

Star Gate 411

Chapter 411: A Great Show (II)

Tidal Wave shared the same thought as Half Mountain at the moment. Fight first, interfere with the massive snake's movements, then retreat together—fighting while they backed away. With the two of them working together, the big snake would not be able to defeat them that easily.

Yama members were behind them. Being Solars, they were slower, but they would be here soon. If seventeen Solars joined them, they would be most amenable to a joint effort due to their speed. They would find it impossible to get away. If they all withstood the giant snake together, they might be able to defeat it!

Both Tidal Wave and Half Mountain felt the same way now. They wanted to take down this enormous snake! A peak Nova monster spirit was terrifying beyond compare, but once it was theirs, the riches would be too abundant to imagine. And was there some sort of ultimate treasure being kept in the massive mountain valley that the snake had been in?

They could vaguely make out golden splendor shining from the valley. Greed intensified when the giant snake wasn't able to kill them with one blow. There was danger, but also opportunity.

As the two fought, the Revolution King seemed to sense something. The man transformed into a gust of wind and rapidly closed the distance until he was a thousand meters away from the snake. The look in his eyes changed!

A monster spirit! And an incredibly powerful one at that. It was wiping the floor with two Novas.

The Revolution King turned to leave, but the sixteen hell masters arrived at the same time and saw the gigantic snake.

“So big!”

“A major monster spirit!”

“Nova... No, peak Nova!” They couldn’t actually make out the monster spirit’s strength, but since it could suppress two Novas to the point where the supernaturals couldn’t really retaliate, the snake must be incredibly strong. However, it should not be stronger than Nova.

The Revolution King wanted to go, but the sixteen hell masters looked on with glittering eyes and stirred to motion.

“We should work together to kill the snake!” Half Mountain called out sternly. “It goes without saying there are benefits to be had, but if you leave and we’re defeated, it’s so much faster than a Solar. You won’t be able to get away!”

Bam!

He was distracted as he spoke, giving the mammoth snake tail a chance to loom over his head. A huge collision sounded, turning the faint form on his shield even wispier. Half Mountain coughed up blood and flew backwards. He darted into the darkness before the tail could arrive again and vanished once more.

Too strong!

If it wasn’t for the snake having difficulty hitting them, they would be dead after a few whips of the tail. Was this monster spirit really a Nova? Or was it stronger than a Nova?

Half Mountain reeled from shock. The shock stemmed from the fact that it could match the previous Hou Xiaochen—the director had been thus when he killed a Nova. Red Hair hadn’t been able to dodge in time. Meanwhile, Half Mountain knew that he was only suffering damage instead of outright dying because he had an origin weapon defending him.

Peak Nova?

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The sixteen hell masters looked at the Revolution King; the latter wanted nothing more than to leave. They could run while the big snake was entangled with the two Novas. It was too dangerous here. The hell masters, however, itched to throw themselves into the fray.

“Ultimate treasure!” One of the hell masters peeked at the mountain valley behind the big snake and stared at the rays of golden light with a shifting look in his eyes. “It must be a treasure born of nature and extraordinary if the snake is guarding it. It might be the companion treasure that will enable it to metamorphose to an even higher level of existence...”

“It’s very strong, but no matter how strong, it’s still a Nova at the end of the day,” said the other hell masters before the Revolution King could respond. “If we work together with those two Novas, we’ll be able to kill it!”

Seventeen Solars, two Novas, and Revolution’s origin weapon... Victory was guaranteed to be theirs!

The snake itself was an ultimate treasure as well. “The snake blood, flesh, and gall are all treasures that enhance strength!” A hell master licked his lips. “Snake skin is the best ingredient to forge superhuman weapons. We might be able to gaze upon the Nova threshold ourselves! Court Master Revolution, let’s do it!”

“Are you crazy?!” the Revolution King transmitted to them. “We need to retreat! This snake is so strong that Half Mountain is suppressed to the point where he can’t fight back. We’ll die in a split second of carelessness if we join the fight!”

“Opportunities and riches are sought through danger! Is Court Master Revolution used to a life of retirement in Silver Moon? You are the only one among the ten court masters who is not a Nova. The opportunity is close at hand, but you don’t know how to grasp it?!”

The sixteen other Solars charged before Revolution could respond! They didn't rush their target as a mob, but erupted with supernatural ability and formed a unique cage—the Hell Cage!

“We'll work together to kill the snake!” cried out one of the hell masters. “We can discuss distribution afterward. Both of you are smart people, we're sure you won't do anything untoward for momentary profit!”

“We won't, don't worry!” Half Mountain shouted.

Tidal Wave surged through the void as a water current, shooting out arrows of water at the snake's eyes wherever she could. “Don't worry, we're not idiots...” she said at the same time. As greedy as she might be, not even Tidal Wave would think of scheming against others when such a strong enemy was present. That was too dangerous and might lead to everyone's demise.

The powerful snake was growing irritated. It'd flicked previous supernaturals to death with a single tail whip, but failed to do so numerous times after encountering two supernaturals weak as bugs. These bugs knew a variety of methods like vanishing into the air or dissolving into water vapor... This rather irritated the inexperienced snake accustomed to brute force!

And not only that, but the sixteen hell masters spread out in four different directions and enlarged the cage to one with a circumference of several hundred meters. Unique rays of power formed a tremendous net that loomed over the snake.

The leading helm master grunted, “Wait for us to crawl out of the cracks in the Avici Iron Net. When we lock onto it, we'll kill it!”

The Avici Hell was one of the sixteen minor hells said to fall under the Parity King's overview. The hell masters deployed the Avici Iron Net, a method similar to a formation. Rays of light twinkled as they wove into a gigantic net that loomed precariously over the giant snake. The cracks were huge and could normally be sealed shut, but that required a lot of mysterious power. They didn't need to do so today as the snake was huge. A tighter knit net was not needed and also left room for the two Novas to burrow out.

Once they locked onto the snake, it would be hard for it to break free no matter how strong it was. The net swiftly descended, prompting fury in the snake's eyes. It whipped its tail!

Boom!

A strand of supernatural net thread snapped, but was instantly repaired. The snake coiled in on itself and head butted the offending net. Bam!

Another strand snapped, causing the sixteen hell masters to shake with incredulity! They'd once jointly locked away a Nova to the point where their target could not move. The Nova was meat on a chopping block, which was why they thought nothing of the Revolution King. They'd killed Novas before, so they didn't fear any Novas.

The group also thought nothing of Hou Xiaochen who'd killed a Nova in such a domineering fashion. We've done that before! If they ran into Hou Xiaochen, they were confident of taking him down as well if they attacked together. And yet, this big snake was easily smashing their Avici Iron Net!

"Steady!" roared one of the hell masters as he erupted with mysterious power. The others followed in the same fashion.

"Half Mountain, Tidal Wave, why aren't you attacking yet??" another shouted.

The two Novas took advantage of the opening to dart out of range of immediate attack. They were stunned by the development! The sixteen hell masters under the Parity King really did have some skill to their name. They were immobilizing a peak Nova with their strength as Solars!

Although the snake snapped threads each time it rammed itself against the net, there were many threads in the enclosure. Each one that snapped was quickly replaced. Despite the snake's rage, it wasn't able to immediately break the net entirely.

A thought struck Half Mountain and he waved his little shield into a bigger version of itself. It overhshadowed the net as another layer of defense. When the snake next threw itself forward, there was a tremendous crash, but no threads snapped.

Joy dawned on the crowd! One Nova and sixteen Solars had finally stabilized the net, leaving the snake as lamb ripe for the slaughter regardless of how strong it was. The sixteen hell masters were slightly wan as they crushed mysterious power stones to restore their energy.

Tidal shouted with exertion as she fired more water arrows.

“Revolution!” Half Mountain yelled.

The Revolution King frowned. He hadn’t taken any action during this time, but there was nothing to be done now that the situation had reached this point. He would act, then. He was just irritated that the sixteen hell masters didn’t listen to his orders. But after witnessing their Avici Iron Net, he understood why they were so arrogant!

He summoned a bell-like treasure without a word—an origin weapon! The wind chime rotated rapidly and sent out uncountable blades of wind that were incomparable in strength. They shot through the holes in the net and collided with the snake!

Half Mountain and the sixteen hell masters were in charge of locking the snake into place, whereas Tidal Wave and Revolution were in charge of attacking it. It wasn’t the first time that the three great organizations worked together; their division of labor was very clear. Everyone chose the best way to attack without having to discuss the plan of action.

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Off in the distance.

A spying Li Hao sucked in a sharp breath, astounded by the snake's strength and surprised by the three great organizations. These people were very strong when they cooperated, but he was more taken aback by how smoothly they worked together!

Based on his expectations, he felt that there would exist many differences of opinion and grudges between them. But their powerhouses partnered together without missing a beat—this was most shocking! Otherwise, any of the three were doomed if they ran afoul of the snake by themselves. But when they worked together, it was the snake that met its doom.

Would the other three major monster spirits in the valley take action? And where were Southern Fist and Golden Spear hiding?

Chapter 412: A Great Show (III)

These people might actually kill the big snake if the other three monster spirits don't make a move... A headache throbbed at Li Hao's temples. He didn't care about the big snake dying, but what if these people didn't go after the other three afterward and continued to come for him instead?

With these people working in tandem, even peak Novas would find it difficult to escape. Just look at that large net immobilizing a premier powerhouse!

But... this snake was also the weakest among the four, wasn't it? Li Hao could clearly see the snake's light—it stabbed into the eye, but it wasn't as piercing as Hou Xiaochen's or the others'. The young man's eyes hadn't teared up because of this big snake. The other three were probably stronger than it.

It's pretty much one against four...

Seventeen Solars were absolutely on par with two Novas—the big snake was fighting the equivalent of four Novas. How terrifying! So this was how strong Hou Xiaochen was. No wonder Blue Moon and the others hadn't dared make a move. It would require four or five Novas to be reasonably guaranteed of taking down the man.

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At the same time, inside the valley.

The other three monster spirits stirred restlessly. The little snake seemed to be trapped. As they thought, it was useless. A unique ripple reverberated around the valley—it came from the tiger. More ripples floated over the other two's heads.

“Snakey is so trash that it's trapped. The Golden Lotus... seems to need a while longer to mature.”

“So you're going?” came a ripple from the golden eagle. The tiger looked at the bird, the bird looked back at the tiger.

“Stop it with the ‘you go, no you go’,” rumbled the ape. “Snakey is crap and caused too much of a disturbance. There seems to be martial masters around apart from these supernaturals. Martial masters... they're very strong and I seem to have seen the fool from before. I'm talking about the one who beat you guys... I mean those of your race!”

“Nonsense!” yowled the tiger in a weak voice.

The ape didn't care, its nose twitched. “I'm just saying that there's a very strong martial master similar to him. His blood qi is exuberant, so I'll take on that guy!”

The golden eagle mantled with a burst of lazy ripples. “I'll help Snakey!”

The tiger twisted its tail around. “There seems to be another human apart from the one with strong blood qi... I'll take care of him!”

The three monster spirits had decided to make a move. The golden eagle spread its wings wide and disappeared without a trace. A powerful bound sent the ape out of sight. After a final look at the lotus, the tiger also dashed away. Its speed knew no comparison as it vanished from the valley.

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Seventeen Solars and two Novas furiously pummeled the giant snake. Some of its sturdy scales had crumbled; it rasped with fury. One drop of blood fell to the ground, shaking the earth when it landed. It continued to hover protectively over a small snake. A new ripple washed over the scene at this time—everyone knew instantly what contained.

