

Star Gate 301

Chapter 301: Being a Kind Person (II)

Hao Lianchuan listened mutely. He hadn't thought that Li Hao would come with three very specific demands. True enough, he couldn't make the decisions in these. Hou Xiaochen was needed for these matters.

"My thoughts were that you'd choose to keep a low profile in White Moon or conduct any possible business from the shadows. But judging from your words, you seem to have other ideas in mind?"

"I do." Li Hao nodded. "I'm not here to be decoration. I only keep a low profile when I have the self assurance to do so. I have none here, so I need to be granted some."

"Do you think Director Hou will agree to it?" Hao Lianchuan chuckled. "I have no opinion, but what right do you have to ask for special treatment straight off the bat?"

"What right?" Li Hao pondered over the question. "By the right that I possess certain things that the director values at the moment. Director Hou redeployed me here partially because of my teacher, and partially for myself!"

For yourself? Hao Lianchuan sank into deep thought. Had Li Hao become a Dominator? If he was and also knew the method to Summoner of Spirit, then the lad truly did have a possibility of swiftly becoming a Summoner.

Of course, it didn't matter much to Hao Lianchuan even if the young man was indeed a Dominator now. But if Li Hao advanced to Summoner, he would be able to stand against Solars even if he was far less than Yuan Shuo. That possibility could not be taken lightly of. A Summoner was far more valuable than a Solar.

"Very well! I'll pass this along to Director Hou too!" Hao Lianchuan repeated. "You're an interesting little fellow. I'd thought that you might not be willing to help me with a small matter, but it looks like that won't be the case."

“Does Director Hao need my help?” A conflicted expression suddenly appeared on Li Hao’s face. “I am very weak...”

“Hang on!” Hao Lianchuan waved him off. “Hear me out first! This is precisely what I need—your superb acting skills and that honest expression. It makes people think that you’re a simple, honest, and naive young man who doesn’t know much of the world.”

Li Hao scratched his head. What was the deputy director trying to say?

“White Moon is not at peace these days and some people keep wanting to make trouble. I need you to help me resolve the problems that they’re creating.”

“Me?” Li Hao asked hesitantly. “What can I do?”

“It’s simple!” Hao Lianchuan chuckled merrily. “Just do a few things for me. One, unintentionally reveal certain information that’s very important, but don’t reveal it all in one go. Give them the urge to interrogate it out of you!

“Two, pretend to be hurt and wholly innocent in the event. If someone bumps into you on the street, for instance, or wants to take you, or if someone has their eye on you—use your acting skills to lure them out of hiding. The rest of the troops will be there very shortly. At that time, all you need to do is act hurt, be innocent, and be caught in immense suffering. We’ll take care of capturing and killing them!

“Remember, a lot of people will be watching your act—the provincial government, those upstairs, the military... No one will say anything if we act brutally when you’re convincing. But if your act doesn’t pass muster, that will lead to questioning and fury.” The deputy director flashed a wide grin. “It hasn’t been the best of times lately. Director Hou killed a Nova, but he ran off after and left me with too many messes to take care of. It’s been a lot!”

Li Hao understood, he really understood! He was quite surprised and glanced at Hao Lianchuan. Did the man wish to kill a chicken to intimidate the monkeys? However, that didn’t jive with his

reputation as a good man, so he needed a reason—someone skilled in feigning injury to extort others—to coordinate with him.

The prerequisite was that his partner needed to be very important, very weak, and easily bullied. In this way, Hao Lianchuan would have an excuse to clean house and not be taken to task for it. It was simple, honest people had a temper too!

“Director Hao, are you certain you can take the lead on this?” Li Hao looked steadily at him. Are you sure about this? An initial Solar is good against some weaklings, but is that all you’re targeting?

“I still have the Flaming Phoenix Spear!” Hao Lianchuan sneered. “Anyone is fine so long as they’re not a Nova! Kid, don’t look down on Solars. Plus, you’re a Sunderer. Do you have the right to think less of Solars? You keep your head down even if you’re a Dominator!”

What’s with the act, huh! Who do you think you’re fooling?

Li Hao, however, frowned with indecision. “Does Director Hou know about this?”

“He still wouldn’t care if he did,” Hao Lianchuan sighed. “All he needs is to push me out to take the fall at a critical time. Alright, just let me know if you’ll do it or not. To be honest, it’s hard to find a mark like this. Most people are automatically assumed to be bait, but you’re different. You look innocent and honest. I like an incorrigible rascal like you who can present a harmless exterior!”

“.....” Li Hao was much aggrieved.

“Haha, that’s right! That’s the expression!” Hao Lianchuan roared with laughter. “Of course, this won’t be without benefits. I’ll try to get everything you spoke of earlier and I’ll give you a list of names. Those people cannot be touched, but you can do anything you wish with the rest!”

“Director Hao, what if I’m beaten to death before you arrive in time?”

“That shouldn’t happen. Ordinary people wouldn’t dare, and what’s the benefit in killing you? You can reveal some information that makes them want to take you alive instead. I’m sure you can do it!”

Li Hao sighed. Fine, then! But he still made a final gasp of effort. “But, I feel that Director Hao isn’t paying anything for this scheme. What if you... offered some sort of reward? This is a mission, after all.”

“Another reward?” Hao Lianchuan thought for a very long time. “How about this, I’ll make it known that you’re no different from my son. I had high hopes for you starting from Silver City. If anything happens to you, I’ll slaughter their entire family to avenge you. I’m your father in name!”

“.....”

Fuck that shit!

All joking aside, it would still benefit Li Hao if Hao Lianchuan really did publicize that attitude. The deputy director’s status was high. He could represent the Night Watchers and the agency’s attitude.

Although Hou Xiaochen had killed a Nova for Li Hao, that was under different circumstances.

The young man nodded after a while, agreeing to the partnership. He still couldn’t help but ask, “What’s Director Hou’s plan? Southern Fist says that someone may be trying to force the director into irrational action. Aren’t we falling right into their trap if we do this now?”

“No!” Hao Lianchuan laughed. “I tell you, this is precisely our matter and duty as Night Watchers. Therefore, you’ll have to suffer a bit for it. Otherwise, Director Hou would just outright kill them with his strength! There would be no need for all this.

“Sometimes, there exists only a fine line between revolt and law enforcement. If you kill without reason, that is revolt. If you are forced into killing, that is administering the law. Do you understand?”

Do I understand? Kind of? Maybe?

But more or less. Li Hao nodded.

Hao Lianchuan breathed out and suddenly bared his teeth with a smile. “Our first target is a superior—a Solar Night Watcher. I’ve had him in my line of sight for a long time now! Your task is simple, find a way to reel him in. We need to kill him before anyone else reacts, and we need to kill him with a just and proper reason!”

Li Hao blinked and sucked in a sharp breath. “My venerable Lord Hao, are you... being a bit too bold?”

“You dared to kill even Zhang Ting, and you’re saying that I’m bold?” Hao Lianchuan snorted.

“What... Is Director Hao framing me?”

“You know yourself if I am or not.” Hao Lianchuan raised an eyebrow. “Cut the crap, can you do it or not? It’s best if he’s allowed to secretly follow you from the shadows and even conceals his identity. If that’s the case, we’ll be completely upright in our actions to kill him! I want these fellows to know that the savage wild lands of their words is not a place where they can do as they wish!”

“I can.” Li Hao nodded after thinking it through for a bit. “But his mysterious power is mine after he dies.”

“That’s fine!” Hao Lianchuan agreed readily. He beamed widely and couldn’t contain his joy. “Ah, right, I can’t appear too quickly. You’ll have to hold your own for a bit and preferably give rise to

some disturbance if possible. It'd be for the best if you raise other people's attention. I'll then appear with the Flaming Phoenix Spear and finish him off!

"Will that be difficult? How confident are you?"

"I'm confident enough," Li Hao chuckled. "Do we need to choose a particular spot?"

"Nah, it can be anywhere so long as there aren't that many mundanes. It should be over quickly when I show up with the spear..."

You're that confident, are you? Li Hao flicked a glance at the man. His ball of light was a bit bigger than before, was he a mid Solar now? But even so, could he kill a fellow Solar with one jab just because he wielded the Flaming Phoenix Spear?

To be honest, Li Hao wouldn't have doubts if it was Hou Xiaochen in front of him. But when it was Hao Lianchuan... One couldn't help but question his ability. The young man began contemplating whether or not Hou Xiaochen knew of what his subordinate was doing. Brashly killing a superior was a very troublesome matter. It would give rise to consequences even if the target had behaved oddly.

Of course, it has nothing to do with me! I'm just an innocent bystander!

Li Hao actually found the proposal exciting. He'd been bait on his first day in the Demon Hunters, and this was what Hao Lianchuan wished for him to repeat the role in White Moon. The young man rather liked the role.

Nice and quiet, the epitome of a low profile...

What was the point of being that in White Moon? It was better to create a mess and gain something for his troubles. It was even better to participate in some battles so he would have the chance to comprehend other auras.

The last thing he wanted was to be protected all the time, even if it was Hou Xiaochen. Kicking up a fuss and extracting himself from it was more up Li Hao's alley.

The two readily came to an agreement!

Chapter 302: Being a Kind Person (III)

"Very well, let's stop here for now," Hao Lianchuan concluded. "I'm going to see if Director Hou is out of seclusion. If so, you should meet him. If not, I'll figure out a way to get your five thousand cubes. Oh right, the director means to convert your reward into the Nova level blood pearl. Do you agree to that?"

Li Hao raised a brow, but quickly nodded. "I do!"

He'd thought he could obtain that blood pearl for free... I guess that's not possible anymore. It was fine. Trading his gains for a Nova level scarlet shadow was just as well. It was what he needed the most at the moment since it enhanced the entire body. That was just as good!

Scarlet shadows strengthened the physical body and internal force; his five organs were very strong now, but his body lagged a little behind. He was planning on collecting some thunder and wind mysterious power.

One major advantage of scarlet shadows was that they consumed exceedingly little sword energy to digest. They didn't require large amounts of sword energy to extract their essence, much like mysterious power did. They could be digested even without sword energy.

"Then we leave it here for today. I've arranged accommodations for you—they're right in front of my apartment. It'll be easier to look out for you that way and it's more convenient for me to appear with you. My presence won't be suspicious!"

"Where do you live, director?"

“Not too far away, about five kilometers from headquarters. It’s very close. You’re a martial master, so it should take you much less than half an hour to cover the distance on foot!”

Five kilometers was indeed not far. It was also a sufficient distance to draw attention and create openings for many. Otherwise, no one would dare move in on Li Hao if he stayed at headquarters all day.

.....

Li Hao walked down alone after conversing with Hao Lianchuan for a while.

The first floor.

Wang Ming was surrounded with people listening to his tall tales. Everyone knew now that he was a Sunflare. He grinned at Li Hao’s reappearance. “You’re back! How is everything with Director Hao?”

“Nothing’s been arranged yet, we’re waiting for Director Hou to exit seclusion.” Li Hao smiled. “But Director Hao said that he’s arranged for me to live right across from him to make it easier to look out for me. Director Wang, do you know where that is?”

“I do!” Wang Ming nodded. “I’ve been there. It’s actually the Inspectorate’s family accommodations. All of us used to be part of the Inspectorate and that’s a nice place to live. It’s very safe.”

“Commissioner Inspector Li, are you related to Director Hao?” asked someone next to Wang Ming.

“No, but the director visited Silver City a few times and is on great terms with my master,” Li Hao chuckled. “So he keeps an eye on me as well. He’s simply making sure to take care of me now that I’m in a bit of trouble. Don’t misunderstand, everyone!

“I’m newly arrived here and don’t know anything about White Moon. I’ll take everyone out to dinner once I’m settled in!” The young man was exceedingly polite, warm, and had a very soothing smile.

“It should be us welcoming you instead! But that is indeed quite a journey, so we’ll arrange for that later!” The group was in congenial spirits. Almost everyone left at headquarters was of the Darkmoon level, there were very few Sunflares. Wang Ming counted as a heavyweight among them.

Darkmoon Night Watchers didn’t know much, but they knew that Li Hao was here at Director Hou’s request. The newcomer was also on good terms with Director Hao and close friends with the newly ascended Wang Ming...

