

## Star Gate 501

### Chapter 501: Cultivation, Promotion, Farewell (III)

Liu Long was strengthening his organs further in the distance. Everyone benefited from Li Hao's enormous gains on the expedition. All of the Demon Hunters cultivated furiously.

Time passed day after day. Li Hao's store of mysterious power and mysterious power stones depleted at a furious rate. He'd sat on more than two thousand pieces of stones before. He'd shoved in thirty energy stones for the Water of Life, a consumption equal to three hundred pieces of mysterious power stones. One piece was worth approximately two hundred eight cubes of power.

Due to the large number of people absorbing energy, he exhausted three hundred pieces over a few short days. That was almost seventy thousand cubes of power!

Panther siphoned off quite a bit, Liu Long and Wang Ming absorbed a great deal, leaving less for the martial masters. Most of it had gone to Li Hao. And yet, the young man's body and organs weren't that much strengthened. He was trying to see how much energy it would take for a lock to be saturated, but the results of his experiment told him that he'd thought of it in too simple of a way.

He absorbed roughly half of the seventy thousand cubes, so he took in more than thirty thousand cubes of mysterious power. And yet, his supernatural locks felt like bottomless pits! His organs and body had absorbed some power in the ancient city as well, reaching six thousand cubes each.

The past couple of days of furious absorption hadn't increased that level by much, but he'd raised them to roughly seven thousand cubes each. Over this most immediate period of time, his body and organs had taken in less than ten thousand cubes. The remaining twenty thousand were absorbed by the supernatural lock—and not all of them, but just one.

Li Hao had paid special attention to the process and noticed that the lock of the heart took in all of the energy. It absorbed twenty thousand cubes by itself and was yet to be filled to saturation. That was incredible! And impossible!

Surely He Yong and the others didn't need so many cubes to fill one lock! Li Hao could absorb so much energy because he could also call upon sword energy. If he lacked sword energy and still wanted his locks to absorb twenty thousand cubes... The task wouldn't be complete until his next life!

Yuan Shuo couldn't do it either. His heart summoned a spirit at one thousand cubes. If He Yong and the others had proceeded methodically down their path of cultivation, they would've reached saturation with numerous supernatural locks after twenty years. Could it be that all of their locks contained more than twenty thousand cubes?

No way, there must be something wrong here.

Three days had passed in the blink of an eye. Something must be amiss if not a single one of Li Hao's locks had reached full capacity yet. Can it be tied to... potential?

The young man frowned. Perhaps it had something to do with his bloodline. A bloodline heritage meant that he possessed some abilities that other people didn't. His body may be stronger than others, so he needed to absorb more mysterious power.

But... this is a bottomless pit. Who knows when I'll fill it up?

And the key thing was, fusing energy into supernatural locks didn't result in a noticeable improvement of his strength!

There was almost no improvement! This was a deal that was hardly worth it! It improved his foundations, alright, but at a hefty cost and with almost no increase to strength. What good were strong foundations then?

Li Hao sighed and decided to give up. This wouldn't do! He needed to discuss this with his teacher, otherwise he could forget trying to build the five bridges. He needed to find a way to avoid this problem.

The more he thought about it, the more his head ached. The strength of a supernatural lock also resulted in another issue—the five auras melded into the five organs. His heart was so strong now, but his aura was the same as before. It was now too tightly locked into place. All of them would be nailed into the organs if this continued!

It would be the greatest joke if his auras proved unable to break out of the organs at the end of his cultivation! He would've strengthened the organs so greatly that they maintained a death grip on the auras. Nothing could emerge, he would've sealed off his own future!

Ten thousand at most... Li Hao estimated. He could infuse his locks with ten thousand cubes at most. His auras might be forever imprisoned if they were any stronger. That would be a thorny issue then! I wonder if the Mind Fruits that I traded for will be of any use for nurturing auras...

Just then, a voice traveled through the door. "Are you in here, Li Hao?"

The young man vanished on the spot.

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Outside the cultivation room.

The sky was not yet fully bright. Mu Lin waited outside the door. He quickly smiled when the young man emerged. "Have you been cultivating during all this time?"

"Yes, Brother Second Mu."

"I didn't want to disturb you." Mu Lin kept smiling and ignored the weird name that Li Hao referred to him by. "But today is when we leave. A deployment order has come from upstairs to transfer Director Hou to Skystar City! As his direct subordinates, the Silver Moon Guards will be going with him. I felt that I should give you a heads up because you and the Demon Hunters might be the only ones left here after today."

Today?

Li Hao blinked, thinking back to an earlier conversation. They would leave after three days—so it was already the fourth! So fast! Well, that made sense since he'd spent some time absorbing thirty thousand cubes of mysterious power.

Various members of the Guards were packing up; some were falling into lines to move out. A general din rose from the barracks.

“Is everyone willing to go?” Li Hao frowned slightly. These were all Silver Moon denizens. Were they all willing to leave their home to travel with Hou Xiaochen?

“Of course!” Mu Lin laughed. “Director Hou treasures martial masters in an era where martial dao has declined. He brought us up step by step and now that his future is unknown after he travels to the dynasty’s capital... the Silver Moon will naturally follow in his footsteps! Schemes and plots may abound in Skystar City, but the director will be more at ease with us at his back.”

Li Hao was moved by the response. One could not think lightly of the Silver Moon Guards’ loyalty toward Hou Xiaochen. They were willing to follow the man thousands of kilometers away from their homes.

“Where’s Director Hou and the others?”

“At the Night Watcher headquarters. We’re going to convene with them in a moment and drive to Cloud River. We’ll be in Near River province after crossing the river, then drive to the North Sea province, then cross that sea. That will put us in the central region, where we can then drive to Skystar City.”

It was truly a journey of thousands of kilometers. If they traveled on foot, it would take several months to reach their destination even if they sped through several hundred kilometers a day.

Skystar City was so far away. Frequently described as thousands of kilometers away, it was more accurate as ten thousand.

In the central region, one could drive approximately fifteen hundred kilometers a day if the roads were clear. They would reach Skystar City in roughly a week. And if one was rich enough, one could take the airplanes found exclusively in the central region. That was even faster, but there were so many Silver Moon Guards that they'd have to split up. Hou Xiaochen most likely wouldn't choose this transportation method, so they would reach Skystar City after a week.

Having read many ancient tomes, Li Hao knew that there was a special type of high speed car that could reach two hundred fifty kilometers an hour and cover five thousand kilometers a day in the ancient civilization.

Modern day technology was far from that level. Excavating the ancient ruins uncovered some technologies for use, but modern products were still lesser in quality and far slower. It was only after the rise of the supernatural and their special techniques that quality of life improved. Otherwise, it was horses and buggies before them.

"Let's go together," Li Hao exhaled. "I'll send you guys off and bid farewell to Director Hou."

"That's what I intended in coming to you." Mu Lin grinned. "You're the only troop staying out of the Silver Moon Guards and there's too few of you. There should be some major personages attending Director Hou's farewell. It would do you good to familiarize yourself with them. They might look after you in the days to come."

"What a pity that we're leaving after just a few days as colleagues." He'd wanted to explore more ruins with Li Hao. "Ah, yes, the boss seems to be looking for you. He failed an exploration of another ruin before and wanted to explore it with you. But you ran off quick and now this happened, so there probably won't be a chance to do so. Boss will probably give you the ruins' location so you can explore it yourself. But be careful, if even boss failed it... Well, you're also pretty damn strong yourself, so nothing may happen to you."

Having attended the last excavation, he'd personally witnessed Li Hao's might when he cut down a Nova. Golden Spear may have failed, but Li Hao might not.

The young man didn't say anything and walked out with Mu Lin. Someone fell in step behind them.

"I'll go and send off Director Hou too," Liu Long murmured. "Although I didn't make a name for myself in the Night Watchers when I tried crossing over, it was with his approval that I could return to Silver City. That was how I continued to be the captain of the law enforcement team and formed the Demon Hunters..."

Thus, he felt that he should bid Hou Xiaochen farewell. Li Hao didn't say anything. They followed Mu Lin to a car outside the complex.

Trucks were already waiting outside the complex—the one thousand strong Silver Moon Guards required twenty trucks. That was only for humans; storage rings held various armor and resources.

A person walked over—Golden Spear disciple and Kong Jie's daughter, the girl named Kong Youyun. Li Hao wasn't familiar with her as they hadn't seen each other that many times.

"Centurion Li, the ranking officer is looking for you!" she said. A small car was parked in the front of the convoy. Li Hao thought for a bit, nodded, and followed her over.

Golden Spear sat in the car; he seemed much older after a few days. He'd seemed in his forties or fifties before, but now there was an air of the elderly about him.

Li Hao guessed that it might have something to do with the eruption shown by Earthturner Sword and the others.

#### Chapter 502: Cultivation, Promotion, Farewell (IV)

"Get in!" Golden Spear's tone was calm. Li Hao said nothing and swiftly jumped into the back seat to sit next to Golden Spear. Kong Youyun climbed into the driver's seat and started up the car.

Golden Spear sat ramrod straight, like a spear. His voice was as calm as before. “You guys will be the only ones here after we leave. There are some items left in the warehouses, as well as some mysterious power stones and cubes. There’s also the dao comprehension weapons—not in the warehouses, but in storage rings!”

He tossed a ring to Li Hao.

“You wouldn’t be given custody of this, but since you’re the one staying, you get to keep it. There isn’t much inside, we’re taking most of it with us, but we won’t leave you high and dry either.”

Li Hao quietly caught the ring. He hadn’t anticipated that the Silver Moon Guards would leave him some resources before they left.

“These are the ruins that we’ve explored over the years.” Golden Spear handed a book to Li Hao. “This is the information that we’ve compiled on them, take a look. Mu Lin might have told you already that I discovered a ruin a while back, but didn’t have time to explore it. It’s a bit dangerous inside, so do as you see fit. Their information is all inside the storage ring as well.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“No worries,” Golden Spear replied coolly. “I couldn’t explore it because I lacked sufficient strength. You might be able to, so there’s nothing to thank.

“Also, be careful of the pirates from the Moon Sea. We have some information on them as well and you need to be on your guard. There’s no concern regarding their weaklings, but there’s a possibility that their powerhouses will enter the Moon Sea to raid and loot once they learn that the director is gone.

“So be very careful! Some of them are quite strong with even peak Nova heavyweights among them. A few of them even keep major monster spirits as pets. You must exercise extreme prudence!”

Li Hao nodded again.

“And don’t think of ever relying on your master,” Golden Spear added. “Don’t walk in his footsteps your entire life. The Five Styles is wondrous, but I hope you can also carve out your own path. I don’t have the right to say anything, but I know that once there is a heavy mountain on your head, it is too hard to try to shift it!”

Despondency appeared in his eyes as Golden Spear looked around with weariness. One could not tell if his expression carried regret or resignation. He was the leader of the Three Spears of Silver Moon, but now couldn’t even measure up to Light Sword of the Seven Swords. The last expedition had crushed his pride and bestowed him unspeakable discomfort. He didn’t know the way forward, so he couldn’t progress. Golden Spear had been a shell of himself lately.

Li Hao didn’t say anything to the man. Some things needed to be tackled by oneself. No one could comfort him—neither was it needed.

The man sat back with his eyes closed. Li Hao remained quietly next to him as they took the car to the Night Watcher headquarters.

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The Night Watcher headquarters.

Everyone was present on this day. Large numbers of supernaturals were present as Hou Xiaochen was about to leave. He had been the leader of the agency since the Silver Moon Night Watchers were first established twenty years ago. Today, this local tiger was finally leaving.

