinates thought of him, which meant that his execution skills... truly were mediocre.

The motorcycles continued forward, not stopping when they passed by some people and towns. They raised a lot of attention, but no ulterior motives crossed the mind. He Yong looked wild and ferocious, who would dare run afoul of the hulk with the big beard?

.....

White Moon City.

A massive headache throbbing at his temples, Hao Lianchuan wearily walked out of the provincial government headquarters. Someone walked toward him as soon as he emerged, a young man in his twenties wearing an Inspectorate uniform. Its colors were a bit brighter than Hao Lianchuan's and the hems were gilded with gold. His hair was long and tinged with green.

Hao Lianchuan's headache intensified when he saw the person approaching him. Someone from Night Watcher central headquarters!

The central region headquarters had sent five people this time. Other than their leader keeping to himself, the others could be found all throughout the city over the past two days. The one in front of him was a thorny character.

Yu Xiao, twenty-six, male, initial Solar!

There were almost no Solars of twenty-six years old in Silver Moon, but plenty in the central region. There were even Solars that were twenty years old, not to mention those six years older than that. In this era, six years made one of a different generation!

Headquarters would certainly send strong personnel on a mission to manage the affairs of the border regions, but this guy was the weakest out of their contingent! It was clear to see that the central region headquarters was taking this mission very seriously. One Nova, four Solars—and two of the other Solars were peak Solars.

“Director Hao!” Yu Xiao approached with a hypocritical smile. No one found it false when Li Hao smiled, but this one’s rang especially false to Hao Lianchuan.

“Special Agent Yu!” Hao Lianchuan smiled back at him. “Do you have business with the provincial government?”

“No.” Yu Xiao continued smiling falsely. “I’m here for Director Hao. It’s been three days since Director Hou entered closed door cultivation, is he still not done? Why don’t we go take a look? Headquarters sent us with healing medicines this time that are quite effective...”

“Ah... I’ll ask Manager Yu when I get back.” Hao Lianchuan didn’t want to pay attention to him, but couldn’t fob him off randomly either.

Yu Xiao nodded, not that concerned. “In addition, headquarters is very concerned with Yuan Shuo’s matter! We hear that his disciple is about to arrive in White Moon City, possibly in the next day or two. Apparently he’s of the bloodline of the legendary eight families...”

“Mmm, that is the case.” Hao Lianchuan inclined his head.

“Headquarters wishes to know if we can obtain the method to Summoner of Spirit... Of course, this can be discussed. We just want to meet this Li... Li Hao and ask him a few questions. He’s a Night Watcher, so it should be fine, right?”

“That... should be fine!” Hao Lianchuan frowned. “But the special agent should also know that the martial world has certain rules. This has to do with top secrets and cannot be shared...”

“He’s a Night Watcher, not of the martial world!” Yu Xiao chuckled lightly. “And what martial world? That was gone a long time ago! Director Hao, let’s leave those stories in its day and age. If it really was around, would a bumpkin of the martial world be able to join the Night Watchers?”

He was quite speechless at the fatty in front of him. The martial world? What year was it already? It’d been twenty years since the supernatural rose and the martial world was long gone. The Dominators of the central world were just gasping for breath. Even if Yuan Shuo made the crossover, he would just map to Solar.

Were Solars strong?

Were they rare?

Novas were even dying in the central region, to say nothing of Solars. He, Yu Xiao, was a Solar at twenty-six years old! He would be a mid Solar soon. Although Yuan Shuo had killed Sun Yifei, Yu Xiao didn’t think of himself as less than Sun Yifei. That old man had long fallen behind the times!

Chapter 299: First Visit To White Moon City (IV)

Yu Xiao wasn’t much interested in the method for Summoner of Spirit, he cared a lot more about the so-called bloodline of the eight families. Even someone like Ying Hongyue cared about it. They were much more interested in Li Hao, whereas the martial masters might be curious about Yuan Shuo. Or rather, some of the higher level Red Moon personages cared, out of consideration for the entire organization.