And so, they were even more enthusiastic in their reception.

.....

Li Hao and Wang Ming walked out of the lobby after a few more minutes of pleasantries. Hao Lianchuan ignored Li Hao after the initial meeting. The female guard was still present at the door and she hastily spoke up when she saw the young man, “Commissioner Inspector Li, I am...”

“My apologies,” Li Hao interrupted. “Director Hao said that I cannot communicate with anyone not of the Night Watcher system! I’m under partial custody, you see.”

He strode out of the building. He Yong was waiting outside as well, along with a few others. None of them dared draw closer.

“You don’t have to keep following me, Senior South!” Li Hao called from the front door. “Director Hao just told me that we’ll host a meeting for martial masters tomorrow. All half step Dominators and Dominators can attend! I’ll respond to everyone’s questions and concerns at that gathering. I’ll be forthcoming about my master’s affairs too, so long as it doesn’t infringe upon the secrets of the Five Styles!

“The Five Styles discipline also wishes for martial dao to be restored to glory! We will not jealously hoard the most insignificant scrap of knowledge and will share everything we can!

“Additionally, those who are not martial masters can submit their questions or concerns to the Night Watchers. If my superiors permit me to respond, I will respond!” Li Hao continued earnestly, “I’ve just arrived after a very long journey and haven’t had a bite to eat yet. I don’t even know where I’m sleeping, so please give me some time, seniors! I will be able to better answer your questions when I am settled in.”

Those beyond the front doors were no longer in a hurry after they heard the young man. They finally had a concrete time!

“Is it only martial masters?” someone asked. “Little friend Li, some of us were forced to make the crossover many years ago and are no longer martial masters. However, there are martial masters among our disciples. If attendance is restricted to only martial masters, then we...”

A look of sympathy and pity spread over Li Hao’s face, but he quickly responded with embarrassment, “I... cannot make the decisions in this. Seniors, you can ask the Night Watchers. I have no opinion so long as they agree. I do not have the final say.”

He was quite resigned as he looked like he wanted to agree on the spot. When they saw his expression, the crowd felt that there was no need to make things more difficult for the young man. He was probably already in a slight panic at having to make the trip from Silver City to this enormous metropolis. They had to go to the Night Watchers for this matter; it was enough that Li Hao was willing to share certain things with them.

“Then I’ll be heading back.” Li Hao raised a cupped fist salute. “Seniors, I will see you tomorrow!”

Southern Fist He Yong looked closely at Li Hao and... scratched his head. Why did the kid feel a bit different?

Not by much, but there was the vague sense that the young man wasn't as honest as he appeared to be. Li Hao was so pitiful with what he'd just said, yet he hadn't been that way on the road to White Moon. Although such thoughts ran through He Yong's head, he didn't voice them aloud.

The crowd settled down patiently after learning that there would be a meeting tomorrow. It was very safe in White Moon City—Hou Xiaochen was here. Regular people didn't dare cause trouble inside the city.

.....

Moments later, Li Hao followed Wang Ming to the residential neighborhood.

Someone was following him!

Granted, they were keeping themselves hidden very well. The young man didn't care either way—any supernatural that dared to follow him was a walking target. If martial masters followed him, Li Hao was of the mindset that there weren't that many in the entire city that could fight him now. Only a few veteran seniors like Southern Fist, fortified with great instances of fortune, could stand a chance against Li Hao if they met in a fight.

With how much his organs were enhanced, he essentially counted as a Summoner with two auras. His only difference with his teacher was that he was weaker as his auras were weaker.

"Li Hao, did Director Hao say anything? Did you see Director Hou?"

"No."

Wang Ming looked on with some regret. "Ah right, I'll take you back first and then go home first myself. My home's on the western side, we're on the southern side. I haven't been back since I broke through to Sunflare!"

He needed to go home and brag a little, as well as ask for some rewards. The mysterious power that his family had given him was for him to break through to Plenilune. He was a Sunflare now, so he should certainly go home to take a few more things from the family vaults.

“Come to my place a few days later and just stay with me!” Wang Ming chuckled. “My house is much bigger than the dorms.”

“Don’t speak of what you shouldn’t when you go back home,” Li Hao transmitted after he nodded. “Keep your big mouth shut!”

“.....” Wang Ming blinked and glanced sharply at Li Hao. Transmission? That was the purview of Solars or experienced Dominators, but his colleague had just broken through!

What the heck, has Li Hao gotten stronger?

No change in expression took place on Li Hao’s face, but man it felt good to utilize transmission. He’d realized the skill was available to him after his organs took in one thousand cubes each. It was just a task of controlling the reverberations of some sound waves. It wasn’t complicated, but required a high degree of mastery over internal force. Otherwise, whatever was transmitted would easily be leaked.

It was why one could do it only as a Solar or Dominator. Regular Dominators did not have such a rich base of internal force.

Wang Ming didn’t say anything. He wasn’t a fool, he knew what he couldn’t speak of. Zhang Ting’s death, for instance, wasn’t something he could bring up.

Li Hao continued observing the environment around them as they walked. He was too unfamiliar with the provincial capital as this was his first visit. The Night Watcher headquarters was situated beside some older and smaller neighborhoods with tangled streets. The southern quadrant was an

older part of town and lacked towering buildings. More traces of modernity could be seen in the other quadrants.

The Night Watchers had been formed too late, so all the better locales were claimed by the other agencies by the time they needed an office building.

.....

At the same time.

News of the Night Watcher meeting tomorrow swiftly traveled upon the wind. When it was confirmed that powerful martial masters could participate, many who walked the path of martial dao agitated with excitement. How desperately they yearned for the way to rise to Summoner of Spirit!

At the same time.

The eastern quadrant of White Moon City, the penthouse of an exceedingly tall hotel.

There were only five people in a presidential suite replete with an opulent living room, dining room, kitchen, and dance hall. They were gathered in the receiving room—four men, one woman.

Other than green-haired Yu Xiao, one of the remaining three men was a young man with short hair—Hu Qingfeng. He was the leader of the five person team.

“Hao Lianchuan has sent word,” Yu Xiao took the lead on debriefing since he was the weakest out of the group. “Li Hao can meet us after the martial master meeting tomorrow. However, he wishes for us to go to the southern quadrant. It’s Li Hao’s first time in the city and he’s having trouble adjusting to a new environment.”

They would rather avoid the southern quadrant if possible—that was Hou Xiaochen’s territory. In contrast, the eastern quadrant was where the provincial government was headquartered. Hou Xiaochen would not come here under normal circumstances.

Chapter 303: Fishing With One’s Life (I)

“Is Li Hao that easily frightened?” Hu Qingfeng chuckled. “Very well, you’ll make the trip tomorrow. Take Chen Min with you. It’s best if you two can return with Li Hao. If not, there’s no need to start any conflict. Obtaining a sample of his blood will also do.”

There was no need to antagonize Hou Xiaochen at this stage of the game. The provincial government had not taken any action thus far. Hence, even if the central Night Watchers had certain plans in mind, they needed support from some of the major local figures to ensure success.

“A blood sample... Will Hao Lianchuan agree to that?” Yu Xiao frowned. “He likes to give us excuses...”

“Figure it out yourself!”

Fine then. Yu Xiao shut his mouth. It was just some blood, would there be any difficulty in that?

“Li Hao is our secondary target outside of the mission,” Hu Qingfeng continued. “Our primary mission is still Hou Xiaochen! Additionally, does the Silver Moon military elder still refuse to meet?”

An older, middle-aged man responded in a low voice, “The Silver Moon Division says that their Commander Yu’s old injuries have recently flared up. He’s been in recovery and needs a period of rest.”

More old injuries! Hu Qingfeng glowered. Hou Xiaochen’s old injuries had flared up, that old commander’s injuries had flared up, and even the inspector general of the Inspectorate said he was struggling with old injuries. Director General Zhao of the provincial government was also saying that he didn’t feel too well and that his cough had grown stronger...

Damn it, were the leaders of this vast province all sickly and feeble?! All of them trotted out the same excuse! It was either old injuries or feeling under the weather. Hu Qingfeng wanted to explode with anger. He wouldn't be faced with this kind of treatment in the central region! He wouldn't be met with a closed door no matter where he turned!

He was a Nova and a Heaven Favored!

Other than some of those perverts at headquarters, he commanded attention and respect no matter where he went in the central region!

Of course, those perverts wouldn't always be at headquarters. Apparently they'd gone out a few days ago to cause more trouble. Who knew what they'd stir up this time? They were the reason for the war in the central region.

Irritation gnawed at Hu Qingfeng when he thought of those people. They were excellent at creating a mess and leaving it for others to clean up. They were the bane of his existence and people like him often had to step in to pick up the pieces!

"Then we'll ignore him for now!" Hu Qingfeng declared. "Is there anything from the three great organizations?"

"The Parity King is outside White Moon City, there doesn't seem to be anything from Half Mountain. Apparently Blue Moon has come from the Red Moon organization..."

Hu Qingfeng inclined his head and thought over these details. "We can meet with them if need be. Hou Xiaochen is a thorn in their side. There are many secrets in Silver Moon and this thorn must be digging into a lot of people's sides!"

"Understood!" The group was in no hurry to meet with Li Hao after their discussion. Everything could wait until the meeting concluded tomorrow. They also wanted to see if any secrets might be divulged during it. Was it hard for martial masters to reach Summoner of Spirit or not?

.....

Quiet could be found on all sides tonight as everyone waited. Li Hao's arrival was a pebble dropped into the lake of White Moon City. Small ripples undulated across the lake's surface. Meanwhile, the young man was perfectly at ease as he looked around his new home. He admired massive balls of light through the window—so bright!

The house wasn't big, but it was very clean. Plainly, someone had been by to put it in order. It was a standard two bedroom apartment, but superb accommodations in a place like White Moon. Land was at a premium in the city, yet the Night Watchers were assigned units wholly for individual use.

Hao Lianchuan was across the way from him. The man was a deputy director, yet this was his residence as well. Who knew if he was unwilling to move to a new house or if this was the best that his status could afford?

Li Hao opened the window, enjoying the light touch of a cool breeze over his face. White Moon City really is impressive! There's seven supernaturals gathered in this tiny spot and probably an unknown number of martial masters.

There's two earth supernatural hidden in the ground. I wonder if they'll suffocate as time goes on?

There a wind supernatural floating through the sky as a wisp of breeze.

There's someone who knows invisibility—it's probably a dark supernatural ability—in the house across from me.

And then there's three more that are further away. Maybe they have some sort of vision or ability to hear from far away.

It's really impressive!

Are these seven from seven different factions? I've only just gotten here, but there's so many people keeping an eye on me already. How interesting.

A knock sounded on his door as he admired the large light bulbs. Li Hao cocked his head at the front door—there was no ball of light coming from it. Therefore, he wasn't afraid and stepped forward to open the door.

"Are you Commissioner Inspector Li?" smiled a bubbly woman in her thirties. "I'm from the Inspectorate's logistics department. We've learned that it's the commissioner inspector's first time in White Moon City. You're no doubt unfamiliar with your surroundings.

"The Inspectorate makes certain arrangements for all commissioner inspectors and those above. Just give us a call if you need anything. You can give us your dirty clothes to be washed, and do you prefer motorcycles or cars as a form of transportation? There is a free cafeteria in this neighborhood, but if the commissioner inspector doesn't like it, we can arrange for your own meals..."

Li Hao blinked with surprise. This level of treatment was wonderful! The Night Watchers were almost completely separate from the Inspectorate, yet the agency was still able to enjoy this level of care from the Inspectorate.

A commissioner inspector was a major personage in a small place, but nothing much in the provincial capital. Many Darkmoons were given a commissioner inspector position, some Sunflares were only high rank commissioner inspectors—they weren't further promoted for their strength.

Chief commissioner was still more worthy of note.

"I see, thank you. I don't know anything since I've just gotten here. You don't need to take care of me, big sis. I'll ask Director Hao when he comes back. I'll usually eat with the director if nothing comes up..."