“So weak and so stupid, Snakey. You really don’t have much ability to your name...”

Anger, as well as a certain degree of insecurity, appeared in the snake’s eyes. Was that true?

A smear of gold burst onto the scene, stunning the humans when a hell master was ripped apart by a pair of golden claws that tore through the void. A Solar was shredded to pieces in the blink of an eye!

Bam!

The snake erupted in a frenzy of activity and rammed through the net. Caught in a fit of wrath, it lashed out with its tail and smacked the little shield away. The next flick of its tail smashed one of the hell masters into meat paste!

The golden eagle was much faster than it. Aureate light sparkled as—pfft pfft pfft! A series of popping sounds traveled through the air; eight of the cocky hell masters were promptly mauled out of their lives!

The abrupt development stunned everyone present. Half Mountain spun on his heel and ran off without a word. This was insanity! There was another major monster spirit here!

A loud collision sounded as a new figure flew out of the void. Southern Fist shot back in the air with a bellowed complaint, “I haven’t done anything bad...”

Bam!

The enormous ape almost shattered the sky when it punched out! Southern Fist was so despondent that he nearly spat blood. How... damned unlucky am I?? I’m just here for a peek, how was I supposed to know that all of you are here? I didn’t do nothing, but the ape found me through smell alone and it’s damned fast!

Southern Fist also punched out!

BAM!!

The skies and earth roared; He Yong flew backward with a mouthful of blood. Fucking hell, it’s strong! Peak Nova? No!! Probably stronger!

“Hmm? That’s strong... Are you the Crippled Fist King of the Thirty-Five Rookies?” An astonished voice traveled into Southern Fist’s ears. Immensely taken aback, his eyes snapped to the giant ape when he realized something between mouthfuls of blood. As expected, there was a puzzled look in the monster spirit’s eyes.

Crippled Fist King?? The hell is that?? It went without saying where the monster spirit had heard the nickname from—Yuan Shuo! It must be him! This ape must be one of the ones that he learned the five auras from.

The massive ape was very curious and punched again!

Boom!

Heaven and earth shattered once more; Southern First broke through the void and fled for his life. Are you kidding me?? The monster spirit's too strong! I'm bloody strong too, but I need to stay away from this one!

A tiger roar shook the skies the second he escaped. Bam! Sword light illuminated the land while the skies churned and earth overturned. The ground split and the firmament was torn asunder!

"I'm just passing through!" A resigned voice protested in the distance. Truly!

"ROAR!!" snarled the tiger, shaking the mountain and decimating countless trees to dust. They revealed a large clearing where the earth had been shaken apart.

"I really... don't mean to cause any trouble..." A man with a longsword looked around helplessly.

Keen light shone out of the tiger's eyes! "One of the thirty-five trash?"

"....." The heck?? Hong Yitang asked wearily, "Are you the tiger that Yuan Shuo once beat up?"

"ROAR!!"

"Ahem, sorry! My apologies!" Hong Yitang swiftly retreated, longsword in hand. "This is a misunderstanding! I'll be on my way, you guys continue doing whatever you were doing. I'm only here to look for my daughter, so let's not engage in anything. If we really fight to the death... This isn't the only place of treasure in the nine mountains and eighteen layers of Ash Mountain. We might lure stronger existences to us..."

The tiger glared coldly at Hong Yitang. "One of the Seven Trash Swords?"

"....." Oh fuck you! Why was even a tiger that Yuan Shuo had beaten up so irritating?

Off in the distance, Half Mountain was dumbfounded by the giant ape and Southern Fist that showed up in the first direction that he ran in. When he changed tack, he stumbled across a ferocious tiger and... Hong Yitang?

This was unbelievable!

He didn't dare contemplate anything and quickly ran in the only direction that didn't contain anyone. Half Mountain didn't have the courage to linger. Agonized shrieks rose and fell behind him as the golden eagle and gigantic snake quickly ripped all of the sixteen hell masters to pieces. The Parity King's strongest troops were eviscerated in the blink of an eye!

The golden eagle was much stronger than the snake; Half Mountain's scalp went numb as he ran. Aureate light flashed overhead and the void broke thunderously. Golden claws materialized over his head. Half Mountain's face slackened with dismay even though he vanished into the darkness!

An invisibility method!

And yet, light filled the eagle's eyes. It broke the darkness! When Half Mountain reappeared, a claw descended to crush one of his arms with a sickening crunch. The man used the opportunity to escape again.

A stern look entered the eagle's eyes. One sharp cry later, it broke through the air and vanished on the spot. When it came back into sight, it plucked Half Mountain out of the darkness!

Horrified, the man spun and ran for Tidal Wave.

The woman had suffered a blow from the snake's tail and flew out from the loud collision. She didn't dare remain on the scene and used the momentum to flee. There was no time to pay attention to her severe injuries. The sixteen hell masters had been eliminated in the blink of an eye and their joint offensive instantly smashed to smithereens.

Whether it was the snake or eagle, both were unparalleled existences—and there were two more! Thankfully, those two were preoccupied by Southern Fist and Earthturner Sword. No, it would be more accurate to say that the two monster spirits were obstructing them.

No one had the mind to spare for why these two were so strong and why they were following the bigger group. There was no need to think about anything other than how to escape and survive!

Who would've thought that four major monster spirits would be living in Ash Mountain? And the key thing was, rather than attack each other, they helped each other in times of distress! That was the most frightening!

Earthturner Sword looked over at the one-armed Half Mountain, the gravely injured Tidal Wave flying backward, then at the Revolution King madly running for his life with a wind chime over his head... He dearly wished for all of them to live. They needed to be hale and hearty so they could buy him some time! Sadly, all of them were trash and about to die.

Hong Yitang then looked at the suppressed Southern Fist—the ape kept beating mouthfuls of blood out of the man. As he thought, Southern Fist was trash too. He was slightly stronger than anticipated, possibly mid Nova. But still, he couldn't stand up to the ape!

Of these four monster spirits, one was a peak Nova and the other three were at critical moments of metamorphosis. They would be greater than Nova when they completed the change—they could be hailed peak perfection Novas or a half step beyond.

The tiger in front of him was one of them.

“Brother Tiger, why run down a bystander?” Earthturner Sword continuously retreated with a smile on his face. “My sword isn't weak. You guys seem to be protecting something and awaiting the chance for transformation. You might be injured if you fight me, which might delay your change. Wouldn't that be a great loss? I haven't done anything against you, have I?”

The fearsome tiger stared coldly at him, its limbs trembling. It wasn't afraid, but ready to pounce at any time. The human was very strong! But, so what? Humans were all wicked! This person reminded it of that evil guy many years ago. The tiger didn't want to listen to anything, it just wanted to kill the human!

Chapter 413: A Great Show (IV)

The tiger floated through the air like a patch of clouds. A gust of white mist rose and enveloped Earthturner—a water tiger!

Hong Yitang cursed to himself, but didn't pay much attention to the attack. He parted the mist with a sword slash and ran off. Meanwhile, Southern Fist was sent flying by another punch and utilized the momentum to draw nearer to Hong Yitang.

"Take me with you!" he bellowed with tragic resignation. "Brother Hong, let's go together. Don't run off by yourself!"

Oh, for... Hong Yitang didn't respond. Go fuck yourself! Get away by yourself! I don't want to be with you! One tiger is hard enough to shake off already—here comes another giant ape. Do you want the two of us to die together??

A massive boom echoed in the distance. The Revolution King's body was breaking after being whipped by the snake tail, but he utilized the strength of his origin weapon to turn into a gust of wind and churn through the snake's blockade. He convened with Half Mountain and Tidal Wave, enlarging the wind chime without a word and enclosing all three with it. The other two immediately infused the origin weapon with endless mysterious power.

The golden eagle settled its claws around the wind chime and closed them with a crunch!

The origin weapon did not break—it would require more than that to break it. Not even the formidable eagle could shatter it like that!

The three acted like they'd worked together for years. The Revolution King directed the wind chime to protect the trio as they swiftly shot for the outskirts of Ash Mountain. All three were vomiting

blood, but they ignored their state of being and infused their mysterious power into the origin weapon. That enabled the origin weapon to accelerate to new heights—they would make it out if they could go past the mountain!

A frosty look in its eyes, the golden eagle gave chase. It was followed by a swiftly slithering snake. The former was so fast that it caught up to the wind chime in a thunderous dive and forced it to slow down. Cracks even appeared in the origin weapon's exterior defenses! The three powerhouses shrieked and wailed, filling the wind chime with as much mysterious power as they could bring to bear.

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Li Hao took note of everything; the young man was so terrified that he couldn't move. All four major monster spirits were on the hunt! This ran so far beyond his expectations that he only absentmindedly scanned the golden light emanating from the distant mountain valley. He couldn't be bothered to consider it more fully. What should I do?

Run? Will that raise attention? Also, Southern Fist is pretty strong. He's stronger than I thought.

Mm, there's Hong Yitang as well. So it's not Golden Spear, that's surprising. Where's Hong Yitang's ball of light? This guy's really perversely strong. That tiger is incredible, but it still can't take him.

Additionally, the powerhouses of the three great organizations were much stronger than anticipated. Sixteen Solars were dead, but the three remaining representatives could still work in such harmony. It made Li Hao wonder—did the senior executives of these organizations often partner together?

Otherwise, to cooperate so well on their first attempt... That would be a reflection of utmost battle consciousness. But was that possible?

At the moment, this tiny part of the woods hosted eight Nova level powerhouses and one peak Solar equipped with an origin weapon. There were sixteen dead Solars on the ground... It was a battle that exceeded all the ones that'd ever taken place in Silver Moon. Hou Xiaochen hadn't given rise to such a scene when he killed the Nova!

Li Hao abruptly made up his mind. Play dead!

He would play dead without shifting a finger. They weren't traveling in his direction, so he could lie low and wait for the situation to clear. The sparkling golden light probably meant that the flower was mature, but he wasn't interested or had designs on it.

His only thought was that with it matured, these monster spirits might depart and go home after eating it. This place was obviously not their normal camping grounds. Therefore, he would survive if he outlasted them. As for claiming that ultimate treasure for himself... The young man didn't wish to die. As soon as those monster spirits discovered that the item was gone, they would search through the air, ground, water, and trees. As opposed to thinking he could make it to safety, the young man thought it would be better to pray that all parties died together!

Not to mention, the Demon Hunters were nearby. If he took the treasure, that would cause the monster spirits to search high and low. That would certainly expose the team and cause their demise.

He might've been able to try if he was here alone. But in these circumstances, he was better off suppressing the impulse.

Li Hao fell to the ground like he was dead, still covered in leaves and awaiting the end of battle. As for Hong Yitang whom he did have good relations with... Forget it, it's not that I'm not saving you, but that I don't have the right to! Not to mention, nothing might happen to him. He's so damned strong!

The young man thought back to the earlier conflict as he laid on the ground. Who would survive at the end of it all? Did Southern Fist have a hope of seeing it through? What about the powerhouses of the three great organizations? Even if the latter did, would Southern Fist and Hong Yitang permit them to walk out of Ash Mountain? They'd concealed their strength for so many years; it was all exposed today.

I am so very weak... Li Hao sighed to himself. The weakest present was the Revolution King, but he might not measure up to the man either. It was quite a blow to his ego.

Tiger roars shook the air far away, followed by piercing calls from the golden eagle. Crashes and collisions abounded!

The entire mountain seemed to have quieted down; all wild beast noises had vanished. Only the major monster spirits could be heard in all directions. Some fervent cursing from Southern Fist and Hong Yitang could also be heard in the wind. Those two seemed to have been caught by their pursuers again.