He didn't need to, neither did any of his comrades on this trip.

They wanted to know whether the bloodline of the eight families could offer them anything. Or perhaps the eight families could bring them some opportunities and deeds of merit. Maybe they could bring Li Hao back to headquarters as bait and tempt Red Moon members to set foot into traps.

"I see!" Hao Lianchuan raised an eyebrow; he didn't flat out refuse the request. "I'll bring Li Hao to meet the special agents when he arrives."

"That's good, don't worry, we're all on the same side." Yu Xiao smiled. "We would never harm him! It's to his good fortune that we meet him. There's more treasures in the central region, and not even mysterious power stones are that precious if we see eye to eye..."

"Does Special Agent Yu have other business?" Hao Lianchuan had absolutely no desire to respond to those words.

Yu Xiao's brow creased into a frown that quickly smoothed itself out. It was irritating that this fatty couldn't wait to get rid of him, but he kept himself in check. "There is another small thing—headquarters sent us with a mission to audit the Silver Moon Night Watcher system. Everything from finances, personnel, and equipment needs to be assessed! I trust there is no issue with that, Director Hao?"

"Of course not!" Hao Lianchuan chuckled. "As things should be. After all, there's always been a problem with ghost employees, but we're not in that business. Audit whatever you wish and just let us know how we can help."

"Then I'll be frank. I hear that... there's some sort of Silver Moon Guards... There's no such subunit, we have no records of it..."

"Hmm?" Hao Lianchuan asked blankly. "You should ask the military, I'm not familiar with it. It sounds like a military unit just from the designation. Why don't you ask Commander Yu?"

Yu Xiao frowned and stayed silent for a long moment. “We’ll make our investigations—that will be all. Let us know when Li Hao makes it to White Moon City!”

“Yes, of course!” Hao Lianchuan watched him walk off, the smile disappearing from his face when the young man vanished. The deputy director sighed with a bit of disdain and resignation. How pathetic! I, Hao Lianchuan, am also a Solar. That kid’s wet behind the ears, but also a Solar. And the key thing is, there’s nothing I can say about his cockiness!

He laughed when his thoughts reached this point. Li Hao...

As he thought, everyone cared about the eight families. I wonder if the kid will bring some surprises with his visit to White Moon City. His communicator rang as he pondered.

“Director Hao, Wang Ming has come with Li Hao.”

“They’re here?”

“Yes, at the door.”

“Wait for me, I’ll be right there. No one is allowed to take Li Hao with them before I get there!”

“Understood!”

Hao Lianchuan hastily climbed into his car and sped for the Night Watcher headquarters. He’s finally here! I would’ve gone to Silver City myself to hurry him along if he still didn’t show up.

.....

Li Hao stood in the lobby of the Night Watcher building and looked around curiously. So this is the province's Night Watcher headquarters? It's so small!

He'd seen so many towering buildings along the way that he'd thought the Night Watchers would be splendid and dazzling. But... it was just a small, old building with a large yard. That was it!

Of course, there were many balls of light hovering throughout it. What a pity that Hao Lianchuan didn't seem to be around—but Manager Yu was. Her massive ball of light was blinding. Li Hao only glanced at it; he didn't see Hou Xiaochen. Or rather, he couldn't find the man.

He hadn't dared look too closely at Hou Xiaochen when they were standing face to face. The man was also blinding, but Li Hao couldn't catch a good glimpse of him when they were far away. It was a similar case to Qiao Feilong—viewable only when up close.

Currently, Li Hao looked around in all directions like he was a country bumpkin entering the big city for the first time. He wanted to assess Night Watcher strength.

There were no Solars. That was dismal. There was one Nova and probably one Solar that was Hao Lianchuan. Hou Xiaochen's strength was unknown. Was this all that the entire agency possessed to their name? What were they supposed to rebel with? Were their elites all with the Silver Moon Guards?

