

Star Gate 551

Chapter 551: Wood Sword Aura (I)

After he killed all of the pirates, Li Hao left through the air. He could already see some balls of light in the distance.

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Light Sword looked around with a frosty expression on her face. She'd still been surrounded after running for a day. More and more numbers of powerhouses were gathered around her—she was done for this time.

Did she have regrets?

There was nothing to regret. The only thing she might regret was that she hadn't killed enough people. She wasn't strong enough to deter people, and Silver Moon was too far away!

She grasped her longsword in her right hand; it stayed within the scabbard. Light energy emanated from her being—her body had long been dyed red with blood. Some of it came from her, some of it from the enemy.

“Hand over the Windchaser Boot, Light Sword!” someone shouted. “We do not wish to kill you. Hand over the treasure and we'll leave you to settle the grudge with the Xus yourselves.”

Indeed, they were just here for treasure. Killing the swordswoman was a Xu family matter. Light Sword was plainly on the verge of death and Silver Moon martial masters were very difficult to deal with under such circumstances. They might easily bring down some powerhouses in a final stand.

It was a very arduous path to become a Nova. No one wanted to be dragged down by this old witch. When Light Sword advanced, they retreated, but didn't leave. They dogged her steps like a pack of

hyenas and would make their moves as soon as she revealed weaknesses. No one wanted to be the first to erupt in an offensive!

Increasing numbers of heavyweights gathered on all sides. Some wore masks, others wore cloaks, and some were dressed in armor like Li Hao. Many concealed their identities, wary of the Xus, those around them, and Silver Moon...

Silver Moon martial masters were a unified whole outside their home. They fought each other tooth and nail within the province, but often joined forces elsewhere. Killing Light Sword might draw revenge from other Silver Moon martial masters. No one would be concerned about this if the state of the world was as it was before, but that view changed after more Silver Moon martial masters left the province. Their displays of power demonstrated they were exceedingly domineering.

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In the distance.

Li Hao had made it. He saw Light Sword surrounded by a group of powerhouses, they backed away each time she took a step forward. No one was leaving; the swordswoman was dead without a doubt if the situation continued.

The young man could see her ball of light—it was very disorderly and confused. This was the drawback of erupting after snapping the supernatural locks. Energy seeped out of the supernatural locks, causing mysterious power to erupt, which was then forcefully suppressed by the wielder...

He didn't need to take a look to know that it must be a complete mess inside Light Sword's body. There was also a peculiar strain of energy that seemed to be protecting the swordswoman and healing her organs, but it wasn't very effective. That was likely light energy.

Li Hao did not draw close. He looked around and sighed softly. Damn!

There were fourteen big balls of light around them, meaning fourteen Novas. Their weakest was mid Nova and there were two that were particularly eye-catching! This level of brightness was

comparable to the four major monster spirits. It was stronger than the snake, but not quite as strong as the other three. Perhaps they were in metamorphosis, but were weaker than monster spirits. They should be beyond peak Nova!

“Two in metamorphosis, four peak Novas, six late Novas, and only two mid Novas...” Li Hao’s heart spasmed at his findings. His earlier bravado was completely gone.

This was insane! Where did so many powerhouses come from? He’d thought that it would be impressive enough to have a few Novas pursuing Light Sword, but this was so much more than that! All of the premier powerhouses in the nearby surroundings had come. There might even be more if not for the distance.

Was this really necessary??

The Windchaser Boots are just a heritage treasure of the eight families. How come not that many people come looking for me? Li Hao mulled the difference over. Perhaps... it was because they were wary of Silver Moon.

The crafty foxes of Silver Moon didn’t often make moves, but that didn’t mean that people didn’t know how strong they were. Hou Xiaochen was one such example. Although no one stepped up to protect Li Hao, one had to say that it was to the province’s credit that the young man was still fine at the moment.

First it was Yuan Shuo, then Hou Xiaochen, and now Li Hao was no weakling. Combined with protection from the province, it meant that no one would make trouble for him in Silver Moon. The stronger one was, the more one understood the dangers.

“Fourteen Novas...” Li Hao was at a loss for what to do. This was just the immediate vicinity! Who knew if there were more powerhouses hiding elsewhere?

The young man sank quietly into the sea. He’d been quite cocky earlier—it was better to keep a low profile now. It was easy for martial masters to hide themselves. Light Sword would’ve been able to do the same if she hadn’t broken her locks. Unfortunately, her wildly fluctuating energy made her easily detectable.

Within the sea, Li Hao thought rapidly on how he might save Light Sword. No matter how many powerhouses there were, he was not the weakling he once was. He was not afraid of such a force as he'd seen too many experts at the level of metamorphosis before. Hou Xiaochen and the others were such examples. Hong Yitang and He Yong also exceeded Nova when they unsealed themselves. The Silver Armors of Battle Heaven were strong enough to be in metamorphosis when they reawakened, and Gold Armors were even more valiant.

Having seen all this, Li Hao's experience with the world was no longer what it once was. He made swift calculations and decided that the best course of action was to facilitate Light Sword's recovery first. After she was back to her usual state, she would have no problem against those peak Novas and ones in metamorphosis.

As for mid and late Novas... Panther could take care of one and Li Hao could take care of another mid Nova, but that was far from enough. The caveat to all this was that Light Sword must recover from her wounds, or all of this was nonsense. He didn't have as much battle strength as the others. It was only when Light Sword fought at full strength again that no one would dare match her.

Let's see if I can get closer to her from the water... Li Hao stayed in the water and peered ahead, discovering that there was another late Nova underneath the woman. He was a water supernatural and the reason why she didn't enter the sea at this time.

There were also enemies underneath her.

There's too many heavyweights...

There was a real issue with helping Light Sword recover her battle strength. Someone's voice rang in Li Hao's ear at this time, "She seems to be at the end of her tether, let me do it."

Li Hao naturally had reasons to be so confident for this rescue mission, but he still frowned at what he heard. "You're one person and there's so many Novas," he transmitted. "There's also ones in metamorphosis and this may not be all of them. Light Sword is half crippled now. If you take action, you need to kill them all to prevent further troubles."

“I can try unsealing myself?”

“Is martial uncle not concerned about wasting mysterious power stones?”

“We’re all Silver Moon martial masters and fellow members of the Seven Swords. I’m the only one with some spare time on my hands in all of Silver Moon these days. Those guys in the central region are a bit too far away. When it comes down to things, I’m the only one who can make a move...”

Indeed, the speaker was Hong Yitang. With Li Hao’s level of caution and knowing that there would be many powerhouses on this operation, he came armed with a few preparations. When he left the ruins, he approached within five hundred kilometers of the Sword Sect to pass on a message. He’d wanted the man to follow and protect him, but Hong Yitang said that he could join the rescue mission.

The reason was simple—none other than the fact that they were both Silver Moon martial masters. As the Earthturner Sword, he should help when Light Sword was caught in trouble away from home.

“Martial uncle, if you unseal yourself as well... it’s not even a matter of mysterious power stones anymore. I may not have time to help both you and Light Sword!”

An unsealed Hong Yitang and gravely injured Light Sword was much more troublesome than a He Yong in need of help in the ruins. Light Sword was in a very poor condition!

“Let’s just go to that trouble,” came Hong Yitang’s response. “Li Hao, Silver Moon is not a big province and we do not have many martial masters. You may not have a deep understanding of what I say, but you will when you head to the central region. Those from the same hometown are still more reliable. It’s Silver Moon martial masters who are willing to take a stand for our own when we run into trouble. It’s because of this that Silver Moon martial masters are famous.

“Otherwise, going at everything alone... As strong as we are, we only have two hands. It’s right and proper that you demand payment from those guys, they deserve it.

“As for Light Sword... there’s no need to resolve certain grudges right this very moment. You can send your teacher to her if it comes down to it, but we still need to rescue her for the time being. Only then will large numbers of Silver Moon martial masters come help you if you need it in the future!

“I’ll draw their attention first and you look for a chance to remove her from the situation. Treat her wounds if you can, you don’t have to pay attention to me for now. However much you can recover is for the best.”

Li Hao frowned sternly. It wouldn’t matter if Hong Yitang wanted to unseal himself and make a move, but these circumstances... Li Hao couldn’t promise that he’d be able to swiftly help the two suppress their internal turmoil. They were also in very dangerous straits; the waters might hide big fish.

Neither was Hong Yitang his subordinate. The man was here not just because of Li Hao; he’d decided to come when he heard that Light Sword was in danger. The young man was just the bearer of some news.

As Li Hao mulled over his thoughts, waves churned over the surface of the sea.

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Light Sword’s expression shifted slightly as she began to despair. Some of the powerhouses with their identities concealed also looked in a certain direction. There was a person approaching them, walking over the water with a longsword in hand.

Hong Yitang did not conceal his identity and approached in broad daylight.

“Earthturner Sword Hong Yitang?” someone asked coldly with narrowed eyes. Silver Moon martial masters had come? This caused many to scan their surroundings, but they only saw Hong Yitang.

“The Seven Swords of Silver Moon may not see eye to eye, but there’s so many of you ganging up against a woman. Don’t you think your bullying is too much?” Hong Yitang smiled.

“Too much?” someone snorted. So Earthturner Sword had come... how ludicrous. They might be wary if it was Sky Sword. What were they supposed to be afraid of with a long crippled fellow?

Chapter 552: Wood Sword Aura (II)

“It’s said that Silver Moon martial masters are strange, that they beat each other black and blue at home, but are very united when outside. Silver Moon ranks first when it’s a matter of hot-bloodedness always ready for a good fight. We’re really learning something new today. Who would’ve thought that Earthturner Sword would come when no one else dared...”

Many eyes were drawn to the new arrival, whereas Light Sword looked around with a complicated gaze. Her feelings grew more complex when she didn’t see Li Hao. Earthturner Sword may be here, but he wouldn’t necessarily be of use. She wanted to see Li Hao more.

Sadly, she knew that waiting for her in Silver Moon was the limit of what the young man could do. Someone like Li Hao would not take the risk of coming to save her after she threatened him. As for Earthturner Sword coming, she was surprised and not surprised by his presence.

