

## Star Gate 341

### Chapter 341: Master and Disciple With One Heart (III)

A supernatural had to break a second lock of the five visceral organs in order to advance beyond Nova.

Li Hao jerked when his thoughts traveled here. That was why some problems may exist beyond Nova—such as coughing! After breaking the second supernatural lock associated with the five visceral organs, it was highly likely for a conflict between the organs to appear as two kinds of energy clashed with each other. The heart was of fire and the kidneys of water. Releasing a second kind of mysterious power would naturally damage the five organs since water and fire did not coexist together!

Li Hao blinked. Did Hou Xiaochen and the others struggle with their condition because they'd converted back to martial masters, or because they'd broken the second lock of their organs?

“Are there existences beyond Nova in the central region?” the young man hastily asked.

“How do I know?” Hao Lianchuan responded with disbelief. “I barely know any Novas...”

“Are there any notable powerhouses in the central region that like to cough?” Li Hao changed tack.

“Do you mean our director?” Hao Lianchuan burst out laughing. “What, do we have to cough to be a powerhouse now?”

The young man sank into deep thought. If there were powerhouses beyond Nova in the central region, they would very likely be prone to coughing fits as well. Of course, coughing was just a symptom of damaged lungs. If the heart was damaged, perhaps the supernatural would have a sickly pallor since they lacked sufficient blood flow. If the kidneys were damaged, perhaps there would be an issue with sexual performance. That was a more private condition that regular people would be unaware of.

Therefore, coughing was a more directly perceived symptom. The other five organs wouldn't be as readily observable if they were damaged. Kong Jie, for example, didn't cough much. It was thus possible that it wasn't his lungs that were damaged, but another organ. He was just as eye-piercing as the rest, so his strength should be on par with them. The others coughed, but he didn't. Therefore, if everything was as Li Hao surmised, that meant that everyone in the conference room had broken the second lock of their visceral organs.

So that was greater than Nova? Li Hao finally understood. These people were either all above Nova or supernaturals converted to martial masters! Whatever the case was, there was an imbalance in their organs. Thus, there were many implications to Summoner of Spirit. Or rather, if his teacher really could modify the Breathing Method of the Five Styles so that it could strengthen the five organs...

Li Hao sucked in a breath. If that really happened, then both the supernatural and martial master domains would erupt with an accumulation of secret strength.

Teacher... is in danger!

No, teacher is safe!

Li Hao suddenly recalled what he'd said at the meeting of martial masters, that his teacher was attempting to modify the breathing method so that all five organs could be fortified at the same time. Some may not have paid attention to that, but powerhouses that had broken their second organ locks would certainly have taken notice.

They must be keeping tabs on his teacher and hoping that he could accomplish that feat! Why didn't anyone else try?

Supernaturals had no way of attempting to modify a cultivation method and all martial masters walked different paths. Someone may be progressing down Yuan Shuo's path of the five organs, but it was the renowned martial master who walked it the firmest and was the strongest!

Li Hao suddenly smiled in this moment; Hao Lianchuan found it strange. Why was the boy smiling so happily?

So as long as teacher's breathing method isn't fully modified, some powerhouses may actually protect him from the shadows instead. But once it's finished, he could meet with horrifying danger. Certain powerhouses might choose to take it from him.

As for whether or not they would succeed... that was difficult to determine. It was harder than reaching the heavens if they wished for Yuan Shuo to share it of his own accord.

"Are you alright, Li Hao?" Hao Lianchuan asked with concern as the boy continued smiling.

"I'm fine, I just thought through some things. Interesting, Senior Southern Fist was right after all. Once you know a lot of things and follow them through, you'll find that a lot of things are quite interesting."

The hell? Hao Lianchuan was hardly interested in this.

"So does this mean I have a chance of seeing the fifth lock if I consume enough blood pearls?" he asked urgently.

"That's right!"

Hao Lianchuan became agitated. As long as that's the case!

Li Hao suddenly thought of Ying Hongyue. Scarlet shadows! What was the man doing with so many of them? The young man seemed to finally understand part of it. He was either converting supernaturals to martial masters or strengthening supernatural locks to balance the five organs. The scarlet shadows were not used to create a batch of powerful martial masters, but to eliminate supernatural drawbacks.

If Ying Hongyue had reached beyond Nova, then imbalance in his organs would start to become apparent. Perhaps he'd discovered this problem a long time ago and began preparing for it. If that was the case...

Li Hao sucked in another sharp breath. If there were sufficient scarlet shadows, they might resolve the problem of the five organs not being in balance. Had Ying Hongyue already resolved this problem and proceeded far down the path of the five organs?

The four locks of the limbs and one of the five organs made for five supernatural locks. Breaking all of them made one a Nova! One had to break a second lock of the organs to advance beyond that. As for the head... Li Hao believed that very few dared to do that. It was safer to try with the organs.

Therefore, most reached beyond Nova if they shattered the second supernatural lock of the organs. These people might possess two types of elemental attributes. The young man had unwittingly discovered some secrets after helping Hao Lianchuan locate his supernatural lock! The secrets of the scarlet shadows!

His teacher had said that the scarlet shadows were puppets of the ancient civilization. Whoever devoured the shadows strengthened their bodies. It was highly likely that Ying Hongyue had used the scarlet shadow to fortify his supernatural locks and maintain the balance of his organs!

"Li Hao!" Hao Lianchuan couldn't bear it anymore. Why was the boy grinning like a fox?

"Nothing, it's nothing!" Li Hao rose with a smile and handed over two storage rings. "Director, just deliver the mysterious power to my office after you swap it for me. And I'll have to trouble you for something else. Please look into all of my teacher's former students for me."

"Huh?" Hao Lianchuan blinked. Why?

"I just want to understand how many senior brothers and sisters I have," chuckled the young man.

Why do I want to know? Because I'm thinking that the breathing method might have elicited interest from countless powerhouses, just not from those below Nova. If I was a powerhouse of the central region and unable to obtain it by force, what would I do next?

I can target Yuan Shuo's disciples! Teacher is typically very mean to regular people, but dotes on his disciples.

Many martial masters exhibited such behavior. Yuan Shuo didn't have any children and only a few disciples. Someone like Li Hao had only needed to say that he could absorb mysterious power for the man to immediately pass on the breathing method. His previous final disciple had taught the breathing method to an outsider, but Yuan Shuo never mentioned it and tacitly allowed it in the end.

Therefore, everyone knew that Yuan Shuo treated his disciples very well. Even if he appeared to be quite intimidating, he was softhearted. Would he teach the modified breathing method to his disciples?

Most likely!

Li Hao would absolutely learn it, while the others... including the previous final disciple, might obtain it too. But that could not be allowed to happen!

Li Hao was fully aware that once others learned of the modified breathing method, that would be the start of enormous trouble. It would help certain powerhouses reach beyond Nova, so it was a given that some might kill his teacher after obtaining the method to prevent more from learning it!

Hao Lianchuan looked strangely at Li Hao, but ultimately nodded. "Alright, I'll help you look into it. I won't have a detailed report for a few days. We looked into it before, but focused on your teacher. Some of the particulars won't be fleshed out."

"Mmhmm, thank you for the effort!"

“You’re... not thinking of throwing yourself on their mercy, are you?” Hao Lianchuan couldn’t help but ask.

“How could I!” Li Hao burst out laughing. “It’s so nice in the Night Watchers, why would I leave?” He hesitated and continued, “Look into the Bai family for me as well, the Bai family of White Moon City! And not just them, but all powerhouses having to do with Hu Dingfang. Novas warrant special attention, and also Commander Huang Yun!”

Hao Lianchuan took a deep breath. The hell? What are you trying to do? The Bais, Huang Yun... What are you planning?

Li Hao didn’t say a word. What do I want to do? I want to see if someone’s going to use my senior sister to obtain the modified version of the breathing method.

Even though Yuan Shuo was yet to find any success, Li Hao and some other premier powerhouses were fully confident that he could do it. The old man’s potential was very strong, to say nothing of everything else. And not to mention, the breathing method was something he’d always been working on. He held vast sums of knowledge from ancient books, was an archaeology expert—or rather, a tomb raider!

He was honestly a grave robber. Why else would a martial master run off to study archaeology? Did they have too much time on their hands? It was to better excavate the old ruins, of course!

Yuan Shuo had uncovered many Silver Moon ruins over the years of his dominance; there was a large amount of highly important ruins in the province and he’d destroyed most of the important records of knowledge. He either destroyed or burned the books after glancing through them.

He could be labeled as one of the villains responsible for a gap in ancient civilization knowledge. While he’d excavated the sites himself, destroying the knowledge he found put him in the wrong all the same.

Li Hao's thoughts turned to his senior sister, Hu Dingfang, the Bais, Huang Yun, and a complicated web of relationships. If the modified breathing method was finalized, his teacher could not randomly teach it to his disciples! That would easily give rise to trouble!

He wanted to contact his teacher, but the man seemed to be at Near River. Perhaps he'd entered the three northern provinces, so there was no way for the young man to reach Yuan Shuo.

## Chapter 342: The Silver Moon Guards (I)

Fog Province.

Fog wreathed the land, blanketing the province with haze no matter day or night.

Inside a high-class hotel.

Yuan Shuo chose to spend the night at a hotel this time instead of camping in the wilderness. He presented a genteel front as he wore a pair of glasses. Jadelight fidgeted uncomfortably next to him and stared at her outfit. She was wearing a suit jacket and short skirt. Having never worn this kind of clothing in her life, she glared furiously at Yuan Shuo.

"Don't lose your temper now." The old man lit a cigarette, the very picture of urbane sophistication. "You're my assistant for the time being. I am a professor at the Near River Academy—and this is a real identity. I got it quite a few years ago, they won't find anything wrong with my background. We've come to the three northern provinces to inspect the recent aberrations in the creatures living by the sea..."

"Why can't we be more normal?!" Wu Hongshan snapped.

"Normal?" Yuan Shuo laughed. "Can't, the three northern provinces are a mess right now. There's no way to be normal. But it's also good that they're a mess. We can fish in troubled waters. We'll take our time and stay here for a few days. My second spirit is about to emerge, the water tiger is going to come forth in full fury. My injuries weren't fully healed before, but now that we're near the North Sea, I can sense that they're almost recovered..."

“I’ve had some inspiration lately and further modified the Breathing Method of the Five Styles. An imbalance between the five organs due to differing strengths is the greatest disadvantage of Summoner of Spirit!”

Li Hao could avoid that downside thanks to sword energy; Yuan Shuo could not. Not to mention, the veteran martial master did not know that the young man could now use mysterious power stones to supplement the sword energy. Hence, he didn’t think to make continued use of the little sword to resolve his problem. He had to straighten it out himself.

Additionally, a method that could nurture all five visceral organs was crucial if the path of Summoner was to be popularized and officially accepted by all martial masters.

At the same time, Yuan Shuo was hardly a saint. Even if he was to teach others, he would wait for his own organs to fully nurture their spirits and even for his disciple to complete the process before teaching some more optimal candidates.

“You’ve adjusted it again?” Wu Hongshan stopped yanking at the uncomfortable clothes. “If memory serves, you started modifying it many years ago. It’s been many versions now, hasn’t it?”

“Yep, but constant improvement is in order for martial dao as we progress, attain new comprehension, and uncover new needs. Are we to always work off of our original foundation?” Yuan Shuo laughed. “The secret arts left by the ancients are not necessarily suited for us! We need to modify them according to our differing needs. I’ve lately grasped several key clues of how to proceed. If I succeed, Summoner of Spirit will no longer be my path alone. Everyone will be able to cultivate it, even if they lack five auras. One aura works all the same if the five organs are in balance. I was able to progress when my five auras were in balance only because that represented my five organs were in balance.”

“Will you teach me after you finish revising it?” Wu Hongshan asked after thinking the words over.

“Of course not!”