But that was a unit of martial masters!

Li Hao had thought that they were concealing some strength. Here, at the very least, revealed no signs of hidden strength.

He busily peered in all directions and suddenly looked back as Wang Ming greeted his acquaintances. A woman not quite middle-aged walked into the lobby. She grew agitated when she saw the young man. "Are you Li Hao?"

Surprised, Li Hao nodded dumbly.

“You’re finally here...” she wanted to speak further when a fatty quickly rushed over from the back.

“Little Hao, you’re finally here!” Hao Lianchuan roared with laughter and drew Li Hao into a hug.

The young man was completely baffled. What was he being so enthusiastic for?

“Ignore the woman!” Hao Lianchuan whispered. “She’s one of Hu Dingfang’s—his wife’s guard, to be exact. You’ve just arrived in White Moon, so don’t get involved in anything!”

Li Hao didn’t say anything, but new comprehension was upon him. Hu Dingfang’s wife’s guard was not Hu Dingfang’s guard. The Breathing Method of the Five Styles... Senior sister?

I get it!

Hu Dingfang was his senior sister’s husband and she’d taught the secret art to outsiders. However, teacher had not agreed to anyone not of his discipline learning that secret art.

Li Hao understood a great deal in this moment. He was a bit stiff as he was unable to react—he seemed to want to say something, but Hao Lianchuan was dragging him upstairs. He waved to the woman, as if bidding farewell.

Meanwhile, Hao Lianchuan cursed to himself. The hell, kid! What are you doing dragging me off for? Do you even know where my office is? And you’ve got some decent strength in those arms!

“Director Hao, I need to officially report to my station. What are you doing dragging me off like this...” Li Hao continued to be dragged upstairs and said naively, “Director Hao, no, Uncle Hao, I can’t stay at your place even though I haven’t been assigned to a dorm yet. It’s not appropriate...”

When the hell did I ever invite you to my house?! Hao Lianchuan rolled his eyes. What'd gotten into the kid today?

The two quickly left everyone's line of sight; Li Hao recovered his smile. "Director Hao, I was completely terrified of this trip. Thank goodness you're a familiar face! I feel like I see my dead father when I see you..."

Oh for... Hao Lianchuan was completely speechless, but broke into a wide grin when he looked at Li Hao again. "Well done!"

"....." Li Hao smiled bashfully when he determined that Hao Lianchuan truly seemed to be complimenting him. "Not at all. I'm not listening to anyone but you, Director Hao! You're my parent in White Moon, a person more worthy of respect than Director Hou. I'll come to you with all my issues in the future!"

"Are you latching onto me?" Hao Lianchuan's grin turned stiff.

"No!" Li Hao chuckled. "I truly feel close to you, Director Hao. You're family! I was scared stiff just now, but relaxed when I saw you. It felt like I was at home!"

Hao Lianchuan was utterly speechless. I still thought too little of this guy. He wasn't this shameless before, why does it seem like he'd gotten worse after coming here?

"Cut the bullshit, let's go and sit in my office. Director Hou isn't out of seclusion yet, you can meet him when he's out..."

"Whatever Uncle Hao says!" Li Hao bobbed his head rapidly. Your wish is my command! I don't know anyone or anything in White Moon. Although Ole Wang says I can go to him for anything, who's giving a Sunflare the time of the day? A Solar is better, and one with status and position! It's best to get close to Ole Hao as soon as possible.

Li Hao and Hao Lianchuan looked at each other with a smile. As Hao Lianchuan grinned, he suddenly sighed.

“You seem so much like my dead son!”

Li Hao’s expression stiffened. Hao Lianchuan... wut? The heck you going on about? Wang Ming never mentioned this! It looks like nothing true passes through this man’s lips either.

.....

The name of Li Hao was quickly known throughout certain circles after the young man arrived at the provincial capital.