Silver Moon martial masters were sometimes a very stubborn group. They could fight to the death with no holds barred, but would just as soon present their backs to each other and fight together if someone interfered. After they killed whoever was so rude as to show their face, they would continue the first fight.

These people put the words of “Silver Moon” in front of “martial master”, which set them apart from martial masters of other territories. It represented their pride as people and martial masters. They were Silver Moon martial masters!

That was likely their faith, that they were number one in the world.

“Hong Yitang...” Light Sword coughed continuously. Blood streamed out of her body. “Where’s He Yong?”

“Back to the central region,” Hong Yitang chuckled. “It can’t be helped, I’m the only one here. We’ve either lost contact with the others or they can’t leave. You, though, you’re in really poor shape!”

“I’m alright.” Light Sword smiled, not a smile of brilliance, but one that showed her age. It was then that a wave churned through the sea and exploded in front of Hong Yitang!

The man didn’t even look at the spray of water. He simply waved his sword to settle the water surface and looked at the one who’d attacked him. “You don’t think I’m just a Solar, am I?” he snorted. “If you think you can kill me with a wave that can kill Solars... You’d be thinking much too little of me!”

“Hong Yitang, no matter how much strength you’ve hidden, even if you’re as strong as Light Sword, you will not be walking off with her today! The price you must pay for that might be more than you can endure!” someone sneered.

Various powerhouses flared their presences. Even if Hong Yitang rivaled Light Sword, he would not be saving the woman on the brink of death. Not unless he wanted to leave himself here as well.

“Earthturner Sword, does Silver Moon wish to protect someone who’s betrayed their master?” Xu Zhen frowned at the man. “Silver Moon martial masters were indeed strong back in the day and their powerhouses are still active, but keep in mind that she’s turned on the Steadfast Duke! Don’t forget, our army trampled over Silver Moon when the Skystar Dynasty conquered the world...”

Was that supposed to be a threat?

“Don’t even mention the Steadfast Duke’s army,” Hong Yitang chortled. “The royal family’s Black Armaturas might be worth a mention. The first generation Steadfast Duke did lead his army into the province, but he was almost wiped out on his expedition. He would have been, if not reinforcements

from the Black Armaturas. That was also two hundred years ago, how is that a point of pride? Does your family history not record your humiliation and defeats?”

Xu Zhen frowned. Bullshit! Of course the family records noted various events, but it only spoke of triumphs such as suppressing Silver Moon. The family’s army had been an important portion of the dynasty’s battle strength.

Of course, history was written by the victors. Only those involved knew the truth of the matter. Even Hong Yitang knew only what the older generation spoke of.

Those on the scene weren’t that willing to take action after Earthturner Sword’s arrival. He might actually be quite strong. Delaying battle brought them no drawbacks. Light Sword’s condition would only continue to deteriorate. As time dragged on, she would cripple herself.

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At the same time, within the sea.

Li Hao proceeded soundlessly through the waters. Earthturner’s appearance had drawn everyone’s attention. He was approaching the water late Nova from behind. They could keep talking up there! He didn’t mind commencing another ambush.

He could reconvene with Light Sword after disposing of this late Nova. If he supplied her with some sword energy then, he might be able to help her recover some.

Li Hao soundlessly drew closer to his target. Late Nova would not be easy to kill, but he had experience. If the dog coordinated with him perfectly, they might be able to eliminate their target in a split second.

The young man steadily approached; he was closer now. He didn't see the supernatural, just a massive ball of light. Perhaps the supernatural was hiding with a special method. Whatever it was, it was useless in Li Hao's eyes.

He stopped walking when he was thirty meters away. Light Sword was right above him. She seemed to have sensed something and, at the very least, knew that there was someone beneath her. That was why she'd refused to go into the water again, but now... another person seems to have come?

Who?

It didn't feel like a supernatural, more like... a martial master!

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Within the waters.

Li Hao stayed still for a while. Earthturner Sword was still talking to the others, they seemed to be casually chatting. No one was in a hurry—the only one was Light Sword. A small sword appeared in Li Hao's hand. He wasn't making much progress when it came to nurturing his sword, but he persevered. Four kinds of sword intent brewed in the small sword; they didn't need to be recombined again.

The young man closed his eyes, reviewing that awe-inspiring stroke he'd seen. The stronger he was, the more he could understand just how strong that stroke was.

A faint sword intent emanated from the weapon. At the same time, a vast and magnificent sword intent exuded from Hong Yitang. It percolated in the four directions, causing many to stir with shock and apprehension.

The water supernatural in the sea also felt the chilling prickle of sword intent. Hong Yitang is so strong! His sword intent could still seep into the depths from such a distance, and it came with such a piercing cold. Was this guy another Light Sword?

One had to say, Li Hao and Hong Yitang were coordinating their actions perfectly! Sword intent wafted through the area. Ordinary people could not discern the difference. Only Light Sword looked around alertly. There... seemed to be more than one sword intent present!

As a fellow sword user, a premier swordswoman, she could sense something different. There was another sword intent spreading beneath her feet. Was it... Li Hao?

Demon Sword? The thought had just appeared in her mind when Hong Yitang struck in the distance.

“Get out of my way!” he roared, overturning the skies and seas with an all-encompassing blow!

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Under the water.

Li Hao struck! Fast, exceedingly fast! Not only that, but he deployed the Incantation of the Blade of Blood without the slightest hesitation. It ripped through water currents and shot at the ball of light.

He didn't pause to determine anything in his line of sight before attacking the ball of light. I don't care how much smoke and mirrors you create!

The water Nova had been marveling over Hong Yitang's strength when his expression shifted drastically. He hastily fled through the water, running from the scene like he was a water current himself.

BAM!

An explosion detonated in the water and overhead. The water Nova almost somersaulted through the water, but thankfully evaded the attack. There was... another swordsman close at hand!

Li Hao struck again as he grappled with surprise. Waves churned under the water! KABOOM!

Detonations rang out, nine in succession! The young man shot toward his target; the late Nova watched with narrowed eyes. What a strong swordsman! What a pity he hadn't discovered his attacker's presence earlier. Now that he had, he noted that the swordsman wasn't much stronger than him.

He summoned countless waves toward Li Hao with a wave of his hand, sealing off a portion of the bottom of the sea. But when he wanted to follow up on that attack, his eyes widened and he quickly darted away.

He wasn't fast enough to escape a dog's claws. Razor-sharp claws pierced right through his arm—they'd been aimed at his heart. A water supernatural's perception was very sensitive in the water. He was able to sense enough to protect his vitals, but was shocked all the same.

Damn it! How was there another one? And a major monster spirit!

Panth was quite disgruntled. This was its first failed ambush, it'd brought shame upon all dogs! Meanwhile, Li Hao's longsword was already descending!

There was only one thought on the water supernatural's mind—run! He would be in great trouble if this continued.

At this moment, upon the sea.

Light Sword's eyes danced around and she suddenly stomped her foot, summoning a tidal wave with an eruption of sword intent. It barreled into the depths!

The water supernatural about to get away jerked to a halt. A black dog came for him from the left, Li Hao slashed at him from the right, and there was a surge of sword intent above him.

BOOM!

His way was cut off. It took only a second for Li Hao to stab into his target's chest. The water supernatural roared with fury, but his voice didn't have the time to travel before Panther brought down what felt like one thousand kilograms of water with its paw and nearly smashed the supernatural to a pulp!

Li Hao stirred a circle with his sword, erupting with sword light and raising wave upon wave as he bisected the supernatural.

Li Hao, Panther, Light Sword, Earthturner Sword... Three sword wielders and one major monster spirit coordinated their efforts perfectly, despite not discussing a plan of attack beforehand. A late Nova adept at water combat died on the spot.

The young man immediately stored the body in a storage ring. At this time, the supernaturals testing Hong Yitang seemed to sense something, but failed to grasp anything concrete. They looked at Light Sword.

Next to Xu Zhen, the old man with white hair quietly took in the surroundings. His expression suddenly shifted!

"There's someone in the water!"

BOOM!

Sword qi raced to the heavens. A supernatural encircling Light Sword hastily dodged. Sword qi exploded and the waves turned into arrows, spewing in all directions. Blood flowed freely as a dozen rays of sword marks appeared on the supernatural's legs.

Li Hao emerged from the water, stunning those present. Where did this swordsman come from? Or was it the Silver Moon Eight Swords instead?

Light Sword had already demonstrated her prowess, they'd yet to get anything out of Earthturner Sword, and here came another swordsman! There was some red bubbling up in the water, causing some expressions to shift. There'd been a supernatural down below. Were they... dead?

Chapter 553: Wood Sword Aura (III)

Li Hao didn't follow up on his attack, he appeared by Light Sword's side instead. He looked at the androgynous old man—well, he didn't want to look at Light Sword too much. But he had to say that she hadn't seemed on the brink of death during her split second of reaction in stabbing her sword through the water. Her battle spirit still raged fiercely.

Earthturner Sword broke through the blockade—or rather, no one stopped him from convening with the other two sword wielders.

“Such cutting sword qi and an inevitability of seeing blood upon action,” someone said on the outskirts before Light Sword had a chance to speak. “If you are not Sky Sword, then you must be Demon Sword Li Hao!”

Everyone's gazes turned to the young man. Although their faces were obscured, some couldn't hide their delighted glee. So that was Li Hao! He held the sword of the Lis and had quickly grown to the point of being able to kill Novas. His bloodline was of the eight families...

Some people were truly overjoyed. What did they chase Light Sword for, if not the Windchaser Boot? Even if that boot really was a weapon of the eight families, it was less than the sword of the Lis. This was a buy one get one bargain!

No, what they were getting was even better than what they were chasing!

Xu Zhen also started in the distance and erupted furiously in the next moment, “Are you Li Hao?!”

The initial explanation after the expedition emerged from the Battle Heaven ruins was that Hou Xiaochen had killed Xu Feng. But after Li Hao killed the White Shark Raiders and with additional news that the young man held a grudge against Light Sword, a new conclusion was easily reached—it was Li Hao who’d killed Xu Feng!