Even Hao Lianchuan wore a pained expression on his face. The Silver Moon Night Watchers would greatly decline in importance once Hou Xiaochen left. The Silver Moon Guards were following the director, leaving just Hao Lianchuan, a mid Solar, holding down the fort of this massive agency. Thankfully, there were other Solars present as two deputy directors had ascended two days ago.



The metal attribute Deputy Director Zhou and water attribute Deputy Director He had both advanced to the Solar stage. That had much to do with the large sum of mysterious power stones that they'd received from the ruins.

These three Solars were the main core of Night Watcher strength. But... was such a force... strong? They might've thought so before, but now they weren't worth a mention.

"Director, why don't you have Manager Yu stay behind?" Hao Lianchuan looked on with a face of longing.

"....." Manager Yu served him a glare that could kill.

"I won't be able to hold on by myself!" A mournful Hao Lianchuan ignored the woman's vicious look. The situation was oh so tragic! "If we can, we should find someone else to take over as director. I can't be acting director..."

Indeed, somehow he was the acting director! The central region hadn't sent anyone to replace Hou Xiaochen—perhaps they were all afraid to die? And so no one was willing to come?

Whatever it was, it left Hao Lianchuan in the position of acting director of the Silver Moon Night Watchers. Far from the joy of receiving a promotion, he was only panicked and resigned. I really can't do this, especially when the last director was the domineering Hou Xiaochen.

"Don't worry, there won't be much to take care of here once I am gone." Hou Xiaochen grinned. "The three great organizations have mostly been exterminated and they won't send further powerhouses to the province after I leave."

How is that possible?! Hao Lianchuan regarded his assurance wordlessly. I'm not a fool, it's the best time to go for Silver Moon once you're gone! Li Hao of the eight families is still here, so how are you telling me that the three great organizations won't continue to send people to us?

Don't joke around, my mind's still pretty clear!

"Don't be afraid," Hou Xiaochen chuckled. "Find someone to help you if you really need help."

"Who?"

Hou Xiaochen looked outside and smiled. "Help is here."

Hao Lianchuan followed his gaze and happened to see Golden Spear and Li Hao alight from a car. He blinked and looked at Hou Xiaochen.

"Doesn't he love being high up in the bureaucracy? Let him have his wish!" Hou Xiaochen laughed. "Since he's not leaving, he can shoulder some of the responsibility. Except, he might not really care about that when old hatreds and grudges rear their heads. It's up to you. You might not have many good qualities to you, but you are genuine in your treatment of others. Li Hao needs a bit of special attention..."

"Li Hao of the Silver Moon Guards is hereby promoted to high level chief commissioner," Hou Xiaochen's voice rang out in the next second. "He will be a deputy director of the Silver Moon Night Watchers and assist acting director Hao Lianchuan in managing the provincial agency!"

Li Hao froze in the process of getting out of the car, one foot over the ground. What in the world? He wanted that promotion a long time ago, but they never gave it to him. It was his now, but how was he also a deputy director and jointly managing the Night Watchers with Hao Lianchuan?

A few more cars rolled to a stop in the distance; some heads poked out of windows in surprise, but no one said anything.

"In addition, the Silver Moon Guard designation remains in effect! Li Hao will be the acting ranking officer and safeguard the Moon Sea coastline to prevent pirates from attacking! He will ensure Silver Moon's peace and make it impossible for pirates to set foot on our homeland!"

Li Hao frowned slightly. He might not stay in Silver Moon for much longer, but now he was a deputy director and the acting ranking officer of the Silver Moon Guards! What did Hou Xiaochen have in mind?

The man had just wanted the young man to go with him to the central region, but gave him so many positions when Li Hao refused. What was this for? There were only so many in the Demon Hunter team!

“The Night Watchers and Silver Moon Guards must ensure the province’s safety. Only then will they be worthy of the hard earned labor of Silver Moon’s citizens. Whether it is military rations or monthly supplies, all of it comes from Silver Moon. You must keep that in mind, Li Hao!”

Down below, Li Hao still had not said a word. Hou Xiaochen had walked out of the building and looked coolly at him. “Do you not accept your orders, Li Hao?”

“.....” A skeptical expression appeared on the young man’s face and he struggled briefly before snapping his legs together in a sharp salute. “Understood!”

Hou Xiaochen smiled and inclined his head, tossing a storage ring over. “This is information regarding the Night Watchers and some lists of names. I leave them in your hands. You must aid Hao Lianchuan well and ensure Silver Moon’s peace and prosperity!”

He took a step forward, strode across the ground, and entered a car in a series of smooth motions. “We set off! Everyone, I will see you on the morrow!”

“We set off!” Golden Spear rumbled. Almost two dozen trucks ignited their engines.

In the distance, Director General Zhao, Huang Yu, Kong Jie, and leaders of various departments alighted from their cars.

“I wish you a smooth journey,” someone sighed softly after a long moment. “The dragon has lurked in the abyss of Silver Moon for too long. It is time to see the world!”

Hou Xiaochen was as dashing and carefree as ever. He didn’t exchange words with any of them and simply left with his team. Li Hao was the one left in a daze. So... the man was gone? Just like that?

It suddenly felt very strange. His teacher had said to have Hou Xiaochen protect him when he left. Although Li Hao had had many doubts, he’d always felt that he had a backer when Hou Xiaochen was present. The same went for Hong Yitang and He Yong...

Hou Xiaochen was gone now and He Yong would also leave today. Hong Yitang had completely cloistered himself in the Sword Sect and refused to see visitors...

Li Hao suddenly trembled when he looked around him! He was in a den of vipers and all of his backers seemed to have disappeared in a split second. He was abruptly back to where he’d been a year ago. His best friend wanted him to run, but where to?

Darkness wrapped around Li Hao. So it turned out that that treacherous guy had still imparted a certain degree of safety to the young man when he was here, even when he didn’t do anything. What a laughable realization!

The young man was deathly silent and next to him, Hao Lianchuan seemed to have become a widower. His expression was pained as he watched Hou Xiaochen’s departure.

#### Chapter 503: The Skies Are Vast Enough for the Birds to Soar Through (I)

Hou Xiaochen left as soon as he said he would. The news of his departure swiftly spread throughout the land as the convoy began traveling to Skystar City.

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In the central region, deep within a mountain.

A man with a slightly pale face sat on a throne within a hall. He was so handsome that it verged on the uncanny. He listened silently to reports being furnished by those beneath him.

“Leader, Hou Xiaochen has set out. Apart from Li Hao’s Demon Hunters, Yu Luochoa, Golden Spear and the rest of the Silver Moon Guards have all departed the province!”

The man rested his chin in his hand, the very picture of laziness in his throne. He listened quietly, contemplating something.

A beautiful woman on his left wore long indigo robes; her eyes blazed with a venomous look. “Leader, the day that Hou Xiaochen and that bitch Yu Luochoa reaches the central region is the day of their death! They trample on Red Moon’s dignity again and again. Hou Xiaochen, Yuan Shuo, and all those people deserve death!”

“Don’t throw out harsh words,” said the man in an even tone as he pressed his hands down, indicating for quiet.

The woman immediately stopped talking. There were people standing in the aisles on the left and right below the throne. There were even some Ghostfaces within the hall—they were all as quiet as could be, shrouding the hall with extreme stillness.

“Hou Xiaochen...” sighed the man. “These people from Silver Moon want nothing more than to feast on my flesh and drink my blood. But I haven’t done anything to them, so why all this hatred? I just want Li Hao...”

“Whether it is the ruins of Battle Heaven or the mysteries of Silver Moon, I’m not interested in them at the moment. i just want Li Hao. Tell me, do you guys think that the eight families are not meant to die out? Things have become very interesting once we turned to Li Hao. The unexpected crops up again and again. First it was Yuan Shuo, then Hou Xiaochen... Things become ever more interesting.”

“Leader, then let us slip into White Moon City while Hou Xiaochen is away and capture Li Hao!” declared the woman in indigo.

“Hou Xiaochen wants nothing more than for you to do that.” The man seemed to roll his eyes. “There is still Kong Jie, Huang Yu, and that old ghost at the provincial government even though Hou Xiaochen is not in the province anymore. Of the three commanders, Hou Xiaochen is one, Huang Yu is the other, which leaves the third in quiet mystery all these years. Kong Jie isn’t the third commander, so I cannot think of any other candidates other than the one at the provincial government...”

“Ai!” he sighed and shook his head. “It is a season of many troubles. How odious. If I’d known it would turn to thus, I should’ve struck swiftly when we discovered Li Hao and taken him from Silver City. Now that he’s left, he’s improved rapidly and may measure up to a mid Nova. This has become troublesome.”

“He’s only killed a Solar...” blinked Indigo Moon. How was he a mid Nova now?

Ying Hongyue leaned back against his chair and couldn’t be bothered with an explanation. It was tiring having to explain every detail.

Would Light Sword cause trouble for Li Hao for no reason at all? Sometimes, much could be derived from one piece of news. Even if Li Hao wasn’t behind Xu Feng’s death, he must have something to do with it. Just that development alone was sufficient to determine many other possibilities.

Li Hao might’ve excavated many treasures from the ruins. What a pity that the world was focused only on Hou Xiaochen. They ignored a lot of other critical details in his wake.

That was just as well. How else would Ying Hongyue’s brilliance be demonstrated if not for this? The man smiled, so handsome that he was overwhelming. In reality, he was only a little younger than Yuan Shuo; he was more than sixty years old. He was a bonafide veteran martial master, but only appeared in his thirties. He might raise delighted squeals from women if he walked around on the streets.

Ying Hongyue seemed to be turning something over in his thoughts. “Since Hou Xiaochen wishes to come to the central region, let him come,” he said slowly. “There is no need to interfere. As for Li Hao...

“White Moon City is too formidable to be touched unless I am there present in person. Otherwise, it is doubtful that we can accomplish what we wish. We will continue to lose people instead, making it much more of a loss than a gain. We don’t need to pay attention to them for now and it’s best to leave Li Hao alone. In fact, do not send any more people to him. Our chance comes when he is forced to leave Silver Moon when he can no longer progress in the province.”

After the ruins, he’d fully plumbed the depths of those in Silver Moon. Sending more people now could be playing right into their hands.

“And there is Violet Moon to consider. Have Orange Moon drop her mission of hunting Yuan Shuo and go to Silver Moon!” Ying Hongyue smiled in an exceedingly tender fashion. “Let’s show them abundant sincerity. I know what they want in exchange for Violet Moon. Have Orange Moon offer ten mid Nova blood pearls and three late Nova blood pearls. Also, make a promise to Li Hao that Orange Moon will no longer chase Yuan Shuo. Have him return Violet Moon after that.”

Indigo Moon listened with some jealousy and wanted to say something... but thought better of her impulse. Perhaps this was the most obvious point of Ying Hongyue’s charisma. He was very generous. These thirteen blood pearls were incredibly powerful as they were all of the Nova level. There were even some late Nova specimens. It might strengthen the enemy or resolve some of their problems, but he was willing to give them up.

If Hou Xiaochen had captured Green Moon and the others instead of killing them, Ying Hongyue would’ve ransomed them back as well.

“You are wise, leader!” said Indigo Moon.

Ying Hongyue rubbed his temples with a soft laugh. “There’s nothing wise about this. If I really was, I wouldn’t have underestimated these guys. I knew they were dangerous, but still let Green

Moon and the others go. Look at how things turned out..." He shook his head with a sigh. "Such are the times and our destiny!"