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Rumbles and booms rose and fell, intermixed with determined yelling. That the four monster spirits were unable to eliminate their targets when they were all in the field spoke to how strong the humans were. As he played dead, Li Hao also considered how he might get away if he was discovered.

One must be prepared for danger in times of peace. It wasn't his turn yet, but what if he was discovered? Southern Fist and Hong Yitang were prime examples. Perhaps the former wasn't that good at hiding, but Hong Yitang had been well concealed and found out all the same.

These monster spirits seemed quite sensitive and able to work together. That was most alarming of all.

Li Hao was still wondering if he'd been discovered or not. Perhaps he'd been detected, but also assessed as too weak to warrant immediate attention. It was very possible that they'd decided to eliminate the stronger ones first before coming back for the ant that was him.

Could he really avoid those major spirits through playing dead? This was his chance, now that they were preoccupied with the powerhouses. He could run immediately, but complications would easily

arise from him traveling with the Demon Hunters. Why not... pick over the corpses around him first?

Sixteen Solars were dead and Half Mountain's shield seemed to have been discarded nearby. It could be fed to the little sword, whereas the mysterious power of sixteen Solars could strengthen him. The sword would be well replenished if it absorbed the shield—but that required time. How much longer did the monster spirits need to resolve the situation and return?

Despite not making up his mind, Li Hao settled on his first decision. He would locate the shield first. Half Mountain had thrown it away when he was ambushed. The powerhouses of the three great organizations were relying on the wind chime for protection. Li Hao needed to grab the shield—he'd be much more fortified with ample sword energy. Otherwise, just the eight mysterious power stones left in his storage ring weren't very inspiring.

The young man crawled up from the ground and headed for the spot he'd taken note of earlier. The origin weapon had drawn his attention as soon as it appeared. Half Mountain and the others didn't have time to come back for it, leaving ample time for Li Hao.

Sword light illuminated the heaven and earth in the far off distance—Hong Yitang. The man was very formidable; it was a pity that he'd encountered the four major spirits. Southern Fist had convened with him and led another powerful monster spirit to him. Which of them was stronger, Hong Yitang or Hou Xiaochen and his colleagues?

Would Hou Xiaochen and the others be able to challenge a monster spirit by themselves if they entered Ash Mountain? They shouldn't have much of an issue with the snake, but the others were inconclusive for now.

His thoughts did not delay his search for the little shield. After a while, Li Hao found a shield on the ground not too far away. It was very small, just slightly bigger than a plate. Dim and dull, it lay in the dirt.

It seemed to come alive when he approached it. An incredibly weak shadow floated out of it, like it wanted to run away. Origin weapons were quite unique. So long as its soul did not die, it had the ability to move by itself.

Li Hao scanned it. There were four levels to origin weapons—sky, earth, arcane, and gold. Zhang Ting's Shadow Snake Sword that he'd snapped was apparently the lowest gold level. This little shield should be stronger, right?

Half Mountain was Celestial's leader in Silver Moon. This little shield would be arcane level at the very least, no?

The shadow on the shield wanted to resist when he grabbed at it, but the heavily damaged origin weapon could not put up a fight. The shadow dispersed on the spot when Li Hao's hand broke through it. It wasn't dead, just dispersed because it lacked sufficient energy.

Unless the origin weapon could devour mysterious power stones, there was nothing special about it without the support of its master. They were just durable items with special abilities that they could not utilize. If there was sufficient energy powering it, the weapon soul would bestow powerful defensive ability upon the shield.

Li Hao was left with the shield in hand when the shadow vanished. Cool to the touch, it wasn't heavy. In fact, it was almost too light. He took out Stellaris. Origin weapons were hard to break—the golden eagle couldn't claw through it even when the item lacked defensive power. At the same time, the young man knew that the most durable material was useless when it came up against Stellaris.

The Flaming Phoenix Spear was purported to be a sky level origin weapon. It'd still been terrified when it saw the little sword.

All Li Hao considered now was if the little sword would devour enough energy when it broke the shield. Would it strengthen the little sword to the point of revitalizing large amounts of sword energy?

The young man smiled after some thought. The shield's soul always existed; it didn't impact anything after it disappeared. Half Mountain awakened the weapon's soul simply because he supplied enough power from mysterious power stones and himself.

Li Hao didn't intend to retain the weapon—quality over quantity. As good as the shield was, it wasn't better than the little sword.

Chapter 414: Accident (I)

A keen light flashed through Li Hao's eyes. He stabbed the shield with the little sword!

A weapon soul shaped in a tiny turtle manifested over the origin weapon. It revitalized somewhat when the little sword descended upon it. Some struggle ensued as it sought to run away; an innate fear was imprinted on its heart. Even though it'd long lost its memory, the fear that surfaced in this moment was impossible to suppress.

The shield wanted to break free!

A distinct crack sounded when the sword landed; the origin weapon was run straight through! None of its powerful defensive force could be brought to bear. A small hole had formed—that was all that was needed for the little sword to break through the defensive barrier. Powerful suction erupted, pulling the flailing weapon soul into the little sword.

Domineering sword energy surged back out a moment later. The little sword seemed very interested in origin weapons—far more than in mysterious power stones, in any case. Not only did it brim with a vast amount of sword energy in its refreshed state, but it was even a bit longer than before, as if it was gradually unsealing.

Previously as long as the young man's forearm, it was a bit longer than that now. The little shield was possibly stronger than anything the little sword had ever come across before. Li Hao could clearly sense incredibly dense energy within it. This might be the first time he'd felt such concentrated sword energy since he obtained the weapon.

Joy dawned in the young man's eyes! The shield was a high level origin weapon indeed!

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The three powerhouses were furiously making their getaway when Li Hao cut into the shield. The golden eagle and giant snake pursued them relentlessly. The eagle closed its claws around the wind chime a few times, but never found success. Continued failure drove it into towering rage.

Terror abruptly flashed out of Half Mountain's eyes before he spat out a mouthful of blood! His mental strength immediately wilted, impacting his flow of mysterious power. Energy blasted through his body, raging out of control. To lose control at this stage was an unmitigated disaster!

Being a premier powerhouse, the eagle instantly seized the opening and struck!

Bam!

It clawed through the wind chime's outer defenses and slashed through to the injured Half Mountain. Half of his body was mutilated to a bloody mess; fury and refusal flooded the man's eyes!

Why??

The three of them stood a good chance of escape! They could live if the wind chime maintained its function until they fled the mountain. Why had his origin weapon suddenly severed its connection to him?!

As the master of the origin weapon, he infused it with some of his mental strength when he refined it. That was how he could control and use it effectively. It was almost never the case that an origin weapon would recoil on its master, not unless it broke.

But in this day and age, how many people could break an origin weapon? Even that golden eagle couldn't manage it! And yet, that was what'd happened to his shield!

Horror-stricken, furious, and despairing, Half Mountain was also confused. Who'd done it?? Was there an even stronger monster spirit inside the mountain that'd discovered the little shield and broke it?

If that was the case... there was nothing he could say about that.

While he understood the particulars, the Revolution King and Tidal Wave did not. Tidal Wave shrieked with madness. What was this bastard doing?! They frantically infused the wind chime with even more mysterious power, hoping to repair the gap and maintain its defenses.

However, Half Mountain had been an integral part of the trio. He was almost dead and had no effort to spare for defense. The wind chime steadily weakened, prompting the Revolution King to despair as well. He set his jaw as a ruthless look entered his eyes. Next thing they knew, he kicked away the erupting Tidal Wave!

Indeed, he chose to save himself in this moment!

Tidal Wave was completely caught off guard when she was booted out of safety. She gaped incredulously at Revolution, but he was already fleeing with the wind chime. Tidal Wave would cover his getaway; he'd already thrown out the dying Half Mountain.

The monster spirits would have to expend some time to kill the two Novas despite both of them being close to death. Revolution wouldn't have done so if Half Mountain hadn't suddenly stumbled. In these critical moments, he would seize any additional hope of survival there was. He didn't want to die like this, and he didn't flee for the mountain's outskirts. The world beyond Ash Mountain was very far away. Instead, he headed for Hong Yitang's direction. His hopes now lay with those two powerhouses. If they could distract these monster spirits in a chaotic battle, that would give him a bit more hope to escape.

As for Half Mountain and Tidal Wave, one was near death and the other raged with bitterness. Tidal Wave shrieked with wrath and erupted with water energy to fend off the eagle's claws.

“Revolution!” she shrilled with the knowledge of certain death. “You shit stain! Have you forgotten the agreement between the three great organizations?? How dare you betray us in this moment...”

Agreement? The word floated into Revolution’s mind to be promptly forgotten. They were almost dead, what agreement was there to consider?

There was indeed an accord between the three great organizations that applied only to senior management. Whenever they met with danger or enemies that were not of the organizations, they were to ally together against the enemy. However, this proved insufficient in the face of his desire to live.

Revolution fled madly without turning back. A ghastly wail sounded behind him as the golden eagle completely ripped through Tidal Wave’s body. The monster spirit threw the woman to the rear. She was alive, but her despair deepened because the eagle had tossed her to the slower snake.

Tidal Wave had harmed the snake’s descendants earlier, so the eagle was plainly giving the snake a chance to exact revenge.

The snake’s enormous eyes looked cold at Tidal Wave. A massive tail reared to the heavens and smashed down on her!

BAM!

A hole several dozen meters deep appeared in the ground. There was no Tidal Wave in the hole, just dissipating water energy and flattened flesh. At the same time, Half Mountain looked at the Revolution King. There was no bitterness, only sardonic amusement.

Do you think you’ll live? There’s no hope for that!

The man was regretful as he watched the eagle's claws approach him. There were too many things he'd yet to accomplish in life and too many secrets stored in his heart. Alas, life was full of the unexpected and danger lurked around every corner for supernaturals.

Who would've thought that two Novas and seventeen Solars would be lost in a bid to hunt Li Hao? The three great organizations had suffered an enormous loss this time, one that rivaled the sum total of their losses in the central region war over the past two years.

That war was violent and intense, yet it hadn't even taken Hou Xiaochen to act against them in Silver Moon for them to be the end of themselves. How ironic.

A jeering look appeared in Half Mountain's eyes—aimed at possibly himself, the Revolution King, or everyone. There was nothing he feared in his final moments. A massive claw ran him through in the next second! As light faded from his eyes, his only thought was wondering what Hong Yitang and the others sought to accomplish in hiding themselves so thoroughly.

Celestial's leader also seemed to be the same. None of the leaders of the three great organizations made moves in public, all of them concealed themselves deeply. Why was that? Since they wished to vie over the world and seize the dynasty, what was their plan in proceeding like this?

Boom!

The corpse landed heavily on the ground! The eagle retracted its claws and flew off without a glance down, soaring to Hong Yitang and He Yong. Once the snake finished with Tidal Wave, it also quickly slithered over.

.....

At this time.

Hong Yitang panted heavily; multiple bloody marks scored the tiger in front of him. The giant ape warily looked at the humans while Southern Fist had his back to Hong Yitang. Bathed in blood, the latter held on with sheer force of will. He'd simply followed these people on a lark, who knew that it'd be such an unlucky decision?

Hong Yitang was quite resigned to see Half Mountain and Tidal Wave summarily disposed of. What the heck? Why were these guys so damned weak and died so quickly?

Hong Yitang breathed out with effort and looked at the tiger with resignation. "Is there a need for us to go to this step? The two of you must be familiar with Yuan Shuo..."