The woman's eyes lit up and she grew even more enthused. "Got it, I won't disturb you then. You can reach the logistics department if you press 1 on the communicator in the room. Please let us know any time if there's anything we can do to help!"

"You're too kind!" Li Hao thanked her so profusely that the woman left quite reluctantly. The young man shut the front door, a smile still on his face like he was truly very happy. "How nice!"

Li Hao laughed, as if quite satisfied. He walked over to the window and looked down at the ground. He was moderately high up at twelve floors, but there wasn't much to see outside the window. The building directly in front blocked some of his line of vision. However, the neighborhood's greening efforts were well done.

It was late in the day when he arrived and now night was almost upon him. The sky was dark, yet Hao Lianchuan had not returned from work yet. It looked like this deputy director of his needed to put in overtime. Poor guy.

Li Hao was in no rush since Hao Lianchuan was still at work. He walked around the apartment, taking his measure of the place. It wasn't very big—there was a study aside from the two bedrooms that held some books on a bookshelf. They were all elementary primers.

The young man perused them, then replaced some with his own books. He hadn't brought anything special, but he'd brought some of the books from the third row of his teacher's bookshelf. They were part of Yuan Shuo's treasured collection. Li Hao had been concerned that his teacher wouldn't be able to find them when he came back, so the young man decided to bring the books with him.

There seemed to be one missing, however, possibly because his teacher had taken it with him. His teacher really loved books more than life itself! The situation had been so dangerous then, but he still chose to take a book with him before that great battle. How touching it was!

Li Hao didn't bring anything else with him other than the books. The agency issued clothes and other standard equipment. Public servants had no need to bring those with them; they were naturally issued some when they reached their destination.

Ah, he also carried a bank card. Several months of his salary was saved inside. After his promotion last month, his salary and bonuses should be sizable. There might be tens of thousands in his bank account now.

That should be enough to treat some folks to a meal, right?

Some sounds traveled from the unit across from him after the young man spent some time busying himself around the apartment. Li Hao glanced out the window instead of his neighbor. The light bulbs in the vicinity immediately vanished, even the ones in the dirt. It looked like they were still wary of Solars. If he lived alone, they'd probably stay the entire time.

Li Hao breathed out gently. While he liked looking at light bulbs, it was uncomfortable to have them watching even his business in the bathroom.

Sharp raps sounded on his front door. The young man quickly went out to open the door. A slightly weary Hao Lianchuan took a look inside the apartment and nodded with satisfaction. "It's good that you're settled in. I'm usually at the Night Watchers, but I come back to sleep at night if there's nothing happening."

"Have you eaten yet, Director Hao?"

"No, have you not either?"

"No." Li Hao smiled and whispered, "How about my blood pearl?"

"There's no rush, maybe tomorrow!" Hao Lianchuan rolled his eyes. "I asked Manager Yu after you left. She says that they might be able to give it to you tomorrow, possibly after the meeting."

"How is Director Hou?"

“His injuries seemed to have worsened and he needs to be in seclusion for a few days more.” Hao Lianchuan smiled, as did Li Hao. These injuries were quite severe to still be an issue after a few days.

“I had people deliver dinner,” Hao Lianchuan continued. “Ah, your senior sister’s husband gave me a call. All he wants to say is that it’s fine if you don’t wish to go to the Tiger Wings. You can go to him anytime.”

“He’s quite sincere!” Li Hao nodded without a change in expression, plainly unmoved. Hao Lianchuan was curious about the reaction.

“You’re utterly shameless when you kiss up to me, so why don’t you think about doing the same to him? That guy would certainly help you more if you were willing to.”

“Director Hao is not a martial master,” was the only thing that Li Hao said.

Hao Lianchuan frowned. The young man didn’t explain further.

You don’t understand because you’re not a martial master. A heritage can not be randomly passed on or learned!

Yuan Shuo wished to learn the Nine Forged Force, but did either Li Hao or Liu Long teach it to him despite their good relationship? Did Yuan Shuo teach the breathing method to Liu Long?

Martial masters adhered to basic rules. One’s heritage could not be disseminated in such a manner. Even if one learned it accidentally, one could not display it without permission. Hu Dingfang had employed the Five Styles in public, and the full, official version. That was a violation of the rules!

Chapter 304: Fishing With One’s Life (II)

It was one thing that Yuan Shuo didn’t take Hu Dingfang to task for growing stronger through an illegitimate acquisition of the Five Styles, but the commander shouldn’t have used it in front of others!

That was a grave taboo!

He'd demonstrated the secret art of the Five Styles, but was not of the discipline itself. Anyone who saw him might think that the discipline had been exterminated! That was the only way an outsider would possess core knowledge!

"Very well then, that's the last I speak of this matter." Hao Lianchuan exchanged a few other simple lines before saying, "I'm going back to rest. You can come to me if you have further business, or you can eat by yourself if you don't. I don't want to eat with you anymore."

The fatty is so narrow minded! He wanted to eat with me just now, but loses his temper as soon as I say he's not a martial master.

Li Hao didn't say anything. He watched Hao Lianchuan walk out of his front door, through his own, and slam the door shut with a bang. The deputy director's temper was really riled up.

.....

Inside the opposite apartment.

Hao Lianchuan turned back with a grin. The little guy was interesting! He put Li Hao out of his mind and entered his study, pulling out a tattered book after some thought.

The Chronicles of Silver Moon's Martial World.

Chapter one: A listing of Silver Moon's martial heroes.

"When it comes to the heroes of the martial world, there are thirty-six personages as of this book's date of publication!

“We must mention Five Styles King Yuan Shuo when we speak of the martial world. His Five Styles are that of the tiger, bear, deer, ape, and bird. He dominated the martial world in seven years. Wails and cries of agony filled the land when a challenge letter arrived from the Five Styles King. Those who accepted it did so frightened out of their wits, and their disciples were ready with coffins...”

Hao Lianchuan read with great relish. What a pity this book hadn’t been updated since twenty years ago. He hadn’t perused it much before because he hadn’t been interested in the characters it explored. And now, the names in these pages were appearing in front of him one by one.

Yuan Shuo who kept a low profile, the brash and crude Southern Fist, the Qimei Staff who shook the land with one staff, the Earthturner Sword who churned heaven and earth, Silver Spear who died on his sickbed, and Ying Hongyue known far and wide. The main villains of the book were the three commanders of the Skystar Guards. They were given monikers of Cannibal, Laughter, and Sickly.

Which one of them was Director Hou? Laughter or Sickly?

Sickly seemed more possible. Had the director been in his condition early on?

Hao Lianchuan felt it more likely than not that the director was one of the three commanders. Sadly, the book didn’t mention Sickly much and only expounded on his many evil deeds. It was obvious to tell that Silver Moon’s martial world thought very poorly of the three commanders!

Another figure floated into his mind as Hao Lianchuan read on—Manager Yu. He paged through the book, but it didn’t mention anyone like the secretary. The woman had been by Director Hou’s side for many years and Hou Xiaochen had never been stationed elsewhere. They must’ve met in Silver Moon.

Hao Lianchuan himself had been in White Moon City for many years. Manager Yu’s sudden appearance was quite bizarre and out of the norm.

What other inspiration might this book give him today?

He hadn't cared before and truth be told, he still didn't care now. He was just curious and really wanted to come to a deeper understanding of Manager Yu. What other identities did she have?

The deputy director kept reading and recounting everything he knew about the secretary... Finally, he saw a very short mention at the end of the book.

"Sickly abandoned the idea of killing her. She was one of the few martial masters to escape his grasp. The martial world was in disarray and the supernatural was on the rise in the central region. It was time for the martial world to withdraw from this age. Ying Hongyue had left, the Sky Sword had left. They all chose to leave..."

Hao Lianchuan read for a bit longer and carefully read through all of the identifying details once more. He flipped the pages again and again, abruptly breaking out into a grin after a long while.

"No way?" He smiled craftily, and with some incredulousness. A merry Hao Lianchuan quickly closed the book.

Perhaps... I know who you are now. He thought of the meeting of martial masters taking place in the morning. Will some more of these legendary characters appear tomorrow? These people had been stuff of myths and legends twenty years ago, existences that could not be reached. After falling quiet for so many years, they seemed to be awakening one after another.

How many of Silver Moon's thirty-six heroes were still alive today?

.....

Hao Lianchuan was reading, but Li Hao wasn't in the mood to read. His muscles writhed over his arms as he operated the Nine Forged Force again and again. It would be difficult to comprehend its aura if he couldn't attain nine layers. This would be one of the easiest auras for him to grasp once he

completed nine layers; everything would fall into place then. He would naturally sense the water aura. All that would remain then was to fashion it into the water sword aura.

Almost seven layers...

He could only manage six layers before. It wasn't that one could layer internal force faster simply when they were stronger, but that they needed to repeatedly hone their layers. Li Hao hadn't spent enough time honing his.

If he could swiftly attain nine layers and grasp the second aura, he would be able to perform his second summoning once he incorporated sword aura into it and turned it into the water sword aura.

Five auras for five organs... What about my four limbs? How should I meld the wind, rain, and thunder that I command?

He pushed his hand out very gently, shooting out a ray of force that was visible to the naked eye. One, two three, four five...

Seven layers were completed in the blink of an eye! It happened very quickly, but it was clear to see that it was a layering of seven times.

"Too slow... and too obvious!" Li Hao shook his head. The method was very powerful, but it was useless in anything other than offensive capability. Granted, that didn't matter to him. He'd barely managed to pull off seven layers. It might take a while longer to attain nine.

"They say that there's a sea at White Moon City... and I do see it to the east of the city on the maps. Perhaps I should go see what waves look like? Are they really that immense?" He'd never seen the sea before and didn't know how capricious it could be.

They said that seawater was salty and those who lived by it could eat seafood everyday. Salty water, soft beaches, and apparently women liked to sunbathe without clothes on... Perhaps his teacher would like that. Li Hao didn't care, he just wanted to see the waves.

Learning never stopped in martial dao! No matter how strong one was, prolonged disuse or lack of practice would lead to a decline in martial dao.

His tiny rooms weren't suited for boxing routines. All the same, Li Hao threw himself around for a bit, conducted some breathing exercises, further tempered his organs, and finally went to bed late at night.

Hao Lianchuan also rubbed his eye when Li Hao's side grew quiet and turned off the lights to sleep himself.

Li Hao's first night in White Moon City passed by in a quiet manner.

.....

September 5th. A bright and clear day.

The Night Watcher headquarters thronged with people early in the morning. Director Zhou was the first to report to work. He frowned at the crowd as he wasn't a fan of this kind of uproar. But there were some within the gathering that he couldn't do anything about.

"Everyone, you are all highly respected seniors," he called out from the front door. "Therefore, the rules should be respected. The workday has not yet started, Li Hao will naturally appear at 9 am. You can wait in the meeting hall next door, what is the purpose of lingering here for?"

"It's not that we don't respect the rules," an old man with white hair spoke urgently. "But that you Night Watchers come to work too late! Martial masters should sleep early and rise early, how is someone still not here at 9 am..."

These martial masters had come very early in the morning. Some didn't even leave last night and decided to keep watch until morning. They'd thought that Li Hao would come bright and early, but there was no sign of the young man to be found at 8 am! Was he still a damned martial master??

It was the first time that they understood the Night Watcher system to be so lax. Some martial masters set up dojos that teemed with activity at 5 or 6 am.

Supernaturals were blessed by the heavens, alright! They didn't need to cultivate!

These veteran martial masters were envious, jealous, and a bit contemptuous. How much battle strength could supernaturals like these possess? Regardless, they were still envious at the end of the day.

The supernatural domain was now the officially recognized way and the sun had set on martial dao. There was no use in rising earlier than the rooster. Supernaturals would laugh their heads off at the thought of rising at the first crow to train. Training all day and night for an entire year amounted to less improvement than one who absorbed a little bit of mysterious power.

A car stopped in front of the building as the crowd clamored. Li Hao alighted first, followed by Hao Lianchuan.

"My apologies, seniors!" Li Hao quickly yelled when he saw the amount of people. "I woke up a long time ago and wanted to rush here, but I'm unfamiliar with the roads. I had to come with Uncle Hao. My apologies for making everyone wait!"