“.....” What... the... This old guy is so annoying! Then what are you telling me all of this for?? You said you would help me reach Summoner! How am I supposed to do that if you don’t teach me the method?!

“Don’t be impatient,” Yuan Shuo chuckled. “Just nurture your organs for now. You can also change out your blood and strengthen your physical body. You can take it slow with your five organs. I’ll teach you the old version first when I’m done modifying the breathing method. It’s also pretty useful!”

The old version! What a stab to the heart.

“I need to tell my student when I’m done,” commented a merry Yuan Shuo. “Although he might not need it, he stands a chance of combining the five auras if he knows it!”

“When will you complete it?” asked a resigned Wu Hongshan.

“Soon, in another few days. I need to summon all five spirits first. I have two thus far and almost have the third. With a few more blood pearls, the fourth and five will be an easy step.”

Wu Hongshan said nothing further. The blood pearls were indeed fine items. Meanwhile, Yuan Shuo sank into contemplation. The blood pearls had a splendid effect when it came to fortifying the five organs. He bore the same thoughts as Li Hao—was Ying Hongyue using the blood pearls to balance the five organs? Did supernaturals need to balance their organs? Or was it to break more supernatural locks?

Many ideas occurred to him in this moment and he vaguely sensed some danger. The old demon of the martial world had a keen sense of danger. As he summoned the five spirits into his organs, he gradually sensed that the supernatural domain might urgently need a treasure or method to balance their organs as well.

Yuan Shuo stood in front of the window and looked around him, slightly regretful that Li Hao wasn't present. That kid seemed to be able to see things that other people couldn't. Perhaps the lad could check for him if anyone had their eyes on him.

A smile spread across the veteran martial master's face. He would know before long if there was anyone following him. He wasn't afraid and skilled at narrow escapes.

"Jadelight, I'll bring you along a big one next! Solars are trash. The three northern provinces are the old homes of the three great organizations. There might be Novas among them... I'll take you with me if you're not afraid of death!"

Wu Hongshan stared unpleasantly and nodded after a prolonged pause. "Alright!"

Why should I be afraid if you're not afraid? Nova... Is this guy going crazy again?

Yuan Shuo cackled. Not only am I not crazy, but there might be someone who gives me a hand. I already said that I might be able to finish a new version of the Breathing Method of the Five Styles once I summon the five spirits. If someone is keeping an eye on me, then I might be able to pick up a Nova level blood pearl on the ground!

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Li Hao did not interact with anyone in his remaining time.

Within his office.

The young man began practicing the Nine Forged Force. He wanted to reach nine layers as soon as possible. He wasn't too worried about his teacher as his teacher might be improving at an even faster rate. His teacher had melded his five auras together a long time ago and didn't need to start from the beginning like Li Hao. Since Yuan Shuo grasped the proper method, all he needed to do was somewhat strengthen his organs, send his auras into them, and that was it!

Li Hao, however, needed to start from the basics. Yuan Shuo's basics had reached the height of sturdiness a long time ago. Who within the modern day martial world possessed more auras than him or was stronger than him?

Even the so-called Tyrant Blade of the day was less than Yuan Shuo. And now, Li Hao felt that the expert was probably still less tyrannical than his teacher!

"I possess the necessary constitution to accomplish nine layers, I just lack experience and comprehension..." Li Hao ran through the routine again and again, making the air snap from his attempts.

Manager Yu next door was highly irritated! Here that guy goes once more.

Li Hao had been quite the homebody after moving in next door. He was so much of a homebody that it was annoying. He never left the office and ran through boxing techniques in his downtime. Those practice runs weren't always quiet.

Manager Yu had had enough! She was scheduled to bring Li Hao to the Guards tomorrow—Hou Xiaochen had arranged for it. But now, all she wanted to do was ferry this guy over right away!

That's right, the Silver Moon Guards. The Night Watcher headquarters was filled with supernaturals, making it a boring proposition for Li Hao. It might be better for him to go to the Silver Moon Guards.

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Punch punch punch!

Li Hao punched steadily. Since he hadn't reached the right level of comprehension yet, he would go at it with sheer persistence. Improvement was inevitable when he punched thirty to fifty thousand times.

Other people's bodies wouldn't be able to endure the strain, but Li Hao didn't care in the slightest. Wind and thunder energy would be delivered to him soon, so he wasn't afraid of suffering injuries! He'd reached only seven layers thus far—he might be able to reach nine layers if he punched one hundred thousand times. Liu Long had practiced martial dao for many years, but Li Hao felt that the captain may not have gone all out and punched one hundred thousand times!

If he had, his arms would be completely crippled.

When one did not possess sufficient potential or time, one had to fill in the gaps with hard work. Hard work and effort could supplement one's deficiencies!

If anyone else knew of the young man's thoughts, they might die of incredulity. Deficiencies? Was Li Hao dumb? If he was, he wouldn't be able to quickly comprehend three auras.

A stronger opponent was never the greatest fear. The greatest fear was someone stronger and possessing more potential while also putting in more effort. That would only incite despair in the hearts of those striving beneath him.

Potential and intelligence were nothing to fear. If those who were naturally gifted didn't bend their minds to improvement, they would be eclipsed sooner or later. But when these people worked ten times harder than the rest... then one would have absolutely no space on the path to walk.

Li Hao continued practicing; knocks sounded at his door. He'd sensed the disturbance a while ago, but assumed that Manager Yu was heading to the sixth floor. Hou Xiaochen's out of seclusion. Why are you here for me instead of spending time with him?

"Come in!"

Manager Yu pushed the door open, frowning slightly when she saw that the young man was covered in sweat. She didn't like it when martial masters were covered in grime and sweat. Director Hou set a good example. He quickly washed up whenever he finished training and smelled divine. While the young man didn't stink, he... was really ugly as he exerted himself.

Li Hao naturally didn't know her thoughts. If he did, he'd probably serve her with a slap—assuming that he could beat her in battle.

“What is the grand secretary doing here?” Li Hao smiled and wiped off his sweat with a towel.

Manager Yu avoided the sweat he was flinging around and said without a change in expression, “The director wishes for you to visit the Silver Moon Guards. You can stay there if you're so interested. I'll take you there for a look.”

“Now?”

“Yes!”

“But it's dark out...” Li Hao looked outside the window and then at the clock he'd bought himself. “There's five minutes until the work day is over.”

“.....” A wordless Manager Yu's frown deepened. “Li Hao, you are a martial master, not really an office worker!”

It was fine the first couple of days, but heavily annoying when he was like this everyday!

“That's fine, but when will my position as a chief commissioner be announced?” Li Hao grinned. “I'll naturally put in overtime when I'm promoted. I'll be like Director Hao and work till daybreak everyday if I have to. As for an office worker... aren't I that right now?”

Startled, Manager Yu looked more sharply at the young man. Li Hao seemed much bolder today. Or rather, his true self was appearing. He'd been cautious, circumspect, and unfailingly polite whenever he saw her before.

#### Chapter 343: The Silver Moon Guards (II)

"Your position will be official soon." Manager Yu frowned ferociously. "Not only does Director Hou need to approve the position of chief commissioner, but so does Inspector General Kong. The provincial government also needs to respond before you can be promoted. The dynasty still exists and the complete system operates smoothly. The word of one is not law!"

Chief commissioner was a high level official. If the dynasty collapsed and Silver Moon declared independence, then Hou Xiaochen's word would be law. Since that was not the case, they needed to do things by the book.

"Alright then!" Li Hao shrugged on his jacket. "Then let's wait. I think it'll be soon. The Inspectorate and provincial government won't not show Director Hou face."

Manager Yu couldn't be bothered saying anything else. She strode out of the office, leaving the young man behind to quickly catch up. Not in the mood to talk, she headed down the stairs.

"Manager," a merry Li Hao chattered behind her. "It's not that I'm demanding terms, but that I still don't know what I've been transferred to Silver Moon for. Director Hou had me come, but hasn't given me a single mission thus far. I think I have too much time on my hands. Perhaps the director will value me more after I'm promoted."

Bullshit!

But it was true that Hou Xiaochen hadn't arranged a single duty for Li Hao after telling the young man to come to the provincial capital. As for killing Yu Xiao, Hao Lianchuan had asked for his help with that.

"It'll be soon!" Manager Yu said coldly. "The director had you come not so you would sit around and stare at the wall. He must have an important mission for you and also means to protect you."

“Mm, that’s good. I told the director that I’ll attack in whatever direction he points! He has my life. We’re on the same team, wouldn’t you say so?”

Manager Yu ignored him; the young man didn’t mind. He grinned from ear to ear as they walked.

“Manager, I hear that origin weapons have a special energy inside them that strengthens the body if absorbed. The effects are quick and it’s very safe—is that right?”

“Some do.”

“Do the Night Watchers have only one origin weapon?”

“Mmhmm.”

“Can I borrow it for a few days?”

“.....” The aloof Manager Yu stopped in her tracks and looked at the young man squarely in the eyes. Does this kid think he’s about to be enthroned in heaven to be asking for that?? The Flaming Phoenix Spear is a premier origin weapon! While it may not compare to the likes of similar ones in the central region, it’s ranked number one in Silver Moon. Li Hao’s only been here a few days, how dare he ask for the origin weapon??

“Li Hao...”

“It’s all for the director!” Li Hao interjected solemnly. “I want to grow stronger and become his right hand man! I don’t want to rely on the director for protection and drag him down as his burden! I want to become a powerhouse like the manager so that I can support the director more. I don’t want to be like Deputy Director Hao—skilled at throwing a wrench in the works and fit only for minor errands. He isn’t able to participate in any major events, that’s all left in the director’s hands!”

Manager Yu frowned without a word. Was there anything wrong with what he'd said?

No!

But it was a bit grating on the ear. Thank goodness Hao Lianchuan wasn't close by or he'd be apoplectic.

"The Flaming Phoenix Spear isn't just a weapon, it's also the foundation with which supernaturals ascend. It's extremely important and nothing can happen to it..."

"I understand!" Li Hao nodded. "Don't worry, I won't lose it unless I die. If I'm dead, that means that enemies are at the gates of White Moon and have taken the Flaming Phoenix Spear form under Director Hou's nose. There's no helping it then. Wouldn't you say so, Manager Yu?"

She was going to say that no borrowing was allowed, but found herself unable to deliver the words. She pursed her lips for a while. "I'll go and ask Director Hou."

"Oh don't. We all know that the director listens to you!" Li Hao beamed radiantly. "If you say so, then the director will absolutely be fine with it. It's just a small matter!"

Manager Yu was at a loss for words and ignored the young man. She walked off, Li Hao hot on her heels again.

"I'm just borrowing it, manager, not taking it. Let me broaden my horizons. Didn't the director say as well that I've seen too little of the world? I haven't even seen an origin weapon yet at my age."

Manager Yu's frown deepened as she continued walking. "Wait for news!"



Wait for news, again! Waiting for news meant no news. Li Hao would absolutely not agree to that. “Then forget it, I won’t trouble the director and manager. I’m taking a day off tomorrow so I can visit the army barracks. I’d like to pay the Silver Moon Division a visit.”

“Oh?”

“I want to visit Commander Yu!” Li Hao said eagerly. “My teacher is friends with Commander Yu and the commander’s also a powerhouse. As one of the three commanders, he must own an origin weapon. I want to see if I can borrow it.”

Manager Yu’s expression shifted slightly and she turned back to regard Li Hao with a slightly sharp look. “Is this... a threat or something else?” What did he mean by this?!

“It’s not!” Li Hao bared his teeth in a wide grin. “I just feel that origin weapons might help me comprehend some of the true meaning of martial dao. I need to improve myself and not be a piece of trash that waits for death. I need to try every possibility available to me to borrow this treasure. What is it, manager? Can I not go borrow one?”

Irritation had well and truly set in for Manager Yu! The kid had seemed honest before, but when one got to know him, the truth was that he wasn’t honest at all! That explanation plainly held undertones that if Hou Xiaochen didn’t lend him the origin weapon, that would be restricting and suppressing the young man. In that case, he would search for opportunities in the army!