"Roar!!" snarled the tiger.

"Then you know that Silver Moon martial masters were the strongest entities in the land back in the day," Hong Yitang chuckled. "The four of you are indeed domineering when you work together, but there's nothing good in it for you guys if you force our hand."

The Revolution King barreled over, ignoring the monster spirits. The wind chime swayed in the wind as the man roared, "Earthturner Sword, my wind chime's defenses are unparalleled and its offense is also first class. Martial masters can control origin weapons too. With your strength, we can raise a defense that they can't break!"

Origin weapons were not exclusive to supernaturals. During the ancient civilization, martial masters were possibly the rightful way. Thus, they were naturally able to utilize origin weapons.

Revolution had thrown himself here in the face of blatant danger and was deathly afraid that Hong Yitang wouldn't agree. "If I survive, I'll tell you guys all the secrets of the three great organizations that I know," he gabbled. "There are some secrets that only we know. I am one of the ten court masters and know a lot of secrets..."

Hong Yitang guffawed, this fellow had quite some nerve!

The golden eagle and big snake gathered as well. Sweat dripped down Southern Fist's face and he snuck a glance at Revolution. Trash! We're in for it now! Granted, he'd run over to Hong Yitang because he wasn't able to handle the ape either. Hong Yitang had also cursed at him for being trash.

The four monster spirits were gathered in one spot, surrounding the Revolution King and others. The tiger glared coldly at Hong Yitang instead of attacking. It hadn't even prevented Revolution from forcing his way in. The human had locked onto it. If it tried to stop the newcomer, a dominating sword slash to the face might answer for its efforts.

Chapter 415: Accident (II)

With a deep exhale, Hong Yitang turned to the Revolution King. "This wind chime is very powerful." He smiled. "As expected of one of the ten court masters. This is at least an earth level origin weapon. Yama has invested quite a great deal in you."

The Revolution King beamed and was about to speak when the scene darkened in front of his eyes. He exploded as sword light descended!

Hong Yitang killed the Yama representative with one sword stroke and summoned the wind chime to him. "Not bad," he chuckled. "Not bad at all. Ah yes, you guys didn't kill Tidal Wave's scarlet shadow, did you?"

"The blood pearl of a Nova is excellent nutrition." The man glanced at the golden eagle and snake.

"Brother Hong, what did you kill him for?" He Yong transmitted behind him. "The origin weapon will go dark with his death. We stood more of a chance with him around."

Hong Yitang couldn't be bothered to respond and looked at the major monster spirits surrounding him. He grinned broadly. "I really don't want to be in open hostilities with you all. I have no desire to cause trouble on this trip, I'm just here to look for my daughter..."

"I'm decently strong, but I have a small problem. My organs can't withstand an eruption that goes overboard. They'll easily rupture, and I'm only one of many with this problem."

“Therefore, outsiders think we’re all insidious, devious sorts who are hiding our strength. That’s not the case. We do this out of resignation because we’re too strong. Who can endure a daily stream of challengers? Constantly fighting for no reason at all will eventually be the death of us.” Hong Yitang’s organs shook under strain as he talked; towering sword intent wafted through a radius of one hundred meters. His smile grew tight. “But you guys are ridiculous! You want to force me to my death! In that case, I don’t mind releasing all of my battle strength. So my organs will break! I’d like to see if I can kill you four for it!”

BOOM!

Sword intent lashed through the air, making the monster spirits shift uneasily. Shock filtered into the ape’s eyes, the tiger took a slight step back. The snake flicked its tongue and the golden eagle took to the skies.

Behind him, He Yong was also astonished. “So... you’ve... reached that step?”

“What step?” Blood bubbled at the corner of Hong Yitang’s lips when he coughed. “Do you know which step is what step? You’re just a Nova, shut up!” He looked at the monster spirits with a devil-may-care grin. “Cough cough cough... Don’t force my hand or I’ll let you have a taste of the might of the Earthturner Sword. I couldn’t be bothered with Yuan Shuo when he challenged me all those times—he suppressed you guys and beat you half to death. Are you trying to act tough with me now?”

“To think that you would be so strong...” A special ripple emanated from the golden eagle. “Forget it, leave behind this man of strong blood qi. You may go...”

He Yong cursed to himself. Are you guys bullying me?! He grit his teeth and punched his heart. Something seemed to shatter from the loud impact; his vibrant blood qi frothed with agitation!

“Fuck your ancestors!” he swore loudly. “Let’s do it! I won’t be able to look myself in the eye if I don’t butcher one of you today! You absolute fucking bastards, this is my supernatural lock we’re talking about! Fuck it!”

He kept up a litany of hotheadedness. Not only did his blood qi churn, but tongues of flame appeared over his being. He seemed to have broken the lock of his heart.

Unable to restrain his temper, He Yong looked around with a violent glare and snarled savagely. He stared fixedly at the golden eagle hovering overhead and declared with some madness, “Featherbrain! It’s not you letting me go anymore, but me working with Earthturner Sword to stick you guys like the pigs you are! There seems to be treasure in that mountain valley, maybe that will make up for our losses...”

The two were already enduring heavy losses. Although their strength had climbed dramatically, they’d paid a heavy price to do so and even sacrificed some of their future. How would He Yong not be incensed at this?!

“Not bad!” Hong Yitang remarked with surprise. “You’re able to open it!”

“Do you think you’re the only one who’s improved these years?!” He Yong spat. “Fucking hell, are we doing this or not?! If we kill these four, drink their blood, eat their flesh, and scoop up some treasure in the valley... It might be able to salvage our situation!”

“He Yong, this personality of yours...” Hong Yitang laughed. He abruptly struck with his sword. “Let’s do this!”

The situation had progressed to the point where he’d unleashed his five organs and He Yong had broken his supernatural lock. Their losses were too grave. He wouldn’t go quietly if they didn’t do something incredible in return!

Boom!

The ground was ripped asunder by the sword. A fissure several hundred meters long shot toward the monster spirits. The tiger leapt out of the way, but the snake wasn’t fast enough to avoid being grazed by it. Its mighty scales were ripped apart like paper; blood and flesh flew through the sky.

Southern Fist roared with fury and ignored the ape. He launched himself upward, hand extended in a punch that aimed straight for the eagle. The bird might be the leader of the four and it was the one that'd wanted his head just now.

You want my head, is it? I'll have yours stuffed and mounted first!

Bam!!

Fist and gigantic claw clashed against each other, erupting in a spray of fiery sparks. The eagle was blasted into the upper reaches of the sky with bloody marks on its undeniably durable claws. Blood also covered He Yong's fist—but it wasn't apparent if it was his or the eagle's. He punched at the ape the second he landed!

Rumble!

The enormous clash far eclipse what had taken place prior!

“Are you still laughing at me for being weak, Earthturner Sword??” He Yong howled as he pummeled the ape.

Hong Yitang swept his sword around him and snorted, “You're still a piece of trash—you're doing this all from destroying your supernatural lock! Whether it's Sky Sword or Tyrant Blade, either of them are stronger than you if they do the same!”

“Fuck you motherfucking fuck!”

BOOM!

The four monster spirits were caught between a rock and a hard place. They'd felt a prickling of unease when the two humans erupted with power. Ceasing hostilities had actually been on their mind. They'd only continued the pursuit because they felt they were guaranteed of taking down their prey.

But now, it wasn't that they wanted to conclude the hunt, but that the two were unwilling to stop because they'd suffered too much damage and wanted compensation for their losses!

After his strength increased explosively, He Yong beat the enormous ape into the ground! Hong Yitang was even more terrifying—he chopped off the mammoth snake's tail with a few strokes and shoved it underground, like a mountain was sitting on the snake. With a quick flick and turn, his sword entangled the eagle and tiger!

These two were so incredibly strong, but He Yong could only take on one monster spirit. The truly shocking was Hong Yitang going one against three! Unfortunately, a growing amount of blood frothed at his lips. He kept up a violent coughing fit as he fought. He Yong was better off, but the flames around him continuously intensified!

There was no joy to be found in the two despite their prowess, just resignation. They were done for! Even if they won, they were done for. All these years of accumulation and preparation had been destroyed by a few monster spirits!

.....

In the distance.

Li Hao was collecting the bodies and storage rings of these Solars when... he paused and peered ahead. Dazed, he shot into the air in the next moment to look further out. Southern Fist and... Earthturner Sword? Weren't they being chased just moments ago? How was this change possible??

The two were now incomparably domineering, but Li Hao looked sternly at the scene. There hadn't been balls of light around the two before, but a fiery ball of radiance had suddenly enveloped He Yong!

"Fuck you all!" Southern Fist's enraged howl echoed through the land. "If I become a fire supernatural, I'll butcher all of you bastards!!"

"He's... broken the lock of his heart?" Li Hao's eyes widened. "And erupted with his potential?"

That was the notion that immediately occurred to him. Hong Yitang was slightly better off, but his ball of supernatural strength that'd previously vanished had reappeared. Multicolored in its glory, it wasn't as before. What kind of condition were these two in? Would special changes occur if they broke the locks of the five organs?

A tiger was blasted into the air with a loud collision. Sword light also flashed through the air, piercing through heaven and earth to send a golden eagle flying.

"I said I was just passing by," sounded Hong Yitang's cool voice. "But you insisted on attacking. Do you really think that Ash Mountain's monster spirits are invincible?? To turn the skies!"

The sky seemed to overturn with a low grunt! Indeed, sky and earth swapped places. The eagle had been soaring overhead, but it suddenly dropped to the ground. The tiger was running on the ground, but abruptly found itself hovering in the air!

"ROAR!!" Violent combat erupted between six powerhouses. A massive snake burrowed out of the ground only to be punched flying and slam heavily back down!

As the clash grew more out of hand, it afforded more clarity of the situation to Li Hao. He could sense the two powerhouse's fury and reluctance! It was a mixture of emotion that one did now know how to voice. Their eruption of strength to the point where the four monster spirits could only defend themselves did not satisfy the two. They grew even more enraged in the depths of their anger!

BAM!

A sword descended from the skies and drilled through the eagle's wing. A quick backhand with the weapon rendered the tiger's claws a bleeding mess. Some of them were cut straight through!

Entranced by the display, Li Hao wanted to draw closer. He knew what was happening and hesitated, unsure if he should reveal himself and expose some secrets. Hong Yitang and He Yong were decent people, but the latter came from the royal family and Hong Yitang had always hidden himself deeply.

And yet... the young man had once witnessed the kind of despair that was creeping over the two. It was not the despair of impending death, but that of their future being ruined.

He'd seen it in his teacher before!

Chapter 416: One Step to Heaven, One Step to Hell (I)

Yuan Shuo once described to Li Hao a similar performance of despair when the old man's heart tore and there was no hope for him to break through to Dominator. He'd spoken of it with equanimity in his expression, but his tone and the look in his eyes spoke of hopelessness.

Hong Yitang had once taught Li Hao and He Yong had also given him a few pointers...

Martial masters!

They were martial masters of Silver Moon and the vast territory of the province belonged to martial masters!

Li Hao decided to take a chance and bellow, "Hurry and finish the fight, martial uncles! I have a way of doing up the supernatural locks again!"

A sword shook heaven and earth after his words; Hong Yitang brightened! Li Hao? Doing up the supernatural lock again?

He Yong lit up. He sent the giant ape flying with a punch when a new thought struck him. “What do you need?”

“Countless mysterious power stones and an origin weapon!”

“Alright!”

BAM!

He Yong lost his mind as he punched again and again, fighting so ferociously that it was like his fists were the only thing that existed in the world.