"Please take your seats in the neighboring meeting hall," the young man offered a few more rounds of pleasantries. "I'll be right there!"

Seeing that the young man was here in the flesh and being so polite, the crowd decided to disperse for now. They'd simply been worried by Li Hao's absence. All was fine now that he was here.

These martial masters melted away in the blink of an eye. Some of them looked to be only Slayer of Tens. How had the Night Watchers arranged things, to let even Slayers in?

Hao Lianchuan laughed when he checked the time. Damn, they're in a hurry! He caught a glimpse of someone else out of the corner of his eye and continued laughing. It looks like martial masters weren't the only ones anxious about this matter! So were others!

"Get your things and head on over!" Hao Lianchuan said to Li Hao. "Don't worry, you're right next to the Night Watchers. Nothing can possibly happen. Just don't run your mouth with nonsense!"

"Understood!" Li Hao nodded and fell in step beside the deputy director.

Many Night Watchers were very curious. They knew what was to take place today and that some information was about to be released. They all wished that they could learn some of it ahead of time. It was a pity that they weren't close to Li Hao, but they knew someone who was. Those who'd explored the ruins together were familiar with him.

Huang Yun waited for Hao Lianchuan to leave the young man in the lobby before sidling over with curiosity, "Li Hao, are blood pearls really that useful for martial masters?"

"Would I possibly lie about this, Elder Huang?" Li Hao nodded with a smile. "You'll know in a bit. Are you going to the meeting?"

"I'd like to... but..."

"Then come," Li Hao chuckled. "It's not classified intelligence, just stuff that's about to be made public. It's no big deal."

A smiling Huang Yun nodded in agreement. That was true. Perfect, he could tag along later and listen to the gossip.

The receptionist called out at this time, “Commissioner Inspector Li, Director Hao requests your presence on the fourth floor in Manager Yu’s office!”

“Thank you!” Excitement gripped Li Hao. Was he about to receive the Nova blood pearl?

etvolare’s Thoughts

!!! Manager Yu used to be a martial master! Why didn’t HXC kill her?

And folks, I’m sending out postcards to celebrate chapter 300!

In celebration of this milestone, I’d like to send a postcard to anyone who writes a review! If you’ve already written a review, you count too! I simply request reviews to be fair and relevant to the series. (Although, can anyone top spiderman100’s not so secret cry for help in his lolol.)

Once finished, please send me your username and address to my Instagram, Twitter, or email @etvoscribbles@gmail.com. I do prefer IG if possible, the other accounts get such a deluge of messages/pings that I’m worried about possibly overlooking someone. Please do not ping me on Discord or share your personal info in the SG channel!

Coming your way, a badass postcard from Taiwan with some cool designs about history and Chinese culture!Chapter 305: Fishing With One’s Life (III)

The fourth floor of the Night Watcher headquarters.

Quite a few people visited this floor—typically secretaries, drivers, and the like. It was a quieter floor as everyone had tasks to accomplish for the various directors.

Manager Yu possessed an office to herself. It was huge, bigger than Hao Lianchuan's.

Li Hao knocked on the door.

The secretary's crisp voice echoed from the other side.

The young man pushed open the door and swiftly saluted, the epitome of respect.

"Hello, Secretary Yu!" Li Hao stood ramrod straight.

Across the desk, Manager Yu inclined her head at him. She took out a box from a drawer without a word and opened it to reveal ten red pills.

"These are the blood pearls extracted from killing Red Hair. The director split the energy into ten parts because you aren't strong enough to take it all at once. Nova is the equivalent of nine suns. If initial Solar is one sun, peak Solar is almost three suns. Solar is the start of three suns, and nine suns is its peak.

"Although this Nova blood pearl is split into ten portions, each portion is much stronger than those of the Sunflare level." The secretary was very frank. "You're just a half step Dominator, which means that the energy within one of these blood pearls exceeds the sum total of all of your internal force. I recommend that you take them only after becoming a Dominator and take only one at a time. One pill is sufficient for a month's worth of digestion. If you take them all within a year, it will more than double your internal force!"

"Secretary Yu." Li Hao was a bit confused as he listened intently. "Does this mean that one of these pills is only a bit stronger than a Sunflare level one?"

That would be such a shame! What'd you go and split that shadow for? That makes a Nova level shadow just a little stronger than ten Sunflares...

Li Hao was very familiar with the effects of Sunflare level blood pearls. This completely negated his anticipation for the Nova level shadow! It was very disappointing!

I didn't tell you to split it into separate portions for me! All of it together will be much stronger than it being separated. It wasn't just how much energy there was at times, there was also a matter of energy being stronger or weaker, and if it was one complete whole. There was no doubt that taking ten Sunflare blood pearls at the same time would lead to less of an effect compared to one Nova!

A Nova level blood pearl was defined by a complete whole. The value was completely different! One massive watermelon at five kilograms would always be more tasty than ten watermelon at half a kilogram, because the latter was yet to mature.

Manager Yu laughed when she glanced at the young man's expression. "If you think that splitting them apart is a waste, you can take multiple at the same time. Don't worry, they were created from the same whole. If you're not afraid of death, you can take all ten at the same time for a Nova effect! But I don't recommend you doing so. The director split them out of certain considerations—he's concerned that you'll pop from the energy!"

That's good then!

"My thanks to the director and the secretary!" Li Hao smiled.

"There's no need to thank me!" Manager Yu dismissed casually. "You traded for it with your sword. The director wishes for me to ask, do you know how to unseal the sword?"

It wasn't a simple item even if it wasn't the sword of the Lis. Hou Xiaochen had his suspicions, but the trade was still well worth it as the sword might be a sealed origin weapon.

Li Hao shook his head.

The secretary remained unmoved. It didn't matter if the young man didn't know. "Keep one thing in mind for the meeting later—emphasize the effects of the blood pearl. You can do as you see fit about any other topic!"

"Understood!" Li Hao saluted with solemnity.

"Dismissed!"

"Okay!" Li Hao excitedly put the box in his pocket.

Manager Yu frowned slightly at the door after the young man walked out. She wordlessly shook her head after a moment. Li Hao was probably already a Dominator! She could determine that from the director's reaction that day. But that wasn't important, it wasn't like she'd never seen Dominators before. She was more curious whether Li Hao would be the same kind of Dominator as Yuan Shuo.

Probably not.

The young man hadn't coalesced the auras of the Five Styles yet. He only seemed to have the sword aura. Li Hao wasn't walking down the path of the Five Styles, and the key was that Yuan Shuo didn't mind.

He forewent an established path to attempt the one of the sword. None of the Seven Swords had been a match for Yuan Shuo. How strong had the Sky Sword been?

The results spoke for themselves.

Did Yuan Shuo think that his disciple would have greater accomplishments in sword dao than the Five Styles?

Manager Yu was confused, but it didn't matter. As strong as Yuan Shuo was, he didn't necessarily measure up to the director. That held true even though the old man had dominated an era. He'd been so domineering only because the director hadn't paid attention to him.

A faint smile appeared on the woman's face, one that quickly faded away. White Moon City was a complete mess lately. That was fine, all would be resolved once the director emerged from seclusion. But if the situation continued, perhaps she should do something as well.

.....

If the Night Watcher headquarters were an antique, then the meeting hall was the epitome of modernity. Magnificent lights illuminated the massive hall, the seats were plush, and there were refreshments off to the side.

General seating was located on the first floor, private booths could be found on the second. Perhaps the Night Watchers had borrowed a faction's auction hall instead? The setup was rather mysterious.

Powerhouses from the major factions and agencies were present. They didn't draw much attention as they headed directly to the second floor.

Li Hao was facing the audience and seated right beneath the pulpit; he was flanked on both sides. Peak Sunflare Director Zhou was on his left—the man seemed to have changed after the excavation. He was possibly headed toward Solar.

As for Li Hao's right... Wang Ming looked around attentively. Li Hao found it strange that this guy could get a seat representing the agency at this meeting. Did he call upon his connections last night?

These three were the only ones from the Night Watcher. Hao Lianchuan wasn't here, Manager Yu wasn't here. It would seem that they didn't place much importance on this gathering.

Many martial masters were present in the hall. He Yong had the right to sit upstairs, but he sat in the front row of the first floor instead. He stared excitedly at Li Hao, barely able to contain himself.

Li Hao looked out over the assembly. Most of them were martial masters, but there were also quite a few non-martial masters. How'd they get in here? The second floor was populated mostly by balls of light. Most of them were supernatural and the ones without were possibly Dominators.

The young man even saw a very familiar ball of light—Hong Yitang! The leader of the Sword Sect was here!

Li Hao glanced at the second floor; so many heavyweights had come without making a fuss! And, what was Hao Lianchuan hiding on the second floor for? Not only did the young man see the familiar sight of Hong Yitang's ball of light, there was another one he was well acquainted with—Hu Dingfang. There might be someone else in his booth, the senior sister that he'd yet to meet.

If there were military representatives here, then the provincial government might've sent people too.

"Everyone's here, then." After a while, Director Zhou began with clearing his throat. "I'll keep it short. Li Hao just arrived yesterday and isn't familiar with everyone. We can skip the introductions. Li Hao will call upon people. Those who are recognized can ask their questions. He'll answer everything he can!

"So when it comes to questions he cannot or will not answer, I hope that people won't force his hand!

"Everyone wishes to see martial dao be further perpetuated. I'm sure he won't voice random nonsense or mislead us!" The director turned to the young man. "Try your best to satisfy everyone if you can. Also, there are some martial masters from the central region here today. They might have deeper questions to ask. You can converse with them afterwards if you don't wish to answer on the spot."

Eyes darted around in the crowd. Had powerful martial masters come from the central region?

“We don’t need to talk in private.” Li Hao smiled. “My master says that, apart from the core method of a martial discipline, we should speak freely of everything else we know! As martial masters, none of us wish to see martial dao decline! So long as everyone does not ask about the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, I will share all that I possess!”

“As things should be!” someone whooped with approval. “There should be free and open discourse in martial dao apart from our core methods. That is how we improve ourselves. None of us are rookies—those who dare ask about the core method are purposefully making trouble. There is no such allowance in the martial world! To seize one’s core method is to exterminate the discipline. Those who ask such questions are fake martial masters and should be hunted down by everyone!”

A large sum of martial masters wholeheartedly agreed with his words. Although there was high interest in the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, just as Li Hao said, whoever asked about it was picking a bone. It was perfectly normal and expected if the two sides fought each other to the death on the spot.

.....

The second floor, inside a booth.

Hu Dingfang furrowed his brows and looked at his lady sitting beside him. “Is the core method... of a discipline... really... really that important?”

Being a martial master, it wasn’t that he didn’t understand this. However, neither did he fully understand it. He was a martial master of the army and the core methods that the army collected were shared with all of their own. Hu Dingfang knew that the Breathing Method of the Five Styles was very important, but the martial world had almost been stamped out when he learned it. He knew about the rules of the martial world, but had never experienced it for himself.

It felt different today. The martial masters below could fully empathize with Li Hao's declaration that core methods could not be revealed. It was as heinous as attacking one's parents and punishable by general fury!

His wife didn't say anything and simply inclined her head. Hu Dingfang said nothing further.

On the stage, Li Hao continued, "My master once disseminated the Method of the Five Styles as a book. Quite a lot of people know it, and that's fine. The Five Styles fortifies the health and body. It's a good thing if people know a thing or two about it. That will also build my discipline's reputation!

"But I would like to speak a little more on a certain matter." The young man rose with a cupped fist salute. "Many are those who know the Five Styles and some have created their own variations or modified a breathing method to use in conjunction with it. That is also normal. But whether it is to kill people or in sparring, the Five Styles cannot be used in official settings! If it is, you must leave your own unique mark within! Otherwise, outsiders will think that my master is randomly killing people or that my Five Styles is in the business of establishing bizarre blood feuds!

"There is only my master and I in the Five Styles discipline now! The disciples that he accepted before have gradually gone on their own ways. It is my master's generous nature that he did not retract the Five Styles when they left. But these people cannot use the discipline's name in pursuit of their nefarious aims!