“Old witch Light Sword, you’ve certainly got a venomous heart!” Xu Zhen raged with madness. “You two must’ve caused Little Feng’s death together! Li Hao must also be Little Feng’s murderer—he’s here to save you, you bitch! She-devil!”

Anyone who saw this scene would suspect Light Sword! If Li Hao was Xu Feng’s murderer and had a grudge with Light Sword, it made no sense that he was taking the risk to rescue her. This could only be proof that the swordswoman had long betrayed the Xus. Perhaps she’d been the one to kill Xu Feng!

Light Sword didn’t respond and simply sighed at Li Hao. Just when she was about to speak, the young man revealed his true form and looked around with a smile. “It looks like I’m pretty famous! What an honor! You guys recognized me even in armor—you’ve got keen eyes!”

Li Hao wasn’t apprehensive about a gathering of the sword wielders. They were missing Sky Sword and Jadelight Sword. It would be quite the occasion indeed if all of these Silver Moon sword dao powerhouses were present.

“I’ve retreated from the world for too long.” Hong Yitang shook his head. “These people took longer to recognize me than they did you. It looks like I need to show my face around more often.”

Transmissions flashed around the vicinity.

“It’s Li Hao! He has the sword of the Lis. Everyone, all together with no hesitation...”

“Earthturner Sword’s not weak and he might be able to unseal himself as well. Judging from Li Hao’s performance from moments ago and his previous battle accomplishments... he’s pretty strong too. We probably won’t be able to take them if we don’t work together!”

“How do we split the sword and the boot?”

“Is the sword of the Lis for the likes of you guys? It’s priceless to whoever gets it. They can fetch an astronomical figure for it if they sell it...”

Various heavyweights rapidly communicated with each other; they had to be on the same page before taking action. They had just temporarily gathered together, wanting to kill Light Sword through a battle of attrition. The situation was much more difficult after she was joined by two more swordsmen.

Who would attack first if they didn’t come to an agreement? It was the most dangerous for whoever made the first move. And what if their quarry ran off if none of them attacked?

Reaching a consensus and completing an exchange of interests was their most pressing concern.

Light Sword looked at Li Hao with a slightly complicated expression and transmitted, “I’m afraid it’ll be hard for you guys to leave too after you’ve barged in like this!”

This wasn’t how one rescued people. Granted, she was the safest in this kind of development. While it would decrease the pressure on her if they harassed her pursuers from the outside, it would still be up to her to break through the blockade. That would land her in the greatest danger.

The other two swordsmen coming to her resulted in her maximal safety, but put them in danger. She knew that Earthturner Sword was strong, very strong, but he wasn’t invincible. There were a dozen Novas present and other heavyweights in metamorphosis.

“Can you still fight?” was Li Hao’s only question.

“I can... but I can’t endure for long...” she transmitted back.

Li Hao was conflicted, but he was already here, so he wouldn’t waffle around. Martial masters were an impulsive bunch. The Silver Moon old fart had only paid him to heal Light Sword, not risk his own life. He should’ve waited on the perimeter—this was all Hong Yitang’s fault! The man just had to show himself!

The young man tossed a small flask to Light Sword, but it flew back to him before reaching the woman. Li Hao raised an eyebrow at Hong Yitang; the man had taken out a small flask himself. It fell into Light Sword’s hands.

“Drink that, it’s Water of Life. Li Hao won’t be able to suppress your injuries in the short term, so use that for now.”

Li Hao put away his Water of Life with some surprise. So Hong Yitang had some as well? Meanwhile, the man sighed heavily. These people would be the death of him! He Yong had spent one of his exceedingly pure mysterious power stones and now Light Sword consumed his Water of Life. All that he had left from Battle Heaven were two pieces of exceedingly pure mysterious power stones. He hadn’t held onto the fortunes that heaven had seen fit to grace him with.

Light Sword quickly drained the flask without another word, prompting dismay from someone on the perimeter.

“Stop negotiating, they seem to have brought ultimate treasures for healing. Now is our chance if we want to take the treasures of the eight families. We might have to pay an even higher price if we wait any longer!”

The powerhouses swiftly reached an accord. Everything could wait until after they took down the trio. Otherwise, it was all just empty talk.

“Kill!” Xu Zhen set his jaw and turned to the two by his side. No one was making a move, but the representatives of the Steadfast Duke could not hold back!

Of the two by his side, the old man with white hair was peak Nova. The other middle-aged man was late Nova. While they hesitated slightly, they clenched their teeth and charged!

The old man seemed to be a special attribute or even crossed over from being a martial master. Heaven and earth threatened to split apart when his punch blasted forward! The middle-aged man also raised towering waves with a strike of his blade.

With these two as the vanguard, the remaining crowd didn’t hesitate. Everyone made their moves—supernatural abilities detonated in the area and strew chaos through the sea.

Li Hao and Earthturner Sword responded in kind. Long swords swept through the air! A sword hum rang through the world as the Earthturner Sword suppressed the four directions. Li Hao’s stroke of the four auras severed the self, there was no return!

BOOM!

Sword auras met with mysterious power, heralding a massive explosion. Li Hao spat out a mouthful of blood while Hong Yitang stumbled backward. The supernaturals reeled with shock!

“Swordsmen of Silver Moon...” someone mumbled. They were so strong!

The strongest was Earthturner Sword—he suppressed numerous supernaturals when he attacked, creating space for Li Hao. Li Hao’s sword was also very strong, but not to the point of stunning the crowd. It was Hong Yitang’s display of dominance that frightened those present.

While Li Hao was injured and Hong Yitang’s organs shook after the two sides collided, the supernaturals weren’t any better off. A streak of blood appeared on the old man’s fist. Behind him,

Xu Zhen's expression shifted and he grunted to the crowd, "Rush them together, don't hold back! Hong Yitang has not unsealed himself yet. He might, so we need to act as quickly as possible!"

No one listened to him.

"Are you sitting back and watching a show, Xu Zhen?" sneered a voice. "Attack with us!"

The speaker was a late Nova and didn't think much of the Xus. While this representative wasn't complete trash and had some real strength, he had no right to direct others.

Fury rose in Xu Zhen! A rich and noble man did not sit under the eaves for fear of falling tiles. His resident experts were in the field, was that not enough?? They wanted him to personally participate! How dangerous that would be!

And yet, Xu Zhen couldn't contain himself. "Light Sword seems to be recovering... all together now!" He sprang upward and kicked out a gust of swirling wind with his foot. He'd once practiced martial arts, but his potential had been mediocre. He'd continuously failed to grasp the aura and converted to the supernatural after that domain appeared. Thankfully, he'd done well for himself there.

With Xu Zhen himself in the battlefield, the various sides had managed to reach an accord. They would attack together! Ice sealed off thousands of kilometers as thunder and lightning danced!

KABOOM!

Detonations ripped through the air. Earthturner Sword brandished stroke after stroke, overturning the skies and earth to form a defensive circle a dozen meters across. It blocked the attacks while Li Hao's sword darted out, injuring the supernatural powerhouses.

It was a team effort, but while the defensive abilities proved adequate, the offensive ones were slightly insufficient. Li Hao was a little too weak.

“What a pity that you’re not Sky Sword...” Hong Yitang sighed. These words might grate on the ear; he truly did think that if Sky Sword was here, the two of them would make quick work of the crowd.

That was also the truth. Li Hao commanded mid Nova battle strength and was indeed weaker when it came to offense. There were only two mid Novas outside, the rest were late or peak Novas. There were even some in metamorphosis. Li Hao’s sword qi could not kill them and even found it hard to injure them.

Light Sword was still absorbing Water of Life and recovering some of her injuries. If she didn’t, Li Hao would find it difficult to suppress her rampaging organs. However, this left only the other two available for defense.

Li Hao didn’t say a word. He only felt a bit aggrieved and the situation difficult. Where had all these people come from? How were there so many powerhouses to be found?

His attacks weakened once more and his moves seem to float through the air like drifting willow leaves. It turned a bit mysterious like a ghost when combined with the No Shadow Sword, but it was even easier for their attackers to fend off!

The young man’s moves had previously provided a bit of threat, but that threat was now much smaller.

Hong Yitang wanted to cry. He regretted his actions! What was Li Hao doing, using him as a defensive shield? The kid was hiding behind him and using their enemies as practice targets for the Weeping Willow Sword. My heavens, do you think this is a safe place?

Chapter 554: Silver Moon Swordsmen (I)

Although Li Hao fought while Light Sword recovered from her wounds, he cowered completely within the defensive circle. His moves were slow and weak. How was he supposed to stand against their enemies?

Li Hao didn't care. This was a display of trust—trust that Hong Yitang would endure. The young man wouldn't be getting away if the defenses broke. However, his attacks really were listless. In that case, he could go even weaker since he wasn't hurting anyone!

His sword strokes were as if fluttering willow leaves. He immersed himself in the process, growing bolder as he did so. He even rushed out a few times and startled his opponents by slashing his sword down, but ultimately discovered that his blow couldn't even break the defenses of a mid Nova.

“He's used the Incantation of the Blade of Blood!” Xu Zhen snorted after kicking Li Hao back. “It's wearing off and he's suffering from the backlash. He's much weaker as a result—it's left him with real strength around initial Nova!”

Li Hao was demonstrating the decline that occurred after using the Incantation; Xu Zhen was well familiar with it. It was Hong Yitang who was truly strong and blocking their attacks. However, the man didn't have room to counterattack. He could only passively defend and await death.

Xu Zhen's words made everyone brighten. That weak?

Initial Nova... was easily taken care of in their eyes. Many focused on Li Hao instead, waiting for the young man's next charge out. When he did, all sorts of supernatural abilities exploded around the perimeter, throwing a bloody Li Hao back with a roar.

He didn't care about his injuries, he had eyes only for the sword in his hand! He rushed out again, his durable body giving him more opportunities to fight. One stroke followed the previous. His Weeping Willow Sword technique grew more practiced, but he still wasn't able to manifest his sword aura!

“Li Hao!” Hong Yitang grunted, his defensive circle shaking noticeably. Li Hao rushed forward again, but a cloaked powerhouse sank their hand into his arm and ripped out a large chunk of flesh!