“Hand over one thousand mysterious power stones and cease fighting, or you all die!” Hong Yitang shouted. He forced the four monster spirits back and bellowed this demand for good cause!

Of the four major spirits, the snake was drenched in blood, the tiger’s claws were shattered, the eagle’s wings had been run through, and the snarling ape never had a chance to seize the initiative from He Yong’s fists.

Hope dawned for the two powerhouses after they heard Li Hao. Would the young man lie? There... wasn’t a need to, not at this time!

Urgency nipped at their heels; they wanted nothing more than to make up for their losses. Otherwise, even killing these four wouldn’t be worth the effort.

“Make haste!” Hong Yitang’s sword intent became more concentrated as he exhorted, “If you drag your heels in making a decision, all of you will die when my organs are fully unsealed. Of course, I might go down with you too!”

He Yong punched himself in the lungs, coughed, then shrieked like a banshee, “Don’t force me to break my second supernatural lock! Hurry up!”

Shocked amazement appeared on the monster spirits’ faces. These martial masters... could become even stronger?? Why?! Did they intend to go down with their enemies?

“We... don’t have that many mysterious power stones...” came the eagle’s unique ripple.

“Every stone counts! Cough them up and I’ll have your head if you dare hide any!” Hong Yitang roared. Even if the monster spirits didn’t have that many, there would be enough with so many people dead at the scene and the origin weapons, right?

He looked at Li Hao up in the sky and shouted, “Do you need monster spirit blood?”

“.....” The four monster spirits grew solemn. At this stage in the battle, they could tell that the two humans seemed to have tapped into their potential. If that could not be supplemented, they might really put their lives on the line and go down fighting.

“Not yet!” Li Hao called back. “But it might be better with the treasure inside the valley...”

At this point in the game, anything he could get would be wonderful.

The monster spirits shot severe glares at the young human in the distance.

“Just give us half,” Hong Yitang snapped out. “You brought this upon yourselves. If this can make up for our losses, we won’t cause further trouble for you!”

A cold light glinted in the eagle’s eyes, but it acquiesced upon seeing that the two humans were growing stronger and beginning to rage out of control. “Very well!”

Hong Yitang flew upward without another word. Some body parts and two storage rings appeared in his hand. He hadn’t forgotten about the Novas’ bodies either. There might be some mysterious power stones on them.

He Yong followed in his wake; the two shot for Li Hao. He was both nervous and excited. He could barely contain the fire energy in his body. Southern Fist would be a supernatural if this continued!

.....

The outcome of battle was rewritten after the two Silver Moon martial masters erupted with everything they had. The ferocious martial masters once more proved that they were masters of the land!

However, there seemed to be certain faults and drawbacks to martial masters. Or rather, similar issues cropped up in all of the pioneers because there was no further road ahead. Thus, they had to lock their strength away and couldn’t easily erupt with it. They needed to bide their time, ordinarily speaking, or show a weak side to others.

It wasn’t that they didn’t wish to put their full strength into a fight, but that they couldn’t afford to do so. If they did, that meant the painstaking effort and labor of many years were destroyed in a few moments.

Southern Fist and Earthturner Sword barreled toward Li Hao. They weren’t afraid of the monster spirits running away or that they were waiting for the two to fully break through their supernatural locks. Although that meant the duo’s future was no more, their battle strength would increase explosively. The monster spirits might die a quicker death then.

The four monster spirits were keenly aware of the situation. Suppressing the two was the best choice at this time. They could not force the humans into further unsealing their battle strength—that would only result in grave injuries to both sides.

In fact, they hoped that the weak martial master in the distance could help the two to bring their raging strength under control. A battle to the death was inevitable otherwise!

.....

He Yong was in more of a rush than Hong Yitang. Only the latter's organs were damaged, but he was about to become a supernatural! This wasn't what he wanted, so he threw himself forward even faster than Hong Yitang.

He rushed to Li Hao in the blink of an eye, his temper on the verge of annihilating the mountain. He was almost a full supernatural!

“How?!” He Yong roared. “Can you do it? If you can't, I'm going to rip those four animals apart!”

He was almost out of his mind! So many years of painstaking effort for this path! No one knew how much effort he'd invested and what price he'd paid to strengthen his blood qi! Only proponents of this path knew how many thistles and thorns filled the way. He'd cut through them all and nearly died more times than one could count.

There was no way ahead! That kind of despair forced martial masters to search out their respective destinations on the path of martial dao, and now, he was about to become a supernatural!

He Yong was covered in blood; urgency and desire shone out of his eyes. Could a supernatural lock that was about to snap really be recovered?

As for blood pearls... There was only one Nova blood pearl around them. What good was that for?? It wouldn't repair his lock!

Li Hao felt an incoming heat wave wash over him! That was the strength of erupting fire energy. He could even sense that He Yong's heart was breaking. The man might not succeed in crossing over. He Yong's heart might not be able to endure the strain and just explode.

None of these people had strong organs. Both He Yong and Hong Yitang were partially bluffing. They might be able to erupt with greater strength if they continued, but they were equally likely to die from rupturing all of their organs.

It was a fifty-fifty likelihood of either outcome, but the four monster spirits might all die if they were to take the bet.

Li Hao said nothing and quickly operated the Breathing Method of the Five Styles. Sword energy surged into his body, then to He Yong's. A surge of force answered in kind, shaking the young man almost to the point of vomiting blood!

Such incredible blood qi shocked Li Hao. It was... too strong! Was this the strength required to beat major monster spirits into the ground? Was this just three transfusions? Bullshit! He Yong had changed out his blood at least ten times, that terrifying guy!

"Martial Uncle He, try absorbing the energy into your heart. Has your supernatural lock fully broken yet?"

"No..." He Yong devoured the energy without further discourse. He didn't know what it was, but this wasn't the time to care. His eyes lit up as sword energy rushed into his body, but they quickly dimmed. "There's an effect, but it's just a cup of water for a bonfire!"

A cup of water for a bonfire?

Li Hao's eyes widened. He'd sent over quite a lot as sword energy was densest after it devoured an origin weapon. He hadn't been stingy, but it was negligible to Southern Fist!

The young man drew upon the little sword and sent it into He Yong's body. The man furiously absorbed it and compressed it all into his heart. He knew how to enhance his supernatural lock without needing guidance from Li Hao.

However, flames erupted from his body after a short while. "It's not working, there's too little energy..." He sweated profusely with panic.

Li Hao was stupefied by the reaction. Too little? He was transferring sword energy for all he was worth. He was being more generous than he was to his own teacher! This could only mean one thing—Southern Fist's supernatural lock was too strong!

The young man took out eight mysterious power stones without skipping a beat. He also took out multiple storage rings and retrieved whatever stones he could find in them. As he searched, he continued to transfer more energy to Southern Fist.

The sword energy converted from an origin weapon was very plentiful. Vast sums of energy flowed into He Yong's body, gradually quenching his fiery aura. Although sparks still appeared from time to time, the situation wasn't worsening.

Li Hao didn't even blink. The mysterious power stones he'd gathered from sixteen Solars totaled roughly one hundred pieces. This was the greatest amount he'd ever seen in one go.

He crushed them all; their energy enveloped him. He Yong's face twitched—this was a lot of stones to him, but Li Hao...

He felt a complicated mix of emotions, but didn't say anything.

Hong Yitang arrived moments later, continuously coughing up blood. However, he didn't interrupt He Yong. The man was worse off than he was. He was just suffering from heavy internal damage, but He Yong was about to become a supernatural. He should naturally come first.

Hong Yitang swiftly rifled through the storage rings of two Novas and one peak Solar. There were naturally quite a few mysterious power stones among their possessions. The Revolution King and Half Mountain, in particular, were rich. Tidal Wave was laughably poor.

Being the representative leaders of their organizations, the Revolution King and Half Mountain's storage rings produced nearly two hundred stones. But Tidal Wave... only had thirty!

Cheapskate! How was a Nova so poor??

Hong Yitang threw the stones and wind chime on the ground. He flew without pause and shot toward the sheared off mountain.

Chapter 417: One Step to Heaven, One Step to Hell (II)

"Roar!!" The four monster spirits were hot on Hong Yitang's heels and landed behind him. The man coughed incessantly and blood bubbled out of the corner of his lips. Black longsword in hand, he turned to face them.

"I want... all of your mysterious power stones! And... the lotus in this valley... I want half of it..." He could see that the lotus was now golden in color instead of green. The man bared his teeth. "I told you... that I was just... passing by, but you wanted to fight! Now both sides... are heavily injured... You will pay the price... of the stones and half of the flower. And we... if we cannot stop our worsening condition... you will bear... the consequences... of which you are well aware of!"

The four monster spirits were likewise highly aggrieved and full of suffering. No one was well off at this stage, but... who knew that you guys are so strong? If we'd known, we wouldn't have wanted to kill you.

Unbidden, they were reminded of that person of yesteryear. Martial master... Were the martial masters of Silver Moon this terrifying?

“We can give you mysterious power stones,” responded the eagle. “If that is enough to recover your seal, then...”

Can we not give you the Golden Lotus? It’s too important!

Hong Yitang laughed and didn’t respond, he stared down the four monster spirits. A vicious hint flashed through the tiger’s eyes and the ape snuck a glance at Southern Fist, tensing to take action.

Hong Yitang chuckled and pointed his sword at the eagle. “Right now, this instant! Don’t think that it’ll benefit you to drag out the situation. If this really drags on... there might be surprises in store for you given the disturbance we’ve created! There are countless monster spirits in Ash Mountain, but how many dare enter Silver Moon? Why don’t you try it today?”

A keen light glinted out of the eagle’s eyes. It dove without another word and grasped the blooming Golden Lotus. There were eight flower petals, but six seeds. The eagle sent four petals and three seeds to the human as it climbed back into the air.

“This is not a treasure to enhance blood qi,” came a ripple from its mind. “It may not be useful to you. If not, we hope that we can trade for it with other treasures!”

It would be such a waste of this treasure if the humans couldn’t use it. This was the Golden Lotus, a unique treasure, not one to enhance blood qi or the physical body. This was a treasure that bestowed intelligence and was effective on the mind and spirit.

“Cough cough...” Hong Yitang smiled as he inspected the treasures he held. “How would we not find it useful? Do you think I’m that bumpkin Southern Fist? This is an item that enhances mind intent! The lotus of golden petals is recorded in the ancient records, but I don’t know about these seeds... I’ve never heard of them. This is the flower I’m thinking of, right? It blooms with eight petals, but the ancient records also say that this exists in a very special sea...”

The man glanced at the small lake below. “This lake is far from ordinary! This lotus shouldn’t grow here under normal circumstances, but that’s nothing to do with me. In this case, our battle today is concluded!”

Golden eagle and the other monster spirits remained quiet. They watched as Hong Yitang flew away, whereupon the tiger suddenly sent out a ripple. “Is that demon still alive?”

“Of course!” Hong Yitang laughed. “He’s fallen behind because he’s been kept under guard for a few decades, but I’m sure he’ll soar to the skies soon. Although he’s entirely too cocky, I have to say that his talents and potential are unparalleled! You guys might see him soon!”

Shifting looks appeared on the faces of the monster spirits. Still alive! That person had been the strongest among the thirty-six that year, but now one of the Seven Trash Swords and Crippled Fists of North and South that he spoke of demonstrated unparalleled strength. They were terrifying!

So... what of the demon?

The swordsman said that he’d fallen behind, but that he would catch up. Also, just two of the thirty-six Silver Moon powerhouses were already this strong. How many more like them existed in Silver Moon?