Who could've fathomed that so many unexpected developments would occur in Battle Heaven? The three great organizations sent more than ten Novas, of which several were late Novas. They were already highly on guard against Hou Xiaochen. Based on Ying Hongyue's judgment, Hou Xiaochen did not wish to unseal himself. Since that was the case, their losses wouldn't be high. There must be other reasons at play if the three great organizations had been completely lost. With just Hou Xiaochen, Kong Jie, Yu Luochoa, and a few others in the ruins, it would take all of them unsealing themselves to accomplish the deed.

"It's all because of Hou Xiaochen's wiles..." Indigo Moon quickly said.

"Wiles?" Ying Hongyue flicked a glance at the woman and sighed again. "Don't constantly dismiss or belittle the enemy. That will make me feel useless. There's nothing wrong with admitting to the enemy's strength. If the enemy is strong and I suffer great losses, that just means I was unlucky and didn't have timing on my side. If you say the enemy is trash, that exemplifies how dumb I am."

"....." Indigo Moon was immediately struck dumb, but she wasn't afraid, just slightly resigned. The leader didn't seem to be in good spirits lately. If this was times past, he wouldn't spend so much time and effort explaining himself.

"This is all my fault, I've been too lenient on all of you over the years." Ying Hongyue shook his head again. "I've always felt that women didn't need to be too strong, that women aren't born to fight. Fighting is a man's job, but this mindset has resulted in some bad influences on the ladies. After you guys set foot into Nova, people show you face and don't normally attack you."

"This expedition has been a blow to the head and reminded you that the old friends in Silver Moon are all vicious sorts!"

He shook his head ruefully. Indigo Moon remained silent.



“Of the six of you, Yu Luocho ran off, Peacock and the divine girl died in the expedition, leaving you and Spider alive. When Spider returns... let’s try a bit harder!” Ying Hongyue looked down the dais and said slowly, “Send word to the Steadfast Duke that Li Hao killed Xu Feng. Light Sword will turn on them, so be careful.”

“Understood!” Someone vanished on the ground. As for whether or not this was true... it was true if the leader had said so. No one suspected anything.

“Light Sword... will turn traitor?” asked Indigo Moon.

“Yes,” sighed Ying Hongyue. “The loyalty of Silver Moon martial masters is not won like that! The Xus have whetted Light Sword’s appetite all this time with the Windchaser Boots, saying that Xu Feng will be in charge of them so long as the young master enters the metamorphosis stage. Light Sword has looked after Xu Feng like a mother and father these years, wanting nothing more than the young master to grow into his strength. Now that he’s dead... Light Sword will surely betray them.”

“With Light Sword’s personality, she should’ve turned on them many years ago,” Indigo Moon asked curiously. “Why wait until today? I didn’t think she was that strong before, but the news now paints her as very strong...”

“The Xus aren’t that weak either!” chuckled Ying Hongyue. “Not to mention, they didn’t lie to her. If Xu Feng had reached that stage, the family would’ve given him the boots. When the yin and yang come together then... It’s not important that Light Sword is old or incredibly unsightly. Most importantly, Xu Feng might be able to borrow the power of pure yang to fully ascend beyond Nova. It was an arrangement that benefited both parties, but nothing of that remains anymore.”

The man seemed to know a lot.

“Therefore, let’s keep watching the show. It’s not that I mean any harm to an old friend, I just want to remind the Xus to be careful. Once they take care of their troubles, they’ll have the ability to try Li Hao and Silver Moon for me. So they better not be caught off guard by Light Sword.”

“Got it!” Indigo Moon nodded, appearing quite naive despite her age.

A smiling Ying Hongyue admired her profile. A naive woman was good, being simple was good. He hadn't let them be involved in too much over these years because he didn't want their base nature to change. But now... it looked like that hadn't been the best decision.

His harem lived in harmony, but it was difficult when they were actually sent out to do anything. Their chances of success were too low and not even on par with some martial masters or supernaturals. I wonder if Hou Xiaochen and the others curse me for taking care of these martial masters to the point where they've been crippled?

“Leader, don't we also need the Windchaser Boots?” added Indigo Moon. “Why don't we take the chance to seize them?”

“The Liu family weapon came into the duke's hands long ago.” Ying Hongyue shook his head. “There's no need for open hostilities with them over this. The core of the eight weapons is still the sword of the Lis. It's a pity we couldn't locate it before, but now we are certain that it is either with Li Hao or with Hou Xiaochen.

“The blade of the Zhangs is likely with Yuan Shuo. That indestructible blade of his probably hides the blade of the Zhangs.”

#### Chapter 504: The Skies Are Vast Enough for the Birds to Soar Through (II)

Ying Hongyue thought for a while before continuing, “Those of Red Moon shall not come in too much contact with these people in the short term. I also need some time to prepare. Share the news that the sword of the Lis and the blade of the Zhangs is in the respective hands of Li Hao and Yuan Shuo. Those two weapons have exceedingly special uses, particularly the blade of the Lis. It might be the key to some of the important ruins of the dynasty.

“As for the royal family... tell them that the sword of the Lis may be able to fully unseal the Skystar ruins. They need to stop playing dead. If the Skystar King wishes to become the Human King of our era, he won't achieve it through staying behind the curtains. He needs to fight for it!

“There’s never been a Human King who won through playing dead,” Ying Hongyue laughed with a sarcastic bent to his voice. “That has ever been the case since the ancient times. Someone like Li Hao is hard to handle as, instead of dying at the last possible moment, he grows stronger in return. They’ll understand from the information they have, they can determine themselves what they want to do next!”

Indigo Moon nodded and couldn’t help but ask, “Then why doesn’t leader...” Personally take action and capture Li Hao? As dangerous as Silver Moon was, the leader could manage those Silver Moon powerhouses, couldn’t he? The opportunity was right in front of them now that Hou Xiaochen was gone!

“We... should not go to Silver Moon if we can help it!” Ying Hongyue responded without looking back. “The province has begun to awaken. When I visited, Hou Xiaochen was much weaker than me, but still killed the second generation Violet Moon. Some of Silver Moon’s existences no longer wish for me to set foot on their land and keep me away. It will be difficult to visit again!”

He vanished with another soft sigh. Indigo Moon looked down at the crowd and snorted, “Keep a watchful eye on Hou Xiaochen’s group! Although our leader has said not to move against them for now, keep them under close surveillance!”

“Understood!” The Ghostfaces below responded haphazardly and didn’t really care what the woman was saying. What was the point of her acting tough when their leader had already spoken? However, since the favored Indigo Moon was one of the few Seven Moons left, they weren’t at liberty to say anything out loud.

.....

On this day, some news began to circulate as Hou Xiaochen’s group left Silver Moon. The first to receive it was the Steadfast Duke’s household.

A magnificent complex was situated in the east of the central region.

Inside a large hall.

An old man with graying hair coughed gently. As the fourth Steadfast Duke, he'd reached an advanced age. He sighed as he looked at the middle-aged men standing beneath him. "It is ever a tragedy for those with white hair to send off those with black hair. Little Feng has died in Silver Moon. There are no further spectacular talents among the younger generation of supernaturals of the family."

As he shook his head, a middle-aged man looking very similar to Xu Feng intoned, "Father, Hou Xiaochen must have something to do with Little Feng's death in Silver Moon. Now that he has left the province and is in the capital, it's possible to eliminate him even if he is strong! On the Night Watcher side, Yellow Dragon probably won't let him find his footing, so why don't we..."

"Let's leave Hou Xiaochen alone for now!" coughed the old man. "Light Sword should be returning soon. Is there news of her?"

"No." The middle-aged man frowned. "I suspect she didn't take any action this time. Otherwise, with her strength and just a simple ruin exploration, she's fine and Little Feng is dead..."

"Big brother, let's not be overly hasty in our grief," cautioned a slightly younger man standing behind Xu Feng's father. "Light Sword is very strong and we still need her help in many things..."

"It's not your son that's dead!" snorted Xu Feng's father. There were many intrigues and plots against each other in a family with over two hundred years of heritage. His younger brother likely wished that he'd died with his son!

It was easy for him to persuade the rest of the family that they shouldn't transfer their anger to Light Sword. You wouldn't be so calm if it was your son dead. Little Feng's death causes the ownership of the Windchaser Boots to be up in the air again. You're probably over the moon.

"Ahem!" The old man rapped on the table to interrupt the arguing. His tone was calm and he was used to the sight in front of him. "Stop arguing about this. If Light Sword comes back... make the arrangements to kill her! Be careful, she's strong and a wily opponent..."

Even Xu Feng's father blinked with surprise. "I didn't mean it that way, father." He looked at the old man. "I know she's very strong and still useful to the family..."

He was just grumbling and hadn't truly thought of killing Light Sword. The swordswoman was very strong and they might have to pay an enormous price to kill her. Not to mention, she was still working for the Xus at the moment. It was awful to lose his son, but it might be even more of a headache to throw in Light Sword into the mix. He hadn't thought that his father would really want to move against the woman, that was entirely unexpected!

"I wouldn't seek to do so if there was any other alternative available," sighed the old man as he looked at the brothers. "It would be best if Light Sword can join the family and always work for us, but you know that there aren't many who can use the Windchaser Boots. I can partially compel it, but that ugly witch thinks I am too old..."

The old man shook his head with a laugh. "She was somewhat willing since Little Feng was handsome. That old witch will never do it if I am the one. I thought that it was fine to have Little Feng suffer just a little as he would gain a very powerful helper in the form of that witch. Men do not need to care about trivial details like these. When the Xus walk out of the east, we'll naturally be able to suppress her! She'll do whatever Little Feng commands then.

"But now that Little Feng is dead, we have no way out!" The old man rose with a heavy sigh. "I do not wish to do this, but the witch will certainly want to seize the Windchaser Boots. Just kill her! These Silver Moon martial masters are wild, intractable, and deviously hard to keep control of. We can't win them to our side no matter how much kindness we show them.

"The female martial masters can only be kept in line through certain men. With Little Feng dead and her hopes ended, she won't let this quietly be..."

The two brothers looked at each other with some understanding and gravity.

"Father, it's said that these martial masters can unseal their battle strength when they reach the peak of their cultivation. Has Light Sword reached this stage?"

“Possibly.” The old man wasn’t sure. “The peak battle strength she exposed before was that of late Nova. She has not displayed any specifics and it is normal for martial masters to hold back in ordinary times. Summon a few of our generals to kill her together!”

“Understood!” The two quickly nodded without further question. It looked like their father had made up his mind to kill Light Sword. The household’s army dominated the east and their generals were exceedingly formidable. Any one of them might rival the General of Northern Pacification of the three northern provinces. Their father meant to utilize strength in numbers to mob Light Sword.

“Ah, yes.” The old man was about to leave when another thought struck him. “Send some men to Silver Moon and test Li Hao’s mettle after we’re done with Light Sword. There’s news from Red Moon that Li Hao might be behind Little Feng’s death. He might also wield the divine sword of the Lis!”

Xu Feng was already dead, so there was no need to expend the effort of sending people to Silver Moon to investigate Li Hao. But if it involved the divine sword of the Lis... that was different.

Regular people were hard pressed to understand just how incredible the treasures of the eight guardian clans were. But as the Xus possessed the Windchaser Boots, they knew a thing or two. The boots had belonged to the Liu family and were marvelous!

It was partially due to these boots that the Steadfast Duke had been able to render aid to the royal family when the dynasty was first established. The first generation of the duke had been a Dominator hailed as a walking god.