His attacker was focused on the longsword and had tried to grab it before, but suffered a gash to his hand for his attempt. This time, the cloaked man chose to rip into Li Hao's arm instead. The sword would come with the limb!

As substantial as Li Hao's body was, he could not withstand the other's attack. His skin ripped readily, but the young man's sword drifted through the air and pierced his attacker in return. It was repelled by a surge of mysterious power, so overwhelming that Li Hao spat out a mouthful of blood. He quickly backed away and just barely managed to retreat.

His attacker wanted to follow up, but Earthturner Sword's weapon sent him flying back!

Hong Yitang's face began to pale. He was confined to a defensive position, Light Sword was digesting the Water of Life, Li Hao was practicing his technique, and he... was a damned babysitter. He had to keep his wits about him so that the enemy wouldn't take advantage of an opening to break through. He was incredibly heart weary. If he'd known this would be the situation, he would've just ambushed all of these guys by himself. These two would be the death of him!

Li Hao had fully immersed himself in practice and deployed ever softening moves. He swayed unpredictably like dancing tree branches. When his longsword was rebuffed with another clang and someone's foot connected with him again, he spat out blood and returned to the defensive circle.

As he did so, he flicked a glance at Xu Zhen out of the corner of his eye and smiled. Having fun, are you? I'll make you the first target practice in a moment! You'll be the first recipient of the Five Elements Sword!

The wood sword aura was beginning to form. As he thought, this kind of struggle of life and death was the most exciting and conducive to inspiring sword intent.

As Li Hao retreated from his latest foray, Hong Yitang sweated profusely from his efforts. His Earthturner Sword technique was magical! It sealed off the four corners, producing a boundary like an overturned bowl. It was only now that the young man had the mental bandwidth to look at it closely and marvel at how airtight it was!

Thirteen Novas were attacking them. It'd been fourteen, but the trio had killed one. None of the remaining thirteen were characters to run afoul of. Perhaps they were holding back due to wariness of the enemy or wanting others to risk their lives first, whatever it was, Hong Yitang was holding off thirteen by himself!

It wasn't until Li Hao came back that he sensed the danger and pressure they were under. Hong Yitang's bronze armor was beginning to deform under the immense strain! He'd actually surreptitiously unsealed himself at some point in time. He wasn't as berserk as the others when he unsealed himself, but it was a snapping of his supernatural locks all the same.

Whether it was in Ash Mountain or Battle Heaven, he didn't snap his locks with fanfare. It was a soundless undoing, an unsealing that was even more frightening than the typical flare of violence demonstrated by others. It indicated that Hong Yitang could partially control the potential released by his locks.

Li Hao heaved for breath and didn't immediately offer to help. He had Xu Zhen in his sights. Xu Zhen was one of the five late Novas, but his identity was special. He had another late and a peak Nova following him. If he was to die... then the other representatives from the Steadfast Duke would either despair and fight to the death, or they would be so terrified that they would immediately run for their lives.

But as the duke's son, Xu Zhen would not be an easy target.

Li Hao panted for a bit as a faint aura billowed into existence like swaying willow branches. The Weeping Willow Sword. The aura born from this technique was not as vibrant or majestic as other wood auras. It was a gentle, tender sensation that drifted with the wind—timid, yet endless.

Li Hao's wood sword aura stemmed from two origins—the Weeping Willow Sword method and the little tree's core origin power. Hence, there was a bit of the little tree's characteristics interspersed among the willow.

What were the tree's characteristics? It sank its roots into the mountain and never loosened!

Perseverance, continuous, and unending!

It safeguarded a palace by itself for tens and thousands of years all by its lonesome. Once it accepted something as part of its values, there it stayed forever. There was no turning back.

Li Hao had a deeper understanding of the little tree's dao at the moment. It was similar to the big tree's—perhaps it was just pure inheritance or rebirth, and not walking down another path.

Therefore, the son inherited the father's work and dao. In Li Hao's comprehension, it was always the big tree's growth history. The big tree was dead now, the little tree had taken root and sprouted, continuing their mission in inexhaustible fashion.

“Li Hao!” Hong Yitang grunted once more because his defensive circle was shrinking, but the young man seemed to be comprehending something. He was almost out of range and would be in trouble if he left the circle of protection!

Li Hao gently took a few steps back like a willow leaf flitting around. Light Sword flushed white and red—she seemed to be awakening soon. Hong Yitang inwardly wailed to the heavens. These two were so unreliable! It was one thing for Light Sword to be out of the fight, but Li Hao...

The man knew what Li Hao was doing, but it really was going to be the death of him!

A little tree seemed to take root in Li Hao's liver and sprout leaves. It was a willow branch stuck in the dirt. As it extended in growth, locks appeared like roots—not to confine the little tree in place, but to entwine around its roots and reach throughout the liver.

There were strange things living in all of the five organs now. There was a ferocious tiger in the heart, a wave of water in the kidneys, a mountain in the spleen, a dot of a golden sun in the lungs, and now a growing tree in his liver.

The little tree was the weakest, the other four were noticeably stronger as they'd been fed the Goldensky Lotus or Mind Fruits. This tree was the weakest as it'd just been born.

Li Hao coughed gently, summoning a seed of the Goldensky Lotus into his hand. Hong Yitang had given it to him, along with a petal. He'd already consumed the petal, but kept the seed for future use. If the petal could enhance the aura, then what of the seed?

He didn't know, but he wanted to try. It might have good effects as well. If possible, he wanted to strengthen the willow tree. If the five auras were out of balance, that would create problems when trying to meld them together.

The golden lotus seed immediately vanished when he placed it in his mouth. A surge of refreshing energy far stronger than the petal refreshed Li Hao's mind. The seed had a similar effect, and it seemed much stronger!

He conducted the strength into his liver, whereupon the tree shot upward like it'd been fertilized.

Boom!

Hong Yitang's heart pounded fiercely—audibly—as the power of fire seeped out. Li Hao jerked awake with alarm and looked at the man. Hong Yitang's face was on fire; one of his locks seemed to have snapped all the way through.

The increased strength enlarged his defensive circle, but the power seemed difficult to endure. His heart seemed to be burning. This was a condition that hadn't appeared when he faced Hou Xiaochen and the others in Battle Heaven.

Light Sword's eyes fluttered, but Hong Yitang roared, "Continue recovering, don't waste the Water of Life!"

She plainly sensed danger and felt Hong Yitang's resignation. If the situation continued, he would follow in her steps. However, Hong Yitang was also well aware that Light Sword was still recovering. If she made a move, she would quickly undo all of her earlier work. Not only would the droplet of water be wasted, but Li Hao might not be able to save her either.

They only needed a while longer for the Water of Life to completely permeate her body and close her wounds. Only then could she act.

Light Sword's eyelids fluttered a moment longer before calming down. Earthturner Sword seemed to bestow an immense feeling of security upon everyone. Even Li Hao could focus solely on his cultivation because he knew the man was there. He was a jolt of confidence!

Chapter 555: Silver Moon Swordsmen (II)

Waves of shock roiled in the hearts of the powerhouses attacking the trio. Had the heavyweights themselves brought their full strength to bear?

No.

At the very least, the two in metamorphosis hadn't brought all of their power to bear. Under these circumstances, whoever was the strongest would become Earthturner Sword's primary target. That wasn't a good idea, considering that the attackers weren't all from the same faction and there were a lot of them.

Even so, thirteen premier heavyweights were a force to be reckoned with, even in the central region. Such strength was sufficient to annihilate some of the stronger organizations. And yet, they couldn't break the defenses of a single person. How incredible!

Of the two metamorphosis titans, one wore a mask and the other black armor that somewhat resembled the kind from Battle Heaven. The armored one couldn't help but sigh with appreciation, "Earthturner Sword is probably number one among the Seven Swords of Silver Moon..."

Just this defensive technique alone was sufficient to place him at the head of the Seven Swords. It was airtight and present everywhere at the same time. Not to mention, Hong Yitang's reaction skills, internal force, and battle experience were already first class!

Upon seeing that the armored heavyweight had the presence of mind to judge the battle as he fought, someone cursed inwardly. Our current situation is because you two aren't bringing your full strength to bear!

He bit his tongue and didn't say anything, but his sentiments were shared by many. Everyone present was an incredible heavyweight, there was no pulling the wool over anyone's eyes. The armored man's identity was revealed as soon as he opened his mouth. A name appeared in people's minds—Fan Chang!

This was someone who was absolutely a mover and shaker in the world. He was the tyrant of Near River province, the one who held all the reins of power. Originally just the director general of the provincial government, he'd later consolidated all of the provincial institutions and built the Director General Office. He was Silver Moon's old neighbor and apparently the backer behind the Sea Monster Raiders, one of the eight pirate factions.

Fan Chang, the nine ministries, and the royal family were thorns in Silver Moon's side. No wonder he needed to conceal his identity. If he exposed himself and killed Light Sword, he might draw vengeance from Silver Moon martial masters.

Near River and Silver Moon were too close to each other.

But in this moment, no one minded Fan Chang's identity. By this point of the battle, most of the thirteen's identities had been more or less revealed.

Fan Chang cursed to himself. He was one of the metamorphosis experts. The other under a cloak was not from Celestial. If his guess was right, his counterpart was the commander of a certain prince's royal guards.

The Steppe Prince!

Indeed, Fan Chang had met the prince a few times. To think that he would possess greater strength than previously thought! The Steppe King was Hou Xiaochen's superior and the one who'd built the Skystar Guards.

His manor was not too far away from the North Sea. Plainly, someone had come from his side. This person's name was Qian Feng, one of his major leaders.

Of the four peak Novas, Fan Chang knew that one of them was from the Steadfast Duke and another behind a mask was Orange Moon. She wasn't fooling him, and neither were the other two concealing their identities.

One was a pirate—a duke under the North Sea King. Fan Chang wasn't familiar with his name, but he called himself the Duke of Sea Pacification. Fan Chang had heard of the title before and smirked at how shameless and ignorant the pirates were. It now appeared that they weren't weak as this one was a peak Nova.

I wonder what level the North Sea King is? He had to be metamorphosis at the very least. Who knew where he'd gone to be continuously absent from the field?