Was that a threat?

Not really, but Manager Yu didn’t like the feeling. “Fine, I’ll lend it to you,” she said coldly after a while. “But for three days at most!”

“My thanks!” Li Hao hastily thanked with excitement, but he was inwardly calm. It was good that he could borrow it; it didn’t matter if he couldn’t. He just wanted to see how much tolerance these people bore for him and to test if the army and Night Watchers were truly as close as family.

The latter didn't seem to be the case. Perhaps there were some clashes or conflicts of interest between the two sides. Hu Dingfang had invited him to the Tiger Wings multiple times, but the Night Watchers never agreed to release Li Hao. While that had to do with the young man's own decision, it demonstrated the Night Watcher attitude as well.

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Director Hou's car waited outside the front gates. Li Hao climbed into the front seat while Manager Yu sat in the back. It was very quiet in the car; the Silver Moon Guards were plainly not nearby. The young man didn't ask where they were stationed—he would know once they arrived.

He was curious about the Guards, but also not that curious. An army unit of martial masters might possess numerous experts and quite a few Dominators, but he didn't care about them unless they were renowned martial masters.

It wasn't that martial masters were stronger the more famous they were, but that they were all unique. How were martial masters supposed to grow stronger if they did not fight often? How could they challenge their peers if they were not prominent? How were they to strengthen their aura if they didn't spar with others?

If martial masters raised by the military were all cast from the same mold, then they weren't worth mentioning even if they progressed to Dominator of Thousands. The three commanders had been considered strong because they were renowned throughout the land. Where did strength come, if not from numerous battles?

Manager Yu wasn't inclined to chat, neither was Li Hao. The young man closed his eyes to rest and didn't bother looking at the route they were taking. His mind intent circled around him, however, so sharp that the driver found it uncomfortable to bear.

Manager Yu's eyes glinted in the backseat as well. Sword aura! Li Hao had practiced his sword aura well and would've made a name for himself in the martial world of yesteryear. To think that Yuan Shuo would find a diamond in the rough in his old age after missing the mark on so many students!

The car headed north. The Night Watcher headquarters were in the southern quadrant and the Inspectorate headquarters were in the northern quadrant. Were the Silver Moon Guards there as well? They were so far away, did Hou Xiaochen not visit on a regular basis?

“There are very few in the Guards, less than one thousand,” Manager Yu offered from the back. “980 to be exact. There are nine teams of one hundred and the remaining is a bodyguard troop for the officer in charge of them all.

“There are nine centurions, they’re all low level chief commissioners. The ranking officer leading the Guards is a high level chief commissioner. The Guards themselves are almost all commissioner inspectors. There are less than one hundred Slayers among the 980, the remaining are all Sunderers!”

Li Hao’s heart shook. That strong??

But it made sense upon further thought. In this day and age, Sunderer wasn’t difficult when there was sufficient mysterious power. Half step Dominator was the true test.

“Are there many half step Dominators?” he asked.

“Not many, nearly one hundred.”

The young man raised a brow, that was still a lot. Almost one hundred people perceiving the aura was not a small number. The Guards were more powerful than he thought! He’d felt that it’d be impressive if they had a dozen martial masters who’d perceived the aura, but almost one hundred? And that wasn’t counting their officers—those must be Dominators.

“Ah, there’s also a deputy officer, so that makes for eleven Dominators in the Guards!”

Nine centurions, two of their superiors, eleven Dominators.

“How do they compare to Southern First?” Li Hao asked after momentary silence.

“They are inferior.”

“I mean their highest officers...”

“That’s hard to say.” Manager Yu thought for a bit. “If it was back in the day, before He Yong set foot into Dominator, then the comparison would go without saying. But now, he has never demonstrated his full strength in front of others, so it’s hard to judge. Martial masters need to be met in battle to see how strong they might be.”

“Have the Guards fought Solars?”

“Their two highest officers have!”

Li Hao understood. That meant those two weren’t regular Dominators. Their centurions, however, were peak Sunflare at the most. That was strong, but that was all there was to them.

“The army also possesses army formations. When they are assembled, the sum is far more than the parts. The Guards seek to assemble a formation of a thousand people and kill Novas!”

Li Hao nodded.

“Are you not curious?”

“It’s just an army formation, what’s there to be curious about?” Li Hao smiled. “They’ve existed since ancient times and were recorded in the ancient civilization. The group’s strength rises when

the formation is assembled, there's even a chance for it to double or triple. Historic books speak of a formation that is incredibly mighty and concentrates power on one person. It borrows strength from a thousand people and might use one of the Guards' officers as the formation eye. They would have hopes of defeating those greater than Nova, to say nothing of Nova. So it looks like Director Hou doesn't possess this kind of formation?"

### Chapter 344: The Silver Moon Guards (III)

It was true that formidable formations existed. Numerous records could be founded in ancient tomes. Li Hao knew quite a few ancient books that spoke of them; he'd been forced to memorize the material due to his teacher.

Manager Yu felt quite frustrated all of a sudden. Information that she thought was quite impressive was worthless when Li Hao spoke of it. The young man wasn't the only one to give her this feeling. She couldn't help but take a walk down memory lane—there was once an irritating fellow in the martial world who knew everything one spoke of. If someone presented a formidable secret art, he could give examples of countless arts much more powerful.

That person was Yuan Shuo, someone so infuriating it set one's teeth on edge!

Yuan Shuo was widely learned at a young age. Of that, the entire martial world was aware of. He knew a lot and read all sorts of books. When modern choices couldn't satisfy him, he grew curious about ancient books. Thus started his path of archaeology. By now, he knew much, much more and Li Hao showed signs of following Yuan Shuo's development. Old Demon Yuan had just returned to the world, was there going to be a Little Demon Li?

Manager Yu instantly lost interest in the conversation. You'll know when we get there!

.....

The car headed for the northern outskirts after driving in the city for half an hour.

“There’s a sea in the northern outskirts, but it’s only a bay and not a real sea. The North Sea traverses the continent and separates the central region from the north. Silver Moon holds only a tiny portion of it, we call it the Moon Sea.

“Taking the Moon Sea will deposit one in the North Sea. From there, one can travel to the central region, but it’s not safe. There are robbers and pirates in the waters, it’s not as safe as going by land.

“The Silver Moon Guards are stationed near the Moon Sea. It’s sparsely inhabited there and, as such, suitable for martial masters to train. The resulting disturbance from nearly one thousand martial masters is quite significant.” Manager Yu started giving an overview of the Guards when they were almost at their destination.

Her introduction piqued Li Hao’s interest. “Manager, does this mean that the barracks is by the sea?”

“Yes.”

“Then I can swim at any time?”

“If you’re not afraid of drowning.”

Li Hao was suddenly in a good mood. The Moon Sea... It didn’t matter that it was a bay. He’d never seen the sea before. Apparently, there were beauties there who didn’t wear clothes—ahem, beauties there who sunbathed.

“Are there beaches near the barracks, manager?”

“Of course, but there’s not really anyone there as that’s a military restricted zone.”

Li Hao was disappointed again. A restricted zone! What a pity! Not for himself, but for teacher. His thoughts had already traveled to when teacher might visit. He could take his teacher to watch sunbathing beauties! But it looked like he had to give up the idea.

.....

There was a patch of man-made forest near the Moon Sea. It covered an enormous area at thousands of acres. There was a clearing within its center, a perfectly square one if viewed from overhead. It was empty in the middle and occupied by numerous buildings.

This clearing spanned several hundred acres; a scattered handful of people could be seen walking through it if one took an aerial view.

In a building below ground.

Grunts and shouts abounded. But since this was a restricted zone for the military, there were no visitors. The man-made forest surrounding them also provided soundproofing so that larger disturbances didn't travel beyond the forest.

The buildings surrounded a massive plaza in the center—the sparring and parade grounds. This plaza was almost fifty acres itself and could hold one hundred soldiers in times of need. There weren't many within it at the moment.

Although night had fallen, lights converged in the area and lit up the premises. Some people stood in the center of the plaza, a stark contrast to those training. Those martial masters wore the same uniforms that closely resembled Inspectorate uniforms, but were slightly different. They wore red badges while the Inspectorate and Night Watchers did not do so. The latter only had shoulder patches to indicate their rank.

The people in the plaza were dressed in casual or combat outfits. They represented a large variety of characters and were plainly not governed by typical rules.

A pudgy middle-aged man with eyes so small that they were slits in his face was the first to speak. “Manager Yu will be visiting shortly, apparently to escort someone here. It’s Yuan Shuo’s disciple.”

“Li Hao?” someone asked. Their sources of information were quite well informed.

“That’s him!” chuckled the fatty. “Yuan Shuo... was an old demon back in the day. Though we don’t have any dealings with him since he’d retired from the martial world when we became active, everyone here knows him, right?”

Martial dao had not sprung up out of nowhere. There were legacies and inheritances involved. Some faces darkened in the plaza.

“My martial uncle died to him, I know him!”

“He killed my master’s master!”

“If it wasn’t for the director protecting that old demon these years... We would’ve killed him a long time ago!”

“.....”

Yuan Shuo had killed quite a few notable martial masters back in the day. The speakers were all Dominators and their longest tenure at twenty years. Even with the appearance of mysterious power shortening the cultivation period required, the shortest tenure of those present was ten years. Their previous generation had been of Yuan Shuo’s time.

“Mu Lin.” Someone looked at the fatty. “I hear that your younger brother Mu Sen is on good terms with Yuan Shuo. Are you saying this to help that Li Hao?!”



“Now that would be a misunderstanding! How would I ever?” Mu Lin roared with laughter. “Not to mention, what am I supposed to help him with? Li Hao is a half step Dominator, not a little nobody. He killed the Qimei Staff’s eldest disciple, so he’s not a true rookie. His length of training is short, but he’s not weak!

“I’m just telling you all of this in advance.” Mu Sen grinned merrily. “So that you know what will be done with him when he comes.”

There was one officer in charge of the nearly one thousand of the Silver Moon Guards and one deputy. The deputy was Mu Lin, but his centurions didn’t quite like taking his orders. The fatty flinched and cowered when he fought, but was always first in line for benefits. It was quite annoying. But he naturally had his talents to be able to occupy the position of deputy for the Guards, such as... instigating trouble!

“I’ve given it some thought,” Mu Lin chuckled at seeing everyone remain silent. “How about we let him be a centurion? He’s Yuan Shuo’s disciple, after all, so we have to show him some respect. Although he’s not a Dominator yet, the Five Styles is well known. Perhaps he can punch above his class!”

“Out with whatever crap you’re cooking up, Mu Lin. What do you want to do?”

“How rude!” Mu Lin sighed. “Alright, to be honest, I don’t really want to do anything. I just want to have you guys put him through his paces. I’ve been wanting to create my own set of bodyguards. It’s so distressing not to have a single man beneath my command as I’m a deputy. I think highly of this lad and want to recruit him to be the team captain. What do you think about testing him out?”

The rest of the group frowned. What did this guy want to do? There were reasons for why Mu Lin was the deputy—his mind worked more quickly than the others, at least.

Some didn’t want to entertain him, while there were others who champed at the bit. Yuan Shuo’s disciple! Some wanted revenge, others wanted to humble the boy, and yet others wanted to befriend him...

Of course, no one would actually kill him since it was Director Hou who sent him to them. But a regular exchange of skill was fine, right? Martial masters spoke through their strength. They couldn't be blamed for looking down on him if he joined them only through connections.

"Everyone, stop training!" Mu Lin announced in a sonorous voice. "We are going to have guests soon! The disciple of Five Styles King Yuan Shuo, his final disciple at that, will be arriving shortly. Be ready to welcome him!"

A hubbub of conversation started after his words.

"Old Demon Yuan's disciple?"

"The old demon's disciple dares come here? My master's master died to the old demon..."