Dominators of present day were a far cry from Dominators back in the day. Other than Silver Moon, there were very few martial masters anywhere in the land. Dominators were mysterious personages that one could not catch sight of. Such a heavyweight had sat in residence at the Xus.

Ferocious beyond compare, that Dominator had been the key figure to the royal family securing supremacy over the land. He had been exceptionally fast and able to kill fellow Dominators due to the Windchaser Boots.

It wasn't until several ancient tomes were discovered in recent years through more excavations that the Xus learned their boots was the family heritage of one of the eight families. They hadn't known much about the eight families at first, but as Ying Hongyue's scheme in Silver City was uncovered, the insignificant border city immediately became the center of attention to some.

So the eight families were located in that miserable backwater... No one would have expected that!

Before anyone could respond or set up plans, drastic changes occurred in Silver Moon. Solars died, then large sums of Novas died. Even the Xus were at a loss of how to respond. The divine sword of the Lis was ranked first among the eight family weapons. It went without saying that it must have marvelous effects.

Red Moon was sharing all this news simply because it was wary of Silver Moon's martial world and characters like Hou Xiaochen. Everyone knew what Ying Hongyue had in mind, but who wasn't tempted when treasure was set in front of them?

The old man said nothing else before leaving. Light Sword... What a pity! They'd finally recruited a premier Silver Moon martial master to enhance the family's strength. Now look at the situation—he had to pray that nothing went wrong in the process of taking her down.

.....

All sorts of news spread throughout various powerhouses and senior executives in a short day. It was a repeat of when Hou Xiaochen shared the effectiveness of the blood pearls and caused significant losses to Red Moon in a short period of time. It wasn't until Red Moon killed quite a few powerhouses in warning did that stem the bleeding.

Rumors of the divine sword of the Lis spread by mouth. The premier powerhouses didn't care about blood pearls as they knew that unless there was a very large number of these items, those weak pills wouldn't be of much help to them.

Thus, not that many elite heavyweights had been tempted by that news, but they were very much so by the divine weapons of the eight families.

## Chapter 505: The Skies Are Vast Enough for the Birds to Soar Through (III)

Silver Moon.

White Moon City, the Night Watcher headquarters.

Li Hao was yet to recover from Hou Xiaochen's departure. At the moment, he and Hao Lianchuan were busy staring at each other. It was the two of them against the entire world. Another piece of bad news arrived while Li Hao's thoughts were a tangled snarl.

A red communicator rang in Hou Xiaochen's empty office.

Li Hao looked at Hao Lianchuan, Hao Lianchuan looked at Li Hao. The two were still relishing the melancholic bleakness that'd washed over them. That suddenly ringing communicator... was not a good sign.

Hao Lianchuan focused on Li Hao and gestured with his fat chin. "My head hurts and I don't want to pick it up. You get it!"

Li Hao rolled his eyes! My head hurts too! I've never been in charge of people in my life! I was a class rep once when I was a kid, but all I had to do was collect candy. The Demon Hunters regulate themselves, so I'm the one in a massive pickle!

However, there must be something large at stake if the red communicator was ringing now. The young man swiftly answered it.

"Is this Li Hao or Hao Lianchuan?"



“I am Li Hao...” The young man vaguely made out who it was, but he wasn’t too sure.

“That’s good. Don’t go around by yourself these days. Either you run after Hou Xiaochen right now and head to the central region with him, or you stay put in White Moon City! There’s news traveling through the central region that you wield the divine sword of the Lis, that it can access many core ruins—even the one held by the royal family!

“You know what that means. As more information about the eight families spreads, your troubles will continue to grow bigger!”

Li Hao blinked and took a moment to respond, “I gave it to...”

“Enough, do you take everyone for fools?”

“.....” Well, it looks like not everyone is a fool. So now there were people who felt that Stellaris was on him. And the key thing was, the news was spreading only after Hou Xiaochen left. Li Hao had become an easy target when he had no one protecting him!

When Hou Xiaochen was present, some people played dumb out of wariness of the Night Watcher director. Now, they dropped the act. Troubles came one after another! Li Hao stared forward with resignation.

“You’re not the only one, your teacher is in a great deal of trouble too. Rumors say that he holds the blade of the Zhangs. People didn’t care that he was attacking Red Moon members before, but now they’ll make trouble for him too. No one knows where the eight weapons are, but they’re likely in the hands of major factions. You and your teacher are weak and you hold two of them. Who will people look for, if not you?”

“Did Red Moon spread this information?” Li Hao frowned.

“How did you figure that out?”

“Setting me aside.” Li Hao recovered his calm. “Apart from Red Moon and Ying Hongyue being exceedingly familiar with the eight families, no one is able to guess that my teacher holds the blade of the Zhangs.”

It would be one thing if his teacher was left out of the stories, but once Yuan Shuo was involved, that confirmed for Li Hao that the news came from Ying Hongyue! After some thought, the young man asked, “So I will be fine if I stay in the city?”

“Correct.”

“White Moon City won’t be able to protect me if I leave?”

“Correct.”

He understood! Li Hao was just asking and wasn’t truly concerned. He was more resigned that some of his earlier preparations were ruined after Stellaris was exposed. People wouldn’t be focused on Hou Xiaochen anymore. Thankfully, most simply knew that the divine weapons were strong. They were unaware of the specific effects. If they knew that as well... trouble would be never-ending!

The only ones that knew at the moment were his teacher, Southern Fist, and Earthturner Sword. They wouldn’t do anything with their information.

As more thoughts rose in Li Hao’s mind, he suddenly understood why Hou Xiaochen wanted to leave together. Perhaps he’d already foreseen that if Li Hao remained in Silver Moon, there would be endless issues coming for the young man!

“Thank you for the reminder!” Li Hao didn’t have time to finish his sentence before the communicator cut off. He looked at it wordlessly.

“Who was it?” Hao Lianchuan asked curiously. He’d heard the voice and found it familiar, but didn’t recall who it was.

Li Hao raised his chin in the eastern direction. Hao Lianchuan paused, quickly thinking of someone. “Director General Zhao? How does he have a personal communication channel with the director?”

“.....” Li Hao suppressed the urge to roll his eyes. “They’re both in Silver Moon and the heads of their major institutions. Is it weird that they have a personal channel?”

What was going through Ole Hao’s mind? Why was this such a surprise to him?

“It’s not that.” Hao Lianchuan shook his head. “It’s that that old man has always had a poor relationship with the director. It’s one thing if others have a private channel with him, but him... and for him to know all this and tell you? What does he mean by that?”

“Who knows,” Li Hao sighed.

“Does this mean that trouble has grown bigger?” Hao Lianchuan asked after some thought.

“Probably.”

“What can your family sword do? If there isn’t much use to it, you should just give it to the director before and avoid all this trouble...”

“Director Hao.” Li Hao served Hao Lianchuan with a long look. “Why are you so timid today?”

Where had his previous domineering air gone? No matter how many powerhouses the three great organizations had sent to the province before, this one always excitedly charged forward to kill Red

Moon powerhouses and harvest blood pearls. But now, he seemed deathly afraid of being embroiled in trouble.

Hao Lianchuan ignored him and continued to wallow in misery. What do you think?? I'm a mid Solar without Hou Xiaochen's influence to borrow from. How dare I provoke anyone right now?

Ole Hou is so heartless to have me hunt down the three great organizations while knowing that he was about to leave. Look at things now! He's off high and dry, and took all of the Silver Moon Guards with him and Manager Yu! I'm the only one left! What should I do now??

Hao Lianchuan drooped dejectedly on the sofa and wanted to light up a cigarette. He pawed at his pockets before recalling... he didn't smoke.

"Forget it, let's not think so much." The man rallied his spirits. "Good thing we took care of most of the supernaturals in the ruins. There are some stragglers left, but not that many. We can only pray that those bastards aren't all that strong and that there's no more Novas left to cause trouble. Otherwise... we'll be in for it!

"Also, you seem to be in a pickle, so you should probably just listen to what other people are saying. Stay at White Moon City with peace of mind or wait for Director Hou to come back, or... find a place to hide.

"The director insisted on promoting you when he left. He probably wants you to shoulder some responsibilities. In that case, you can be in charge of the coastline. I'll redeploy some supernaturals to be under your command and supplement your defenses. As for outside of White Moon City... I'll do that since you can't leave. I hope no one has their eye set on me. We'd just be proceeding as usual, I was in charge of these before as well."

Hao Lianchuan looked hesitantly at the young man and suddenly said, "Li Hao, um..."

"What?" Li Hao looked warily at the man. What did he want to complain about now?

“Don’t take the coastline lightly! There has indeed been a lack of nautical invasion in Silver Moon these years, so the people’s understanding of pirates isn’t deep. According to what I know, the big cities along the North Sea might suffer attacks at any time. Each attack leads to thousands of casualties, with sometimes cities being outright massacred! A single spot of inattention from you might lead to pirates making landfall and rushing the cities. They won’t all have Night Watcher presence in them, so that might result in extreme suffering for the people!

“Moon Sea’s coastline is very long and you don’t have enough people! Don’t think that your job is done simply after you hold the line at White Moon City. Pirates will probably stay away from the capital and more likely focus their attention on the surrounding cities.

“Of the sixteen cities in the southern half of the province, there are three closer to the coast in addition to White Moon. They are Southern Ford, Abundance, and Flowing Cloud. Only Southern Ford has a Night Watcher branch with two Sunflares. The other two cities don’t have any supernaturals present.”

“Then how did the Silver Moon Guards defend the coastline before?” Li Hao frowned.

“They didn’t, they struck proactively instead. They cleansed the waters every so often!” Hao Lianchuan responded seriously. “The Silver Moon Guards are still known on the open seas. Regular pirates don’t dare trespass in Silver Moon territory, and it’s also because we’re very barren here. To those pirates, it’s a better use of time to visit the North Sea because it’s richer over there. But now that the Guard is gone, don’t you think those pirates will wander over for a casual raid?”

Li Hao’s temples throbbed! Three cities, plus White Moon, so four cities. He had fifty subordinates to draw from—they would be forty-five once Liu Long left! Was he supposed to defend four cities with this number? What a joke!

He would have to take the fight to them like the Silver Moon Guards did and destroy the pirates at the intersection of the North and Moon Seas. Defense would be entirely impossible otherwise.

“Don’t look at me,” Hao Lianchuan mumbled. “It’s good enough if I protect the inland cities.”

He was at a loss too.

“Then the army and Inspectorate...” Li Hao looked at him.

“It’s not that we can’t ask them for reinforcements.” Hao Lianchuan considered the idea. “But that the Night Watchers were the agency with the highest authority over superhumans along the coast and cities. Once we hand that over... we won’t be getting it back. I don’t mind as power struggles are not what I desire. But if we lose Director Hou’s hard work as soon as he leaves...”

That didn’t seem to fly!

“Very well, I see.” Li Hao rose to leave.

“Are you doing?” Hao Lianchuan quickly asked.

“What else should I do?” Li Hao sighed. “I’ll go back to the Guards barracks first. Also, assign some cars to me. I have to run every time I travel, it’s such a loss of face.”

“Will do!” Hao Lianchuan didn’t protest this easy request.

The young man tossed over a small bottle after some thought. “There’s some blood pearls inside, you use them, Director Hou. It’s best if you can find the fifth supernatural lock. If not... we’ll think of another way.”

Hao Lianchuan paused. You have blood pearls?

Chapter 506: The Skies Are Vast Enough for the Birds to Soar Through (IV)

Hao Lianchuan opened the bottle and took a sniff. There were quite a few blood pearls inside; a couple were of the Solar level.

“Where did you get this from?”