Fan Chang recognized the other peak Nova as well, it wasn't someone from Celestial or Yama. Those two hadn't seemed to have time to send their powerhouses. Only a late Nova represented them. This peak Nova was from one of the seven divine mountains—Buddha Mountain. It was hard to determine who they were, exactly, but their place of origin was evident from the techniques they used.

The seven divine mountains weren't as well known as the three great organizations, but anyone in the know was aware that they weren't weak.

The lord of Sky Sword Mountain was the Sky Sword. Lord Yonder of Yonder Mountain was an absolute titan. A major monster spirit that'd once swallowed a Nova with one gulp ruled over Sky Roc Mountain. It was said that the leader of Buddha Mountain had once descended like a Buddha to

wrestle about a cease in fighting with his exceedingly fierce path of slaughter. This was a demonstration of pure strength as well.

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Everyone had their own schemes in mind. While they appreciated Hong Yitang's strength, they were highly confident of victory. No one had expended much of their energy, but Hong Yitang was plainly beginning to falter.

Li Hao's five auras were starting to balance out. Stellaris began shaking in his hand. He didn't look at Hong Yitang—it was the limits of what the man could do that he was still defending. The young man didn't know how much longer Light Sword needed to stabilize her wounds. He wanted to send her sword energy as she might not be able to suppress her supernatural locks in her current state.

Various thoughts flashed through his mind as five chains encircled Li Hao's five organs. Although he didn't know much about the five organs as a whole yet, he had some of his own reflections.

The five auras followed the five chains to connect and collide with each other. This was his first attempt to meld five auras together. Just because they'd manifested didn't mean that they could be combined. They hadn't been fully turned into one before. It was just that his sword aura overview had been strong enough to suppress them.

This time, he wanted to see if the five auras could be naturally combined and not forcefully suppressed.

His body trembled when the five auras came in contact with each other, like he'd been electrocuted. His organs were so fortified that they'd long reached the standard of ten thousand cubes. But now, they were shaking and cracks beginning to form in them.

Li Hao's heart skipped a beat!

That strong??

In that case, he could not forcefully attempt to meld his five auras. He could only have the sword overview tame them and lead them in battle.

“Hup!” Hong Yitang roared. Flames rose in the air and evaporated countless tons of seawater. Domineering internal force erupted and shook the four corners, forcing all combatants back.

He spat out a large mouthful of blood and panted for breath, waving his longsword around. The skies and earth seemed to swap places and he seemed even stronger than before. However, the various powerhouses could read a thing or two from his condition. Hong Yitang couldn’t hold his breath anymore. This was his final eruption before he declined—he was already declining.

A look of suffering crept into Hong Yitang’s eyes. If it wasn’t for protecting these two, he wanted to erupt and kill a few people. But once he did so, his defenses would break. He stood a chance of making it out alive, but Li Hao and Light Sword wouldn’t.

The man clenched his jaw! He would wait for an opportunity. He would wait for Li Hao to finish and Light Sword to awaken. Only then could they turn defeat into victory. Otherwise... he would have to think of how to escape. He trusted that Li Hao would not attempt anything futile. He also trusted that Light Sword would not collapse so easily. She just needed some time after absorbing the Water of Life. She would absolutely recover some battle strength.

It was a similar situation in which the two trusted that he could defend them to the last.

“Yup!” Hong Yitang roared once more, enlarging his defensive circle instead of shrinking it. Their attackers willingly gave way, ruthless looks entering their eyes.

You won’t hold out for long!

Li Hao had mostly put his five auras in order, he just didn't have enough time to fully consolidate them. But that didn't matter, this was good enough. Stellaris trembled when he infused the little sword with the five auras. When he utilized the sword nurturing technique, the little sword dimmed and stopped shaking.

To nurture one stroke!

The young man opened his eyes and focused on Xu Zhen among the thirteen. There... might be quite a different reaction if this one was to die. Panther should also be prowling around, looking for an opportunity. If Xu Zhen died and his people ran, the dog would certainly take advantage of that opening.

With that, Li Hao raised his sword and charged out again!

It was weightless as before, just like a willow leaf. And just as before, he was attacked on all sides as soon as he showed himself. The barrage was so fierce that his silver armor shuddered violently and began shrinking back into his body, revealing his true form.

There were limits to the silver armor and the young man wasn't able to fully deploy its complete abilities at the moment.

The Weeping Willow Sword struck again and was sent off course by a fist. The recipient reached for Li Hao's arm, wanting to seize the sword. The young man struck back, but his riposte was impotent.

After a few blows, Li Hao quickly retreated back into the defensive circle. As regretful as the attackers found the development, they were in no hurry. The young man's power wasn't worth mention in this situation. Apart from the two mid Novas who needed to be careful, the rest weren't worried.

"Stop being so stubborn, Hong Yitang! If you back away now, Li Hao hands over the sword of the Lis, and Light Sword hands over the Windchaser Boot, then all three of you can live! If not, none of

you will be making it out alive today!” The speaker was one of those in metamorphosis—General Qian Feng from the Steppe King.

Hong Yitang didn’t respond. He’d sensed something from Li Hao’s sword intent, an omen of something about to erupt. The young man wanted to kill, but could he do it? The man didn’t know, but he didn’t mind creating an opportunity for the lad.

Hong Yitang roared when Qian Feng finished speaking and seemed to abandon his defenses. He shattered heaven and earth, parting the seas with his stroke. It was as if the sea was caving in.

The group jerked with surprise and some charging at the forefront quickly backed away. Those weaker couldn’t react in time, but Hong Yitang abruptly withdrew his sword and took a defensive stance again. The group of attackers cursed loudly to themselves.

What are you scaring us for?!

The stronger of the group included their fellow pursuers in the insults. All of you are so scared of death, no wonder you can’t take down the targets!

Some of the mid and late Novas were standing in the front now because they’d been a bit slower to retreat moments ago. Li Hao’s eyes darted rapidly around, this was his chance! It was so lovely to work with martial masters! Hong Yitang was so adept at creating the right opportunity.

Chapter 556: Silver Moon Swordsmen (III)

Li Hao charged the moment that the other powerhouses retreated. Out in front, Xu Zhen and the others didn’t mind the action. It wasn’t Li Hao’s first time rushing out. Everything was fine so long as it wasn’t Hong Yitang.

It was then that the young man suddenly roared, “Kill!”

A ferocious tiger seemed to descend from the mountain; his roar reverberated in their ear drums. A formidable mind intent exploded. The group saw a lot of things—mountains, rivers, a tiger, a tree...

The lithe Weeping Willow Sword danced through the air, but this time, it struck like a venomous snake! It was locked onto one person and nothing would deter it from its target. It was everywhere and anywhere. Lights of five colors shone in all directions. Seawater rocked violently and waves reared. Xu Zhen was propelled a step forward. Eyes widening, he attempted to kick Li Hao away as before.

But this time, the young man remained unmoving after a loud collision!

“Be careful!” shouted the old man with white hair. He swiftly stepped forward and blasted with a punch!

Li Hao’s sword didn’t seem that fast, but it took only a split second for it to descend. It struck with a swift stroke!

Xu Zhen felt that there were branches all around him—no, that was sword light. He didn’t know where the weakness was in Li Hao’s sword method. Roaring, he sought to shatter the sword light. However, he felt a terrible pain in his right leg. Li Hao had punched him with his left hand and fractured the right leg that Xu Zhen had just kicked at him with.

Sword light draped over him like a spider web. It flashed across the vision, then vanished!

Xu Zhen ran from Li Hao’s vicinity, a shocked expression on his face. “You little brat, not bad! You actually tried going for me!” he laughed uproariously.

Li Hao took a few quick steps back. Panting slightly, he began accumulating sword aura again.

Xu Zhen continued laughing loudly, covering up his fear. Meanwhile, the frantic white-haired old man and the middle-aged man quickly drew close to Xu Zhen. That had been terrifying! Thankfully Li Hao’s sword was all show and no force. It wasn’t too destructive. The young master duke was fine.

If anything had happened to him, the Steadfast Duke would surely explode. It hadn't been long since Xu Feng's death, Light Sword turning traitor, and five generals dying. It would be unthinkable if something happened to Xu Zhen as well!

The others casually looked at the Xu representative. It wasn't long before someone hummed with surprise. The general director of Near River tilted his head at Xu Zhen. The latter was celebrating his escape and also jeering at Li Hao for being surface level and no substance. He'd thought that he wouldn't be able to avoid that stroke, but it suddenly melted away. He was fine!

However, more hums of surprise sounded around him. The old man didn't notice it at first, but his expression shifted drastically in the next moment. Xu Zhen blinked when he noted the old man's expression. What's this about?

"Young... young master duke..." stammered the old man. Shock brimmed in his eyes.

Lines of blood were beginning to appear on Xu Zhen's face, expanding like a spiderweb and fracturing his skin. He didn't feel any pain—just an itch on his face. He reached out to scratch his itch and spontaneously shattered his face! His hand began to fissure like a porcelain object, countless cracks spreading across it and pieces of flesh and blood falling off.

"Im... impossible!" Xu Zhen panicked. How was this possible?! Everything had been fine!

He attracted attention from everyone present.

Li Hao appeared once more, soundlessly striking a mid Nova that'd turned for a look. Hong Yitang also roared in the opening and stabbed his sword forward, abandoning his defense. Everyone was still looking at Xu Zhen, staring at the man cracking like a porcelain doll with his pieces falling into the waters below. The white-haired old man and muscular, middle-aged man were terrified out of their wits. The world spun before their eyes!

They had no thought to spare for the others, which created another opportunity for Li Hao.

“Kill!” The young man struck again, no longer gentle and weak, but ferocious and domineering. His blow detonated viciously; the mid Nova trying to escape froze for a split second, feeling like countless branches were entwined around him.

That split second cost him his life. When the sword descended, he died much more quickly than Xu Zhen. Stellaris chopped him into two halves!

Li Hao killed two people in the blink of an eye. In the same vein, Hong Yitang completely gave up on defense and struck explosively, bringing his magnificent technique to bear on his targets. The other mid Nova was minced to a pulp, unable to offer the slightest resistance. He collapsed to the ground and exploded!