"He killed your master's master? Pfft, keep blowing hot air! That old demon only killed famous martial masters, it's not like I don't know your background! The leader of the Iron Fists was strong enough, but he wasn't even part of the rankings back then. What would the old demon go and beat him to death for?"

"....." Discourse arose round the plaza. There weren't that many bearing actual hatred for Yuan Shuo because he only fought those with strength and status. Martial masters who weren't famous enough back in the day wouldn't receive his challenge letter.

Some people like to brag about a fight with Yuan Shuo all the same. "My master died to him" was an indication of strength. Those who received that treatment were all powerhouses in those years. Therefore, apart from those who truly came from renowned disciplines, the rest were mostly curious. There was no helping it, as a martial master—and Silver Moon's martial master—one could not avoid that person and name.

Yuan Shuo!

If he'd been truly crippled and retired in Silver City, the martial world would no longer share his stories after a few years. But he'd stepped into the public again!

All of the martial masters in the barracks looked at the front gates. There was a massive set of doors there—or rather, an entire structure. All visitors must pass through it.

.....

The car drove into the jungle. Li Hao opened his eyes and looked forward. He could see some balls of light. While he couldn't make out martial masters, there were plainly supernaturals at the barracks. Not many, possibly used to supplement martial masters. Some supernatural abilities were very complementary with martial masters, such as the ability to fly or investigate.

The closer they drew, the more Li Hao's blood frothed. There were many powerhouses here! He sensed the aura! With nearly one hundred gathered in front of him, their combined perception of aura created an atmosphere of pressure that loomed overhead.

The young man suddenly sat up straight and looked back at Manager Yu. "Can I kill people over the course of sparring?"

"....." The driver's hands shook, as did Manager Yu frown faintly.

#### Chapter 345: The Silver Moon Guards (IV)

"My master's enemies are everywhere," Li Hao said in a low voice. "There are so many martial masters here and I'm his final disciple. There will be plenty of people who want to make trouble for me! I wouldn't care if I represented only myself, but I cannot lose face for the Five Styles discipline!"

"If not, people will say this is all there is to the Five Styles!"

"I'm not interested in beating up weaklings. But if a Dominator provokes me and I can't pull my blows in time, will it be fine if I end up killing them?"

Being a martial master back in the day, Manager Yu naturally knew what he meant. She tensed, thinking it over. “With your strength, there will be exceedingly few targets that you cannot control yourself against. It’s fine to inflict injuries throughout the course of sparring, but keep in mind that once you are at the Silver Moon Guards, they are your colleagues. They may not be of the same discipline as you, but beating colleagues to death is not what martial masters pursue either!”

“I’m not part of the Guards yet!” Li Hao pointed out. “Forget that. How about this, I will not seek to kill someone so long as they don’t insult the Five Styles discipline, my teacher, or try to kill me!”

Manager Yu had nothing else to say when the young man modified his words. She had been a martial master once and knew these particulars all too well. If the young man really did turn a blind eye and deaf ear to everything, he would not be able to find his footing in the world. No one would think much of him, even with his powerful teacher.

Meanwhile, Li Hao was rather excited. Numerous martial masters awaited and there were many auras to be acquainted with! While the occasion might not hold a candle to the prosperity of the former Silver Moon martial world, unexpected gains might await him in a place with so many half step Dominators.

Witnessing different auras would help him comprehend different types of martial dao. It might help him with grasping more auras himself. He wouldn’t be that interested if only supernaturals stood in front of him, but it was martial masters instead. There was even some hostility... No one could blame him if anyone dared run afoul of him!

The car slowly came to a halt in front of massive gates.

The Silver Moon Guards!

The three characters were emblazoned on a signboard hanging over the gates. They appeared extraordinary, but Li Hao merely glanced once at them. It might’ve been Hou Xiaochen who’d written them. They paled far in comparison to the characters of Battle Heaven—there was no need to study them at length.

Overwhelming aura surged at them before the group alighted from the car. A teeming mass of people stood behind the gates—hundreds of martial masters!

Li Hao felt pressure bearing down on him as soon as he got out of the car. There was more than one Dominator in the crowd and troops of one hundred were swiftly assembling. Each troop stood in a square formation, levying more intimidation on the young man.

There wouldn't be as much suppression on their visitor if the crowd had milled around aimlessly. A martial master stood at the front of each formation and a fatty stood at the head. He seemed a bit familiar... Upon second glance, he resembled a Mu Sen with smaller eyes. Li Hao immediately guessed that this would be the elder brother that Mu Sen spoke of. This was the second-in-command and deputy of the Silver Moon Guards.

“Greetings to Manager Yu, greetings to the one of the Five Styles discipline!” The fatty called out from a distance and beamed radiantly.

The manager alighted from the car with an aloof look and didn't say much. Li Hao buttoned his collar and, after some thought, rolled up his sleeves. There was a time and place to play the part of a timid weakling. It was meaningless to do so in front of a group of martial masters, some which were the same age as him. They plainly wanted to humiliate him at their first meeting; he wouldn't permit them to have their way!

Hou Xiaochen obviously wished for him to join the Guards. In that case, he would be the one teaching them a lesson! If one wanted to find his footing in a place, he had to take action when he must.

Li Hao stood next to the secretary's side and walked with her. The pressure built as they stepped forward—the stifling sensation was immense! A miasma of blood qi even appeared over the square formations. Every martial master regarded their visitor with a frosty look and coursing qi. Most supernaturals probably wouldn't be able to control their mysterious power from agitating in response at this distance.

“Mu Lin!” called out Manager Yu.

The fatty jogged over with a smile. “Manager Yu, please forgive us for not going out to meet you!”

“Are you still running drills at this hour?”

“That’s right, I can’t help it if the brothers wish to get in more practice. I can’t stop them at all!” Mu Lin looked merrily at Li Hao. “You’re Li Hao, right? I’ve heard about you—the final disciple of the Five Styles! My brother often mentions you and says you’re quite a talent. Nice to meet you, I can see that the rumors are true!”

The young man inclined his head and said nothing in response. He focused his attention on the martial masters standing behind the deputy. All of them glowered back at him. Li Hao carefully sensed those in the surroundings. A faint air of blood could be found in their presences. It would appear that they’d been in battles before. They weren’t the type of martial master that shut themselves away in seclusion. Now this was interesting. Who had these martial masters once fought? It was impossible for a Dominator to battle without anyone knowing of it.

Li Hao suddenly smiled at those standing in formation. “It looks like the various seniors nurse certain dissatisfaction with me. Perhaps it has to do with my identity as a Five Styles disciple...”

Some eyes widened among the crowd. Was he bowing his head?

“My master killed a lot of people back in the day, perhaps he killed some of your friends and family. But death and injuries are normal when martial masters spar. Those who cannot accept that should withdraw from the martial world as soon as possible!”

The young man beamed radiantly. “Since there seems to be general anger floating around, why not give voice to it? Here I am, I don’t mind being a target. Those present who feel a need to spar with me can step forward! If you think you are no match for me, then all of you can come at the same time. I’ll fight every one of you!”

“.....” Ringing silence echoed around the plaza before a loud hubbub started. How cocky!

Across from him, Mu Lin started. This wasn't right! This wasn't the Li Hao that his brother spoke of! This kid was so arrogant!

"You need to think carefully about this, Li Hao!" a Dominator in the distance said coldly. "This is the Silver Moon Guards and we might not do anything to you out of consideration for the director. Things are different if you provoke us, though!"

"An ax wielder..." Li Hao chuckled when he noted the weapon that the speaker held. "Are you a disciple of Mountain Ax? The one that my master killed with three punches? My master says that Mountain Ax isn't weak, he just didn't live up to the hype. That was why my master couldn't check his blows in time."

"You bastard!" Ax Wielder leapt into the air and landed in front of Li Hao, regarding the young man with a frosty look. "You court death, Li Hao!"

"Don't give me that," sighed the young man. "We're both martial masters and you showed me the greatest enmity when I arrived! You want nothing more than to hack me to death in one swing, so why should I be polite?"

"In that case, let's cut to the chase and be more direct. Since we're martial masters, we don't need to pretend to be supernaturals. We can speak frankly of any grudges we have with each other and then start beating each other, right?"

"That's right!" sneered Ax Wielder. "You're kinda interesting, Li Hao! I'm Chen Jin, a disciple of Mountain Ax. But I've been a Dominator for five years and will not bully a junior. I'll have my disciple put you through your paces. I'd like to see what caliber of talent this generation's Five Styles disciple is!"

"You don't need to do that!" Li Hao took a step forward in his leather boots and cracked the ground. He sent a half-hearted punch drifting through the air. "You can do the deed yourself, I'm worried your disciple is too weak!"

“Hmph!” Chen Jin snorted and swung his ax. He knew that Li Hao’s punch came from the tiger style. A punch of the Five Styles wasn’t worth anything. It was too slow!

Li Hao frowned upon seeing that his opponent wasn’t bringing his full strength to bear. “Who do you think you’re belittling without even using your aura?”

He roared like a tiger overseeing his domain, causing Chen Jin to cough violently. Blood seeped at the corner of his mouth as his organs shook! The man’s expression changed drastically and he shouted with fury, chopping swiftly with his ax! A mountainous ax head seemed to appear above him as he made his move—Mountain Ax!

He’d known that he faced a strong enemy as soon as Li Hao roared. The young man struck with abandon. Since his opponent was now putting his full force behind the blows, he could answer in kind. Otherwise, it would appear that he was belittling the man.

His punch sped up—it was fast, very fast! Though he didn’t use the sword aura, a ferocious tiger manifested over Li Hao’s body all the same. A Five Styles disciple naturally used the tiger aura.

BAM!

Li Hao’s punch didn’t seem that fast, but it arrived first. He connected with the ax head before Chen Jin finished his swing. The tiger seemed to sniff out an enemy as it broke out of its cage. Cavernous maw yawning, it slapped the mountainous weapon and shattered it!

A meeting of auras!

Li Hao hit the weapon with a thunderous collision and broke the incomparably durable metal with a single punch! He jumped off the ground and punched again!



Bam!

Another loud collision saw Chen Jin take a blow to his chest. His rib cage broke with a crunch and he flew backward. Chen Jin of the Mountain Ax discipline had his aura shattered with Li Hao's first punch and was gravely injured with the second!

Wham!

Chen Jin crashed to the ground and coughed up blood, staring incredulously at Li Hao. The entire plaza was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

Li Hao withdrew his fists and didn't press his advantage. He looked around with a smile. "It looks like my Five Styles wins!"

Silence rang. Disbelief filled the crowd's eyes and several centurions looked on with grave looks. Two punches had been all it took to defeat a Dominator of five years, the heir of Mountain Ax! This guy was stronger than they could imagine!

Mu Lin's jaw dropped in his best goldfish imitation. Hadn't his brother said that Li Hao was just a Sunderer? Bullshit! How old was that information??

A complicated look was also flickering through Manager Yu's eyes. She knew that Li Hao's sword aura was very strong, but... that hadn't seemed like sword aura. Was that the tiger aura? Could the boy change his mind intent at will?

Two punches were all that was necessary to heavily wound a centurion and fling him to the ground. The rest of the Guards were still collecting their wits. Were... these the capabilities of a Five Styles disciple?

Chapter 346: Joining the Silver Moon Guards (I)

Within the plaza.

Li Hao took a step forward, looking around with a lilt of his head that was the height of arrogance!

Of course, that wasn't his true attitude. No matter why Hou Xiaochen wanted him to join the Silver Moon Guards, he simply didn't want to bow his head in a place that was filled solely with martial masters. His teacher was Old Demon Yuan Shuo!

Having defeated the heir of Mountain Ax with two punches, his blood frothed and the tiger aura manifested.

"Director Hou wants me to join the Guards, but I don't really want to!" Li Hao announced. "I think none of you can compare to the martial masters of the glory days, so I don't see the need to join you! If I am to fight and vie for glory, I will do so against the old guard!"