Heir to the eight families, Yuan Shuo’s disciple. These two identities were sufficient for him to draw immediate attention upon entering the city, even if Li Hao was just a Sunderer. He was a common topic between powerhouses, as was news that he and Hao Lianchuan were like father and son. It was quite surprising—since when were Hao Lianchuan and Li Hao so close?

Did the deputy director specifically visit Silver City a few times to bring Li Hao to his side? Apparently the two wouldn’t let go of each other when they met again...

The news caused frowns to cross certain faces.

.....

There were six floors to the Night Watcher building. Hou Xiaochen was on the sixth.

Hao Lianchuan's office was on the fifth floor, along with the offices of the other four deputy directors. One principal and five deputies formed the Night Watcher system. Li Hao knew two of the other four—metal supernatural Director Zhou and water supernatural Director He.

However, none of them seemed to stay at the headquarters normally. Being the first deputy director, Hao Lianchuan was the main designee for all tasks since Hou Xiaochen couldn't bother himself. Hence, he was the main occupant of the fifth floor.

"You saw the first floor just now," Hao Lianchuan introduced as they went upstairs. "It's the receiving hall. The second floor is our archives, the third floor the financial office. The fourth floor is where the secretary and driver rests, the fifth and sixth floors are offices..."

"Where's... everyone else?" The more Li Hao listened to the layout, the odder he found it. No wonder this place was so small. Was there nothing else apart from the archives, finance, secretary, and directors' offices?

"They all have their own missions. Do Night Watchers stay at home everyday?" Hao Lianchuan chuckled. "There is much afoot in White Moon. There are a lot of residents and the Night Watchers need to go on patrol as well. This is simply headquarters. Night Watchers can go home if they're off duty or to the Inspectorate. There's a place for Night Watchers to rest there too. We're not too strict here, people don't need to clock in and out. I hear that you did that everyday in Silver City—you're a weird one!"

Chapter 300: Being a Kind Person (I)

When were supernaturals ever willing to have their movements restricted? Hence, Night Watcher management was quite lax. Other than emergency missions, all that Night Watchers needed to do was to complete their regular duties. Someone who clocked in and out like Li Hao was a very strange entity from the perspective of the Night Watcher system.

Fine then!

Li Hao didn't say anything. Silver City Night Watchers were much more loyal to their duties. They were at the law enforcement building everyday; almost no one went home. Here in White Moon City, going home was the norm.

Hao Lianchuan and Li Hao swiftly reached the fifth floor. The sight that greeted them from the staircase was... truly modest. There were only a few offices on the entire floor, not much else. Li Hao peeked into the other offices when the two walked past them. Only one seemed occupied, the others were empty.

Hao Lianchuan's office was located at the end of the floor. As the two proceeded down the hallway, the deputy director pointed upward. "Director Hou's office is upstairs. He has an entire floor to himself and it's much more luxurious than mine. It comes with a rest lounge, I don't have that!"

Li Hao awkwardly lowered his voice, "There's nine of us Silver City Night Watchers and we utilize an entire building!"

Man, I pity you! My office in Silver City has a rest lounge. Poor you, yours is really tiny, it's smaller than my own!

"Space is at a premium in White Moon," Hao Lianchuan chuckled. "We should cut down where we can as we're not that flush with funding. Three thousand star coins will purchase one square meter in Silver City, and that's for a high-end house. Add a zero to that in White Moon. It's exactly ten times higher!"

Thirty thousand per square meter?

Li Hao thought for a bit and nodded in agreement. "That's really expensive! No wonder our headquarters is so small."

The average Silver City salary was a little over one thousand coins a month. They had to work three years to afford one square meter in White Moon. Even houses were beyond one's financial ability these days!

Li Hao started making requests when he followed Hao Lianchuan into the man's office. "Director Hao, I am a commissioner inspector in Silver City, but a low rank one. Logically speaking, I should

get a promotion with my visit to White Moon, right? Will I become a high rank commissioner inspector or a chief commissioner?"