“From killing people,” Li Hao chuckled. “Chin up, there’s no need to be so depressed, Director Hao. There won’t be many problems on land, the main issue is the coastline, which I’ll be in charge of. Send me a few water supernaturals, I don’t have much use for the rest. Oh, I could use some flight types and investigative types though.”

The young man suddenly paused and started laughing. “Just give me Yun Yao, Hu Hao, and Li Meng!”

Those three happened to be the attributes that he wanted. What a coincidence! He hadn’t had a chance to think of them before, but now abruptly recalled that they’d also come to White Moon City and were serving in the Night Watchers.

“Them?” Hao Lianchuan blinked. “They’re just Darkmoons and defending our shores is important. What good are three Darkmoons for? We have some more Sunflares and Solars at the Night Watchers now. Ole He is also a water type and he just made it to Solar. I’ll have him help you...”

One had to say, the fatty was quite generous. There were only three Solars in residence at the agency, but he was still sending one of them to help Li Hao.

“That’s alright.” The young man shook his head. “Solars are the same as Darkmoons to me as I only need them to be scouts. In fact, Solars would be wasted in that capacity. Those three will do and it’s more convenient since we’re well acquainted. I’m not familiar with Deputy Director He and it’s kind of awkward to have a veteran be my lackey.”

“Very well then.” Hao Lianchuan didn’t insist upon seeing how steadfast Li Hao was. He prepared to walk downstairs with the young man. “Do you think Director Hou will make it back from the central region?”

“.....” Li Hao flicked him a sidelong glance. Why does it sound like you’re hoping he’ll die there?  
“I don’t know.”

“Man, Li Hao, I’m seriously kind of depressed,” Hao Lianchuan sighed heavily. “I thought I was a hotshot as a Solar, but so many Novas have died recently and hundreds of Solars as well. I feel that a Solar cultivation level isn’t the insurance that it once was. But I lack sufficient potential to find my fifth lock. I’m crippled...”

“Deputy Director Hao, what are you trying to say?” Li Hao suppressed the urge to roll his eyes. The man had sighed for most of their time together, so he might as well come out and say whatever was on his mind!

“Ahem, it’s nothing much. I just wanted to say... um... take your ole brother along!” The fatty suddenly beamed brightly, losing all traces of his melancholic expression.

Li Hao paused. What did he mean?

“Ole Hou’s gone, which leaves Silver Moon to us brothers!” Hao Lianchuan winked. “I hear that you killed a Nova in the ruins? My dear little brother, don’t pretend with big bro here. I’ve sighed for half a day now, but don’t hear you say that you want to help me. So I’ll be straight, I can do anything like kill people and set fires if there’s enough in it for me. Wang Ming’s too weak, I’m stronger than him!”

What... the... heck! Li Hao didn’t know what to say. The fuck? Where did fatty hear this from? Take you along? Do you think I’m a bandit?? And when the heck did we become brothers? I was calling you my uncle a few days ago, now we’re brothers?

Li Hao really had thought that the fatty was simply in a bad mood after all the sighing he was doing. Why did it seem now that he was thinking he had more room to flex his muscles after Hou Xiaochen was gone?

“Deputy Director...”



“Call me Brother Hao!” Hao Lianchuan corrected solemnly. “Don’t stand on ceremony with me now. Wang Ming made it to late Sunflare in a few short days. I’m not asking for much, just let me tag along when you do something next time and get me to peak Solar!”

“.....” Li Hao was at a complete loss for words and didn’t want to speak further to someone who wasn’t thinking clearly. He turned and left.

“The pirates also have treasure—and there’s a lot of precious objects in the watery depths,” Hao Lianchuan transmitted. “Remember to bring me with you if you go out and exterminate them! I may be a fire attribute, but I can still fight in the sea. No danger troubles me on land, that only occurs in the sea. Remember me!”

“.....” Li Hao broke out in a sprint. The guy was crazy!

Hao Lianchuan was acting entirely beyond his expectations. The young man was still fretting over the situation in Silver Moon, but the fatty had already recovered and wanted to goad Li Hao into attacking the pirates together? How could he even think of that??

“Seriously, the pirates have treasure!” Hao Lianchuan called out. “Check the Silver Moon Guards’ files if you don’t believe me. There’s so much treasure in the sea. Apparently there’s even ancient ruins in the depths of the deep blue. There’s mines and Water of Life left. Let’s go do something big and get rich while people think we have to hole up in White Moon City!”

“.....” Li Hao ran faster and faster. He might fall to temptation from the fatty if he was any slower. I haven’t decided on anything yet, but here you are, thinking of how to get rich.

“Go back and check the files, really! There are a few pirate factions near the Moon Sea. Once you’re on the waters, it’s difficult for foes to track you even if they’re strong. I remember that the Guards have a ship that’s an origin weapon. I don’t know if it was left behind—probably? Go take a look, and be quick about it! The big pirates from the North Sea are coming, so we need to take this opportunity to resolve the small pirates...”

“.....”

Li Hao had completely vanished from sight. Hao Lianchuan sighed with a shake of his head at seeing how fast the young man had run off. Not much courage to this one, was there? There won't be a chance for us to do anything later if we don't do so now.

.....

The Silver Moon Guards barracks.

A loud din used to rise daily from a place where martial masters trained everyday. But now, it was still. However, the Demon Hunters were training. They assembled ten to a group and practiced the Ten Rings Mountain Seal Formation. Several dozen people spread out over the massive plaza made exceedingly little sound.

Liu Long had returned ahead of time. He came back as soon as Hou Xiaochen left, not minding that he didn't have a chance to speak to Hou Xiaochen. The latter hadn't addressed that many people when he left.

There were also a few mundanes in the vast complex apart from the Demon Hunters. They were in charge of hygiene and cooking, but there was no sight of them to be seen as they stayed in the living quarters.

.....

This empty sight was what greeted Li Hao when he returned. He watched the group train for a little bit before leaving alone. The warehouse required a visit. The young man wasn't too familiar with the barracks, but he knew where the warehouse was.

A single story building appeared before long, one with a guard in front of it. The martial masters may have run off, but a few support supernaturals remained on duty. The Darkmoon at the door quickly called out, “Greetings, centurion!”

Li Hao looked at him briefly—this Darkmoon looked to be almost in his fifties and likely didn’t want to run around with the Guards anymore. Hence, he stayed.

“How many supernaturals are there in the base?” Li Hao inclined his head.

“Nine, including me!” answered the man. “Eight Darkmoons and one Sunflare. We are in charge of monitoring the outskirts, fixing any wear and tear to the barracks, and following the team out on missions if there is a need!”

The entire artificial forest was under the watchful eye of a surveillance system.

“I’ll meet everyone later. Now that the rest has gone, I am the acting ranking officer. I’m unfamiliar with you guys, so I’ve come to see you.”

“Congratulations, sir!” the man immediately belted.

“.....” Li Hao grinned. As expected of someone with more years under his belt! You change your tune so quickly! “Open the warehouse doors.”

“You should have the key, sir...”

Is that so? Li Hao took out the storage ring that Golden Spear had given him and looked into it. The man appeared to have a certain degree of an organizing compulsion as everything was neatly categorized and laid out within the ring. Meanwhile, the young man had collected too many rings and stuffed them into jumbled messes. There were simply too many for him to organize.

A quick scan of the ring revealed the warehouse key. There it was, neatly labeled and captioned. It was impossible to miss.

Li Hao broke out into a grin. Had Golden Spear personally gone to this effort, or had the man set his disciples to the test? He put the matter to rest and took out the key to open the heavy warehouse door.

.....

Through the door.

Everything inside was neatly arranged as well. First came the armory that stored all sorts of weapons. They looked to be in fine condition; their most eye-catching members were fifty complete sets of armor. Li Hao blinked at the sight.

He'd put down fifty suits of armor as collateral when he borrowed thirty mysterious power stones. Upon his return, he'd shut himself in seclusion and then sent off the others today. He'd completely forgotten the matter and knew that Golden Spear didn't have enough equipment. The man only had five hundred sets of armor, so it was more than likely that he'd claimed Li Hao's fifty.

But here they were, safe and sound. The young man sighed with appreciation. Golden Spear was a good man—on his end, Li Hao had forgotten to return the thirty stones!

While there was no use for the fifty sets now, Li Hao had the right to activate black armor. They might be useful in the days to come. He didn't activate the ones that the Guards were using as they were one degree of separation removed. There also hadn't been enough time for him to do so.

Now that he thought about it, when the expedition destroyed the Tenth Troop, they'd harvested nine hundred sets of armor. Part of the troop had died with their troop leader. Li Hao owned one hundred sets and the Silver Moon Guards roughly five hundred sets. The three great organizations owned one hundred each, but they didn't make use of them in Silver Moon. Therefore, it was possible that they'd been transported to the central region.

## Chapter 507: Pirates (I)

“Sooner or later, I need to retrieve all of the armor!” Li Hao muttered. He was a Battle Heaven troop leader, after all. It was an affront that evil factions such as the three great organizations were making use of it. At the very least, the Silver Moon Guard were on the side of good.

The warehouse was replete with Battle Heaven armor, weapons, and ordinary armor. Li Hao ventured further in to examine the treasures left behind. The Guards had taken most of it with them, leaving the shelves rather bare.

After a while, he saw a door to a secret room. Li Hao opened the door to discover that this was the ancient archives room, where the Guards stored most of the ancient tomes that they’d discovered on their expeditions. Some of them were ordinary titles, but it was a good find to the young man all the same.

He selected one at random and flipped it open. It was in good condition—the words “War of Southern Jiang” were written on the page. A battle record? Now this was a rare sight. The ancient books that Li Hao knew of rarely discussed topics like these.

The first chapter started off with—In the first year of the New Martial calendar...

New Martial seemed to be the beginning of a new era, a particular calendar designation. Li Hao had seen it in many ancient tomes. The ancient civilization utilized the New Martial calendar, and there was another primordial civilization before that.

The young man quickly scanned the pages. This was a book that not many would pay attention to. He didn’t know if anyone else had read it or if there was even anyone who could. There should be, right?

It was Li Hao’s first time seeing general overviews of ancient powerhouses. The Human King, Martial King, Nether King...

Monikers in lieu of names appeared in the book. According to the book, Southern Jiang seemed to be an old haunt of the Human King during the ancient civilization. When he was out traveling the world and seeking to improve his weak self, it was invaded by an alien race called the Earth Dwellers. A massive war erupted in Southern Jiang as a result.

The weak Human King traveled with large numbers of human powerhouses into the enemy's lair, so that the human territory of Southern Jiang wouldn't suffer damage. Although it was exceedingly dangerous to venture deep into enemy land, all of these people did so without a second thought, so as to protect the ordinary people of Southern Jiang!

Eliminating the enemy outside our home! Refusing to let the enemy take half a step into human territory, even if the price was to fall in battle outside their homeland and being unable to be brought back to their final resting place...

Li Hao had wanted to scan the book quickly, but he fell silent and continued paging through it to read more closely. The book described a ghastly battle and mentioned a name he was familiar with.

"In the war between Southern Jiang and the Earth Dwellers, the sixth rank Eternal Sword Sovereign stunned the world by employing his sword Sever Immortality to strike down an eighth rank enemy. The Human King wailed with grief and brought a dying Eternal Sword Sovereign to his battles in the Earth Dweller home. They fought ferociously throughout the land. The battle of Southern Jiang witnessed the first taste of the Human King's might and caused the name of the Eternal Sword Sovereign to be known throughout the two worlds..."

The Eternal Sword Sovereign!