"Some of them have gone to the central region, some have become supernatural. I once saw the late Solar Qimei Staff King. Although he's no longer a martial master, I feel that he still had the heart of a martial master!"

"It would be happiness incarnate to fight with such martial masters!"

"I visited Senior Southern Fist He Yong at noon, wanting to spar with him. He refused as either I would kill him, or he would kill me. He did not want a fight to the death because he wanted to battle my teacher! I find it a regret that such a martial master is not willing to battle me. It is my regret!"

Li Hao looked around him. "I know that the older generation thinks little of us, that we are young and far less than their era despite decent strength. Even when their strength reached Dominator, they were held at Sunderer!"

"Therefore, I am very happy to sense your enmity and battle intent. I feel that while the old guard thinks nothing of me, if I can sweep the Silver Moon Guards, I can add you to my list of accomplishments!"

“When someone asks me what feats have I achieved in battle, I can answer that I single-handedly defeated the entire Silver Moon Guards—the Guards that have people shaking in their boots!”

Killing intent soared into the air after he finished speaking. A woman dressed in a black combat outfit jumped out.

“Li Hao, do you think you can make a clean sweep of us?” she asked frostily.

“I think I can!” The young man nodded with a smile. “Not only can I do that, but I don’t think there’s anyone here who can take ten moves from me. None of you can!”

“Xie Lan of the Jade Sword Sect! Please show me your skill!” shouted the woman as she swung her sword!

Li Hao was blatantly humiliating all of them—not just one or two of them, but every person in the Guards. His defeat of Mountain Ax’s heir allowed everyone to understand that he was strong. Martial masters, however, never admitted defeat. Even when they knew full well that they did not measure up to the enemy, they still refused to concede that they were inferior.

Pfft!

The sword pierced through the air; a flash of arctic sword light illuminated all directions. The martial masters were nervous. Li Hao had defeated Chen Jin as soon as he arrived—they dearly wished for Xia Lan of the Jade Sword Sect to find victory.

The young man swiftly moved forward with a majestic gait. He leapt into the air and stomped down, shoving the longsword beneath the ground with a thunderous step!

Xie Lan’s fingers nearly split from her hand. She wanted to control her weapon, but found it impossible to shift.

Li Hao punched out with Tiger Roar Through Mountain and Woods, his momentum was undeniable!

Too strong!

A dismayed Xie Lan hastily backed away, but Li Hao flung himself forward with Birdshot! He broke through the air and instantly appeared in front of his opponent. Xie Lan quickly kicked out, but the young man's fist was already in motion!

Bam!

Xie Lan flew through the air, her right leg curled in on itself. She shrieked with grim determination and forced herself to boomerang back as she was thrown backward. With hand as sword, she pointed at Li Hao's head!

The young man opened his mouth. "ROAR!!" Tiger Roar Through Mountain and Woods!

Li Hao was the tiger as its roars reverberated through the land. Internal force erupted and his mind intent was on full display. Xie Lan's sword qi didn't even touch Li Hao before he grasped it with a hand.

Crunch!

It was intangible sword qi made of internal force, but it sounded like metal fracturing when the young man closed his hand. The internal force exploded as Li Hao crushed it! Tiger roars continue to echo through the void after the sword qi crumbled away. As Xie Lan reeled with dizziness, the young man punched again!

Bam!

Xie Lan went flying, blood spewing from her mouth. She crashed right beside Chen Jin when she landed, smashing the man flat just as he was about to struggle to his feet!

Two out of nine centurions had swiftly tasted defeat without even a chance to fight back! The rest exchanged shocked looks.

“I said that one person isn’t enough and that all of you should come together, but you insisted on being prideful instead,” Li Hao said coldly. “Martial masters like to fight solo, but that’s predicated by a foundation of equal strength! All of you are too weak and are just coming to your individual deaths. If it wasn’t for my lack of desire to kill you and the obvious gap between our abilities, all of you would be dead!”

This was no longer face slapping, it was face shitting! Three people jumped out in response. They were all male—one wielded the blade, another the spear, and the last bare hands. His palms were black as all of his skill was concentrated in the hand.

“Zhang Yang of the Five Tiger Broken Blade Sect!”

“Wu Yue of the Heartsmasher Palm!”

“Luo Qizhao of the Luo Spear!”

“Please show us your skill!”

The spear flashed forward like a blood dragon howling with overwhelming killing intent. Tigers roared their outrage when Zhang Yang swung his blade. Wu Yue sent a soundless palm toward Li Hao. The three respectively targeted the young man’s throat, heart, and head. Three Dominators flared their mind intent and locked onto Li Hao, as domineering as the gods!

The martial masters watching were holding their breaths, deeply afraid to miss a single scene. It was exceedingly rare to see three Dominators—three centurions—jointly attack an enemy. Two centurions had fought a Solar before, and their centurions had won!

The Dominators of the Silver Moon Guards were not weak. Two centurions working in conjunction could defeat some Solars—of course, just initial Solars, but that was already impressive enough. That the three were working in tandem meant that they thought Li Hao was stronger than the regular initial Solar.

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Within the plaza.

Li Hao remained unmoved as the spear stabbed at him. His right hand flashed out and grabbed the spear; the young man roared and yanked on the spear so hard that the heir of the Luos stumbled.

He's terrifying! Luo Qizhao's eyes went wide. He shook his spear—vibrate!

Internal force surged, shaking the weapon. However, Li Hao's response was to throw the weapon out. Luo Qizhao could barely control his weapon from stabbing into Wu Yue's palm. Just as Li Hao flung the spear with his right hand, he clenched his left hand into a fist and raised it in a punch!

Clang!

Zhang Yang's blade was sent off course from Li Hao's head. The young man twisted to the side to evade the rest of the swing. He pushed off from the ground and hovered in the air like an ape for a split second. With a flash, he vanished before his opponents.

"Be careful!" exclaimed Zhang Yang. Wu Yue's expression also shifted and he wanted to dodge, but felt pressure around his neck. Li Hao had descended from the sky like a monkey and wrapped both legs around his neck.

Crunch!

His spine cracked; Wu Yue thrust his palm at Li Hao without another word. The young man tightened his legs around his opponent's neck and suddenly swung upside down, punching the backs of Wu Yue's legs!

Bam!

Wu Yue sank to his knees, in too much pain to continue standing!

Li Hao adroitly jumped down and pushed off his right leg, bounding up like a monkey flying through the air. Flicking the leg forward, he punted the kneeling man!

Bam!

Wu Yue crashed to the ground. A long spear stabbed at Li Hao's waist sans disturbance or mighty roar, just ruthless determination!

The young man snorted and grabbed it with his hand, running his grip along it like a little snake climbing a branch and drawing near to the heir of the Luos. Li Hao suddenly reached out with both arms and lifted the other in a bear hug. He was as if a bear hugging a tree to rip it up by the roots. The young man raised the heir of the Luos up and smashed him down onto the ground!

Boom!

A humongous crater appeared in the ground. Li Hao had a death lock on the heir of the Luos; the man couldn't move. Thanks to the tremendous impact, Luo Qizhao was slammed straight into the ground.

The bear style!

The young man had demonstrated the tiger, bear, bird, and ape styles in short succession... Other than the lightness of the deer style, he'd fully displayed everything at his command. The deer style focused on lightening the body and was more often used to escape. He didn't need that for now.

The newcomer had swiftly defeated his opponents in the blink of an eye. Luo Qizhao and Wu Yue were quickly rebuffed, leaving the bladesman to look around in dismay. Three powerhouses had teamed together for joint effort, but one was below the ground and the other sent flying. This was astounding!

"Kill!" He raised his blade and rushed Li Hao.

The young man punched again, it was like the waves were upon them. Seven layers of massive waves churned through the area, visible to the rest of the crowd.

Rumble! A wave reared to the sky. Clang!

The enormous blade broke in a shower of fiery sparks! Zhang Yang's hand fractured and blood sprayed in all directions. He stared incredulously at the punch. Was that... the Nine Forged Force?

Silver Spear's Nine Forged Force was very famous. The name had just floated into his mind when a punch emblazoned itself onto his chest.

Wham! Bang!

Zhang Yang flew backward; this punch was noticeably stronger than the rest. His chest caved in!



Defeat! Three Dominators working in tandem had only lasted moments before being thoroughly defeated!

## Chapter 347: Joining the Silver Moon Guards (II)

Mu Lin's jaw dropped; Manager Yu was also startled. Li Hao wasn't employing the sword aura, but the Five Styles! The young man wasn't bringing his strongest aura to bear and had disposed of three Dominators through just the Five Styles and Nine Forged Force. It quite astonished the secretary.

She knew that Li Hao was very strong and that he'd killed Yu Xiao, but she'd thought that he'd employed the sword aura and put his life on the line to accomplish the deed. But today, he didn't even have a chance to use the sword aura yet.

Within the plaza.

Li Hao exhaled and looked off to the side. He beckoned with a smile. "All four of you together may not make it past thirty moves, do you still want to try? Or maybe you can bring Deputy Mu with you!"

He thought nothing of the four remaining centurions. Mu Lin grinned so widely that his eyes disappeared in the folds of his face. So cocky!

The four being addressed looked gravely at the five people on the ground. Five of their brethren had been defeated in the blink of an eye! The rest of them together might not put up a fight to Li Hao—what a terrifying fellow! When had such a monster appeared in the martial world? He'd only trained for a few years! Was this supposed to be Sunderer of Hundreds?

Everyone looked at Mu Lin. There was no option but for the fatty to walk forward with a smile.

"Well done, Li Hao, very impressive! Let's stop here. Everyone, let us welcome..."

“No, that’s not enough!” Li Hao looked at the fatty with a smile. “Deputy Mu, I’d like to see how strong your Iron Shirt or Golden Bell Shield is! I would be too disappointed if the second in command of the Silver Moon Guards is as weak as the rest of them!”

“We’re all on the same team here...” laughed Mu Lin.

The young man punched without a second word. Tiger Roar Through Mountain and Woods! At this point in the game, how am I going to agree to joining you guys if I don’t suss out what you’re capable of?

BAM!

Mu Lin took one step back at the loud collision, but his expression remained the same. He grinned at the sight of the young man’s fist resting against his chest. “Will this do? Why don’t we stop here?”

Li Hao was slightly surprised. He looked at the man, then at Mu Lin’s chest. The deputy had taken one of his direct punches and was completely fine for it! It was like he’d punched a slab of metal! Mu Lin was many times stronger than Chen Jian of the team in Silver City. Chen Jian was also a defensive martial master and trained a secret art called the Earth Dragon Shield. He was very strong, but not worth mentioning when compared to this person!

Li Hao raised an eyebrow and took a step back. All of the other martial masters in the plaza heave sighs of relief. It would be mortifying if the young man really beat all of them! Thank goodness their deputy was reliable in critical moments, that his Iron Shirt was incomparably strong! He wasn’t at all shaken by one of Li Hao’s punches—those punches could send a Dominator flying.

“Impressive!” Li Hao laughed. “I wonder who’s stronger—you or Inspector General Kong? I mean in terms of Iron Shirt skill. He’s become a supernatural now and might have given up his practice of the Iron Shirt...”

“I may be less than him in terms of supernatural abilities,” chuckled Mu Lin. “If that’s off the table, he crossed over as a half step Dominator. How does that compare to me?”

“Then does Deputy Mu know that my teacher once broke the most famous Iron Shirt with his bare hands?” Li Hao laughed uproariously. That martial master had used Iron Shirt as his moniker! That was true strength as it meant he represented all powerhouses practicing the method in that era. No one was greater than him, and Yuan Shuo trounced him all the same.

“I know, but you’re not Yuan Shuo!” Mu Lin smiled. “That’s enough, Li Hao, it’s enough for everyone to know that you’re very capable...”

“No, it’s not enough! Powerhouses don’t need to prove to weaklings how capable they are. I just need to show my might to the strong !” Li Hao’s presence abruptly shifted and he raised his hand as a sword!