Hong Yitang immediately returned to defense and Li Hao raced back to the defensive perimeter. It took only the span of a breath. The others had fully retreated, but their eyes widened at their reduced numbers.

Dead!

Xu Zhen was dead, two mid Novas had been promptly killed. Only ten were left out of thirteen... Everything had happened too quickly.

“Young master duke!” The white-haired old man was losing his mind as he clutched at pieces of flesh. Xu Zhen was dead, and in such a gruesome manner! He’d been diced by ten thousand cuts!

If word of this got back, would the Steadfast Duke forgive them even though he’d already suffered such extreme losses?!

The old man looked at the middle-aged man; his colleague stared back at him. Both of them were very strong—one was a mid Nova and one a late Nova. They were both fine, but the direct lineal descendant of the duke had been killed. How were they supposed to explain themselves?? No matter what... they could not remain here any longer.

The two instantly made up their minds. They needed to leave. Whether it was to go back and beg for forgiveness on their knees or run for their lives, they could not remain on the scene. With that decision made, they grabbed Xu Zhen's storage ring, collected a few pieces of flesh, and whirled around to run.

They were extremely decisive and immediately took action, but a paw surged out of the water below and slammed into the middle-aged man's crotch. The man looked down incredulously, finding that his lower body had been pierced through by an animal's paw!

Before he could react, a dog's mouth appeared and bit him in two!

BAM!

White Hair punched a black dog back; it hauled the bottom half of the middle-aged man away. Red swiftly bubbled up in the waves. The black dog reappeared with a violent light in his eyes, looking at the shellshocked White Hair. Just as Li Hao had surmised, although Panther hadn't fought that many times, it was first class when seizing the proper opportunity for battle.

The string of developments stunned the rest of the attackers. Four of them had died before anyone had a chance to react and the one running was facing off against a dog! What... in the world was this situation?!

Hong Yitang finally had a chance to breathe from being mobbed. He looked at Li Hao with some gratification—the kid didn't disappoint, alright! Although he'd killed only the weakest, leaving the strongest, reducing their numbers by so many meant that the threat posed by the attackers was greatly reduced.

Four out of thirteen were now dead and another was facing off against Panther in the distance. There were only eight left on the spot. The developments caused a disturbance among the remaining attackers. Near River's general director looked around solemnly, wanting to retreat as he looked at the trio. However, he was also concerned that he'd become the target if he backed away.

“Earthturner Sword, Demon Sword... you are as if your reputations!” he said gravely. “In that case, then let this matter end here...”

Apart from him, none of the other eight said a word. They were still grappling with their dismay. How had Li Hao suddenly killed a late Nova and where had that dog come from?? Their plan to win through a war of attrition was suddenly null and void. In fact, they rather regretted their actions.

A hulking powerhouse transmitted to them all, “We can still win if we work together with our full force. Don’t you guys want the sword of the Lis and the Windchaser Boot? A few dead means a few less to split the spoils!”

This was the Buddha Mountain representative. Li Hao’s attacks hadn’t scared him, he still wanted to try! The caveat was that the two metamorphosis powerhouses had to be willing to put their full force into the fight.

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“Li Hao, Hong Yitang can handle the two in metamorphosis, I’ll take care of the three peak Novas,” sounded a voice in Li Hao’s ear. “That leaves the three late Novas to you, can you handle that?”

It was Light Sword. She was awake, but her wounds were still very severe. That meant she could only go against the three peak Novas. Li Hao was required to stop or kill the three late Novas.

“Alright!” Li Hao transmitted back. He could try! As for whether or not he could, who knew? Being constantly on the defense and passively striking back was not the style of a swordsman.

The three quickly reached an accord. While their attackers dithered over if they should retreat or continue... Sword light flashed!

BOOM!

The trio didn't give them a chance to converse or retreat. Hong Yitang was extremely excited and cursed loudly, "You little bastards! If it wasn't to protect them, I would've long cut off a few heads for fun!"

He was no saint! He was a butcher who'd once gone to the central region himself for some blood pearls. Li Hao found him kind—that was because the young man was blind!

A sword stroke reverberated through the air!

The world spun before the eyes of the Near River general director and the Steppe Prince's commander. They were sucked into a sealed off pocket of space as Hong Yitang spat out, "You two will fight with me in here. Either you die, or I perish!"

Humm!

Sword qi broke through the air as the two's eyes widened. There was no need to hide anything any further. Immense strength erupted from them as the general director employed a blade and Qian Feng used a spear. They were both origin weapons and further enhanced their wielders on the spot.

The three fought so fiercely that they blasted water straight out of the sea.

Her face still wan, Light Sword swept out her sword and illuminated the land with radiance. She pronounced sternly, "Black Widow, a North Sea pirate, and the guy from Buddha Mountain—none of you are leaving!"

"How much longer can you keep this up, Light Sword?" Having kept her identity concealed all this time, Orange Moon finally spoke with gravity. "We've already decided to leave, but you decide to pursue this to the bitter end..."

“Have you forgotten who we are, Black Widow?”

Chapter 557: Silver Moon Swordsmen (IV)

Orange Moon hadn't forgotten! She erupted with a massive boom, sending thousands of strands of spider silk through the void. Of course she hadn't forgotten. As a fellow Silver Moon martial master, she was all too familiar with their style.

Who would've thought that open hostility would rage in the blink of an eye?

As spider silk shot through the air, Black Widow roared, “She's not fully recovered yet, kill her!”

The pirate and Buddha Mountain representative immediately brought ruthless moves to bear. Their combined efforts created a gap in Light Sword's barrage. Orange Moon shouted and soared into the air, sending out thousands more sword strokes that resembled spider silk. She looked like she was about to kill Light Sword, but her moves drifted away in a flurry.

The woman was gone, vanished on the spot. As a Silver Moon martial master and one who used to be part of the thirty-six, she had her own way of survival—although people liked to say that she'd earned her place through her looks. When Earthturner Sword and the others chose to counterattack, she knew that their optimal chance of victory had just slipped through their fingers!

The attackers weren't all from one faction, after all. None of them were willing to truly put their best efforts on the line as they also schemed against each other at the same time. How would they stand a chance now that they were being cut down one by one?

Hence, she chose to run!

Orange Moon had vanished from public sight. Light Sword frowned, expecting the decision and flicked a glance at Earthturner Sword and Li Hao not too far away. She didn't give chase, continuing to focus on the two panicking peak Novas.

Those two were losing their minds as Black Widow had fled and left them behind!

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On Li Hao's side.

He faced three late Novas—one from Yama, Celestial, and someone else he didn't recognize. The two from the three great organizations were easy to recognize. He ignored the happenings in the other directions and slashed out with five auras melded together. The three powerhouses also brought their best to defend, explosions rang out continuously!

The young man was plainly a bit worse off as he faced three by himself, but he didn't care. He wasn't afraid of being hurt or even breaking an arm or a leg. He deployed the Weeping Willow Sword as the overview for his techniques, enveloping the three and not giving them a chance to escape.

Gentle and unyielding, Li Hao forced the three into ferocious counterattacks and unceasing roars. Sword light swept through the North Sea! The young man was the weakest of the trio, but his sword methods were the most cutting. His moves looked mild, but every one of them was lethal.

Hong Yitang carried himself with the same vast and magnificent style as before, suppressing the two in metamorphosis. They howled with the indignity of their circumstances.

"How dare you try to kill me, Hong Yitang?!" Near River's general director shouted to the heavens. "You will not be able to bear the consequences if I die here!"

BOOM!

A sword came down over his head, so oppressive that it nearly forced the man to explode. Fan Chang roared and hacked wildly with his blade. The other swept his spear around and didn't say much. No amount of intimidation or threats was useful at this point. Fan Chang had occupied a lofty position for so long that he'd forgotten this point.

Silver Moon martial masters didn't care about verbal bluster and didn't even converse much with people. They often talked only after killing their opponent—they struck up conversations with corpses.

Of the three, no, four battlefields, Light Sword was the first to finish her fights. Her sword qi shot up to the heavens as it illuminated the vicinity. She cut down the Duke of Sea Pacification of the North Sea pirates with one stroke.

"I am the brother of the Buddha Mountain lord..." the remaining survivor was forced to protest. His elder brother was the mountain's lord! One of the premier powerhouses of the world!

Light Sword finished her sword sweep and crushed his head.

"Lord of Buddha Mountain?" she sneered. "I think I know him, the one who calls himself the Buddha King, doesn't he? He came to Silver Moon from the west, whereupon Yuan Shuo broke his arms, shaved his head, and hung him on the boundary marker. I thought he died a long time ago, but he's still alive! Yuan Shuo always leaves trouble behind!"

What a pity that the person in front of her was dead and could not hear her anymore.

Li Hao used the flash of horror in his opponents to strike with his sword and erupt with the metal sword aura. He ripped through the Celestial elder with a loud explosion!

The young man's other hand came up with a punch. A massive tiger manifested with a roar and swallowed his second opponent. Terrified beyond belief, his last opponent sought to run. He'd just dashed through the void when Light Sword's blow arrived!

It pierced through heaven and earth and nailed the man into the void!

In the distance, the two metamorphosis experts widened their eyes. A ruthless look crossed Fan Chang's eyes. When Hong Yitang's sword flashed out, Fan Chang suddenly threw out something that exploded, creating a massive cavity in the waters below them.

Vomiting blood, Fan Chang ran off. However, a dark look lingered in his eyes. The treasure was gone—he'd uncovered it in a ruin. According to the instructions it came with, it was an exceedingly powerful bomb from the ancient times. It was an energy bomb that could kill countless powerhouses in the ancient civilization.

He'd uncovered three bombs and used two of them already. They eliminated peak heavyweights each time. And the third... could only be used for saving his life.

As formidable as the bomb was, a ray of sword light flew out from the heart of the explosion and cut off one of Fan Chang's arms. The man didn't even look back; he vanished on the spot like it wasn't his own arm that'd been severed. As a general director, he knew the importance of losing an arm to secure his survival.