This was a name and title that Li Hao was more familiar with. People seemed to call his ancestor that. According to the book, his ancestor was very weak then. Sixth rank... was quite weak according to the ancient tomes that Li Hao had pored through before. He could deduce from what he'd read that cultivators wouldn't even have manifested their mind intent at sixth rank. Their physical bodies would be slightly stronger than most—it was eighth rank that was hailed as grandmaster. This was a fight akin to a Sunderer killing a Dominator, or perhaps a little more impressive than that.

Ten years to hone a blade and shaking off the image of trash with one stunning stroke. This hadn't even been the most impressive battle of the entire war!

The weak and fragile Human King of the ancient civilization began his rise with this war. He took the fight to the Earth Dwellers despite being a fourth rank—the book described the enemy as ninth rank powerhouses. They might be on par with modern day Novas, whereas a fourth rank was just initial Sunderer...

Yet in this war, the Human King killed untold numbers of the enemy, razed their major cities, and saved the Eternal Sword Sovereign. Humanity fully defeated the Earth Dwellers after this war. It was hailed as the most important skirmish in the rise of the Human King, and closely detailed his berserk fury, despair, tenacity, and wisdom in that age.

There was such a large gap in strength, but everyone willingly charged to their deaths. Many human powerhouses died in this campaign, but a line from the book emblazoned itself in Li Hao's mind.

During the most critical moments of battle, older grandmasters called upon the Incantation of the Blade of Blood and detonated themselves against the enemy. In the New Martial age, there were no grandmasters that died of old age. They only died on the battlefield. When their time in the world was up and their blood qi depleted, they raced for the depths of the Earth Dweller home and fought fiercely against immense enemies. They battled to the death and never looked back!

It was merely text on a page, but that was sufficient to make Li Hao's blood boil. He thought of the Battle Heaven Army! He'd already thought that the army was comprised of elites among elites, but now that he looked at it... the martial masters of that era were incredible!

They knew that they could not withstand the ferocious enemy, yet all of them still charged to their deaths. There were no elderly martial masters in their time, just martial masters dead in action! They threw themselves into the depths of the enemy camp when they reached an advanced age, fighting tirelessly by themselves...

The young man flipped page after page, sensing the emotions behind the words and picturing the scenes in his mind... He put himself in those occurrences. Was this how that era had been? Then what of the Star Era that I am part of? Are there people with that kind of mentality in this day and age?

But... we don't have external enemies, just civil discord. Li Hao sighed after a long moment and shook his head. It was very hard for those kinds of characters to appear in the modern world. There was certainly text inside this book that was quite unforgettable to the young man.

Martial masters of that era ventured deep into enemy camp just to keep the enemy out of their home. It was more dangerous to do so and their casualty rate was higher, but these powerful martial masters raced to the frontlines to protect ordinary people all the same. They did so heedless of consequences, finally obtaining victory at a higher price.

They would've lost fewer people if they let the enemy into Southern Jiang territory, but that would've resulted in high numbers of civilian deaths.

However...

If it was modern times, how would the ruler decide if expending tens of thousands, even one hundred thousand civilians, could lead to the destruction of dozens of Novas?

The Martial King had been mentioned in passing in the book, very few lines were dedicated to him. He'd been the leader of humanity in that area and the one to give the order to take the fight to the Earth Dwellers, so that the enemy would not venture into human territory. Though the martial masters would meet death in higher numbers, they did so without regret.

"The times... are different now," Li Hao murmured. The modern world was no longer that age.

But the book also said that the New Martial era started from them, that they'd founded this age. Far from naturally giving rise to a new age, it was these people who'd established such a fervent era. The book ended on a note that such campaigns were just one of many thousands upon thousands. The Earth Dwellers attempted many invasions during the New Martial era, but they never set foot on human territory, no matter how strong they were!

The enemies were formidable beyond imagination in the New Martial era, but they were ultimately destroyed beyond human territory. Lights remained on in thousands of homes, peace and prosperity



flourished. The faith of humanity was shared throughout millions upon millions of people. Everyone believed in their powerhouses. Countless youngsters answered the battlefield's call and died in foreign lands, but they did so without regret.

"Complete exaggeration..." Li Hao muttered. This was just a book of historical fiction, there must be elements of overstatement involved. He didn't believe that this was really how the ancient civilization had been.

At the same time, how did that explain the Battle Heaven Army?

There was still a certain degree of mental impact to the young man. Li Hao laughed wryly. What he'd seen and heard the most these days was destroying the enemy outside of the gates. Had he gotten too sensitive to it, or was he thinking too much? Everytime he saw those words, it was like they reminded him to not utilize Silver Moon as a battlefield. Whether it was pirates or powerhouses, it was best if they were all destroyed outside the province. They could not be allowed to disturb the lives of ordinary people or drag mundanes into the fighting.

Hao Lianchuan also reminded him to not wait until the pirates invaded. It was better to take the fight to them.

"The Human King... Eternal Sword Sovereign..." Li Hao murmured in a daze. Were these two really that strong?

No, not strong. It was a kind of ultimate fervor and hot-bloodedness to fight the strong when one was weak. Was the Human King the killing fiend he'd glimpsed?

What kind of concept was fourth rank? He'd rampaged in all directions in a place rife with ninth rank enemies, carrying the dying Eternal Sword Sovereign by his side. He ultimately reaped stunning battle accomplishments and war loot, thus marking his official rise within humanity.

Various concepts echoed in Li Hao's mind; he swiftly put down the book and walked toward the next area. He'd just wanted to take an inventory count of what was here. He should stay away from

these books in the future. It gave rise to a certain impulse every time he picked one up, one to let go of all of his reservations and stop waiting patiently!

It was not terrifying to be weak, it was terrifying to not dare let loose even once. But if he did... he might die in a moment of carelessness. Li Hao didn't want to die yet.

He walked forward and entered another secret room. A ship that sparkled with light sat here—it was very small at only one meter across. However, the young man knew that this was the origin weapon. It should be able to grow bigger if the weapon soul was awake.

Li Hao summoned Stellaris and knocked it gently on the ship. “Show yourself if you're awake. Otherwise... I'll chop you into two!”

The ship remained unmoving. Li Hao knew that it wasn't afraid of a simple sword; he summoned sword intent with a visualized move...

A weapon soul immediately presented itself. It looked like a big fish, but also like a bird. Li Hao frowned at it, what kind of monster spirit was this? A fish that could fly?

“I can claim you, yes?” He ignored its trembling. “The kind through blood?”

While the big fish didn't say anything, the ship itself trembled. After his experience communicating with the Flaming Phoenix Spear, Li Hao took it as a tacit agreement.

## Chapter 508: Pirates (II)

Li Hao forced out a drop of blood from his fingertip, letting it drip down and sink into the ship. As the origin weapon shook, many thoughts entered the young man's mind. It was his first time trying to claim an origin weapon. Although he owned quite a few, he'd never tried to assert ownership over any of them.

Truth be told, it wasn't any easy process. However, given that the young man held Stellaris and it was erupting with the sword intent of the Eternal Sword, the origin weapon decided to make the

process a bit easier. The fish was afraid that an overly complicated process would inspire the sword to smash it to pieces first.

“The Vast Kun Ship...” Li Hao murmured, his eyes darting around. [1] The information in his mind was easy to process—this was a formidable ship that could sail through the Forbidden Sea. Now that was a rare find. There was some information about the Forbidden Sea among the new information in the young man’s mind.

Therefore, the North Sea should be like a little creek to the ship.

It could carry a thousand people when enlarged—a perfect fit for the Silver Moon Guards. Golden Spear and the others had made use of it a few times, but not to great effect since they didn’t claim it as their personal treasure. Many functions were inert and yet to be activated for use.

Li Hao continued to peruse the new information that’d appeared. A sheen of silver appeared over his body; he sent his thoughts into it. “Can the armor pull up information?”

The armor system of the ancient civilization was incredible. Could it act as a reference library?

“The data library is not activated.” A row of characters appeared in front of Li Hao. “Data is lost and authorization insufficient. Only basic functions can be supplied...”

It was plain to see that the data library pertaining to this armor had not yet been repaired in Battle Heaven. That was a bit of a pity! He might’ve been able to look up a lot of things and not have to rely on guesswork when studying an origin weapon.

He put the Vast Kun Ship away—it was quite convenient that these treasures could be stowed after they were claimed. Li Hao continued wandering around the warehouse, walking into another secret chamber before long. This was where the Guards kept their files. He had some points of interest to look up—the ruins that Golden Spear had attempted before and what the organization knew about the pirates.

.....

At the same time, the provincial government.

Director General Zhao sat at his desk, finishing his matters for the day. He glanced at Deputy Zhou in the distance. “Has the little guy gone back?”

“Yes, he’s gone back to base,” the deputy chuckled. “Do you think he’s gone into hiding or has other thoughts in mind?”

“It’s tough to say.” Deputy Zhou shook his head slightly. “We don’t know much about Li Hao. Whether it’s Hou Xiaochen or you, director general, everyone seems to want him to shoulder some responsibilities. But I think... there’s no need for that. The eight families were indeed clans that safeguarded the world in the ancient civilization, but this is endless eons later. The glories and duties of his forebears should not be imposed on him.”

The local powerhouses such as Hou Xiaochen and Director General Zhao seemed to very much wish that Li Hao could take on some responsibilities. And yet, Deputy Zhou didn’t agree with their viewpoint.

“The eight guardian clans protected the human race of that era, not modern day Silver Moon. Li Hao is also too young, his parents are dead and his best friend suffered a horrible end. I think that the director general is too optimistic.”

“We don’t know either,” sighed Director General Zhao. “The eight families gathered in Silver City. It is fine if they fall on the side of good, but once they do evil, they are a plague upon the world!

“You see what’s happened with Red Moon. Their leader may be part of the eight families. Abject misery is inflicted upon people when the eight families veer toward evil. Hou Xiaochen and I both hope that Li Hao can stand on the side of order and justice...”

“It’s tough to levy high standards on him!” said the deputy after some thought. “We can only influence him imperceptibly and set a good example by conduct. If we can’t do it ourselves, director

general, is it reasonable to have him do it? He is young and needs to be swayed through words and actions, not through commands and coercion.”

He didn’t quite agree with Hou Xiaochen and the director general’s methods; they weren’t ideal.

“We want to, but... there’s not much we can do from that angle at the moment.” Director General Zhao laughed ruefully with a shake of his head. “Ah, forget it, he can do as he wishes. Have someone watch the seas so nothing goes wrong. As for Li Hao, let him be. I don’t care what he does so long as he doesn’t cause a ruckus in Silver Moon.”

The deputy went back to his duties. The two had worked together for so many years that even their offices were connected to each other to facilitate communication. This was a very rare arrangement.

.....

All sides had their eyes on Hou Xiaochen’s group; one person in particular was calculating how long it’d take the convoy to exit the northern provinces. People were also watching Li Hao of Silver Moon, but any reconnaissance was wasted since the young man didn’t do anything after returning to the Silver Moon Guards barracks.

The entire province seemed to sink into quiet stillness after Hou Xiaochen left.

.....

The North Sea.

Waves reared and tossed a massive ship around.

“Hou Xiaochen’s gone, the Silver Moon Guards are gone,” snarled a tyrannical and irate voice. “According to our calculations, these guys might reach the North Sea tomorrow or the day after. Shall we strike and ambush them on the open waters?”

“Do you have a death wish?” answered a frosty voice. “They have almost one thousand Silver Moon Guards, Hou Xiaochen, Golden Spear, Yu Luocho, and multiple other powerhouses. So many of the three great organizations’ Novas have died to their hands. Ambush them? Do you have shit for brains?”