Hao Lianchuan was rather put out and walked to his desk without answering. He glanced at Li Hao and sighed after a long moment, "Are you pretending, or do you mean it?"

"What is there to pretend? Of course I mean it!" The young man grinned. Who wouldn't want a promotion? What would he pretend for?

"To be honest, there aren't many Night Watchers who care about their rank," Hao Lianchuan said slowly.

"That's because they know too little!" Li Hao replied brusquely. "Ranks are very important! The dynasty is still the dynasty and the nine ministries are still the nine ministries. So long as the dynasty and nine ministries still exist, the ranks that everyone thinks aren't important are very important!"

"The dynasty adheres to a strict hierarchy. If a commissioner inspector contradicts a chief commissioner, that's insubordination. No matter how strong one is, it's up to the chief commissioner to determine if the incident is important.

"In the same vein, I can kill an inspector with one punch if they show disrespect to me. After that, I can present a just and proper explanation to the relevant departments that the person was guilty of insubordination. Not only will I not be punished, but I'll be recorded with a mark of merit!"

"No one will have a reason to make trouble for me so long as the dynasty has yet to collapse and follows these rules. The caveat is, of course, that we still operate within this system!"

Hao Lianchuan laughed, a true laugh this time. He indicated for the young man to sit and nodded merrily.

“Good thinking! I have to say, you make a lot of sense. It’s just that everyone looks to the fist and strength these days.”

“That’s because we’re still in a stage of fighting and killing each other.” Li Hao grinned. “Everyone will naturally meld into the system when peace is upon us again.”

“You seriously have a fondness for bureaucracy...” Hao Lianchuan smiled happily. Li Hao was very interesting sometimes. “What do you want then?”

“Chief commissioner!” Li Hao said boldly. “There are two levels to this rank, the first is lower level like Director Liu Long and Senior Huang Yun. The other is higher level like you, deputy director. I just want the lower level one. That way, no one will rank higher than me in the entire Silver Moon Inspectorate system other than the six directors.”

Of the six directors, five were high level directors. Hou Xiaochen was an even higher rank. At his grade, he was called a peacemaker commissioner, often shortened to peacemaker. They were in charge of making peace within a province as well as bringing tranquility and comfort to its denizens. Someone of this level was a first level provincial official that was part of the central court. In Silver Moon, only the leaders of the four government organizations were of this level.

Hao Lianchuan looked at Li Hao. This kid obviously has quite a few thoughts running through his mind.

“It’s not impossible for you to be promoted to chief commissioner.” He smiled after a while. “Under normal circumstances, we require those of this level to be Dominators or Sunflares. Liu Long was an exception as he was the head of the Silver City security. How about you?”

“I think I can spar with the Sunflare level Wang Ming.” Li Hao smiled.

“Oh, you!” Hao Lianchuan chuckled. “Very well, I will write up a report for you. The director needs to sign off on this, I don’t have the authority.”

Ah, so Wang Ming was right. We can go to Hao Lianchuan if we have things that need taking care of. He'll agree to almost everything, but won't be able to actually accomplish it. He'll shift everything to Hou Xiaochen when it comes down to it.

"You've guessed at some of Hu Dingfang's matter, right?" Hao Lianchuan changed the topic.

"I have. My senior sister is his wife, correct?"

"Smart boy!" The deputy director nodded. "So what are you thinking? Your senior sister has made quite a name for herself in the Tiger Wings. Hu Dingfang listens to and relies heavily on her. She wants you to go to the Tiger Wings as she thinks you'll be safer there.

"And to be honest, you will be, unless the Tiger Wings are eliminated," Hao Lianchuan admitted. "But if you go there, you'll be a pet bird. Your senior sister... To be honest, she doesn't understand martial masters. She has very good potential, but she's not a martial master in the true sense of the term. She doesn't understand that martial masters are half crippled when they're cocooned in a tame environment!

"Do you want to go?" the deputy director concluded with a solemn expression.