"Whether it is my master or myself, we will admit to anyone we kill. Those of the Five Styles fully own up to our deeds! If anyone sees another using the Five Styles to kill people, that has nothing to do with us! Whether you wish to kill or punish them, all is fine so long as the Five Styles discipline is not involved!"

The martial masters didn't react to the speech, but hushed whispers flurried in the second floor booths. Why did these words seem to be aimed at someone?

Chapter 306: Fishing With One's Life (IV)

Hu Dingfang didn't say anything. Meanwhile, his wife sighed softly and looked at her husband.

“Did you... use the Five Styles in front of him?”

The commander nodded.

Chen Yuhua stayed silent for a moment. “Try... not to use it next time. You are a supernatural now. As strong as the Five Styles is, there are abilities and techniques in the supernatural as well. Don’t use it unless you have to.”

“Mmhhh.” Hu Dingfang didn’t protest. Plainly, Li Hao’s words might be meant for his ears.

.....

Within the hall.

Li Hao called on Southern Fist instead of continuing in the same vein. “Senior Southern Fist, you are a respected senior of the Silver Moon martial world. You can ask one question!”

He Yong roared with laughter and cut straight to the chase. “Does the method for Summoner of Spirit have to do with the five organs?”

Eyes widened among martial masters and they stared raptly at the stage. This was the heart of what they wanted to know!

“Yes, at least my teacher’s method is tied to the five organs.” Li Hao nodded. “I don’t know about anyone else’s method, but nurturing the five elements is the precursor to Summoner of Spirit. The strength of the five organs is the foundation to Summoner!”

He Yong wanted to follow up, but Li Hao called upon someone else.

“How do we strengthen the five organs?” the martial master called out excitedly.

“There’s two ways. One, use internal force to nurture them. That might take ten years, twenty years, or even a lifetime! Two, use a blood pearl. One Sunflare level blood pearl can save you five years. Two can save you ten years...”

The hall ignited with a dull roar. Some with hasty personalities wanted to yell their questions at the stage, but Li Hao quieted them down before they had a chance to.

“Don’t be in a rush, everyone. I’m sure you’ve all heard of the blood pearls. Does anyone have one on them?”

The hall immediately stilled. It was inappropriate to bring the treasure out like this whether or not they had one. There might be Red Moon representatives present.

“I have one!” He Yong hooted. “It’s a Sunflare level one. Do you have a special way for us to take it? I took one, and to great effect, but it wasn’t as wondrous as you say...”

“That’s because of a difference in breathing method!” Li Hao smiled. “It’s wonderful that you have one, senior. Everything looks to the results. There is no use in just talking about things all the time. Senior, could I have your blood pearl?”

He Yong threw the blood pearl on stage. Li Hao took a quick assessment. Good, it wasn’t weak. It was at least from a mid Sunflare scarlet shadow—probably a royal family creation.

So the royal family was also preparing these resources.

“I will not test it on you since you are a Dominator, senior. Are you willing to let me experiment with it?”

“Of course, do as you wish!” He Yong didn’t care. It was best if he could see some results with his own eyes.

Li Hao looked into the crowd and pointed at a young man. His target was roughly twenty years old and seemed to be peak Slayer, judging from his muscles, stride, and condition.

Of course, he couldn’t be certain.

“Please come up here, junior brother.”

The young man in question was a bit baffled, but also excited. He quickly made his way to the stage.

“Who... is he?” Whispers flurried through the crowd.

“Don’t know.”

“I know him, he’s the youngest disciple of the Iron Palm. He’s pretty young and already peak Slayer.”

“Oh, one of his!”

The young man was quickly identified; the discourse also traveled into Li Hao’s ears.

“You’re not a Sunderer yet, are you?” He smiled at the newcomer.

“No...”

“You’ll instantly break through after taking the blood pearl. Not only that, but it will strengthen your five visceral organs as well. You’ll be mid Sunderer or even late Sunderer soon, but it’s up to you to sense the aura if you want to make it to half step Dominator...”

“R-really?” Thrills ran through the young man.

“You’ll know when we give it a try!” Li Hao raised the Sunflare level blood pearl. “There’s too much energy in here for you, so you shouldn’t take it by yourself. Since I am a half step Dominator, I can use the Breathing Method of the Five Styles to help you digest it...”

Li Hao shoved the blood pearl into the other’s mouth and slammed his palm over when energy erupted. He operated the breathing method before the young man had a chance to react.

Not only that, but he utilized a tiny thread of sword energy as well. It wasn’t like the guy would know any different, he’d just think that the breathing method was marvelous.

A massive amount of blood-colored energy spread out in the air; the young disciple’s internal force surged and he flushed beet red. It didn’t take long before he roared and thrust out his own palm, projecting internal force with an explosive rush!

Jaws dropped in the meeting hall. He was a Sunderer now?? How was that possible?!

“Are there any initial Sunderers present who are willing to fight him?” Li Hao asked the assembly. “He’s still digesting the energy, but his organs and physical body have all been enhanced. He’ll be stronger than a typical Sunderer...”

“I am!” Someone quickly jumped out from the crowd.

The two Sunderers were quickly embroiled in a fight. The young man who'd taken the blood pearl urgently needed to vent the excess from the changes in his body. Emotions running high, he continuously slammed down instances of the Iron Palm.

However, his lack of experience showed and he suffered multiple kicks in a row. The assembly carefully observed the proceedings with strange looks in their eyes. The young disciple's organs really did seem to be much stronger than before. The frenzied kicking only inflicted some bruises and scrapes. There was no resulting damage to his internal organs.

The group regarded blood pearls with new fervor. The two Sunderers were still fighting, but people couldn't help but raise questions again.

"Is it... only the Breathing Method of the Five Styles that can digest the energy?"

"No, all breathing methods can do so, they just waste some more energy. The Breathing Method of the Five Styles is more efficient at this task." Li Hao continued before the next question followed, "Blood pearls are actually wasted on Sunderers. They're much more useful for Dominators as the large sums of energy can be incorporated into the five visceral organs used to fortify them. That will be very useful in helping everyone progress to Summoner of Spirit."

"How do we break through after enhancing our organs?" A light danced in He Yong's eyes.

"I'm not certain of the particulars either," Li Hao chuckled. "But I know that after the five organs are fully nurtured, you can try melding your aura into the organs if it's strong enough. However, that easily destroys the balance between the organs and causes death via their rupture!"

"That's right, I've tried that before myself," He Yong frowned and agreed after a while. "I can feel my organs threatening to explode as soon as my aura enters them!"

He'd tried before!

Or more accurately, many people had tried before. They weren't fools and could hazard some guesses when they saw the fire heart ape. However, they couldn't do it!

"I heard teacher mention it once," Li Hao said after thinking it over. "There's a key to this process, but he didn't go into details. He only mentioned that the process requires this key to be successful!"

And that was to lock the aura with the supernatural locks!

No one knew about this and neither did they dare brashly experiment. Martial masters who needed to feel their way through to Summoner of Spirit were all of the Dominator level. It wasn't hard for Dominators to cross over to the supernatural, but even if they didn't, they didn't dare lightly disturb their supernatural locks.

And yet, it was impossible to confine the aura without supernatural locks. This made it impossible for martial masters to summon and nurture their spirits, even if they knew the next step had to do with the five organs.

"There are five organs for five auras, must we have five auras to take the next step?" A voice traveled from the second floor.

The method for Summoner of Spirit was meaningless if that was the case.

"Not necessarily." Li Hao shook his head. "If there's only one aura... and I have to repeat myself and say that I'm not terribly familiar with my teacher's research... But one thing I do know, and it's that my teacher didn't say anything even though I comprehended the sword aura. That means it's not impossible to go at it with one aura alone! We can nurture one aura in five organs, but I'll need my teacher to expand upon the particulars..."

"Is there no other way apart from the blood pearls?" asked the same speaker from the second floor. That was Red Moon exclusive knowledge. If this was the case, it'd be open warfare with Red Moon and they'd have to employ the use of origin weapons.

That would not be good!

“I don’t know, but my teacher is attempting to modify the Breathing Method of the Five Styles. If he succeeds, we might be able to directly nurture the five organs. It might be slower, but it’d be a viable path. Unfortunately, I find it impossible to answer these questions now that my teacher is absent.”

Eyes widened with surprise when the crowd heard the response. Modifying the Breathing Method of the Five Styles? Would it be freely shared if that was successful?

“Commissioner Inspector Li,” came another person’s voice from the second floor. “Did Professor Yuan specifically mention anything to be cautious of before he left?”

“Yes!” the young man answered frankly. “Teacher once mentioned that there are elements attributed to the five organs. They cannot be assimilated willy-nilly with random auras. The water aura corresponds to the kidneys and the fire aura to the heart. But the five visceral organs are fragile, so they need to be strong enough to not suffer damage or bleed when the aura is directed into the organ. That is the most basic requirement for the next level. If such signs appear when you attempt to meld the aura, you must stop immediately!”

Even He Yong frowned now. “The organs are hard to fortify. I’ve consumed countless treasures, but mine still bleed as soon as I try directing my aura into them. Can mysterious power stones enhance the five organs?”

“They can, but they’re not as effective as the blood pearls. The blood pearls are more suited to martial masters and the proper attribute is required for the mysterious power stone,” Li Hao replied. “Director Hao gave me a wood stone when I was injured by another before. I used it to repair my organs. The effects were decent. While they were less than blood pearls, they were much better than mysterious power.”

He Yong breathed out heavily. Damn, even mysterious power stones were less than blood pearls. What else could be said about that?

“.....” Questions flew in a thick flurry and Li Hao answered all of them honestly. The assembly was too embarrassed to ask anymore after a blizzard of questioning. If they continued, they’d be asking about the Breathing Method of the Five Styles.

Mouth dry, Li Hao took a sip of water.

Chapter 307: Fishing With One’s Life (V)

“Li Hao,” Wang Ming whispered next to his colleague. “Can the Breathing Method of the Five Styles really not be taught to outsiders?”

Li Hao glared at him and kept his voice down. “Of course not! Don’t even think about it unless you kill me and take the book about the secret method from my body! And don’t get any funny ideas either. These secret arts are always only partially written down. Randomly attempting it will cause your death. The Breathing Method of the Five Styles is only half recorded in the book, the rest of it’s in my mind. So don’t even think about it!”

“How would I ever...” Wang Ming mumbled. “But what are you carrying it on you for? Isn’t that incredibly dangerous?”

“No shit! But should I hide it at home instead? Don’t worry, only half of it’s written down. It’s not like all of it will be leaked if I lose it. You’re teacher’s honorary disciple. I’ll let you read it if you do well.”

“Okay!”

The two kept their voices so low that they were inaudible. Director Zhou on the other side didn’t hear anything and didn’t mind their whispering.

.....

However, the ears of several Solars twitched on the second floor.

Inside one of the private booths.

Hu Dingfang's expression shifted slightly. That idiot! He looked at Chen Yuhua and transmitted, "Is there a secret record detailing the Breathing Method of the Five Styles?"

His wife looked at him and transmitted back, "There was before, I don't know if there's one now. Why do you ask? You already know it, so why do you need the book?"

"It's not that, but your junior brother... Does he really think that people can't hear what he's saying? He's carrying it on him..."

"What?!" Chen Yuhua blinked. What was he carrying it around for?

There weren't a lot of words in the manual for the breathing method; it mostly detailed some movements and the actual technique. To know it was to plumb the depths of its knowledge. He could destroy it after he learned it, why keep it on himself?

"Wait, you heard him?" she realized in the next second.

"Yes!" Hu Dingfang answered out loud with a frown. "He said it very softly, but what level of strength does a Solar command? They'll be able to hear if they concentrate their focus on him..."

Both of them frowned ferociously. This was not good! The more Li Hao demonstrated the effects of the breathing method, the more it would tempt people. Even supernaturals would be moved if this went on. He would be in grave trouble as the situation continued.

Hu Dingfang's ears abruptly pricked forward as he heard the two voices once more.

“Li Hao, you’ve got a Nova blood pearl on you—why don’t you give me one? Director Hou split it into ten for you, you won’t lose much if you give me one. I’ll buy it off you...”