“But I can’t just let them pass through like this!” raged the tyrannical voice. “That bastard Golden Spear killed so many of our brothers over the years...”

“Then you lead people to attack them. I won’t stop anyone who’s willing!”

“.....” The ship’s hold suddenly fell quiet.

“How will we be able to do it if big brother doesn’t come with us...” mumbled the tyrannical voice with some reluctance. They really didn’t have the gall to make such an attempt without their boss. Hou Xiaochen was terrifying! It was only in the seas that they stood a chance as their targets were masters of land. The North Sea, however, was their territory.

“Then shut up!” echoed the aloof voice. The speaker couldn’t be bothered with the other as all the latter would do was offer ludicrous ideas. Ambush Hou Xiaochen? This is something that the three great organizations wouldn’t dare attempt, and you want me to ambush him? Do I look like I want to die? We spent so much effort creating this enterprise and dominating the seas. Even if I wanted to die, I don’t want to go out like this.

“Big brother, we should take revenge on Silver Moon even if we don’t on Golden Spear,” raised Tyrannical. “The Silver Moon Guards and Hou Xiaochen are gone. Why don’t we rush to Silver Moon, slaughter some of his cities, and make Hou Xiaochen and the Guards regret their prior actions!”

“Silver Moon is impoverished. Where is there a city rich enough for our efforts apart from White Moon City?” Dissatisfaction crept into Aloof’s tones. “There may be more than Hou Xiaochen in White Moon who’s concealing their true strength. It’s a very dangerous place and completely meaningless to attack. We might bring trouble down on our heads instead.”

“Then we should at least kill some Silver Moon people, even if we leave White Moon City alone. The province has some cities near the sea, we’ll just raze one of them! If not, our brothers won’t be willing to let things go like this, it’s not just me! They’ve been cooped up something fierce, they need to stretch their legs.

“It’s not a good idea to head to the three northern provinces right now since they’re at war. We’ll just turn into targets. But we can throw our weight around in Silver Moon with no problem. We’re going to go crazy if we keep staying cooped up in here!”

Raucous agreement sounded in the ship.

“That’s right, boss! The third master is right, we’re going stir-crazy!”

“Yeah! Those Silver Moon Guards killed a lot of us before. Those Silver Moon damned savages are vicious!”

“.....” Sentiment soared and the crowd agitated. A man in white upon a throne furrowed his brows and looked at Big Beard among the crowd. He bore a scar on his forehead that was courtesy of Golden Spear from two years ago. The man obviously itched for vengeance.

“Hou Xiaochen is crafty and cunning.” Aloof frowned. “He won’t be wholly unprepared since he dared leave with all of the Silver Moon Guards. It’s not like fools oversee the province. It may be a trap if we go to them now...”

“Boss, we’re pirates, not politicians!” Big Beard agitated. “Every bullet results in an extra inch of territory. Do we need to worry so much with our strength? Silver Moon would’ve risen over the other northern provinces a long time ago if they were that strong, would they wait until now?”

He was growing unhappy with the boss' indecisiveness and unreasonableness. Granted, his unhappiness was useless since he was weaker than Aloof. On the seas, strength was king.

What was there to be wary of when it came to Silver Moon? These pirates had raided mid-sized cities along the central region coastlines before. They were only human and needed food, drink, and women to vent their furies into. It'd been a long time since their last raid since the times hadn't been right for one.

Silver Moon had plainly entered a defensive void. He wouldn't be able to look at the scar on his head if they didn't pay the province a visit. He'd wring old fart Golden Spear's neck sooner or later!

Big Beard had lost by a hair two years ago, but he'd become a supernatural since then and improved quickly. There was no way that Golden Spear had matched him in pace.

Aloof looked silently at the fidgeting Big Beard and the rest of the eager crowd. "Then... take a few brothers with you and be careful," he said faintly. "Retreat as soon as you find something amiss. Remember, don't linger too long on land!"

"Don't worry, we'll come back as soon as we've had our fun!" promised an overjoyed Big Beard. He'd finally received permission!

"We're going to raid Silver Moon!" he roared with excitement. "We're gonna kill and loot and screw their women! Silver Moon is poor, but their women are soft! You can squeeze the water out of them! And heh, their female martial masters have some fire and kick to them! Brothers, come with me!"

"The third master is mighty!" yelled the motley crew. They streamed outside with Big Beard, where several large ships rested.

## Chapter 509: Pirates (II)

A man wearing a mask walked out from behind the white-robed Aloof when the crowd stampeded out.



“You know that Hou Xiaochen is cunning and will certainly have laid contingency plans for his absence,” he rasped. “It’s not logical to let Sea Shark go to Silver Moon!”

“We would not be pirates if we were logical!” answered Aloof. “Sea Shark was about to mutiny if I kept him down any longer. Must we wait for him to rebel and then kill each other?”

Mask Face quieted, opting to give a simple reminder. “General White, this naval unit is very useful to us. Don’t lose too many of your troops. Although Sea Shark is short-tempered, he’s strong and ferocious in battle. The White Shark Guards are also an important provider of sea treasures for us...”

“I don’t need you to remind me of that,” replied White Shark. “If you’re uneasy, you can follow them in secret. Be careful and keep your distance. You can leave them alone if no problems develop, and you’ll be able to reinforce them in time if anything does crop up.

“They shouldn’t run into issues so long as they don’t head to White Moon City. If Sea Shark keeps his head in the face of temptation and leaves Silver Moon when he should, I don’t foresee us having any problems.”

Mask Face thought for a bit before nodding. “Then I’ll take people with me to prevent anything untoward from developing.” He changed the subject from Sea Shark. “There’s orders from upstairs for us to consolidate all of the pirate factions in the North Sea as soon as possible...”

“I know, but it’s not that simple!” White Shark frowned. “There’s seven renowned factions among the North Sea pirates, we make for eight. Each of them has a Nova in residence and some of them have major monster spirits supporting them from the waters. They’re incredibly thorny opponents!”

He represented the White Shark Raiders and while they were strong, they were only ranked number four. The three factions ahead of them were formidable and boasted a peak Nova each in their ranks. They would be extremely difficult to bring to heel!

White Shark scratched his head irritably, but knew that with the strength that upstairs represented, he would be in grave trouble if he didn't accept. That he was in the middle of the sea didn't change that fact.

"I'll need some support if I'm to consolidate everyone. The others might have their own patrons as well. Pirates of the North Sea are so bloodthirsty that it's tough for us to reach our current development without support from land. According to what I know, the Sea Monster Raiders might be secretly backed by the Near River Director General Office..."

"The Near River Director General Office?" snorted Mask Face. "You can ignore that one! The one in Near River has just made it to metamorphosis and that province possesses fewer than a dozen Novas. He's certainly ambitious. He should consider the fact that there's three northern provinces in front of him and Silver Moon behind him. What right does his Near River have to establish itself? He even wants independence! The day he does is the day he invites his own death!"

Mask Face was quite derisive of the Near River sovereign.

"He's reached metamorphosis?" White Shark was puzzled. "That's very fast... General Kou didn't manage it..."

"I don't know." Mask Face shook his head. "Perhaps someone's supporting him from the shadows. This is intelligence that I've received from above. They want to let him grow stronger, possibly so he can stand against Silver Moon and restrict their expansion!"

Near River neighbored Silver Moon—the latter was an exceedingly important place that various sides had started making plans for a long time ago.

White Shark frowned without saying a word.

"You don't need to think too much," Mask Face continued. "You don't need to worry about backers in the dark either. You should focus your efforts on consolidating the factions in the sea. Only when you hold the North Sea in your grasp can you exercise control over the entire north..."

White Shark didn't pay much attention to these words. The other thought far too highly of the White Shark Raiders if he expected them to seal off the North Sea. Sea bandits were sea bandits after all. There wasn't anything that a pirate force could do to stop the nineteen northern provinces if the latter really wanted to enter the central region.

"Ah yes..." A thought struck Mask Face. "I hear that Yuan Shuo's disciple, Li Hao, the heir to the eight families, is still in White Moon City. If we can capture Li Hao, then we should do so! He's very important and wields a precious treasure. Red Moon's been keeping an eye on him too. It's not just the treasure that's valuable, but that the person is key as well!"

White Shark inclined his head without offering a response. He would not go if the boy was in White Moon City. The possibility would only cross his mind if the young man left the city. Therefore, he didn't care about anything Mask Face said; he simply made the right sounds. White Moon certainly had more powerhouses in residence. As strong as White Shark is, he didn't have the confidence to fight someone of Hou Xiaochen's level.

Mask Face spoke a bit more before leaving to collect men to follow Sea Shark. The latter was strong enough that he shouldn't be allowed to perish in Silver Moon.

.....

At the same time.

Li Hao breathed out heavily after he finished reading some files. Who would've thought that there would be so many pirates in the North Sea? According to information left by Golden Spear and the others, there were a hundred pirate factions in the extensive north sea. Eight of them dominated and had Novas in residence—with even peak Novas in some.

The Silver Moon Guards had met one of the more famous factions two years ago—the White Shark Raiders. Their leader White Shark was an extremely formidable person. He hadn't been present in person at the last encounter, just their third commander who was another Nova powerhouse.

The three leaders of the White Shark Raiders were all Novas. There were ten thousand members of this pirate faction and the third commander had led a thousand people to raid White Moon City. The Silver Moon Guards rebuffed them; Golden Spear almost killed the guy. Sadly, he managed to escape.

The Guards suffered high casualties in the skirmish, but it also meant that the faction didn't dare trespass in the Moon Sea for the next two years.

“Are there really so many Novas in the seas?”

Just a pirate faction alone possessed three Nova commanders. Li Hao furrowed his brows. How many Novas were there to be found in the entire North Sea then? And how were they so strong?

After a while, the young man narrowed his eyes in thought. Perhaps... it wasn't just the bandits in the seas, but also some characters supporting them from the shadows. Whether it was to highlight their own importance by permitting enemies to prosper or having other schemes in mind... Li Hao had long come to his own conclusions about these large factions, important personages, and famous clans.

None of them were anything good! Why else would so many Novas choose to be pirates? They would be a sovereign of any place they settled in on land. They could also join the three great organizations or nine ministries. It would be a decent life in that case.

These people might not be able to hold themselves in check after the director's departure... Should I bring the fight to them?

Li Hao pondered over his next steps and came to the decision that he could go take a look. He'd yet to truly explore the deep blue himself as well. It'd be nice to get his bearings in the sea. This task fell to him since he was still here. The young man suddenly regretted not leaving with Hou Xiaochen. If he had, the wily foxes in Silver Moon could just play among themselves.

.....

The plaza of the barracks.

It was already night by the time Li Hao emerged from the warehouses. This was the first day of Hou Xiaochen's departure. The Demon Hunters were still training. They worked very hard, possibly out of habit, or possibly having been inspired after witnessing Li Hao's strength.

Whether it was the Sword Sect or the Inspectorate, these people all had very humble identities. Some were orphans, some were regular people in society, others had accidentally come in contact with martial dao and progressed from there. Aside from Hong Qing, they were all from the bottom rungs of society. No one's status was that high and not even Hong Qing felt special from her background. Apart from extra affection from Hong Yitang when she grew, she wasn't treated differently in the Sword Sect.

She had to wash her own clothes and make her own food, a far cry from the young miss that one might imagine. Therefore, she didn't halt her daily cultivation goals when everyone trained. She worked diligently despite having recently comprehended the aura.