The other metamorphosis expert from the Steppe Prince's faction was also heavily injured by the bomb. Coughing up blood, he sighed in the direction that Fan Chang had run in. That bastard... if they'd kept fighting, Hong Yitang was in for a rough time even if they lost.

But he'd run away!

The man's cloak split open to reveal his face. It was a weathered face that looked at Hong Yitang with a smile. "The prince will avenge me... Earthturner Sword, you can't hide anymore after today!"

"The Steppe Prince is strong, but he needs to resolve the three commanders first!" Hong Yitang was likewise coughing up blood, but he swept his sword down!

Boom!

Qian Feng exploded, his voice lingering on the wind. “Hou Xiaochen and the other traitors... will not be long for this world!”

The Steppe King had crafted the Skystar Guards, but the three traitors had stolen the faction! As a loyal subject to the prince, he hated the three commanders. Unfortunately, there was nothing he could do about them. All he knew was that the prince had personally taken the field a while back and injured Hou Xiaochen and Huang Yu. The sad pity was that he hadn’t been able to kill them.

Action abruptly stopped on the three battlefronts. The white-haired old man kicked Panther away and swiftly ran off, abject fear in his eyes. Li Hao and the others were about to make their moves when a violent glint shone in the falling dog’s eyes.

A roar that didn’t sound like a dog bark rang in the air, prompting the appearance of a golden dog. Blood frothing, the black dog had turned into a massive golden dog! It was countless times bigger than before as it bit down on the old man!

The void seemed to shatter with that crunch and a devouring suction force emanated from its mouth. The old man screamed with anguish; half of his body was chomped off. Panther’s eyes were bloodshot and it seemed ready to swallow the body.

“Panth!” Li Hao hastily called out upon seeing the dog’s condition.

The black dog jerked itself awake and shook itself to normal. It was at a bit of a loss and quickly spat out the corpse in its mouth. Panther flung itself down to take a large sip of seawater and rinse out its mouth. It looked at Li Hao innocently when it came up for air. What is it? I don’t eat humans, so how did this person shove himself in my mouth?

Hong Yitang and the others regarded the dog in a new light. Hong Yitang quickly transmuted, “This dog seems to have the bloodline of ancient monster spirits. Its bloodline was briefly activated when it was provoked. Be careful, it seems to lose some consciousness when its bloodline is active...”

Li Hao inclined his head and frowned slightly, quickly revealing a smile again. So what?

“Black Widow and the other guy in metamorphosis got away...” he said with regret after a look around.

“I let her go on purpose!” Light Sword sighed deeply in the middle of a coughing fit.

Li Hao blinked.

“She is a Silver Moon martial master and one of the thirty-six...” Light Sword elaborated after a few seconds of silence. “That’s why I didn’t want to hunt her down.”

Li Hao’s brows furrowed, but he didn’t say anything.

“We might not be able to kill her even if we catch up to her,” Hong Yitang smoothed things over. “She was a martial master back in the day and is aware of our methods. She’s also one of Ying Hongyue’s most treasured subordinates, her strength is not to be underestimated. She might have some ultimate moves that she’s yet to pull out of her sleeve.

“It’s rather Fan Chang who surprised me with such an explosive treasure. I don’t know where he found it—it could’ve easily blown up regular peak Novas!”

“None of that is worth much, it’s more important that Martial Uncle Hong’s strength can no longer be concealed!” Li Hao said with regret.

“I don’t mind and don’t want to hide it,” Hong Yitang chuckled. “There’s been a lack of enemies to force my full strength over the years. Those who could’ve are dead, which contributes to the lack of general knowledge about me. It doesn’t mean that I’m afraid of anything!”

Panther swam in from the distance.

“Forget it, it’s all the same.” Li Hao looked around him. “There are actually some more heavyweights in the surroundings, they’re just watching from afar. Some of them have probably seen the results and are running. We can’t keep this under wraps! C’mon, let’s go find a quiet place to heal the two of you. I need to recover as well!”

“Your five auras sword technique... is not bad!” Hong Yitang complimented.

“It’s just stitched together.” Li Hao shook his head with a smile.

The man understood. Stitching together meant that the young man hadn’t truly successfully melded them as one. Even so, he had the ability to kill late Novas. It was apparent from that that the Five Auras Sword had great potential.

“That’s good! That means there’s enormous potential to be uncovered!”

Li Hao had been a bit dejected—he suddenly smiled at this and nodded. Hong Yitang was the best at comforting people!

Three humans and a dog vanished on the spot. Panther didn’t forget to clean up the battlefield. It was very worried at the moment—it could vaguely recall a few things, like changing and almost eating someone. It was worried Li Hao would send it away, there would be nothing good to eat then!

Therefore, it was particularly diligent in its duties.

It wasn’t until long after the group had vanished that people came by to investigate the battlefield. Sword qi crisscrossed in the air and some Novas were even injured by the lingering qi.

“The swordsmen of Silver Moon... are terrifying!” someone sighed after a long while.

The world was about to change again. Silver Moon martial masters were appearing one after another and each stronger than the previous. The situation was too much and too flustering to make a proper response to.

Chapter 558: All Revealing Themselves (I)

News of the North Sea battle quickly spread in all directions. Various communication systems received word as soon as Li Hao and the rest left.

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An island floated in the depths of the West Sea. In its center was a mountain so ethereal that it seemed immortals might be found on it. A person with a powerful presence was practicing a boxing technique on the mountain. He stilled his movements when a powerhouse broke through the air and stood on the outskirts.

“Mountain lord!” The newcomer respectfully looked down and held out a jade pendant.

The lord of Buddha Mountain glanced at him and asked calmly, “Crimson Feather is dead, isn’t he?”

The man’s expression shifted slightly and he didn’t say too much. “He is dead.” He kept his head lowered.

“Light Sword has unsealed herself for a very long time, she isn’t likely to be behind it. Which of the Silver Moon martial masters did it?”

“Earthturner Sword and Demon Sword.”

The old mountain lord inclined his head. Earthturner Sword wasn’t surprising, but Demon Sword Li Hao? Two swordsmen had gone to save Light Sword?

“Silver Moon martial masters...” The Buddha King shook his head, not sure of what he wanted to say. He took the jade pendant after a while and carefully perused the information on it. “Three humans and a dog created such carnage in the North Sea that the very waters shook from it. The dog should possess the bloodline of the ancient monster spirits... Demon Sword Li Hao is Yuan Shuo’s disciple alright!”

He didn’t seem to care about his younger brother Crimson Feather’s death.

“Mountain lord, Lord Crimson Feather...”

“He was too greedy. It’s his own fault for dying,” the Buddha King said calmly. “Is Light Sword’s Windchaser Boot that easy to seize? I told him that the location was too close to Silver Moon and might raise some attention because of it. It might draw in the Silver Moon martial masters. He didn’t listen and didn’t believe me. He went with a death wish that I saw coming from far away. But since I couldn’t persuade him otherwise, I could only let him do as he would!”

The powerhouse under his command widened his eyes. So the mountain lord had seen this coming?

The Buddha King sank into his memories instead of saying anything else. He shook his head to erase them from his mind.

Earthturner Sword, Demon Sword... His information indicated that Earthturner Sword had reached the ultimate peak of what was feasible for his path. The only unknown was how many supernatural locks he’d fully saturated.

Five? Six? Or even more?

Not every person could unseal their battle strength, and not every martial master could accomplish it. One needed to saturate their supernatural locks first—it was difficult to determine how many of his were at capacity.

Light Sword, Earthturner Sword, Hou Xiaochen, Huang Yu...

Various names flashed through the Buddha King's mind. Had all of them reached that step? Silver Moon fellows were truly frightening! Yuan Shuo had also dropped out of the public eye. Where have you gone, Yuan Shuo?

"Forget it," the man sighed at the end. "Tell our disciples to stay out of Silver Moon. Do not engage these people if they lack full confidence in winning."

"Understood!" his subordinate barked out, then asked hesitantly, "Mountain lord, with Lord Crimson Feather's death, do we..."

Not say a word? Wouldn't that cause the renowned Buddha Mountain to lose face?

"Yama, Celestial, and the Steppe Prince have all lost people. The worst off is the Steadfast Duke. That old thing has now lost his son, grandson, and five of his eight generals. He'll be the first to issue any sort of challenge or seek vengeance!

"Undercurrents race beneath the surface these days, no one is willing to be the first to declare war on Silver Moon. Those of the province refused to be lambs to the slaughter long ago and are striking back. Hou Xiaochen has entered the central region, Sky Sword created Sky Sword Mountain, Tyrant Blade can be found in the land... All of them are putting their lives on the line! We'd just be creating trouble for ourselves if we make a move now!"

Putting their lives on the line, lambs to the slaughter...

These terms puzzled his subordinate, but the Buddha King didn't explain himself. Those who would understand would, and those who wouldn't, would not. There were too many secrets buried in that province and powerhouses stared covetously at all of them. However, Silver Moon martial masters were not willing to allow others to interfere. The last attempt had seen thousands of supernaturals be buried in their ruins.

This was just the beginning and also represented that Silver Moon would not share their sacred land!

The Buddha King had long foreseen that conclusion. Silver Moon fellows were adept at fighting among themselves and presenting a united front against outsiders. Who would be willing to give up their sacred land on bended knee?

Martial masters aware of the situation were furiously striking back. Hou Xiaochen's foray to the central region was the beginning of such a counterattack. He hoped to build a first line of defense outside of Silver Moon.

It would be much more difficult than he thought!

As more and more powerhouses were bottlenecked, Silver Moon would be forced to open up sooner or later. The supernatural domain was also improving as time went on. There were more metamorphosis experts these days and perhaps the province would have a better way for them to take the next step forward.

"You are dismissed." The Buddha King waved his hand as the thoughts floated through his mind. "The central region is our current training grounds. We can set Silver Moon aside for now!"

"Understood!" The messenger swiftly departed.

Although the Buddha King returned to his boxing routine, he was distracted. Silver Moon once more came to the forefront of his mind, as well as a lot of other people. As the best and brightest among the western martial world, he'd been hailed as a walking god when he reached Dominator. He'd swept all of his opponents and thought nothing of the so-called sacred land of martial dao when he visited Silver Moon.