“Shut up and keep your voice down. No one else knows about this, so keep quiet, you big mouth! Stop talking! There’s powerhouses on the second floor, what if they hear us? You’ve seriously got a huge mouth!”

“Pfft, we’re talking so softly! Do you really think they’re gods? And who cares if they hear us? Who dares touch you when we’ve got the director backing us up? He’ll stab them to death with one jab!”

“You... forget it, I’m not talking to you.”

That was the end of their conversation, but Hu Dingfang glowered blackly.

“He’s also carrying a Nova blood pearl on him!” he transmitted after a moment. Even Chen Yuhua’s expression changed drastically. The Breathing Method of the Five Styles and a Nova blood pearl was a perfect match! Even she herself would be tempted at this point. Their lives would be so different after killing Li Hao!

As for the secret method being incomplete, some veteran martial masters might be able to deduce the rest of the method after obtaining the first half. Their capabilities were not to be underestimated.

A headache set in for Chen Yuhua. Her junior brother... was too foolish and she didn’t know how many had heard him. Hu Dingfang heard him because her husband was a late Solar. What about the others?

“Pay attention to the reactions from the other booths...”

Hu Dingfang furrowed his brows as soon as she responded. “There’s no reaction, it’s all very quiet. Perhaps... no one heard him? We did because we’re keeping an eye on him. Other people might not have noticed anything.”

However, his brows remained locked in a frown. He needed to remind Li Hao the importance of being prudent. Did the Night Watchers really think that no one would take a risk just because they had Hou Xiaochen?

Youngsters had such big mouths and needed to talk about everything! Hu Dingfang knew who Wang Ming was by now—the grandson of the vice commander of White Dragons. He’d learned that the boy was a big mouth when he asked around. It would seem that he had a particularly big mouth and talked about everything and anything.

.....

Wang Ming acted perfectly normal; there was nothing out of place. Who is Li Hao trying to trick this time? Do I get any credit if he succeeds? Do I get a cut of the spoils? I’ll probably always be known as a big mouth from now on, but who cares! I don’t!

He flicked a glance and looked at the others in the hall again. Who was his colleague’s target this time and how many would take the bait? This guy was up to his old habits on his first day in Silver Moon, he was such a bad guy!

Li Hao continued to cautiously answer everyone’s questions in an earnest fashion. He focused mainly on the blood pearls and the breathing method, assigning all credit to these two components.

The more the crowd listened, the more they felt that these two factors were needed in order to break through to Summoner of Spirit. Granted, the same effects could be had with more blood pearls if one did not have the breathing method.

At the very last when the meeting was about to conclude, Big Mouth Wang Ming whispered again, “Li Hao, does Hu Dingfang know the Breathing Method of the Five Styles? I heard Director Hao

say that he made it to late Solar in two years after stealing your secret art. That means supernaturals can also use it, and to great effect, right?”

“Shut up, seriously just shut up! Stop blabbering and don’t start rumors!” Li Hao rebuked with some anger. “You can stay away from me in the future if you keep running your mouth like this! You’re so damned annoying!”

“Okay, okay, I won’t say anything anymore!”

Hu Dingfang was a bit awkward, resigned, and angry from his seat on the second floor. This Wang Ming really needed a good beating! And these two fools needed to stop talking! At this rate, even supernaturals would be tempted, not just martial masters!

Sigh. I should’ve interrupted them after their first sentence had I known this would happen.

.....

In another private booth.

Hao Lianchuan yawned widely and grinned. The little guy was fishing for all he was worth and fearless that he might truly attract a massive fish. He was fishing with his life as bait!

In that case... fish well.

Hao Lianchuan soundlessly departed the meeting hall. The news would make it into certain people’s ears soon.

.....

Inside the meeting hall.

Li Hao did his best to answer all the questions flung at him. Other than those he couldn't answer, he fully spoke of everything he knew.

It was the final moments of the meeting. Someone in the crowd hesitated, but ultimately asked, "Little friend Li, can you really not share the Breathing Method of the Five Styles?"

There were those who still wanted to give that a try at this stage. Could it be taught to outsiders? Perhaps they were willing to in these times of martial dao weakness?

The young man pursed his lips with difficulty and thought for a bit. Still, his response was, "I cannot! At least not right now. My master needs to give approval, it is not up to me. And my master... Well, it's not entirely impossible!

"Everyone might be more familiar with my master than I am. He's stubborn, but also expresses his gratitude in spades. I'll be frank, my teacher isn't here right now partially because he's hiding for protection. If the various aunts and uncles present happen to come across him or see him when you return home, and are willing to lend a helping hand if my master is in danger... then why can't the Breathing Method of the Five Styles be shared?

"Is there a point to rules if one is about to die?" Li Hao spoke bluntly. "If my master is still unwilling to teach the breathing method after he is saved, his savior can come find me. I will share it even if that gives him an apologetic fit!"

The crowd rustled in reaction to his latest words. Save Yuan Shuo?

Indeed, Yuan Shuo was very strong now. But as strong as he was, he was not to the point of defying Novas. If he really traveled to the central region and sought revenge from Ying Hongyue, then... it wasn't out of the question that those gathered could render some aid if they came across a Yuan Shuo in need.

The word of a martial master was very valuable. They might receive even more valuable things then, to say nothing of the breathing method.

“I see!” The martial master who’d spoken smiled. “If I really do meet an injured Master Yuan on the run in the central region, I will naturally do what I can as a fellow martial master!”

“My thanks to everyone!” Li Hao raised a cupped fist salute. “I have answered all that I can and can do no more about what still remains a mystery. At the last, although I share a death feud with Red Moon, I must remind everyone that the blood pearls are formless and intangible. There is no other way to extract them other than with origin weapons. Don’t take risks for the blood pearls. The best way is not to hunt down Red Moon powerhouses either, but to force the organization to hand over the method to nurture them!

“That is the true root of the situation!” The young smiled. “We martial masters have a way forward if we can produce blood pearls ourselves. I, Li Hao, do hereby announce a promise from my master that if Red Moon is willing to hand over the method to raise blood pearls—the true method, one that is suited for the public’s use—then our discipline’s Breathing Method of the Five Styles can also be publicized! We are honored to do our part for the glory of martial dao!”

A hush descended upon the first and second floors. Some had been thinking during Li Hao’s speech that it wasn’t a done deal even if Red Moon was willing to share their knowledge. Yuan Shuo would have to offer his as well.

This was precisely what Li Hao had just added!

“Can you really make this promise on behalf of your master?” Some people could barely remain in their seats.

Chapter 308: An Honest Li Hao (I)

It wasn’t an impossible idea if everyone worked together. Red Moon was caught in obvious trouble and danger these days, Ying Hongyue might not be able to hang on forever. If the martial world united and forced him to hand over the method to nurture blood pearls, they might attain some success.

If the Breathing Method of the Five Styles was also available then... that would be a perfect match!

Li Hao nodded and intoned, "I can make the decision on my master's behalf so long as we confirm that Red Moon the method is real and can truly create blood pearls. I can swear on the Night Watchers if there's people who don't believe me! If Ying Hongyue dares share his secret method, how would my discipline continue to hoard our own?"

"But without the blood pearl method, only Ying Hongyue stands to benefit if our breathing method is publicized. As great the fools we may be, we will not permit Red Moon to freely benefit from us!"

That made sense to the assembly. If the Breathing Method of the Five Styles became public knowledge, but not the way to foster blood pearls, then Red Moon... Red Moon would be so much stronger!

"Little friend Li is righteous!"

"That's right, I think we should try for the method to nurture blood pearls since it's beneficial to martial masters. Red Moon's Ying Hongyue was once a martial master. Since the Five Styles has spoken thus, why can't they?"

If Old Demon Yuan, an incredibly difficult person, was amenable to the idea, why not Ying Hongyue?

All pressure immediately redirected to Red Moon. As opposed to scheming over how to seize the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, it was better to force out the way to foster blood pearls. That way, the breathing method would be automatically offered up. It was a move that killed two birds to benefit everyone.

"Our thanks to King Yuan's sense of honor and justice! The Five Styles are the shining example for the rest of the martial world, alright!" The assembly of martial masters overflowed with flattery.

The old demon was proposing to give away the secret art of his heritage, whereas Ying Hongyue only needed to pay the price of an uncommon secret art. This disparity in importance was readily evident.

So what if Ying Hongyue was strong? It wasn't like martial masters were pushovers. Ying Hongyue himself also knew that dominating the central region wasn't the same as commanding the world. If he didn't relinquish his method, they'd kill all Red Moon members outside of the central region and assassinate all of his supernaturals!

Celestial wasn't a match for martial masters when it came to assassination. Energy ripples gave Celestial members away. If a large group of martial masters decided to assassinate others, even Celestial would have to bow their heads and stand to the side!

.....

Thus the meeting concluded, leaving behind an assembly of agitated martial masters. Many of them were discussing if they should ally together to force Ying Hongyue's hand. It was too foolhardy and frankly, idiotic, to bring the fight directly to Red Moon's doorstep. So how else could they do it?

Kill!

Hunt down Red Moon members in all other provinces to the point where Ying Hongyue was forced to announce his secret method. That was the right and proper plan.

The martial masters were in agreement. Negotiations weren't reliable—killing Red Moon members until Ying Hongyue could no longer bear it was the best option.

.....

The second floor.

Hong Yitang breathed out inside his private booth and said softly, "Red Moon will find themselves in a lot of trouble in the days to come unless they announce the method ahead of time."

"Won't that turn the Five Styles into a sitting duck if Ying Hongyue publishes his secret method?" his wife transmitted back. The Five Styles discipline would be stuck between a rock and a hard place then.

"How would they? Not to mention, why would Red Moon ever bow their heads to a group of martial masters? They are part of the three great organizations! Although Ying Hongyue knows that acquiescing will bring certain trouble to Yuan Shuo, the invincible reputation that he's crafted for his organization over the years will be instantly destroyed! Everyone in Red Moon will wonder that, if he's willing to announce their secret method today, will he offer up their lives tomorrow?"

"For a large faction like his, they cannot easily bow their head in these kinds of circumstances. They must grit their teeth and bear it to the end. Otherwise, everyone will use the same method to force Red Moon into giving way again and again.

"This is similar to the government's reactions to the three great organizations. No matter how the government is under threat, they fire city annihilation missiles at the first sign of real trouble. They do not compromise or negotiate. Why are they so decisive? To head off the possibility of a second occurrence!"

As the leader of the Sword Sect, Hong Yitang saw things very clearly. If Ying Hongyue was still a pure martial master and operating by himself, then he might actually hand over the knowledge if enough pressure was brought to bear. But now? He was the master of a large organization, how would he ever?!

He wouldn't, not unless he couldn't hold up beneath the strain. Only then would they stand a chance of forcing the method out of him. He would never bow his head unless Red Moon suffered grievous harm.

Hong Yitang's wife nodded in understanding. "Did you hear Li Hao's conversation with his colleague?" she transmitted.

“A little...” Hong Yitang frowned slightly, then responded silently, “We can ignore that. A reminder can be given if the opportunity presents itself, but we should not get involved. We cannot be blinded by self-interest, Hou Xiaochen still reigns in this part of the world. No one who knows these things would take the risk unless they want to be openly hostile with the man.”

Of course, there were always those who were completely reckless. Those people well deserved their deaths.

If anything happened to Li Hao... Well, Hong Yitang felt that that might not be the case upon further thought. The young man was hardly a simple character. He appeared simple, honest, and kind, but Hong Yitang had explored the ancient city with the lad.

So many had died in there, but Li Hao and his companions emerged alive. Were things as straightforward as they seemed? How many supernaturals had died those days, but Li Hao and Liu Long retreated unscathed? Just that alone indicated that they were far more than met the eye.

And yet, no one on the expedition team felt there was anything remarkable about the young man. It was after they emerged that the situation struck Hong Yitang in an increasingly odd way. Li Hao was just a run-of-the-mill martial master without special abilities, yet he'd survived to the very end of that harrowing expedition without a scratch on his body. Granted, the young man hadn't gained anything on the trip either. Yet... was everything as simple as it appeared to be?

His wife had no further comment.