The group paused when Li Hao approached them. The young man studied them thoughtfully.

"In staying behind, we have automatically accepted a mission to strengthen the coastal defenses! The pirates are the enemy we need to face. You guys might not be familiar with them..."

"I know about them!" called out a Sword Sect disciple through clenched teeth. "I'm from the North Sea, we were once invaded by pirates! They committed all sorts of unspeakable horrors, burning down houses, killing, looting, and destroying cities for the fun of it. They slaughtered people for enjoyment! They're complete animals!! The city I lived in before coming to the Sword Sect suffered one of their raids and was razed to the ground. Only some elderly, women, and children barely managed to survive the horrors..."

Li Hao hadn't thought that he'd run into survivors of a pirate raid here! He was surprised, but quickly placed the disciple as someone that Hong Yitang had taken in from the North Sea. He'd grown up to become a martial master.

“Leader, I’ll be the first to sign up against the pirates!” snarled the young man. “But... I know how cruel they can be, how inhumane! Silver Moon doesn’t have many cities near the coast and has always been protected by the Silver Moon Guards, so the province doesn’t know much about the pirates. If you wish to fight them, leader, you must be careful and be on guard against them threatening us...”

“What kind of threats?” Li Hao raised an eyebrow.

“Razing cities!” The young man ground his teeth. “Never negotiate! The city I was in had supernaturals protecting it, but the pirate leader threatened our supernaturals. If we surrendered, they would only loot our valuables. If we resisted, the city would be destroyed! Our supernaturals felt that we couldn’t stand against the enemy and elected to accept those terms. And then... we all died, no one was spared!”

“How can one compromise when the enemy is at the gates...” Li Hao blinked.

“That’s right...” answered the morose young man. “But people were still afraid when faced with the cruel and mighty pirates. They didn’t dare risk their lives and hoped that the pirates would leave after filling their pockets. Killing wouldn’t be of use to them—we didn’t have that many supernaturals. It was mostly mundanes, and what was the point of killing mundanes?”

Such were the thoughts shared by many people. I pose no threat to you and have more valuables, what would you kill me for?

But... would pirates by pirates if they listened to reason and spoke of humanity? They killed for fun! It was pure satisfaction to see a moment’s worth of despair and hear a pained wail.

## Chapter 510: Heading Out to Sea (I)

“But leader, the pirates are a bunch of animals that don’t care about anything other than their own pleasure. Their supernaturals even research various ways to kill and slaughter mundanes—burning them alive, sealing them in ice, burying them alive, making them split open by first freezing and then burning, or ripping them open...” The young man grew more agitated as he talked and burned

with fury. “These animals won’t stop when you howl with anguish—they just get more and more excited!

“They find fun in killing people and don’t do so for cultivation or looting treasures. What’s useful for them in regular cities is just food, clothes, and daily necessities. People would give them all of that if they wanted it. But they want women as well, and at that point... there are actually people who are willing to offer themselves...”

Li Hao furrowed his brows, but remained silent.

“Yet they aren’t satisfied with that! Cruelty runs in their veins!” snarled the young man. “My baby sister was only five... They...”

He clenched his teeth and stopped talking.

Li Hao looked at him and asked bluntly, “What is your name?” He didn’t hide the fact that he didn’t know the speaker’s name. The young man had only been a Slayer when he first arrived. Li Hao recalled most of the Sunderers’ names, but didn’t know many of the Slayers.

“Hong Chou!”

Li Hao’s look sharpened. That was the Hong of Hong Yitang, wasn’t it? And the Chou of... of enmity for his family being slaughtered?

Li Hao nodded without comment. “As the pirates might attack, I would like to head out to sea to observe them first and familiarize ourselves with fighting on water. We’re unaccustomed to the seas and Sunderers will find it difficult to fly over open water. The difficulty level will be high. Regardless, we accepted the mission. What do you guys think, shall we take a look?”

The Demon Hunters looked at each other.

“Of course!” Hong Qing quickly piped up. “Leader, since the Sword Sect has joined the Demon Hunters, we will not shrink back!”

In the distance, the stocky Wang Chao—nephew of Wang Henggang—said in a muffled voice, “We of the Inspectorate are not afraid of death either! If we were, we wouldn’t be part of the Inspectorate!”

“We are all Demon Hunters now, there’s no need to separate ourselves so clearly,” Liu Long clarified. He turned to Li Hao. “Just give the order, leader. The Silver Moon Guards’ first regulation is to follow orders. In Battle Heaven, the Battle Heaven Army’s first regulation is also to follow orders. Since we have joined the Demon Hunters of the Silver Moon Guards, we will obey whatever order you give so long as it is not carelessly made. We will kill enemies or rush into the battlefield!”

“I haven’t led so many people before, so it’s taking some getting used to,” Li Hao laughed. “Then let’s head out to sea sooner rather than later. Director Hou’s departure may be causing some people to stir with interest. We set out tonight. Prepare some food and water, everyone.”

He thought of something and flung out a bunch of storage rings. “Pick one each, they’re all storage rings.”

The group paused. Storage rings? The team leaders looked at each other—they knew what that item was, but the sight in front of them was incredulous. Only Solars possessed these items! Storage rings didn’t require a Solar’s strength to use, but that only that level of supernatural could afford to buy and hold onto one.

How many were in front of them? Fifty? Sixty? Or even more!

“Leader, this...”

“Just some battle spoils from before,” Li Hao chuckled. “There’s too many of them for me to use. I only need a few. You can bring some more food and water for the journey and store your black



armor inside. That can't be retained within the body, but it'll transform into a small round ball after I activate it. Transport will be much more convenient then."

He'd yet to activate the black armor he already owned. It couldn't be stored within the body, but could be minimized to the size of a ball after activation. The ball was much bigger than the ones of the bronze and silver armor. Its mechanisms were more complex and were still the size of a head in ball form. It could only be stored within a storage ring; usage was very inconvenient otherwise.

Bronze armor was different. The user didn't need to personally put it on—it instantly manifested. Silver armor could be stored within the body, and what made black armor complicated was that one needed to open the ball, turn it back into armor, then put it on...

There had been too many Battle Heaven soldiers back in the day and black armor was standard issue. Less care had gone into its manufacture, but even so, it was already quite formidable.

"It can turn into a round ball?" This piqued the crowd's interest.

"Activate? What other special functions might there be?"

"....."

"I don't know about special functions." Li Hao smiled at the outpouring of interest. "But I do know of one benefit, and that I'll be able to contact everyone within five hundred kilometers. Its defensive capabilities will be a bit stronger and wearing it will facilitate our assembly of the Ten Rings Mountain Seal Formation. When the Battle Heaven Army fell into formation, they did so instantly. The armor is so incredible that they'll heighten the chances of success."

This was information he read from the silver armor, it was a state out of reach for the current army. Assembling into formation required a connection between blood qi and internal force. The army was dead; only obsession lingered. It could not make use of formations. If it could, just three thousand troops would easily dismantle the Nova trespassers despite the weak strength remaining to them. That was most frightening of all!

Less than one tenth of the army's strength remained after they lost their physical bodies.

The Demon Hunters were overjoyed. So this degree of convenience was possible?

Liu Long laughed and suddenly took out a large black ball. It instantly morphed into armor that he swiftly opened and put on. "My set is activated. This mode is very convenient and much stronger than before. The sets that you guys are accustomed to work well against Sunflares, but can do almost nothing against Solars. I've discovered that the armor is exceedingly high quality. So long as we have sufficient blood qi and internal force, even Solars will find it difficult to break in the short run!"

Surprised glances were exchanged throughout the crowd. So the armor was that impressive?

"Its defensive capabilities remain very strong," Li Hao supplemented. "They are just greatly reduced before activation and require the support of special energy from the city. It should be much stronger after activation.

"Also, it's possible to fly with this armor."

The Demon Hunters jerked with surprise again. Fly? Martial masters could not fly before they reached Sunderer. Once they were Dominators, they could make use of mind intent to walk through the air like birds. Sunderers had to push off from the ground to soar through the air. They could hover for a bit, but flight was out of reach for them.

"I haven't tried it with Sunderers," Li Hao continued uncertainly. "But both Deputy Liu and I can. However, we already possessed the qualifications to fly, so it's difficult to determine if the credit goes to the armor. I haven't fully grasped all of the armor's functions either."

Excitement swirled through the crowd.

“Also, as the armor is a fully contained system, it might be able to be used in the sea. Once again, this is just my speculation. We can test it out and see if it holds up.” He was also surprised by how versatile the armor was, but perhaps this was only to be expected given how strong the ancient civilization was.

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Li Hao entered the office area after he left the plaza. Some people were waiting for him.

“Senior brother...” Wang Ming greeted him with a beaming grin.

“Call me troop leader!”

“.....” Wang Ming had no choice but to change his honorific. “Troop leader, Li Meng and the others have arrived.”

“I see them.” Li Hao appraised the three additions. Yun Yao was as quiet as usual. She inclined her head at the young man, the very picture of refined tranquility.

“Senior brother... leader... director...” Li Meng was the most simple out of them all. She was almost squealing with excitement. “Forget, I should call you leader. Leader is the most benevolent of them all! You haven’t forgotten us even after coming into your own...”

The three of them had complained when they were assigned to Silver City and were even more uncomfortable with the situation after Yuan Shuo forcefully took them as disciples. But now... they were all excited beyond belief.

Hu Hao was much quieter. He resembled Yun Yao’s taciturn state and murmured, “Leader.”

The three of them were Fullmoons—the equivalent of late Sunderer. They needed to enter Plenilune if they were to become peak Sunderers. They hadn't even set foot into Sunflare yet.

Granted, this wasn't a slow pace. It was all relative. Compared to Wang Ming, they did appear slow. The four had been on similar footing before, but he was a late Sunflare now and might already be a peak Sunflare attempting to ascend to Solar if he hadn't purposefully controlled his progression.

Li Hao waved a hand and summoned four sets of armor. "Wear these. While the armor will suppress your mysterious power, it also prevents supernatural detection."

The Battle Heaven Army was not the one of energy. There was another specialized army for those talents. Thus, the black armor levied certain restrictions on the supernaturals, but Li Hao wasn't looking to them for combat ability. He just needed support from the sidelines.

"I'm leading the team out on a mission tonight. You know about what happened before and that there will be certain dangers involved. You guys..."

"No objections here!" Li Meng shrieked. "I can do anything if I can be as strong as senior brother Wang!"

"....." Li Hao stared at her. This girl was so excitable and the least dependable supernatural he knew. She liked to focus her attention randomly in prior occurrences and even tried to peek at Yuan Shuo teaching his disciple. She was almost beaten to death for that transgression, but she still hadn't learned her lesson.

"How far can your third eye reach now?" he asked instead.

"One thousand meters?" Li Meng wasn't certain either. "I've never tried to reach its limit."

Li Hao nodded. That would do. He could see balls of light, so the only concern he had was that the other was a martial master. Then he wouldn't be able to see who he faced. On the other hand, Li Meng would be able to.

That set up a situation in which he could glimpse all supernaturals within one thousand meters and Li Meng could identify all martial masters. Their abilities complemented each other and prevented enemies from approaching them.

However, their range was too short. One thousand meters was much too short. If it was just Li Hao, he would be able to see balls of Nova light ten thousand meters away if there was nothing obstructing his vision.

"Sis Yun, you're a water attribute and skilled at healing. You can handle regular martial master wounds, right?"

"I can." Yun Yao nodded slightly. "So long as their organs aren't severely damaged, I can heal regular wounds."

That was good.