“Are you the strongest of the thirty-six?” the eagle suddenly asked.

“I don’t know,” Hong Yitang chuckled. “You can try fighting them or asking around. I only know that Sky Sword and Tyrant Blade are pretty good. Southern Fist is likely less than them, I don’t know where Northern Fist is. Golden Spear shouldn’t be on my level, and you can ask around for the others.”

“.....” The monster spirits were silent. Sky Sword, Tyrant Blade... Didn’t they say that the martial masters of Silver Moon had faded into obscurity? Was this the obscurity that they spoke of?

“Oh, I forgot to say, there’s someone else who’s certainly very strong! Ying Hongyue, the master of the water Nova from earlier...” Hong Yitang guffawed. “You can go have some fun with him. He’s apparently been preparing all along, so I think he can probably beat all of you into the ground with one punch each.”

The four monster spirits remained silent. Ying Hongyue!

“That guy is really very, very strong. He’s probably just waiting for the right time like me, but he’s definitely stronger than me. I lack some things, he might not!” With that, Hong Yitang floated away. The strongest of the Thirty-Six now might be Ying Hongyue. He’d never lacked for blood pearls, so he might’ve shored up some flaws long ago.

.....

Off in the distance.

Li Hao continuously withdrew sword energy, gradually extinguishing the sparks over He Yong. They were a little ways off from a full dousing, however. The young man permitted sword energy to emanate for a bit more before stopping.

“Is there no more?” He Yong asked frantically.

“Mmhhh.” Li Hao nodded. “Martial Uncle He’s supernatural lock should be up to the task now. Martial Uncle Hong’s organs are breaking, so I should treat him first.”

“I...” He Yong didn’t finish his sentence. His lock responded again, true, but... it was so weak. He wanted to absorb more energy. Yet seeing that Hong Yitang had returned, he had to keep his mouth shut. The guy was almost dead. If he didn’t remain on his toes, Hong Yitang would just as soon hack him into two.

He Yong was rather satisfied at the moment. Only confusion and shock lingered. What was this energy from the young man? It could meld into the supernatural locks and repair them! That was incredible!

Yuan Shuo's sudden recovery from his wounds, subsequent breakthrough to Dominator, and swift ascension to Summoner must have something to do with it.

Hong Yitang returned as He Yong mulled over the energy. The former flicked a glance at Southern Fist and coughed, "What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing."

"Are you plotting something?"

"How would I?!" He Yong grew irate. "Are you belittling my character??"

"Do you have character?" Hong Yitang snorted. "What character? You've enslaved yourself to the royal family, so what character do you have to speak of?"

"Enough of that!" He Yong harrumphed. "Are you any better than me?"

"Of course! At least I don't do the royal family's bidding!"

"Hmph!"

"You can snort, but it's still the truth," Hong Yitang coughed. He looked at Li Hao with a twinkle in his eye. "How come you decided to help us? You could've waited for us to fight to the death with the four monster spirits and then scavenge a ton of treasures. We might be dead after killing those four, so all of the treasure will belong to you then!"

If that scenario played out, Li Hao would soar to the heavens with one step. The bodies of two incomparable martial masters, four major monster spirits corpses, a complete Golden Lotus, origin weapons, mysterious power stones...

It would more than likely take place. If the conflict had extended to that stage, Hong Yitang might not have been able to control himself either.

Li Hao glanced back at the man and thought over his answer. "Emotion."

"Emotion?" Both men blinked. What emotion?

"My teacher's emotions," Li Hao explained calmly. "My teacher told me one day that he had no hope of progressing to Dominator. His heart was damaged, so he'd settled down in Silver City to retire. If it couldn't be helped, he could erupt one final time to kill the trespassing Red Moon supernaturals.

"There was a certain emotion he carried with him, perhaps... despair? Or reluctance? I'd wanted to stay in hiding and perhaps even watch the show, but the same emotion appeared in you and Senior Southern Fist. That's why I shouted and revealed myself."

Hong Yitang fell silent. A variety of expressions played out over He Yong's face, he didn't have any words either. Had they despaired?

Very much so. His despair reached a peak when he broke his own supernatural lock. He'd thought that his life was over with; he wouldn't accept the outcome even if he became a supernatural powerhouse.

The young man's words had been a lifesaver, a beacon in the dark.

“Your methods are... extraordinary!” Hong Yitang said after a long moment. “The eight families really are something!”

He summarized his thoughts with a chuckle. Li Hao didn’t respond, he continued to quietly induct sword energy into Hong Yitang. The man seemed to be a bottomless pit. Any sword energy that was directed into his body promptly vanished without a flicker of change. He instantly digested any sum of sword energy that was conducted into him.

A flurry of mysterious power stone shards added to a growing pile on the ground. The four monster spirits delivered a batch of stones as well. It wasn’t much at approximately six hundred stones. Hong Yitang felt that monster spirits of their status should have much more. When combined with the gains from the three great organizations, that totaled to roughly nine nine hundred stones.

They continuously shattered as unending energy surged into Hong Yitang. He rose when there was roughly one hundred left and smiled at the young man. “That’s enough, you should keep the rest of the stones for yourself.”

He tossed a storage ring over. “There’s a jumbled assortment of crap inside that belonged to the Revolution King and others. I’m also giving you one flower petal and one lotus seed as payment. Don’t... use them randomly. Make use of them when you’ve melded five auras together, or you’ll strengthen one aura beyond salvage and lose your equilibrium!”

Li Hao collected the remaining stones. There was still plenty of energy left in the little sword—what it’d absorbed from the origin weapon had been replenished. This meant that the two had consumed the equivalent of eight hundred mysterious power stones to recover from their wounds. Not that much had been needed in actuality, their cultivation should be more fortified than before.

Chapter 418: One Step to Heaven, One Step to Hell (III)

When Li Hao collected the mysterious power stones, Hong Yitang gestured to the wind chime with a jerk of his chin. “Take that too!”

The young man stowed the wind chime with his belongings and rose to his feet. He silently considered the two men, a calm gaze in his eyes and one hand behind his back. No one could tell what he was thinking

He Yong looked at Hong Yitang, who laughed and breathed out. “You walk your path however it should be walked. Southern Fist and I will cultivate here for a day and have a chat with these monster spirit brothers.”

He Yong pursed his lips, but didn’t object.

Li Hao took another look at the two and quietly walked off. Hong Yitang watched him and called out, “Don’t forget the corpses on the ground! You can gather mysterious power from them. We have no use for it, but you should.”

Although much of it had dissipated, two dead Novas and seventeen Solars still produced a flabbergasting amount of mysterious power. Solars typically supplied one thousand cubes. Novas, being known as three times the suns of a Solar, held at least three times the mysterious power within their bodies. Thus, even the weakest Nova would produce roughly five thousand cubes. The fiercer ones could hold ten thousand cubes. It would take at least ten times that for a Nova to train from Starlight to Nova.

Li Hao didn’t reply; he swiftly threaded through the woods and quickly extracted mysterious power, as well as a large pile of energy rings. The four monster spirits were watching warily from the mountain valley. They kept a sharp eye on the two humans, wondering if they’d brought themselves under control. They relaxed at seeing that the humans weren’t erupting with the same presence as before.

The situation was finally over and done with!

“Hong, you’re not waiting for me to leave before going back for him, are you?” He Yong suddenly asked. Hong Yitang ignored him. He Yong snuck a few glances at him. “It’s that little sword, right?”

Hong Yitang continued to ignore him.

“Since you’re a swordsman, you might be invincible with it in your hand!”

“Is that so?” Hong Yitang chuckled. “Will a pair of boxing gloves make you invincible? Is it just the weapon that makes one strong and not the person themselves?”

“Does the weapon come first, or the person? We have the weapon, but was it not forged by man? The ancients crafted them, so are we stuck to using only their creations as we seek to dominate the world?”

He Yong didn’t have an appropriate response.

“He Yong, do you think that he was prepared to... cut us down just now?” Hong Yitang looked in the direction that Li Hao had disappeared in. “Did his brain short circuit for him to take the foolish path of saving us? Can you believe that he’s Yuan Shuo’s disciple?”

That might’ve been the most dangerous moment that Li Hao had encountered thus far in life. It was more dangerous than any time! The young man had already drawn his sword and was ready to throw himself into battle against two powerhouses. What was laughable was that he’d been saving both of them seconds ago.

The three martial masters were all well aware that this was a gamble—a gamble with Li Hao’s life as forfeit. Most hilarious of all was that the forfeit had come knocking on their doors.

“I didn’t think anything like that!” He Yong said irritably. “You’d be the one taking any action! I’m not as strong as you—you might even attack me if you’re of the mind to!”

“I don’t need to.” Hong Yitang flicked a glance at him. “Not to mention, can we utilize the weapons of the eight families without their bloodline? Isn’t this so much better—we can ask him for help so long as we bring some mysterious power stones to him. Any action you take would be killing the goose for its golden eggs. Wouldn’t you weep to find out that you’re unable to use it?”

He Yong’s eyes darted around as his thoughts spun rapidly.

“Therefore, I’m not tempted because I’m intelligent,” Hong Yitang chuckled. “You... may lack that sort of intelligence.”

“Keep laughing at me, why don’t you!” He Yong cursed. “I’ll beat you to death with one punch!”

“No, you won’t.”

“.....” He Yong had no witty comeback because... he really wouldn’t be able to do it. He scratched his head with irritation. “Forget it, I won’t beat you up. Just gimme a petal and seed!”

“Why?” Hong Yitang snorted. “Tell me, why? Can you survive by yourself in these mountains? I have a hope of doing so, but not you. So how do you think you have the right to demand those treasures from me?”

“You...” He Yong fumed. “You have two seeds and three petals, that’s too much. I’ll help you digest some, okay?”

“Nope!”

He Yong was so dejected that he nearly wanted to spit out blood. He’d been so damned unlucky on this venture! Thank goodness his heart lock hadn’t shattered. In fact, it’d grown stronger instead. That counted as snatching good from misfortune, right?

“I haven’t taken you to task for running to me when the monster spirits attacked,” Hong Yitang continued. “That’s already showing you enough face!”

He Yong kept up a storm of inaudible curses. You would’ve been in for it too had I not run to you! He exhaled heavily and peeked at the four major monster spirits in the distance. “Are these guys the strongest in Ash Mountain?”

“I don’t know, we’re only in one area of the nine mountains and eighteen layers. Perhaps there’s even stronger ones waiting somewhere.”

“So Great Li has fallen?” He Yong frowned. “Surely not. Great Li’s martial masters are also formidable and may not be any worse than Silver Moon’s. Those savages are still a force to be reckoned with at the end of the day. Rivers of blood flowed when they clashed with Silver Moon’s martial masters. Perhaps they’re just waiting for the opportunity to invade again!”

“Who cares,” Hong Yitang laughed. “What does it have to do with us? I’ve seen a few Great Li citizens here and there, but there’s nothing to be concerned about. They need to put their own affairs in order first.”

Southern Fist inclined his head, then looked in Li Hao’s direction again. “This fellow’s in big trouble once he makes it out! The three great organizations have lost so many people in their hunt for him. Although they don’t know about it right now, they’ll know sooner or later.”

Hong Yitang laughed and looked in the direction of the monster spirits. “What does it have to do with him? Aren’t the monster spirits behind it? The three great organizations won’t dare make trouble for them. We all know of the dangers of Ash Mountain, as do Ying Hongyue and the others!”