“We live in Silver Moon,” Hong Yitang transmitted after thinking things over. “The others can have two minds about their actions, but we cannot. We may be the only two Solars left unallied to a particular faction in the entire province. It's time to make a choice. Do we join Hou Xiaochen or do we draw closer to the three great organizations? Or do we migrate out of the province and see if there's a way out in the others?”

These were the thoughts that he'd brought to White Moon City on this trip—it was a very difficult decision!

But decide he had to—whether it was the three great organizations or the Night Watchers. The two sides had settled into mutual hostility. The Sword Sect had been able to survive in the cracks between them before, but those no longer existed. He needed to make a choice as soon as possible.

“Yitang, must we get involved? You built the Sword Sect from scratch and have poured so much care and effort into it...”

“There’s no way around it!” Hong Yitang continued transmitting as he watched Li Hao and the others leave. “Even someone as strong as Yuan Shuo has his disciple look to the Night Watchers for shelter. Yuan Shuo left by himself so he wouldn’t be shackled! How many martial masters in the martial world remain free at large these days? I can’t do so, at the very least. It’s come time to choose whether to close ranks with the three great organizations or Night Watchers!”

But he was worried that they’d be treated as cannon fodder if the Sword Sect leaned toward the Night Watchers. Therefore... it was more likely that he turned to the three great organizations instead!

He looked at Li Hao’s departing back once more, a light gleaming in his eyes. “I’ll wait for Yuan Shuo to return!” he transmitted.

“Huh?” His wife didn’t understand.

“I’m going to wait for Yuan Shuo to return to Silver Moon.” Hong Yitang gained. “I’ll use that excuse to fob off the Night Watchers for a while. If even Yuan Shuo is willing to join them when he comes back... The Sword Sect follows Yuan Shuo in everything we do!

“That guy is immensely flexible and adaptable, he’s also very perceptive. Although he’s killed so many people, he’s still perfectly hale and hearty, and openly walks the land. He’s now reached legendary heights with martial dao! As a martial master of the same era, we may not come out worse for the wear if we follow his footsteps.”

His wife still didn't fully understand and continued the transmitted conversation, "Can we really say this to them!"

"We can! Don't worry, Hou Xiaochen must be waiting for him to return as well. There won't be a problem!"

Yuan Shuo would certainly return to the province. As arrogant and unyielding as he was, he had one major outstanding quality in that he would remember where his home and disciple were. He'd be back, sooner or later.

.....

Li Hao was naturally unaware of the Sword Sect's decision, neither was he interested in learning about their thoughts. He was on his way back to headquarters. It wasn't far, but he wasn't concerned about potential danger along the way either. That would occur on his way home at night if there was any.

He had another group to contend with after meeting with the martial masters—the Night Watchers from central headquarters!

Hao Lianchuan had notified him beforehand and indeed, a young man with green hair blocked his way as soon as he reached the front doors. The latter wore a smile that didn't seem very genuine; Hao Lianchuan stood next to him.

"Li Hao!" The deputy director beamed and waved him over. "Come here for a second!"

Li Hao trotted over.

"I'd like you to meet a special agent from central headquarters—Special Agent Yu!" Hao Lianchuan chuckled. "Don't underestimate him just because he's young. He's top tier when it comes to strength—a mid Solar powerhouse!"

“You praise me too much.” Yu Xiao smiled and presented a dignified front. “Mid Solars are worth nothing in the central region!”

“Greetings to milord!” Li Hao hastily saluted—respect, admiration, and adoration on his face. The look of yearning instantly put Yu Xiao in a better mood.

So what of Yuan Shuo’s disciple, the heir of the eight families? He was just a Sunderer at the moment, a Darkmoon!

The difference between him and the lad was as if heaven and earth. There was Sunflare and initial Solar between them; the gap was so great that there was nothing Yu Xiao needed to admire Li Hao for.

“You’re Li Hao, right?”

The young man hastily bobbed his head with a biddable expression on his face. “In response to milord, I am Li Hao of Silver City. I am of the Five Styles discipline and a Night Watcher. It hasn’t been long since I’ve joined the Night Watchers, so please look after me well!”

“Well met!” Yu Xiao was all smiles. “I have some questions I’d like to ask you. Is this a good time?”

“Of course,” the young man hastily responded. “Please ask whatever you like, milord.”

“Then let’s find a place to sit and chat.” Yu Xiao didn’t like it here, it was too stifling.

Li Hao snuck a careful look at Hao Lianchuan. Although the deputy director frowned slightly, he still said, “That’s fine. Li Hao, take Special Agent Yu to the teahouse next door. Remember what you can and cannot say!”

The young man nodded emphatically.

“Then let’s do that,” Yu Xiao said indifferently. “Come with me, Li Hao.”

“Yes, sir!” Li Hao was hot on the man’s heels. Yu Xiao left with quick strides. He wouldn’t want to be here if not for the young man.

Chapter 309: An Honest Li Hao (II)

Moments later.

A private booth in the tea house.

Li Hao quickly poured a full cup for Yu Xiao.

“Your motions are very practiced.” The man smiled. “Do you do this often?”

“I used to pour tea for teacher all the time.” The young man smiled simply. “That’s how we martial masters are. We grow and develop step by step. Certain tasks must be undertaken before our teachers are willing to pass on knowledge.”

“Old and decrepit traditions!” Yu Xiao pursed his lips with disdain. “That’s why martial dao has declined. Masters always keep something for themselves and jealously hoards the finest bit of anything. Supernaturals don’t have to curry favor with anyone at all!

“What a pity that I cannot become a supernatural. I tried before...” Li Hao was both envious and resigned.

“That’s normal.” Yu Xiao wasn’t surprised. “Your physical body is strong as a Sunderer, which makes it hard to break the supernatural locks and ascend. But this is also because your internal force has strengthened the locks. You’ll find a way to succeed if the opportunity presents itself.”

Li Hao nodded with some hope, but found no words for a response.

Yu Xiao smiled and gestured at him to sit down. The young man quickly scrambled into his seat.

“You’re the heir of the Lis in the eight families, right?” Yu Xiao cut straight to the chase.

“I don’t know.” Li Hao first nodded, then shook his head. “That’s what everyone says, but I don’t know anything about the eight families. Since Red Moon has come for me, however, and given all the research they’ve done... I probably am.”

“The sword of the Lis...”

“I’ve turned it into the agency!” Li Hao replied quickly. “I don’t know if Director Hao has it, or if Director Hou does.”

Yu Xiao nodded thoughtfully and took a sip of tea. “You said in the meeting that the Breathing Method of the Five Styles can be used in conjunction with the blood pearls to swiftly strengthen martial masters. Is that correct?”

The young man nodded again.

“If you offer the breathing method to the Night Watchers, that will bring you many more benefits.”

“Ah...” A conflicted look crossed Li Hao’s face. “I really can’t, not without my teacher’s approval. He’ll throw me out if I do it on my own. You may not know, milord, but this is a grave taboo in the martial world. Although the martial world no longer exists, my teacher does!”

“It’s fine,” Yu Xiao laughed to see how pitiful the young man looked. “I was just asking, not forcing you to hand the secret art over. Of course, if you have the intention to... Don’t forget that the Night Watcher headquarters are in Skystar City. The Silver Moon Night Watchers may not be able to bear the consequences, but Skystar City isn’t a place where martial masters can run amok!”

Yu Xiao’s laugh deepened as Li Hao looked on awkwardly. When he took another sip of tea, the young man quickly rose to fill his cup again. Yu Xiao leaned back on his chair and looked merrily across the table.

“Li Hao, there may be something special about your bloodline. We’d like a sample of your blood to study it. Do you have any opinions otherwise?”

“No!” Li Hao quickly shook his head. “Of course the request must be fulfilled if central headquarters wants to study it! Shall I collect a sample of my blood now, milord?”

“.....”

What a good little boy! Yu Xiao thought that he’d struggle a bit or protest. It looked like Li Hao really was treating the Night Watchers as his savior! They all say that Yuan Shuo is crafty, but this disciple of his is... so simple and honest!

“When it comes to something like blood... Li Hao, headquarters won’t mistreat you, but I don’t need regular blood. I need essence blood.”

That put the young man in a difficult position. “Milord... essence blood... just one drop will take a lot out of me... I was already heavily injured in the ancient ruins...”

“Are you not willing?” Yu Xiao frowned.

“That’s not it!” Li Hao hastily shook his head. “How would I not? It’s not like essence blood can’t be replenished. I... alright, I will give milord one drop. But can you wait a day or two?”

“Why is that?” Yu Xiao smiled.

“Um... Director Hou gave me some treasures.” Li Hao scratched his head. “I’ll be able to collect some essence blood after eating them. That will minimize my losses.”

“A blood pearl?”

“Yes!” Li Hao nodded with complete honesty.

Yu Xiao didn’t mind, but subconsciously said, “He’s quite good to you...”

“Somewhat,” Li Hao laughed happily. “But it’s mostly because I accomplished a deed of merit in the ruins...”

The young man suddenly closed his mouth and looked at Yu Xiao. He seemed to have said something he shouldn’t have said and ducked his head in some fright. “Right, it’s Director Hou looking favorably upon me!”

“.....” This was when Yu Xiao recalled that the person in front of him had entered the ruins! He’d previously thought that Hou Xiaochen simply placed great emphasis on Li Hao and wanted to bring Yuan Shuo to his side. But... was there another reason behind all this?

Yu Xiao had asked a few others about events in the ruins and come to understand some of what’d taken place. But Li Hao said that he’d accomplished a deed of merit. What deed? Interest immediately pricked at Yu Xiao. These ruins were a subject of general interest and there seemed to be something afoot here.

“Li Hao, are there really that many treasures inside the ruins?” he asked carelessly.

“Many, so many!” The young man quickly nodded. “Mysterious power stones are everywhere...”

“Did you see them too when you were inside?”

“Yes.”

Yu Xiao smiled at the young man’s reluctance to say more. “Oh yes, the ruins will be opening again next month. Will you be entering them?”

“Of course...” Li Hao quickly shut his mouth with a shake of his head. “No no, I’m so weak...”

The man sniffed out secrets at play. Li Hao was going in again next month? It was said that these ruins had something to do with the eight families. Was there really something going on here that he was unaware of?

But based on what he knew, there was nothing of note. Li Hao had attempted to open the city gates with his essence blood, but to no effect. What did he mean by this deed of merit?

Curiosity itched at Yu Xiao’s heart. Seeing as the young man was a timid sort, he put on a stern demeanor.

“Li Hao,” the man coughed. “You should remember that I’m here from central headquarters. Our mission is to ensure that the three great organizations don’t reap any benefits!

“It’s very dangerous and potentially a fatal mistake for a Night Watcher to conceal important information from their superiors. You might be branded as a traitor if it’s serious enough!”

Color drained from Li Hao's face, but he didn't dare meet Yu Xiao's eyes. "I... I really haven't," he said in a muffled voice.

"Li Hao!"

"Milord!" Li Hao jerked his head up. "I really... really haven't!"

"Are you still trying to worm your way out?" Yu Xiao frowned forebodingly. "Do you think we haven't grasped any information upstairs?"

The young man was as white as a sheet and said with difficulty, "I... really haven't concealed anything. I've already reported it to the directors..."

"Then I ask you, is Silver Moon still under dynastic rule? Since it is and I am your superior, do you intend to continue concealing information from me after I've asked you directly?"

"But, Director Hou told me not to tell anyone else," muttered an abject Li Hao. "I'm afraid..."

"Don't worry, I'll keep your secret. Or do you not trust your superior officers?"

Obvious conflict played out over the young man's face and he nodded after a while. "It's... actually not much," he whispered. "Just two small things. The first is that I didn't enter the city—I waited outside for the lords and ladies to come back out. I happened to see a weapon that looked like a small snake shoot from the city. I thought I was seeing things when it flew out. The little snake flew to a certain spot when something happened inside the city. I didn't dare mention it and only told Director Hou later. He said not to tell anyone else about it."

An origin weapon!

The Shadow Snake Sword!

Yu Xiao's eyes lit up when he heard these words, he immediately understood the connotations of what the young man was saying.

"You... saw the sword fly out?"

"Not a sword, it was a snake."