His sword was as if a mountain, or was it a mountain as if a sword? It crashed upon Mu Lin! The earth sword aura!

The deputy’s expression shifted slightly. So strong! He roared ferociously and threw himself at Li Hao, golden light emanated from his body. The Iron Shirt wasn’t just used for defense, it could also be employed in offense! Ramming the enemy was the best attack!

The sword qi loomed like a mountain!

Li Hao’s right hand swung down like a sword and thunderously collided with his opponent’s first.

Bam!

A crash between two bodies somehow gave rise to fiery sparks, as if two chunks of metal had hacked each other. Li Hao rapidly backed away, light on his feet like a startled deer and immediately drifted into the distance.

Golden light sparkled over Mu Lin's fist—it'd been punctured. A bloody scrape could be found on it, but it vanished in the blink of an eye.

"Li Hao, you're pretty ruthless, I shan't hold back then..." Mu Lin rumbled. Though he was rotund, he was exceedingly agile. He launched himself from the ground and hurtled at Li Hao. He didn't bear the slightest reservation whatsoever. The Iron Shirt was an incredible method!

Numerous iron doors seem to manifest over his body—this was his mind intent. His defenses were invincible, he did not fear attacks!

Li Hao raised an eyebrow and continued to wield his hand as a sword. He stabbed forth several hundred times in the span of a breath. The Ghost Shadow Sword!

Plink plink plink!

The two figures continuously tangled with each other as the sword attacked the Iron Shirt. It wasn't until now that the crowd realized their deputy was also ridiculously powerful. It was hardly apparent in regular times.

The other centurions, including the ones that'd been defeated, watched with bated breath. Nervous and excited, they ignored their wounds. Hopefully Mu Lin could defeat Li Hao!

Mu Lin was indeed very strong, but he usually avoided fighting when he could. Today, he was forced to take a stand and the longer Li Hao fought, the more alarmed he was.

Incredible! This guy was stronger than Yu Xiao! Was this the strength of a premier Dominator? His words would become hot air if the fight continued.

The young man snorted. Mu Lin's expression shifted as a streak of fiery light appeared. Li Hao's aura was changing again!

The earth sword aura melded into the fire sword aura and the sword aura outline manifested! Three swords as one!

“Kill!” Li Hao shouted and rushed forward. The longsword broke through the void.

Mu Lin’s eyes widened and he cursed to himself, shit! This guy is supposed to be a Sunderer? My dear little brother, why didn’t mom and dad drown you in a manure pit when you were born?? Your report is going to be the death of me!

As he kept up a litany of insults, he decided to discard the tough response. There was no way he was going to take this head-on, running away was in order!

Li Hao stomped his foot on the ground at this time.

Boom!

The ground collapsed. A mountain peak loomed overhead with a ferocious tiger trapped inside. It seemed to have been released from its cage and now raged out of the mountain!

“Stop!” Mu Lin shouted, golden light sparkling over his body. A ray of sword light broke over him with a loud roar!

RUMBLE!!

It took a while for the scene to clear up after sword light careened through the scene. When the dust settled, the group saw that Mu Lin had been shoved into the sunken ground. His clothes were in tatters, revealing strands of wiry muscle. Blood splattered his body; the crisscrossing sword marks were a horrific sight!

Li Hao stepped through the air to avoid the cave-in, he was breathing slightly heavier.

“Deputy Mu is quite strong,” he said after a long moment of regarding Mu Lin. “My sword once heavily injured a late Solar, but to think that the deputy would be able to block it!”

“Pfft!” Mu Lin spat out a mouthful of blood and crawled out of the hole. He stared at Li Hao with wide-open eyes and exhorted, “I told you to stop!”

So why the fuck did you continue with that stroke?! Thank heavens my Iron Shirt really is invincible, or that would’ve been the death of me!

“I would’ve been the one injured had I stopped at that time.” Li Hao frowned. “You jest, Deputy Mu!”

Mu Lin was at a loss for words! His wounds looked terrible, but they weren’t that bad. He was truly much stronger than most people imagined.

“You are... too ruthless!” He spat out another mouthful of blood. “Too vicious!”

The young man didn’t say anything and continued to regard the man oddly. He’s really strong! I didn’t expect that.

Granted, Li Hao hadn’t brought his full strength to bear either. He hadn’t used the Incantation of the Blade of Blood, nor had he absorbed energy from Stellaris. He hadn’t tried nine layers with his punches either... but the combination of two sword auras was his current peak strength. Not only had that not killed his opponent, it hadn’t even caused heavy injuries. Just that alone made Li Hao think that Mu Lin might not be weaker than Huang Jie.

Was he closer to peak Solar? That would be terrifying! How was he a martial master? Did Mu Lin walk the path of the physical body?

He strengthened his body again and again... and his fatty appearance wasn't true fat. It was an accumulation of energy in his body and highly fortified blood. Blood qi and internal force built within him...

Li Hao suddenly understood this person's path, he wasn't an ordinary Dominator! He couldn't truly be called a Dominator at all. Yuan Shuo called his way a summoning of spirits, He Yong focused on blood transfusion. Tyrant Blade might be labeled as gathering intent, whereas this Mu Lin could be categorized as body refinement?

No matter what, it was another path entirely. He was a Dominator! To think that there would be such a person in Silver Moon's martial world, and he was just a deputy. What of the overall leader of the Silver Moon Guards?

Li Hao narrowed his eyes, spontaneously dismissing his inclination to look down on the Guards. Their deputy rivaled a peak Solar. Would his superior officer rival a Nova? Manager Yu had said that the goal of the Guards was to fight Novas. Li Hao had originally thought it would come about from joint effort, but maybe she meant that their officers alone could take on Novas?

That would be terrifying!

No wonder Hou Xiaochen didn't care about Hao Lianchuan being too weak. If the two strongest of the Guards worked together, they might be able to stand against the initial Solar Hao Lianchuan. If three fought together, they might rival the current Hao Lianchuan.

How much time, effort, and resources had Hao Lianchuan expended to reach this stage with this faction of martial masters? Ordinary people could not afford to raise this caliber of troops. If Li Hao's guess was right, they'd very possibly used mysterious power stones!

Indeed, mysterious power stones! Mysterious power had a limited effect on Dominators and blood pearls weren't available everywhere. That left only mysterious power stones to fortify these Dominators.

Hou Xiaochen... most likely controls a ruin that contains a lot of stones! Li Hao connected numerous dots in a split second.

### Chapter 348: Joining the Silver Moon Guards (III)

"Just how in the world do you cultivate?" An incredibly dejected Mu Lin looked at Li Hao. "You've only cultivated for a few years, haven't you? My younger brother says you were a Sunderer before and had just broken through. Of course, we all know that you're a half step Dominator because you killed Sun Moxian, but... you should be more than that, aren't you?"

"The Five Styles discipline naturally has its ways to elevate me!" Li Hao said slowly while staring at the deputy.

Bullshit! Mu Lin spat out another mouthful of blood. "Do we continue?"

"Nah." Li Hao grinned. "There is no need to continue fighting after witnessing the deputy's tremendous strength. This isn't a fight to the death and there will be plenty more opportunities to spar with each other. If we really were fighting to the death, neither one of us would be holding back."

"....." The martial masters around them were dead silent. What did the young man mean by that?

"So that wasn't your full strength?" Mu Lin raised an eyebrow. "I don't believe you. Why do you like to boast so much?"

To be honest, Mu Lin himself hadn't brought out everything he was capable of. He could do more than just defend! But Li Hao had done the same? The kid was just blowing hot air!



Li Hao smiled and didn't explain further. They could believe him if they wanted to! But who knew if he'd be able to kill Mu Lin if he really did bring his full strength to bear? It was tough to say when it wasn't a struggle to the death. He hadn't used the little sword and just utilized his hand as one.

He was well and truly curious about the Silver Moon Guards now. Hou Xiaochen's army unit was uncommon. He must be using special methods to strengthen these martial masters; their Dominators wouldn't be so much stronger than the ones in the outside world otherwise. Any of these centurions was stronger than Liu Long!

The chief had said before that he could fight any mid Sunflare, but that it was difficult to determine the outcome if he met a late Sunflare. These centurions, however, could easily match a late or peak Sunflare.

It was hard to explain the sudden appearance of so many veteran Dominators.

"Forget it," sighed Mu Lin as he looked at the tattered remains of his clothes. "Let's drop this. Welcome to the Guards, Li Hao! How was this for a welcome ceremony?"

Li Hao nodded with a smile. "Is the ranking officer here?"

"He's out on business, I'm the boss for now!" Mu Lin laughed and waved off the martial masters watching behind them. "Back to your business, everyone! This was just a sparring session, there's nothing else to see here. Those of the Five Styles are indeed strong, so everyone be more polite in the future!"

"Let's go inside for a chat and talk about arrangements for Li Hao." He turned to the young man and Manager Yu. "I was going to have him be a deputy centurion, but I think that's gone out of the window. Which of these nine would dare be his boss?"

No one wanted that loss of face! The centurions helping each other hobble away lowered their heads without a word. Indeed, who would dare give orders to Li Hao? What a joke! They'd been completely routed in front of everyone today. How was any of them supposed to interact with him if he joined their team?

In all of the Guards, possibly only Mu Lin and their ranking officer could keep the young man in check. No, Mu Lin might not be able to either! They'd all witnessed that battle and committed it to memory. Mu Lin's defense was powerful, but he lacked in offense. Li Hao had emerged nearly unscathed, so it was hard to believe that the final blow had truly been the young man's full strength!

.....

The three walked into a large hall after a while. Mu Lin was already wearing a new outfit.

"Come, sit!" He waved his visitors to their seats and looked to Manager Yu for guidance. "Does Director Hou have any specific arrangements for Li Hao?"

"No, he just wanted to send the young man here." Manager Yu calmly sipped her tea and didn't seem to think much of it. She put it down after that one sip, turning to Li Hao. "Do you want to stay here?"

"Of course!" Li Hao nodded with a smile. "The caveat is that the ranking officer isn't a trophy officer and is stronger than Deputy Mu. I like being around strong people!"

"He's stronger than me," chuckled Mu Lin. "Perhaps you've even heard of his name before."

"Please enlighten me!"

"Golden Spear!"

Li Hao paused, in a true daze. Wasn't Golden Spear... dead? That's what he'd heard! Golden Spear of the Three Spears of Silver Moon?! How was that possible?

“Surprised?” Mu Lin roared with laughter. “Golden Spear is alive and has become the ranking officer of the Silver Moon Guards! He possesses the proper qualifications, doesn’t he? He was the strongest among the Three Spears back in the day and stood on the same level as the Sky Sword. The Sky Sword, Tyrant Blade, and Golden Spear were unparalleled!”

“He’s not dead?” Li Hao frowned. “If he’s alive and my master hadn’t broken through... that means he didn’t break through in Silver Moon.”

The young man didn’t believe that anyone could break his master’s curse! If they had, they would’ve eclipsed his master. As one of the Three Spears, Golden Spear had naturally met Yuan Shuo in battle. As usual, the latter won.

“Not everyone needs to leave Silver Moon in order to break through,” Manager Yu said faintly. “Some people were unable to progress back in the day only because Yuan Shuo’s will kept everyone down. If someone pierced this intent, there would naturally be no obstacle to breaking through!”

“I see!” Li Hao immediately understood. “But taking a shortcut isn’t necessarily a good thing.”

Indeed, he did understand. Hou Xiaochen! It was Hou Xiaochen who’d pierced his teacher’s will and enabled Golden Spear to break his shackles. The latter might’ve risen to Dominator many years ago. That he hadn’t walked out of Silver Moon meant that he’d joined Hou Xiaochen’s side!

“A shortcut? Not necessarily!” Manager Yu frowned slightly. “When there’s someone stronger than Yuan Shuo, that means Golden Spear’s path will be wider...”