"No!" Li Hao shook his head. "Not to mention, my teacher never told me to seek out a senior sister. Hu Dingfang didn't learn his breathing method from my teacher, which means that my senior sister privately taught it on her own. That is a clear violation of martial world rules! Teacher likely couldn't bring himself to throw her out as he should've... so how can I go against my teacher's will at this time?"

"You guessed it." Hao Lianchuan rose to open the window. He exhaled slowly when a cool breeze brushed over their faces. "I'll ask you one more time—do you wish to become a supernatural or remain a martial master? This will affect your arrangements to come."

"A martial master!" Li Hao responded decisively. "My teacher is a Summoner of Spirit. I won't consider the supernatural unless I become one too."

“Very good!” Hao Lianchuan smiled. “It’s up to Director Hou as to what your exact arrangements will be. I can only tell you a little ahead of time that if you insist on continuing down the path of martial dao, you’ll probably end up in the Guards. Everyone in the Guards is a martial master!”

“But we can set that aside for now. There’s also a lot of people who want to meet you. What do you say?”

“We can arrange for a meeting of martial masters.” Li Hao thought for a bit. “The half step Dominators or Dominators can be invited. There doesn’t need to be too many people. I’ll use my discretion in answering their questions, and it’s up to them whether they believe me or not.”

“Mmhmm, there’s also other people who wish to meet you apart from the martial masters...”

“From the provincial government or upstairs?”

“Upstairs.”

“It’s best not to offend those upstairs,” Li Hao thought for a bit. “They’re probably concerned with the eight families, but I’m not too familiar with the topic. We can meet, but someone should be with me. Let’s say... Manager Yu!”

“Not me?” Hao Lianchuan snorted with annoyance. “Why the secretary?”

Li Hao didn’t respond.

Because you’re too weak! If those upstairs want to see me, I don’t need to speculate what the results will be. I just need to know that Manager Yu will be a powerful Nova at critical moments, that’s all.

One had to possess sufficient support before erupting with all-out hostility. Hao Lianchuan... didn't necessarily provide that support.

The deputy director himself thought for a moment and broke out laughing. "Li Hao, your mind works fast. I'd thought that you wouldn't know how to handle these situations since it's your first time, and you being in a new environment. It looks like you've thought of everything already."

Li Hao nodded. Of course! Not to mention, he wasn't too worried since there was Hou Xiaochen backing him up. Even if a faction wanted to take him, they had to consider the director's reaction.

"Director Hao, when can I see Director Hou?" the young man asked.

"What are you in such a rush for?"

"I have matters to discuss with the director. Director Hao... may not be able to make the decision in this."

Hao Lianchuan snorted with annoyance again. "Out with it, what can't I make the decisions in?"

"A lot of stuff!" Li Hao answered mercilessly. "I don't have that many requests for this trip to White Moon, nor do I have the right to ask for anything. But since I've been requested here, surely I'm not here just to go through the motions. And you also said that martial masters are not kept in captivity! Therefore, I have my own thoughts regarding this matter."

"Number one, I want the right to enforce the law," he began calmly. "I wish to be able to implement the law on any supernatural or martial master outside the Night Watcher system. When I feel that I'm in danger or that the other is a threat to society, I have the right to execute them. I need the entire Night Watcher agency to shoulder the consequences for this, not just myself!"

The right of law enforcement!

Hao Lianchuan's eyes darted around in thought.

“Number two, I desire immunity! Simply put, other than the Night Watchers, Directors Hou and Hao, there is no one who has the right to interfere with or punish me in the entire governmental system. I have the right to ignore any commands not from the two directors!

“Number three, I need the powers appropriate to a chief commissioner. Based on the rules of the Inspectorate and Night Watchers, I have the right to command all personnel within the nearby Inspectorates and Night Watcher branches in times of emergency. Any that are lower in rank or equivalent rank need to obey my commands during a temporary state of battle readiness!”