You idiot, that was the sword. Yu Xiao knew that Li Hao had likely never seen an origin weapon before—the only one he knew was the Flaming Phoenix Spear since Hou Xiaochen had used it that day.

"Where did it land?" Yu Xiao asked, his thoughts spinning rapidly.

"On the rooftop of an ancient house. I didn't dare take a look since I couldn't fly in the ancient city. I thought it was an ancient beast from the inner city, so I didn't dare stick my nose into it."

An origin weapon! What an unexpected surprise! Yu Xiao's face flushed with excitement. He wasn't equipped with an origin weapon—Zhang Ting had been because she bore a heavy mission on her shoulders. A mid Solar wouldn't be privileged enough to carry on otherwise.

If I can get my hands on it...

It looked like Zhang Ting really was dead! No wonder they were letting Li Hao back into the ruins next month. Anyone who knew the location of an origin weapon was a highly valuable asset.

“Can you identify the precise location of that ancient house?”

“It’s hard,” Li Hao replied with difficulty. “But if I go inside again, I can probably find it. Or I can go back and draw a map for milord. It might not be the most accurate, but it shouldn’t be too far off.”

“Did you draw one for Hou Xiaochen?”

“No, Director Hou is still in closed door cultivation. When I mentioned it to him at the canyon, he told me not to tell anyone else. I came to make a full report, but the director’s been in seclusion this entire time and I didn’t dare talk to the others about it.”

So perhaps even Hou Xiaochen didn’t know the precise location! Yu Xiao’s eyes gleamed brightly. If that was the case... then... maybe...

Of course, the man would emerge from seclusion one day. Once he did and questioned Li Hao, this scaredy-cat would never dare hide anything from his director. But that was fine, Yu Xiao would know then as well and might be able to be one step ahead. Hou Xiaochen might not enter the ruins himself either.

“Very well, you will give me a rough draft after you return. Remember, you may not tell anyone else about this!” he said solemnly.

“Understood!” Li Hao nodded.

Yu Xiao’s thoughts traveled further—what if Li Hao died before Hou Xiaochen made it out of seclusion? Wouldn’t that mean that the Shadow Snake Sword’s whereabouts would remain a mystery? Of course, that had to wait until Li Hao gave him the sword’s location.

“You mentioned two things, this is one of them. What is the other?”

Li Hao struggled once more, but said honestly, “The second has to do with my blood.”

“Hmm?” Yu Xiao was confused at the relevance. Is your blood special? Is there really something more to the bloodlines of the eight families?

Chapter 310: An Honest Li Hao (III)

“Well, it’s like this...” Li Hao answered in a small voice. “Director Hou... really is injured, and it’s an accumulation of many old injuries. His five organs are particularly damaged! I can heal him, though, and he’ll be thirty percent stronger than before once I heal him.”

Yu Xiao almost burst out in laughter. How was that possible? You can heal people? Stop lying!

“It’s true!” Li Hao explained earnestly. “My blood has always had this kind of effect, I didn’t think much of it before. The director was injured when he killed Red Hair—I couldn’t bear to see him suffering, so I gave him a drop of blood. After he took it, the director said my blood is an ultimate treasure. That’s why he had me immediately come to White Moon City. He’s probably been in seclusion these days to prepare for it.”

“What a joke... how is that possible...”

“Milord, it’s fine if you don’t believe me.” The young man set his jaw with indignation and mustered up his courage. “If you do... you could create a small cut on yourself right now. You’ll know when I retrieve a drop of blood from myself.”

Yu Xiao frowned, but his emotions were rapidly climbing. That... couldn’t be true, could it? It was impossible!

His frown deepened before he nodded after a while. “Let’s give it a try!”

A small cut split open one of Yu Xiao's fingertips and began oozing blood. Li Hao immediately scraped his fingernails down his arm and scratched a bloody mark; a drop of blood quickly seeped out. When the young man collected the blood, he infused it with significant sword energy. He quickly wrapped it with internal force and offered it to the man.

Yu Xiao frowned with disdain at the drop of blood. But... what if it was true? He maintained a firm grip on his disgust and swallowed the drop.

A violent wave of emotion reared in his heart.

The hell?! What was going on?? He actually felt a bit different—not just a little bit. The mark on his hand immediately healed and he could sense the blood strengthening his body. Some of his other injuries also spontaneously recovered.

Incredible!

How... how... is this possible?!

Shock and astonishment filled Yu Xiao's eyes when he looked at Li Hao. This wasn't possible! If this was, then Li Hao was the most precious human-shaped medicine! And this fool walked around telling people about it! Oh my word!

He was shellshocked by the depths of Li Hao's idiocy. Even if this was true, it wasn't a detail to be revealed to random people! The young fool had the most severe death wish that Yu Xiao had ever seen! He heavily suspected that Hou Xiaochen wanted to eat the kid, or was nurturing him as a human-shaped ingredient.

Was the Silver Moon Night Watcher director injured?

He probably... was. But no matter if true or not, could he resist this kind of temptation after experiencing the wonders of Li Hao's blood?

A sudden impulse gripped Yu Xiao—he wanted to kill Li Hao on the spot and turn the young fool into a massive pill... No, no! Hou Xiaochen knows about him! And he knows that I'm meeting with Li Hao today! So I can't do that. He'll go crazy and kill me. If he can't kill me, he'll expose this and none of it will belong to me anymore!

This was an incredible supplement, more valuable than some of the ultimate treasures of legend. One drop of blood was sufficient to restore some of his youth! What about all of the blood in his body? Will it... help me set foot into Nova or even higher?

Yu Xiao's mind was quickly dissolving into chaos. He was also dumbfounded by the depths of Li Hao's idiocy and stupidity. How did the young idiot never consider that someone might want to kill him for this??

Oh my word, does Red Moon know about this? Is that why they want Li Hao? Does the blood of all of the eight families have this effect? No wonder Red Moon's been hunting them... In that case, the organization's strength is understandable.

Ying Hongyue... The next Ying Hongyue? Doesn't whoever possess Li Hao become the next Ying Hongyue?

Yu Xiao considered so much—too much—in a split second. He wanted to kill, he wanted to kill the young man to silence him—no, he wanted to kill the young man for his blood and body! Everything about Li Hao's physical body was an ultimate treasure!

Hou Xiaochen could not be allowed to profit from this, absolutely not. Once the director swallowed Li Hao's blood to recover from his injuries, the end result would be terrifying. The young man's blood was a supreme treasure even if the person in question wasn't injured!

One drop of blood was more than the equivalent of a mysterious power stone. One had to know that this was just a drop of ordinary blood that they'd experimented on. Yu Xiao's heart ached for the drops of heart blood that Li Hao had used in the ruins. Apparently no one had paid attention to them—damn, what a waste!

The man wanted to extract more blood, but that was what Hu Qingfeng wanted him to do so the blood could be studied. Once the latter discovered or realized something... the situation would turn dicey.

“Does your heart blood offer better effects?” Yu Xiao asked sternly.

“Definitely.” Li Hao nodded. “Just holding it in hand results in an effect.”

“Then... wait a few days to collect your heart blood. There’s no rush!” Yu Xiao couldn’t bring any bloodback with him now. Li Hao would give the heart blood to him if he asked the young fool, but taking heart blood would certainly result in abnormalities of behavior. The differences would be easily discovered.

“This is a very important matter,” Yu Xiao took a deep breath. “Don’t tell anyone else, it will affect your safety! On that matter, how can you tell anyone about it??”

“I haven’t,” Li Hao replied with a naive smile. “I told Director Hou because he was injured when he took action for me. I couldn’t bear to watch him suffer and vomit blood. And for milord... You are a genius from headquarters. They say that geniuses abound in the central region, so people like me might be found all over the place. Not to mention, I can’t lie to a central region superior! We’re all Night Watchers and the agency represents justice, so I’m not afraid!”

Fucking idiot! Yu Xiao cursed inwardly. I would eat you in a second if we were in the wild! He was absolutely not going to tell Hu Qingfeng about any of this!

Li Hao was also banking on Yu Xiao’s secrecy. How would he possibly tell someone else about what he’d just learned? If he did... Li Hao would call him daddy!

Granted, it was fine if he did say something. If Hu Qingfeng had similar thoughts, he’d want a taste himself. Li Hao would produce a drop of regular blood for him. Yu Xiao would then probably be beaten half to death for passing on false intelligence.

In this moment, Li Hao knew that the man in front of him had taken the bait. He would be tempted himself, if their roles were reversed.

If you can withstand the allure of an origin weapon and rejuvenating blood that is an ultimate treasure... then you are a saint and I've misjudged you. I will never make trouble for you so long as you don't want my head. You'd be a shining example to the rest of the supernatural world!

But since Yu Xiao was planning otherwise, he had to accomplish everything before Hou Xiaochen emerged from seclusion. It wasn't a matter of whether or not he could or should kill Li Hao, but that he had to! Hou Xiaochen's impending re-emergence was the man's greatest source of pressure.

As expected, Yu Xiao suddenly asked, "Do you know when Director Hou will be out?"

Li Hao shook his head, but immediately said, "Probably soon! Manager Yu said it'd be three days at most because there are a lot of things that need to be handled in the days to come. The director must exit closed door cultivation soon.

"When he does, I'll be able to heal his wounds," the young man chuckled merrily. "The Night Watchers will be even stronger than before. With you noble lords in attendance as well, we might be able to capture all of the three great organizations in one go!"

How naive! Yu Xiao sneered, urgency creeping into his heart. Three days!

Three days at most... He was very short on time, particularly as Hou Xiaochen might emerge from seclusion in less than three days.

"Sketch out the draft when you return tonight," Yu Xiao commanded. "Have it on you at all times. I'll come find you whenever I have time, you can give it to me then. Also, don't let anyone know what we talked about today!"

"I won't!" Li Hao nodded.

Yu Xiao thought for a moment and took out a mysterious power stone. He was loath to part with it, but he handed it to Li Hao nonetheless. “This is for you. You should know a bit about mysterious power stones—this is your reward!”

Overjoyed, Li Hao took the stone with clear agitation and disbelief. “Milord... is really giving this to me?” he asked cautiously.

“Of course!”

“My deepest thanks, sir!” Li Hao gasped with delight, then looked on admiringly. “Milord, how... did you... take this out? I see that Director Hao can do something similar...”

“It’s just through a storage ring!” Yu Xiao laughed carelessly. “They exist in some of the ancient ruins and the central region is also researching them. We’ve produced a batch and some spatial supernaturals are also manufacturing them! They’re a costly item, but not a big deal to us...”

He laughed again to see Li Hao flushed with yearning.

“Perform well. I might give you one next time if you accomplish another deed of merit!”

“Many thanks for your favor, sir!” Startled by the attention, Li Hao quickly offered profuse thanks.

“It’s just a small matter!” Yu Xiao laughed heartily and sipped his tea to quell his inner turmoil. “Do you live with Hao Lianchuan now?”

“Yes, we live in apartments across from each other.”

“And do you go to work and get off work together too?”

“We went to work together today, but I left alone. Director Hao needed to put in overtime as he has many duties, being a deputy director. Our accommodations aren’t far—the walk helps me better understand White Moon City. I’ve only just arrived and don’t know anything.”

“Ah, that’s a good thought!” Yu Xiao smiled. “Youngsters should be more independent!”

“You’re right, sir,” Li Hao agreed merrily. “I must learn to be more independent. My teacher took care of me when we were in Silver City and I followed his word in everything. I never thought about being independent...”

So he’s a good little boy! No wonder! Yu Xiao finally understood why Li Hao was so innocent. Yuan Shuo, oh Yuan Shuo, you’ve raised your disciple into utter trash. He’s a big baby! This must be what they mean by a momma’s boy.

No, he would be a teacher’s boy?

“Is your teacher good to you?”

“Very good!” Li Hao quickly nodded. “He treats me like his own son. Teacher could become a Summoner because...” he paused, then continued in a whisper, “partially because of me. Teacher said it many times that I can’t let anyone know, so don’t... don’t tell anyone, please. My teacher would be so angry at me if he finds out!”

Yu Xiao arched an eyebrow. So this was the case!