“My teacher is invincible among his peers!” Surprisingly, Li Hao doggedly vied for every point in this conversation. His position directly opposed the secretary’s. “There is no one in the world who is a stronger Sunderer than my teacher with his five auras melded together. If there is, then my teacher wouldn’t still have the reputation that he does! Manager Yu, not even Director Hou would dare claim that he rivals my teacher as a half step Dominator if you asked him!”

Manager Yu's chest heaved; she seemed infuriated. This was a rare sight for Mu Lin. He'd almost never seen this one lose her temper—she must truly be incensed. He stayed quiet. These two weren't just fighting over who was stronger, but who should be recognized as number one of martial dao! Plainly, Li Hao was not going to give way because he was Yuan Shuo's disciple.

"They have to be at the same level for there to be a chance to determine that." An aloof Manager Yu kept a firm hold of her temper. "What a pity that Yuan Shuo was yet to set foot into Dominator in that era. We might've been able to come to an answer!"

"There's still a chance!" Li Hao smiled. "They weren't Sunderers or Dominators together, but there's a chance for them to meet beyond Dominator, right?"

The secretary looked coldly at him and didn't respond.

First among martial masters! Who was the greatest? That might not be known for a very long time. She couldn't prove either that a half step Dominator Hou Xiaochen was stronger than Yuan Shuo. No one in the dynasty dared say so as, honestly, no one could combine five auras together.

"Let's set that aside." It was only now that Mu Lin interrupted the arguing. "Golden Spear is our ranking officer. Do you still think that the Guards is trash, Li Hao?"

"Of course not!" The young man shook his head. "If I'd known that Senior Golden Spear is the one in charge, I would've kept my nose down. A senior martial master like him was mentioned in the same breath as my master. Although he eventually lost to my master, I would more likely than not lose to him if we met in battle!"

That was because Golden Spear had become a Dominator long ago, thanks to Hou Xiaochen breaking his teacher's will. It was a certainty that Golden Spear was very strong. He probably rivaled Novas!

Sky Sword had become a Nova in the central region and was a premier existence among his level. Golden Spear, Sky Sword, and Tyrant Blade possessed similar reputations. If Tyrant Blade could kill a Solar seven years ago, would Golden Spear be any weaker?

Of course not!

As proud as Li Hao may be, he didn't think that he could match the other at this point in time. He was a bit distracted at the moment. Out of the Record of Heroes from back in the day, he'd already met the Qimei Staff, Southern Fist, Earthturner Sword, and Yu Luocho. He knew that the Jadelight Sword, Sky Sword, and Tyrant Blade were alive, and he might meet Golden Spear soon. Silver Spear was dead and he'd killed the heir to Bronze Spear...

How... interesting!

As for the Heartjab Daughter that he'd seen before, she wasn't part of the ranking. There were only thirty-six names on the record. Some half step Dominators had their own reputations, but were not included.

If Manager Yu really was the Yu Luocho of old, then she was someone who commanded the wind and clouds back in the day as well. When all was said and done, it appeared that Earthturner Sword had done the worst for himself, if Li Hao ignored those who were dead.

Roughly ten among the thirty-six were confirmed dead, mostly at Yuan Shuo's hand. Were the rest alive? During Yuan Shuo's rampage back in the day, there were some that he didn't repeatedly challenge. Under the premise of similar strength, he would be able to kill a second after killing a first. If he'd seen that through, more would've died.

Li Hao's thoughts traveled to initial Solar Hong Yitang. Why did he seem less than the existences that'd yet to ascend to the supernatural domain? Golden Spear and Tyrant Blade hadn't crossed over either, while Southern Fist felt stronger than Hong Yitang. The Earthturner Sword had been ranked number two among the Seven Swords. The young man frowned—was Hong Yitang truly crippled? He'd refused the letter of challenge three times. That Yuan Shuo had issued them to him represented his strength!

Was it due to a continued lack of fighting that led to a decline in morale, which resulted in his current mediocrity?

Li Hao quickly set the Earthturner Sword out of his mind.

#### Chapter 349: Joining the Silver Moon Guards (IV)

“Golden Spear is, without a doubt, very strong,” Mu Lin said with a smile. “Even I would only last a few seconds if I fought him. He’d probably stab me to death!”

“It’s more fun if he’s strong!” Li Hao said excitedly. “There wouldn’t be much of a point in coming here otherwise.”

“That’s good, then!” Mu Lin laughed. “The Guards will be stronger with you among our number, but it’s hard to decide what your arrangements should be.”

Centurion?

There was a full complement of nine already and there weren’t enough Guards to give Li Hao a company of one hundred.

If not centurion, then another deputy? But there was already Mu Lin, were the two of them supposed to slack off together if Li Hao became one as well?

As for being the ranking officer... they didn’t even need to consider it. Golden Spear was part of Hou Xiaochen’s faction and very strong. Li Hao was no match for him.

“Just the same as big brother Mu will do!” a merry Li Hao said unceremoniously. “Just make me a deputy without any real authority. Of course, big brother Mu seems to be a high level chief commissioner...”

He glanced at Manager Yu, his meaning clear. I want that too!

The secretary's expression shifted wordlessly. This guy wants to be high up in the bureaucracy so bad that he's going crazy, isn't he??

Li Hao was just a low level commissioner inspector for the time being. There was still low level chief commissioner and high level chief commissioner to go above him. He hadn't even been made a low level chief commissioner yet, but was already thinking of another promotion!

There weren't many high level chief commissioners in the whole of Silver Moon. Only the deputies of the Night Watchers and the two higher level officers of the Guards were this rank; the rest were low level chief commissioners. As for the even higher peacemaker commissioners, there were only two in the entire province!

Kong Jie and Hou Xiaochen!

Mu Lin didn't mind the outrageous request, he was more distracted by the thought of gaining a peer. "If you're a deputy as well... are we going to play chess and chat with each other everyday? I think Director Hou sent you to us because he wants you to do something."

In other words, he spent his days playing chess and looking for people to talk to.

"I'm too young and don't know any military affairs," Li Hao chuckled. "An empty title is enough, I shouldn't be entrusted with actual responsibilities!"

These words rang a bit false. The young man didn't understand military affairs, but he knew certain army formations—very special ones at that. They were recorded in ancient records; he just wasn't interested in helping train martial masters. Otherwise, he could turn out a troop of one hundred stronger than the ones now if he was instated as a centurion. There were plenty of diagrams and descriptions he could follow from the ancient tomes, even if he didn't have firsthand knowledge of what he would be recreating.

What Li Hao knew, Yuan Shuo naturally did as well, and more. It was just that master and disciple weren't very interested in formations that gathered the strength of many to enhance one person. They preferred to enhance themselves!

Hou Xiaochen had been trying to recruit Yuan Shuo simply because the director wanted Yuan Shuo to replace Golden Spear after the professor broke through. Although Golden Spear was very strong, Hou Xiaochen believed that he wouldn't refuse being displaced for no reason other than Yuan Shuo truly possessing an immense reputation and had once defeated Golden Spear!

Hou Xiaochen also believed that if Yuan Shuo was willing, the Silver Moon Guards could absolutely be raised to another level. It was a pity that the fellow was too flighty to be reliable. He stirred up a great deal of trouble as soon as he broke through and also created the Summoner of Spirit level, forcing Hou Xiaochen to abandon the idea.

"Then let's wait for Boss Golden Spear to come back and for Director Hou to decide!" Mu Lin concluded. "I don't have the authority to make the call."

Li Hao wanted too much!

Manager Yu's brows were tightly furrowed and she said after a long pause, "I'll send in a report. I don't know if this will be approved. Director Hou wished more for you to lead a team—something he's always wanted to do with the Guards. There are only nine teams at the moment, he wanted to round it out.

"We can recruit people for your team. The Guards will be taking their place in front of the public eye soon. Our original plan was that Liu Long could take your place first if you hadn't advanced to Dominator, then give Liu Long another post once you did..."

She had no choice but to speak some of her true thoughts—which happened to be Hou Xiaochen's thoughts. They wanted Li Hao to lead a one hundred person troop!



The young man sank into deep thought. “Director Hou knows that I’m very young... which means I know very little. Is he at ease giving me real power over one hundred people?”

One hundred wasn’t a large number, but one had to take into account that they were all martial masters and nearly all Sunderers. There were very few Slayers among the Guard.

“Director Hou never doubts the people he uses!” Manager Yu declared. “You are Yuan Shuo’s disciple, that is enough.”

Not to mention, Li Hao was very strong and not the weakling that they previously thought. That was more than enough!

“The director is thinking of you with these arrangements,” Manager Yu continued upon seeing the young man remain silent. “Martial masters are used to fighting alone, but problems cannot always be resolved by one person. You can try cooperation—you joined the Demon Hunters when you were in Silver City, so you should know that a partnership between martial masters is stronger than one person alone.”

“I’ll think about it,” Li Hao finally offered. “I’m not ready to do something like this yet. Also, I’m not sure what the Silver Moon Guards do and the kind of enemy they face...”

“I give you two points,” Manager Yu explained brusquely. “Number one, ruins. Number two, pirates!”

Li Hao blinked. Pirates? He ignored that point and honed in on the first one. “Ruins?”

“Correct, you’ve seen the Battle Heaven Army, right?”

“Do you mean...” Li Hao sucked in a sharp breath. “That more than one ruin possesses that kind of army?”

“Correct!”

Awareness dawned on the young man! No wonder the Silver Moon Guards didn’t operate in the public eye! The enemy they faced was beyond the imagination of regular people! They targeted the remnants in the ruins and pirates on the open seas. How would ordinary people be familiar with them?

So this was why the Guards were so strong. They’d benefited heavily from the ancient ruins. This was also why they wanted his teacher. His teacher was an expert tomb raider—er, archaeologist! Did they want him for the army formations, or to make tomb raiding more convenient?

A variety of speculations ran through Li Hao’s mind. Did Hou Xiaochen actually have his eye on their ability to excavate ruins, as opposed to army formations? Excavations didn’t take much work, to be honest. It was just a matter of knowing some feng shui and being skilled in translating ancient languages.

There were many who possessed those skills, but those who did and could fight, run, survive, and remain alive to this day were few and far in between!

It was too time consuming for a martial master to pick up these random bits of knowledge as they cultivated. Only the elderly Yuan Shuo had that much time on his hands and several decades to spare for specializing in this material, given his prolonged stay in Silver City.

Li Hao sank into contemplation.

“There are very few supernaturals among the Guards because some ruins are safe only for martial masters,” Manager Yu continued. “It’s very dangerous for supernaturals to enter, so the Guards have never considered crossing over to the supernatural as a possibility.

“Everyone knows this, so if you agree to these arrangements, you can only recruit martial masters to your banner. Supernaturals will sometimes bring incredible trouble with them!”

Li Hao's eyes danced around. Was this so? It made sense! The Silver Armor had voiced similar sentiments when it came back to life, but ended with the statement that they were all humans, so it wouldn't do anything.

The city of Battle Heaven, however, was plainly targeting supernaturals. Martial masters could fly with impunity—Li Hao had tested that out. They didn't need to take the second passageway! Martial masters could fly, but supernaturals could not. Martial masters could avoid the Black Armors, but supernaturals were attacked the second their energy leaked out. These differences hadn't been apparent during the trip because there hadn't been that many martial masters on that expedition.

After Manager Yu mentioned that there was more than one ruin like Battle Heaven, it was no wonder that his teacher had managed to survive so many excavations, but the supernaturals around him hadn't!

"It's nice being a centurion," Mu Lin chuckled off to the side. "There are benefits to leading a team. You have real power and you'll be able to explore ruins by yourself after the Silver Moon Guards are known to the public. You can even bring your people on some personal missions... Assuming they agree to it, of course."

Astonished, Li Hao looked at Manager Yu.

"It's inappropriate to constrain martial masters with too many fetters," she said calmly. "So the director has bestowed the centurions with a great deal of authority and doesn't treat the Guards like a true army. That would incite a lot of resentment if he did so."