“It’s just that no one thought that these creatures would improve so quickly.” He Yong inclined his head. “The royal family has records of them, but they only speak of the truly powerful being in the center of the mountain. Who knew that the outskirts would be so uncanny as well!”

They didn’t mention Li Hao again, but only they knew what was really on their mind. Had thoughts of eliminating the lad crossed their mind? The most important characteristic of formidable martial masters was self-control. Whether or not they were of the mind to, they restrained themselves in this moment.

Martial masters were violent, cruel, and cold-blooded, but true grandmasters could control the desires of their heart. That applied to Yuan Shuo, Hong Yitang, He Yong, and Hou Xiaochen... These experts killed without blinking, but sometimes showed tenderness as well. Li Hao had saved

them and given them hope, so they suppressed their impulses no matter how strongly their emotions flared.

The two powerhouses stooped on the ground and began roasting monster spirit flesh. The great snake's tail had been hacked off in the earlier battle. They were hungry, so they availed themselves of what was nearby.

A violent glint shone out of the snake's eyes when it looked upon its severed tail, but the radiance quickly faded away. It could not afford to provoke those two. As for why the two humans hadn't left, the monster spirits knew that they were waiting for the weak human to put some distance between them.

"Did any of you..." came a ripple from the ape. "See how the weak one left?"

The golden eagle didn't respond. It had indeed observed something. Meanwhile, the tiger looked into the distance. "He's... that one's disciple!"

"So it was the two of you!" the ape exclaimed.

"....." His two comrades did not respond, they couldn't be bothered to. So what if it was? What are you going to do about it?

"That person really isn't dead! The one that left also grasped some unique auras, but they don't seem to be like the ones that person knew."

"That's normal. Based on what they say, one person walks one dao. A myriad of changes exists in martial dao. Those who learn from me live, those who imitate me die. Martial dao should be a journey of one's own undertaking."

The monster spirits fell silent; the great snake attempted to speak a few times, but didn't say anything. There were four petals and three seeds left. Did they split that up? The petals could be

evenly divided, but there was one less seed to go around. It... was more likely than not that the snake would go shorthanded.

None of the other monster spirits said a word, plainly wanting the snake to come to its own understanding and acceptance. They wanted it to volunteer a relinquishment of the entire flower. Only then would they possibly give one petal to it...

The snake lowered its head dejectedly. Those guys were truly one clique. It wasn't part of them since it'd never been beaten by that human.

.....

At the same time.

Drenched with sweat, Li Hao quickly fled without a word. He was soaked through and had almost unsheathed his sword in the final moments. He didn't regret his own actions, it'd just been a solemn moment.

However, they'd stayed their hands in the final moment. Was it out of consideration that he'd saved their lives? Or thinking that the two of them wouldn't be able to properly divide the loot? Regardless, he'd escaped from sure death, and with a hefty harvest himself.

Li Hao had witnessed a magnificent battle and saw with his own eyes the moves of multiple premier powerhouses. It hadn't taken place through an illusory realm or other obstruction. He'd obtained many treasures—the lotus petal and seed resting in the storage ring that Hong Yitang had given him was immensely valuable.

There were approximately one hundred mysterious power stones—a number on par with what he'd collected from the corpses himself. Seventeen Solars and two Novas had also yielded thirty thousand cubes of mysterious power. His energy rings were almost out of space.

There were also many energy rings rattling in his pockets. He hadn't taken inventory of them, but it would be tens of thousands of cubes even if each person carried just a few hundred on them. Combined with what was left... Li Hao estimated that he held nearly fifty thousand cubes!

It was a staggering figure that was an underestimation. Half Mountain and the Revolution King had been the leaders of their faction in the province. They wouldn't possibly only have a few hundred cubes on them. That would be belittling the three great organizations. Tidal Wave would be the poorest among them.

Chapter 419: One Step to Heaven, One Step to Hell (IV)

The three great organizations are probably going to go crazy after all these people have died here. Li Hao inwardly shook his head to himself. The organizations won't be able to endure the deaths of so many at once, but it has nothing to do with me. The more the merrier. I can keep that wind chime as a backup plan though. If there comes a day when I'm out of sword energy and mysterious power, I can use it to save my skin.

He'd gained something else from the battle—his water aura might have benefitted from observing Tidal Wave. But the key wasn't his water aura, it was his sword aura!

Hong Yitang's sword!

What a pity that he couldn't experience it for himself. Otherwise, the young man might comprehend something different from the greatest swordsman of the era—assuming he didn't die in the attempt. Li Hao didn't dare consider Sky Sword. Who knew what level that personage was at? And, he might be weaker than Hong Yitang.

Li Hao soon returned to where the Demon Hunters were waiting. Liu Long was standing guard outside and heaved a sigh of relief to see the young man come back.

"I thought you were dragged into a fight with the others," he said worriedly. "The entire mountain went quiet earlier before sounds of battle broke out. Did the three great organizations clash with the monster spirits?"

“Yep!”

“How did it turn out?”

Everyone looked worriedly at their leader. So the battle was over? What was the outcome?

“The three great organizations suffered a complete defeat!” Li Hao exhaled ponderously.

“Seventeen Solars and two Novas are dead. Half Mountain, the Revolution King, and what should be a water Nova from Red Moon are dead...”

Jaws dropped and sharp intakes of breath could be heard. They were all dead? That was horrifying!

“All dead?” Liu Long swallowed hard. “Then... what about those major monster spirits?”

“They’re fine.”

“That’s terrifying!” Liu Long fought to regain calm. “Thank goodness they didn’t discover us. Otherwise... But we should go. Ah, I thought you’d made a move because there was also a sword aura on the scene. Wasn’t it you? Or are there formidable martial masters among the three great organizations?”

They were quite far from the battle site, but oscillations from Hong Yitang’s sword intent had still traveled over. Li Hao swept a glance at Hong Qing—he couldn’t see her face since it was obscured by the visor. However, he could still sense some admiration. The young man didn’t know what to say.

“It wasn’t me,” he offered after a moment. “There was another swordsman, but... he died!”

Li Hao couldn’t be bothered telling Hong Yitang’s daughter anything if the man himself didn’t say anything.

“That’s a pity...” Liu Long sighed. “But it’s good that another powerhouse of the three great organizations is dead. That swordsman must’ve been very strong. Our weapons shook when his sword intent traveled to us!”

“Yeah, he was so strong!” Hong Qing piped up. “My sword kept shaking, it was terrifying! Thank goodness he’s dead, or my sword would’ve flown away if it continued!”

Thank goodness he’s dead... You should repeat those words to your father when you have a chance.

“That’s right, it’s a well deserved death!” Li Hao laughed. “Hong Qing, tell your father about this the next time you see him. Say that a powerful swordsman appeared on this trip, he might know this person.”

“Oh?” Hong Qing blinked. Should she tell father? What could he do even if he knew this swordsman? The swordsman was already dead.

“Let’s go while the major monster spirits are quaking from the battle that just ended. We’ll follow the original plan and proceed along our path!”

They were to head east to Rift Canyon. It was no longer viable to retrace their steps. There were four major monster spirits behind and they might run into Hong Yitang and He Yong. That would be quite an awkward encounter.

Li Hao felt that there wouldn’t be any powerful existences ahead after this battle. They just needed to follow the fringes of the first mountain. If the team did run into stronger entities... then he bowed to fate.

The Demon Hunters made quick time. Li Hao turned his gaze to the golden lotus petal and seed in his storage ring. The little sword was longer than before, making for a more comfortable heft in the hand. That battle once more appeared in his mind’s eye—not just the moves from Hong Yitang and

the others, but also how the monster spirits had fought. The golden eagle, ferocious tiger, and giant ape mapped to the Five Styles. He'd witnessed some of the true five auras this time!

But they seem to be connected to teacher... Were they his study subjects back in the day?

If that was the case, should he prepare a coffin for his teacher if Yuan Shuo ever wanted to visit Ash Mountain again? He had too many enemies lying around! Additionally, his teacher had indeed fallen behind the other thirty-six heroes.

Even with Yuan Shuo fully summoning his spirits, Li Hao felt that he would be hard pressed to match the Hong Yitang of today. It was difficult to say if Yuan Shuo went against He Yong. Southern Fist possessed limited strength if he didn't break his supernatural lock—he looked to be a mid Nova.

His teacher with three spirits summoned was invincible among Solars. If all five were... He Yong might not stand on the same level if his supernatural locks remained intact. Not to mention, that was also an option for his teacher as well.

Teacher can catch up to Southern Fist, but Earthturner Sword will be hard!

Yuan Shuo might have to break through past Summoner of Spirit to match Hong Yitang. Various thoughts flashed through Li Hao's mind as he began to understand why these powerful martial masters all played dead. Any fight that put their lives on the line could be one that ended their future. It would seem that this also applied to Hou Xiaochen and the others.

If the organs are weak, so are the supernatural locks. Those are huge problems. In the best case scenario, their locks break. In the worst, their organs give out...

Li Hao shook his head and put these thoughts out of his mind. He was far from reaching this step and these limitations wouldn't have much of an impact on him when he did. Just watch me enhance my organs to the point of ten thousand cubes each! I'll scare the bejeezus out of you guys!

.....

The Demon Hunters swiftly departed the area, not daring to linger for too long. There was no rush to absorb their stores of mysterious power. It was already September 21. There was only one week until the Battle Heaven ruins opened again.

.....

At the same time. Rift Canyon.

Regardless of whether or not the ruins would actually be opening, people thronged the valley as the countdown continued. There was yet to be an accord among all parties present—the three great organizations and provincial authorities were only a small part of the representatives onsite. They were outnumbered by powerhouses from the other nineteen northern provinces and some that'd made the trip from the central region.

The entrance to the ruins was sealed off by a cohort of Night Watchers and military. Although they weren't that strong, no disputes arose. Hou Xiaochen was present. No one dared cause trouble so long as he was alive or on the scene.

As numerous people took stock of the situation, massive booms ripped through the air! A group of newcomers fled toward the valley. They wore ghostly masks—Red Moon! It was a decently sized group as there were several Solars in the lead. However, they were fleeing for their lives in an absolute panic.

The supernaturals milling around the valley quickly gave way. Although many of them had secretly acted against Red Moon, the three great organizations were still domineering on the surface. No one dared directly oppose them, so they immediately moved themselves out of the group's trajectory when a group of Red Moon powerhouses barreled toward the valley.

Another party was in hot pursuit—many of them wore black armor. One of them looked to be an elder in his fifties. He didn't wear armor and wielded a spear, stabbing it forward!

The spear whistled through the air, prompting multiple Solar of the fleeing Red Moon contingent to turn back for a counterblow. Their mysterious power erupted, but was instantly pierced through by the spear. An initial Solar vomited blood as he was nailed to the ground.

“Golden Spear!” shouted one of the surviving Solar. “You are stronger than Solar, yet still attack us! Are you not afraid of Red Moon erupting in complete hostility and general slaughter??”

Soldiers fought soldiers, generals fought generals. This was the unspoken rule. Otherwise, powerhouses on both sides would cause an uncontrollable bloodbath and far too many dead.

Eyes widened when the crowd heard the moniker of Golden Spear. This was the leader of the Three Spears of Silver Moon! He was the strongest martial master known to the public and greater than Solar. He was likely the foremost expert among the modern day martial world!

Hong Yitang and He Yong were not part of this conversation and Sky Blade had crossed over to the supernatural. Apart from close friends knowing that Tyrant Blade was still alive, everyone else thought he was dead. Yuan Shuo had only killed a peak Solar thus far; he was yet to fight a Nova in direct combat.

Golden Spear had exchanged blows with Blue Moon yesterday. Both retreated from the clash, but to emerge unscathed after encountering a Nova made Golden Spear the undisputed first among the martial world.

Since Yuan Shuo was yet to fight a Nova, his strength was impossible to determine.

Golden Spear, Yuan Shuo, Li Hao...

The names of these three martial masters were known throughout Skystar Dynasty and deterred all those who heard it. They were martial masters beyond the conventional meaning of Dominator and had truly set foot into the next level.

The group further understood the circumstances when they heard it was Golden Spear pursuing the Red Moon contingent. No wonder the Solars were running so fast. Their pursuers were the Silver Moon Guard!

“Who says I’m stronger than Solar?” Golden Spear retorted coolly. “Not to mention, you guys are the more shameless ones when it comes to breaking the rules. Who can tell me where Tidal Wave and Half Mountain have gone?”

Who broke the rules first? In that case, how dare you mention the rules!

“Kill!” Golden Spear roared.

“Kill!” Martial masters behind him charged forward. They were indomitable when equipped with black armor. This unit was stronger than the Demon Hunters as there were numerous half step Dominators. They bore down on their enemy with undeniable momentum, following their leader in smashing through the Solar blockade and killing Red Moon supernaturals.

Wang Qing, disciple of Berserk Blade, and Kong Youyun, daughter of Kong Jie, took on the Solars by themselves! This group was Golden Spear’s bodyguards—just eighty of them—and extremely mighty.

There were twenty half step Dominators among the eighty, the rest were late Sunderers. All of them wore black armor, making them true elites compared to Li Hao’s Demon Hunters. Even Solars had to retreat when facing their joint offensive.

Boom!

Explosions rang out as Solars fought bitterly for their lives. A clap of thunder exploded near Golden Spear. The man roared and stabbed with his spear!

Kaboom!

Chapter 420: All Parties In Attendance (I)

Another clap of thunder exploded with a roar as Violet Moon came walking through the air. “Golden Spear!” Her expression was unpleasant. “Must you be like this when the ruins are about to open?”

“You have no right to speak of these things!” Golden Spear denounced coldly. “It would be more appropriate for your mother to come. I’d like to see how strong the Black Widow is now!”

Violet Moon’s scowl deepened. Black Widow! She snorted at Golden Spear. “If my mother were here, you would not last three rounds with her!”

It was only to be expected that the second-in-command of Red Moon would be domineering. Perhaps not lasting three rounds was’t purely empty talk. Regardless, peak Solar Violet Moon’s arrival, along with the Armor of the Thunder God, made her a formidable force to reckon with.

Golden Spear waved his bodyguards to him so they would stop fighting. Red Moon’s remaining supernaturals swiftly congregated near Violet Moon. Not only that, but numerous other Solars appeared behind the woman. There were six of them, which meant there were a total of ten Solars from Red Moon when the two groups became one.

Only then did Violet Moon breathe slightly more easily. These martial masters... were terrifying!

Golden Spear had been the leader of the Three Spears and proceeded far down the path of martial masters. He was undeniably powerful and when reinforced by his bodyguards, it was an offensive unit that the Night Watchers could not measure up to.

Red Moon didn’t feel much pressure when it came to the Night Watchers—Hou Xiaochen was the exception. But when it came to the Silver Moon Guards, they’d fully mobilized these days and spilled so much blood that supernaturals cowered at the sound of their name.

Silver Moon martial masters had once more entered the public eye. Even though there were few powerhouses among martial masters, those that existed enabled supernaturals to see how strong martial masters could be when assembled into an army unit!

It would take at least a Solar to stand against each team of one hundred, but Solars weren't cabbages to be found by the side of the road. Red Moon had gathered thirty-some Solars after summoning their experts from nineteen provinces. Many of them were already dead—just Li Hao alone had killed three.

Solars died faster in Silver Moon than in the central region. Disturbances unsettled the three northern provinces as of late, but only three Solars had died in them. When their deaths were public knowledge, the uproar was so great that it was like everyone had lost their fathers.

In Silver Moon... a Solar had died the day the Silver Moon Guards mobilized. Golden Spear killed another yesterday, making for two dead at the hands of the Guards in a very short amount of time. The one nailed to the ground struggled feebly, not long for the world.

An irritated Violet Moon frowned, it was not a good idea to wage war with the province. Solars died in droves here. Li Hao killed three, Golden Spear killed three, Yuan Shuo killed three, Hou Xiaochen killed a Nova, and four more had gone missing a few days ago...

Red Moon had lost thirteen Solars and one Nova in a short month! This level of loss was unacceptable to both Blue Moon and Violet Moon. Blue Moon took action himself yesterday, wanting to kill Golden Spear. However, Golden Spear caught him off guard instead. Although Blue Moon was a mid Nova, he couldn't immediately regain the upper hand against his opponent!

Neither could Golden Spear do anything to him—he was a hair weaker than Blue Moon. But when martial masters reached his level, they were difficult targets to easily eliminate.

None of this was the key.

The key was Blue Moon's absence today. He hadn't run off, but had caught a woman's eye. He was thick in the midst of trouble and Violet Moon's expression changed slightly when she thought of the woman.

Yu Luochoa!

She'd finally made her move and cowed the four directions as soon as she did so. She sent Blue Moon packing in bedraggled glory—the man didn't know if he'd escape with his life yet.

Silver Moon was becoming ever more dangerous!

A low rumble sounded as Violet Moon was lost in her thoughts. Figures descended from the sky. Blue Moon was disheveled and glowering instead of presenting his usual leisurely demeanor. He hadn't suffered any injuries because a cloaked person landed beside him at the same time, as well as a man with a stern, boxy face.

“The Parity King!”

“And an elder from the Celestial elder council?” Someone gasped from the crowd. Esteemed personages had come! But... their manner of arrival did not seem that smooth.

A lonesome figure floated down from overhead, her face slightly pale and killing intent in her eyes. She inclined her head at Golden Spear and looked again at the three standing in front of her.

“What a bunch of trash!” she pronounced coldly.

“.....” The three esteemed personages did not respond. The Parity King furrowed his brows, Blue Moon brooded, and the elder beneath the cloak had his face hidden.

Yu Luochoa!

The crowd looked at the woman, then at Golden Spear; some had already recognized them. A wizened martial master standing behind a large boulder exclaimed with emotion, “I knew that this Manager Yu of the Night Watchers was more than met the eye! It’s her alright!”

“Who, master?” asked a young martial master with curiosity.

“Yu Luochoa!”

“Ah? One of the thirty-six heroes?”

“That’s right!” affirmed the excited old martial master. “It must be her! Only persons of this level can deter with power and threat to dominate the land! What were supernaturals worth when Silver Moon martial masters were known throughout the land? They were so beaten down by martial masters when their domain first rose that they didn’t dare set foot in the province. It wasn’t until we reached Dominator and could go no further, whereas the supernaturals ascended to Solar and Nova, did martial masters decline. But now... some of us have found the way forward!”

“Ahem... cough cough. Master, um... Yu Luochoa... seems to be a supernatural.”

“So what if she is? She’s still a martial master!” The old man flew into a rage and glared angrily at the disciple who was speaking. Who said she was a supernatural?! She was a martial master! Even though the subject of their discussion had already crossed over, the old man still didn’t wish to admit that martial masters were less than supernaturals.

His disciples didn’t say a word. Whatever their teacher said was the truth. Not to mention, Yu Luochoa had indeed been a premier martial master back in the day. She was listed in the Record of Thirty-Six.

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Conversation buzzed all. Some people stood on a nearby cliff face. White hair dappled one of their number, despite his young age. He stood at their head and looked at where everyone's attention was gathered.

"That is Yu Luochoa?" Composure and inexplicable self-assurance resonated in his voice.

"Yes, that is her!" intoned an old man behind him. "Golden Spear and Yu Luochoa have both sought the Night Watcher banner! Those who were once well known in Silver Moon are still active in the dynasty's territory! I speak of Yuan Shuo, who has just left the province. Earthturner Sword, who has created his own sect of sword dao. Southern Fist, who has traveled to the north of the province. Jadelight Sword travels with Yuan Shuo. Sky Sword in the central region and Berserk Blade who serves the army."

Who said that the martial world of Silver Moon had declined? It was alive and well, just in a different format. Everyone walked their own paths and had found their own homes. Many of the thirty-six were hale and hearty.

The young man inclined his head and whispered, "You forget that Red Moon possesses many of the thirty-six as well. Orange Moon, the Black Widow, Ying Hongyue..."

"That is true." The old man nodded. "Many of the organization's Seven Moons are part of the thirty-six."

"Yu Luochoa was one of them," the young man asked curiously. "Why did she betray Ying Hongyue?"

"We're not sure, it might have to do with the conjecture that Hou Xiaochen really is Sickly. It's said that he spared her life once..."

The young man nodded again. "Silver Moon is indeed a blessed place that produces many talents! No wonder everyone wants to come here, but they seem to be waiting for something. We're here as the vanguard to assess the situation..."

“And to join the fun!” he chuckled. “Let’s take a look at the ruins of Battle Heaven. If possible, perhaps we can claim strong origin weapons as well!”

“Sir, it’s best to give up the idea as soon as possible!” the old man urged. “It’s said that Hou Xiaochen will enter himself! If he really is Sickly, then he was a premier martial master very early on. Martial masters only grow stronger when they become supernaturals, not to mention a preeminent martial master like them. Just look at his subordinates of Golden Spear and Yu Luocho. Hou Xiaochen is either peak Nova or even stronger...”

“Just because he killed Red Hair with a single spear jab?” The young man furrowed his brow. “That jab doesn’t represent anything. Even a mid or late Nova might kill an unprepared Red Hair with one blow if they had a sky level origin weapon to utilize!”

There was no doubt that Hou Xiaochen was powerful, but it was difficult to determine what level Nova he was.

“Red Hair couldn’t possibly have been completely caught off guard.” The old man shook his head. “Therefore... don’t underestimate Hou Xiaochen.”

“I’m not, I just think that the three great organizations won’t let him off easy if he enters the ruins. Not to mention, there may not be only the three great organizations there.” The young man smiled. “There are plenty of people who want Hou Xiaochen dead.”

The old man said no more. That was the truth. Hou Xiaochen was a thorn in the side of many. Even some within the Night Watchers wished for his demise. He would face more than the three great organizations if he entered the ruins.

“Oh yes, I hear that Old Demon Five Styles’ disciple killed six Solars two days ago and fled into Ash Mountain in the northern part of the province,” the young man changed the topic with interest. “Has there been any news?”

“No.” The old man shook his head. “Ash Mountain is not a safe place. The family has some records of it being an exceedingly dangerous locale. There are many major monster spirits there, some even greater than Nova. It’s a terrifying place!”

“What a pity, I hope he doesn’t die in there. There seem to be very few young genius martial masters around,” chuckled the young man. “There are a few in the central region, but they don’t seem all that impressive. That this one can kill multiple Solars means that he’s got real skill to his name. As expected as the final disciple of Old Demon Five Styles, the head of the thirty-six heroes...”

The old man didn’t continue the conversation. It went without saying that Li Hao must have true skill to his name. However, the young man spoke with condescending notes that the old man didn’t care to address. Perhaps the young man was very strong or even stronger than Hu Qingfeng that the Night Watchers had requested from their central headquarters.

No martial master was to be belittled. If Yuan Shuo’s disciple crossed over, he would be a Nova. He might not be weaker than the young man. Occupying a lofty position... only caused one to lose their alertness.