Li Hao's eyes lit up slightly, this was nice!

"Then..."

"You can do anything you want so long as Golden Spear agrees!" Manager Yu flung down.

Li Hao was immediately tempted. I'll recruit one hundred martial masters with Hou Xiaochen's money and bring them on exterminations of Red Moon's people...

The impulse quickly faded away. Red Moon didn't seem to have that many members in the province.

"Let me think about it. If I can be a high level chief commissioner as a centurion, then I... have no further opinions!"

"....." Manager Yu was at a complete loss for words. Just what was this fellow thinking??

Li Hao hadn't been interested in joining the Silver Moon Guards before, but now he was. Golden Spear and Mu Lin had proceeded far down their paths. Although he was yet to meet Golden Spear, just Mu Lin alone was enough to entice the young man to stay.

As for requesting a promotion, that was all a matter of convenience.

Exploring ruins, fighting ancient civilizations, battling pirates... The Guards had an interesting mission statement. As vast as Silver Moon was, there weren't that many opportunities for battle. Joining them might render more chances, and it was closer to the sea here. Observing the sea was also a joy.

.....

Within the hall.

Manager Yu ignored Li Hao's request for a promotion. It was best that he'd decided to stay. As for high level chief commissioner... she could try. It wasn't a loss, in any regard, so if the Inspectorate and provincial government really were willing to approve it, who cared?

“Are you staying to converse with them, or going back with me?” Manager Yu dropped the topic.

“I’ll come back tomorrow!” Li Hao smiled. “My arrival today was too abrupt and I injured a few friends. I should give people some time to accept me.”

“It’s alright,” Mu Lin chuckled. “Injuries are normal over the course of sparring. We had innumerable battles in the plaza when the Guards were first established. There’s specialized healers here, people will recover quickly.”

There were supernaturals with healing abilities on site. Back in the olden days of the martial world, severe injuries meant a difficult recovery. Many martial masters ultimately succumbed to their wounds. The rise of the supernatural domain represented new opportunities for martial dao. One no longer needed to worry as much about striking too hard or being wary of bringing full strength to bear.

Li Hao and Manager Yu said nothing else. Mu Lin sent them off; numerous martial masters watched them walk out of the hall, past the plaza, and slowly drive off in the car.

## Chapter 350: The Flaming Phoenix Spear (I)

A buzz of conversation started up in the plaza as soon as the visitors left.

“So the old demon’s disciple is this strong??”

“That discipline is filled with perverts, alright!”

“What a pity that our ranking officer isn’t present. He’d knock the kid down a peg or two! Li Hao was too cocky!” Discussions sprang up throughout the plaza, each of them punctuated with resignation. Golden Spear was their ranking officer, an existence on par with Yuan Shuo back in the day! But Yuan Shuo’s disciple had come to the Guards and nearly wiped the floor with all of them.

Although Mu Lin had salvaged their dignity, the results of their battle was that Mu Lin was injured and Li Hao only breathing a bit heavier than usual. It was a complete rout for the Silver Moon Guards!

.....

Discourse rose and fell throughout the outside plaza.

In the hall to the rear.

Nine centurions were gathered together, as was Mu Lin. The ones who were injured wore crestfallen looks on their faces. They weren't injured too heavily—the worst among them suffered only broken bones and slightly shaken internal organs. Li Hao was far stronger than them, but he'd showed mercy in his bouts of fighting.

“Mu Lin, didn't you say that he's just a Sunderer?” Chen Jin, heir of Mountain Ax, demanded with an unpleasant expression. This was a Sunderer?? He was the first to take the field and had been defeated in two punches! What a complete humiliation!

“What are you looking at me for?” Mu Lin laughed. “What can I do about him improving swiftly? Everyone knows his details, I'm not the only one to say that he's a Sunderer—all the reports say that. How are you blaming me for him being more than that?”

The crowd fell silent. Indeed, their intelligence reports indicated that Li Hao was just a Sunderer. It was such a short period of time since then!

Xie Lan of the Jade Sword Sect coughed—she was truly injured and not imitating Hou Xiaochen's habit. “It's no big deal that he defeated us,” she said with a pale face. “But I'm thinking that if he was a half step Dominator when he fought Sun Moxian—no, a late Sunderer—then it's only been ten days.”

Ten days!

Indeed, just ten days. Was intelligence of ten days ago old news? Absolutely not, at least not when it came to martial masters. Reality was astounding.

“There’s several reasons for his fast rate of improvement.” Mu Lin inclined his head. “One, he’s been to Battle Heaven. Two, the Nova level blood pearl. Three, he seems to have comprehended yet another aura...”

Altogether, it made sense why Li Hao was so strong, but it was still too hard to believe. Did bottlenecks not plague this fellow?? He could immediately grasp an aura after obtaining a treasure, break through, and instantly be stronger?

Everyone here had at least twenty years experience in martial dao!

“Forget it, he has his fortunes and we have ours,” Mu Lin quickly said. “Although our fortunes don’t seem as great as his, we’re in a much better position compared to martial masters in the outside world! He’s willing to join us now, so he will be a colleague in the future.”

“He’s willing?” someone asked.

“Yep.”

“What are we doing with him?”

“Director Hou means to form another one hundred person team for him to lead.”

The group was much more at ease with this explanation. Mmhmm, that was fine! Life would be impossible otherwise. It would be weird whether he was their superior or subordinate. How would anyone give orders to him, and the boy was too young to be their superior. They weren’t able to instantly accept such a young martial master suddenly being put in charge of them.

“Did Director Hou send him to us so we can borrow his knowledge for the expeditions?”

“Maybe, that and he’s truly strong. His presence will make the Guards stronger!”

“That’s hard to say. If we’d all worked together and assembled an army formation, we wouldn’t have lost so badly!”

“.....” The group was embroiled in conversation and not as repelled by Li Hao’s joining. Martial masters were a pragmatic sort. It was one thing to be a weak, nameless nobody. But when the newcomer was Yuan Shuo’s disciple, the Guards couldn’t be blamed for rejecting or even bullying him.

Yet, it was a different matter entirely when Li Hao was so strong and Yuan Shuo’s disciple! Such an existence absolutely had the right to join the Silver Moon Guards and a foundation with which to be arrogant.

“The captain of my bodyguards... is gone!” Mu Lin sighed.

The group fell silent and some rolled their eyes. How is this what you’re concerned about at this time?

“Mu Lin, your defense is invincible. Someone like you would be better served as being the bodyguard captain for a swordsman,” Chen Jin snorted.

He wanted Li Hao for his bodyguard captain? The fatty was more suited to be a bodyguard himself!

Mu Lin flicked a glance at him and chuckled, “That’s still better than being laid flat in two punches.”



“You...”

Mu Lin laughed heartily and rose while ignoring the man. “Everyone, dismissed! If the lad really comes to be another centurion... I’m worried that he’ll snag a portion of our people to be part of his team. You guys need to be careful—your people might be tempted after seeing you lose so badly today!”

The various centurions grew nervous, that wouldn’t do! They’d honed their teams for many years; any members shifted elsewhere were quickly replaced. If Li Hao was joining them and forming a new team, he would certainly take a portion of the veterans with him. They couldn’t refuse to give him anyone and force him into his new position all alone.

The group quickly dispersed after a bit more conversation. Mu Lin dawdled on the spot for a while and laughed, thinking of his dear younger brother. My adorable younger brother, I hope you return to White Moon City Soon. We need to ‘strengthen’ our bonds of brotherhood!

.....

Within the car.

Manager Yu closed her eyes without a word and rested. Li Hao thought back to the sparring matches of earlier—those really were just sparring rounds. Those centurions were quite a bit weaker than him, so he hadn’t used much force.

As for Mu Lin... The fatty specialized in defense. The young man had only smashed him with one sword stroke, it wasn’t a true fight to the death.

What Li Hao was thinking of was their physical bodies! They were all very strong! Even the centurions were incredibly strong, stronger than Liu Long, at the very least.

“Manager Yu, mysterious power stones can strengthen the body. Have the Guards absorbed many of them?” the young man asked directly.

“Yes, the harvests in the ruins are usually mostly of stones,” the woman responded calmly.

“Are the Black Armors of the Battle Heaven Army also here?”

“Yes, the Battle Heaven Army wasn’t the only army of the ancient civilization. All of their armies were uniformly of these suits of armor and there were a lot of Black Armors! The Silver Moon Guards now possess five hundred suits. It’s a pity that others took a lot of the Black Amors at Battle Heaven.”

The three great organizations had received a lot, as did the Sword Sect walk away with a fair few.

Li Hao’s eyes moved around rapidly as his thoughts flew. Five hundred suits of black armor made for impressive defensive capabilities. Even lacking the special energy from the ground, the defenses of the black armor were enough to cause headaches for Sunflares.

All of these martial masters could be regarded as Sunflares if they were equipped with these sets of armor... That was a terrifying notion!

Almost one thousand Sunflares... No wonder the Night Watchers were so darned poor. Hou Xiaochen had sent all items of value to the Guards and created a formidable army. The Silver Moon Guards might be a premier existence even in the central region.

They were the sum of Silver Moon power and probably the province’s greatest trump card. If they were all equipped with suits of armor and assembled into battle formations with Dominators as the vanguard...

Li Hao's eyes gleamed while he thought. Any team of one hundred would easily take down a Solar. If both Golden Spear and Mu Lin were present, then Novas wouldn't be too difficult either. That was assuming that Golden Spear couldn't capture a Nova by himself.

Hou Xiaochen was valuing Li Hao quite highly to be sending the young man to the Silver Moon Guards...

Li Hao thought for a while longer before asking, "Do I recruit my own people?"

"You can, but they must pass our test. You can't recruit any random martial master wandering around the land," Manager Yu responded in a level tone. "All of these martial masters passed layers of tests to finally join the Guards. They also sign several nondisclosure agreements noting that they wouldn't reveal certain secrets. They weren't even allowed to leave base during their first three years unless it was on a mission. After that, they are allotted one month of vacation every year, but they must take turns with their vacation."

Being unable to leave for three years was torture for many martial masters, but it made sense upon further thought.

"Will it be the same for me as well?"

"Centurions and above are not subject to these restrictions! They just need to be present when the mission is being conducted."

Li Hao nodded. That was good. As expected, only officers received special treatment. If he was a bigger soldier, he'd have to stay here for three years without leaving.

He'd thought through quite a lot; there were many, many benefits to the Silver Moon Guards. With his quick glance, Li Hao had noted that they were almost all Sunderers. They would have to be, after absorbing so many mysterious power stones and so much energy. It would be shameful if they weren't Sunderers!

This was an enormous platform that facilitated martial master improvement. Li Hao thought of the Demon Hunters. But then... what of Silver City? He wanted chief and the others to come over. Liu Long safeguarded a couple of mysterious power stones like they were his life. But here, there would be plenty of opportunities like that for him to quickly catch up.

Liu Yan, Wu Chao, Chen Jian... They were all Sunderers and as such, had the right to join the Guards. Being Night Watchers, there would be no problems with their background checks.

Li Hao suspected there was a treasure here that helped everyone grasp the aura. There wouldn't be one hundred half step Dominators in a faction of one thousand, otherwise. The aura was not that easy to comprehend.

There were so many opportunities here that Li Hao felt he couldn't let the chief and others continue to dwell in Silver City. But... the city was very important. The stone door was very important, at the very least. On second thought, if people couldn't open the stone door...

Liu Long worried about defending Silver City, but once the three great organizations were exterminated from the city, a Sunflare could take over for his duties there.

"Manager Yu, can I recruit supernaturals?"

"You can, but they can only be support and not an official member! You will have to assemble into formations and one fewer member takes away from their completeness. Some areas are not suited for supernaturals, so having fewer members available for formations will be a grave problem!"

"Hmm?" Li Hao blinked. "Does Manager Yu mean that the current formations depend on the number of members in terms of strength?"

"Do they not?" The woman frowned and looked at the young man.