Reality dealt him a mortifying blow that he would not forget for the rest of his life. None of Silver Moon's Dominators had come out to welcome him—only an excited Yuan Shuo in the midst of his rise challenged him when he learned that the best of the western martial world had come.

Naturally, the Buddha King couldn't be bothered with the upstart and didn't want to accept the challenge. However, his opponent came straight for him.

After a fierce battle, he proved unable to match the Sunderer level Yuan Shuo. His arms were broken and the impertinent Buddha King managed to infuriate Yuan Shuo so much that the latter decided to humiliate his opponent. He shaved the Buddha King bald to make him match his moniker and hung the man on the province's boundary marker.

The Buddha King had wanted to die that day, but he lived through the shame and carried on to present day.

"Yuan Shuo..." The Buddha King suddenly smiled. It was good! It was good that the old man was still alive. He rather wished for Yuan Shuo to be as strong as possible. So long as Yuan Shuo was alive, so would the Buddha King's shame live on. It propelled him onward in the face of cultivation challenges, never forgetting the mortification and disgrace he'd once suffered no matter how tired he was.

Yuan Shuo, certain credit has to go to you that Buddha Mountain is now one of the seven divine mountains! To think that your disciple would be raising a ruckus after you've disappeared. He wields the divine sword of the Lis and will probably become public enemy number one before long, just like you.

.....

While Buddha Mountain was incomparably quiet, the central region was far from such a tranquil scene. A grand manor stood at the end of a prosperous avenue—the Steppe King's manor.

This had been a sacred land eighty years ago; it was much less illustrious compared to before. The nine ministries had confined the royal family after the reins of power were turned over. Even one of their nine princes still kept an exceedingly low profile. He hadn't done anything major aside from creating the Skystar Guards several decades ago.

Inside the prince's manor.

A middle-aged man with a stern countenance sat on wooden chairs as he sipped tea. He put down the teacup after hearing the latest reports from the intelligence networks. "So Qian Feng's dead... I'd thought that this would be another chance for him to break through after setting foot into metamorphosis. What a pity, what an absolute pity!"

What a pity that the loyal Qian Feng had perished. What a shame. Those vile Silver Moon barbarians were growing stronger yet.

"Go tell Huang Yu to have Silver Moon return Qian Feng's body," the Steppe Prince said after a long moment. "We need to give him a proper burial!"

"Milord!" some grieved among the generals standing in the hall. "General Qian has been killed, we are not willing..."

"You must be, even if you are not willing!" The Steppe King shook his head. "Now is not the time. There are more than just one or two people that comprise of Silver Moon powerhouses, there are a lot of them! If we start the war first, the ultimate result might be that we are the ones destroyed. No one from Silver Moon's side might even die in that case.

"Our only recourse is to wait! Wait until there are more in metamorphosis and looking for the breakthrough. Once the fact that Silver Moon can be breached is known to the rest of the world, that will be when we destroy the Silver Moon martial world one and for all!

"I knew thirty years ago that this group of people would be trouble sooner or later. I wanted to fight fire with fire and use savages against savages, but I failed in the end. And now, their dangers are apparent."

He'd known early on that the Silver Moon martial world would eventually be a problem. But the royal family had been too heavily suppressed then and the nine ministries didn't really care about

exterminating the martial world. They neither approved nor condemned such actions, but didn't support them either.

I wonder if the nine ministries regret their actions now?

The Steppe Prince snorted to himself. Everyone wanted Silver Moon, but it wasn't an easy target to conquer! It was also impossible to not subdue the province first before conquering the world. If they didn't, how were they supposed to obtain benefits, rise to higher levels, and rule the world again?

Hou Xiaochen, you and yours think too simply. Those with ambition will charge into Silver Moon sooner or later. How is one to be the Human King without pacifying that province first?

.....

Three sword wielders fought in the North Sea, sending shock in all directions.

Hou Xiaochen received word at first light—he'd just arrived at the central headquarters of the Night Watchers. He chuckled when he saw that those in the middle of a meeting glance downward and continue reading.

There were many directors at central headquarters. One principal, nine deputies. Hou Xiaochen made for ten deputies. There were eleven ranking powerhouses total. Of them, the most eye-catching was naturally the famous Yellow Dragon. Instead of assessing him, Hou Xiaochen looked at the statuesque Director Zheng.

He wasn't as famous as Yellow Dragon; he kept such a low profile that the deputy severely overshadowed him. The Night Watchers were a subagency of the Inspectorate. It was logical for a Night Watcher director to be an Inspectorate deputy, but for a Night Watcher deputy to be an officer in the Inspectorate as well... The clear intent of checks and balances was at play here.

Plainly, Yellow Dragon had his backers, and they were possibly at the Inspectorate headquarters. They put him here to suppress the Night Watcher director.

“Congratulations, Ole Brother Hou,” someone called out while Hou Xiaochen was still looking at Director Zheng. “You have a good heir. Yuan Shuo’s disciple seems to be a deputy director of the Silver Moon Night Watchers. We’ve just received word that he annihilated a band of pirates in the North Sea. He seems to match the other little guys in Silver Moon...”

Pirates.

No one spoke of their true identity and clapped them with the identification of pirates. Even if Li Hao and the rest of them died, it would still be the work of pirates.

Chapter 559: All Revealing Themselves (II)

“More like utter contempt for regulation!” Seated in the head position, the incomparably dignified Yellow Dragon snorted. “It is one thing to be exterminating pirates and raiders, but I have received word that Night Watcher Li Hao has killed Xu Zhen of the Steadfast Duke’s household! Although the royal family has retreated behind the scenes, they are still the nobility of the dynasty. The Steadfast Duke is officially acknowledged by the nine ministries!

“Li Hao is just like his master, one who flagrantly defies the law. The Night Watchers were formed to stand against such people. He breaks the rules knowing full well what they are. He disregards law and order! Light Sword joined the Steadfast Duke as a slave and has turned traitor, killing her master. How can such a violent criminal be rescued by the Night Watchers instead...”

All eyes snapped to Hou Xiaochen. Here it came! Everyone knew that Yellow Dragon would not let Hou Xiaochen find his footing in the central region. As expected, the man was berating their newest addition at his welcoming party.

“Deputy Director Hou.” Yellow Dragon looked at Hou Xiaochen. “Li Hao has broken the law knowing fully well what it is. You are a veteran inspector and Night Watcher. What say you, how should he be punished?”

"I should stay out of it to avoid accusations of bias," Hou Xiaochen responded calmly. "Let's see what the director says. If not, let's see what everyone thinks..."

"We can remove Li Hao from his position if it comes down to that," he laughed. "It's not like we'll arrest him for questioning, will we? There's no one in Silver Moon who will listen to me after my departure. Why don't Deputy Director Yellow send someone to capture Li Hao? I have no opinions about that. Miscreants such as these should be punished!"

"And if we send Deputy Director Hou to arrest him?" Yellow Dragon frowned.

"Sure!" Hou Xiaochen grinned. "I'll set out immediately with my people. We'll bring in Li Hao, Earthturner Sword, and the others. But they're very strong, so headquarters will need to give me a certain degree of support. I'll absolutely capture them within a year!"

"....." No one said a word. They'd finally brought Hou Xiaochen to the central region, wouldn't it be letting the tiger return to the mountain if they sent him back?

The old man who'd yet to say anything coughed gently. "Alright, let this matter end here! The Steadfast Duke... has not publicly admitted that the one who died is one of his. He hasn't filed a report, so we have no right to be involved. They can do as they wish." He gave both sides a way out of the situation.

"Being newly arrived, Xiaochen is not too familiar with our situation. The Night Watcher headquarters possesses five commanders in addition to us directors. They are in charge of the north, south, east, west, and central regions. Deputy Director Yellow Dragon has always been acting commander of the north. Xiaochen is also from Silver Moon of the north and is unfamiliar with the other regions. Director Yellow..." The old man turned to Yellow Dragon.

"Let's give the position of northern commander to Xiaochen. He knows the area well and this gives him something to do. Being commander will prevent his talents from being wasted in just sitting around."

Yellow Dragon's expression froze over. When it came to the hierarchy of power, the five commanders were certainly lower than the deputy directors. But in terms of actual power, the five

commanders were much greater than regular deputy directors. They directly commanded a portion of the Night Watchers!

He'd always been the commander of the north, but the old fart wanted to make use of Hou Xiaochen's arrival to knock him down a peg! Was he supposed to just give up the position of northern commander??

"Director, that would be inappropriate, wouldn't it?" Yellow Dragon was naturally unwilling. "Director Hou is only familiar with Silver Moon. There is unrest in the north now and the director is likely unknowing of the entire situation. The Night Watchers of the other eighteen provinces may not be satisfied if we brashly change their commander."

"Why don't we take it slower? It's alright if I have to labor under a heavier workload. Isn't the director also a commander of Skystar City? There isn't much for a commander of the central region to oversee, why not let Deputy Director Hou take over that?"

A commander of the central region was officially known as the Skystar commander. They oversaw the central region, but in name only. There were so many powerful institutions in the central region, alongside the nine ministries and royal families. There were also large sums of princes and dukes as well. Each central region province was also overseen by a domineering personage. Who would listen to the Skystar commander?

That position was sheer nonsense. Commanders of the other four areas might be able to exert some strength in their position. There might be some who didn't listen to them, but not all of them wouldn't ignore the commander.

The old man glanced at Hou Xiaochen, then at Yellow Dragon. "That is just as well!" He nodded with a smile. "Then that's settled. Xiaochen has just arrived and could do with some time to familiarize himself with new surroundings. Then the position of Skystar commander will be given over to Xiaochen. I'll send word to the Inspectorate in a moment. We shouldn't run into too much trouble particularly as Director Yellow also gives his support. There won't be any issue with this."

Yellow Dragon frowned slightly. Do I support this?

Fine, it had been his suggestion. He just hadn't thought that the old thing would agree so readily. It went so smoothly that he felt something was amiss.

The Skystar commander did indeed lack actual power, but it was also nominally the head of the five commanders. Its authority was very high as it oversaw all of the supernatural affairs in the central region. The old director had the intent of doing so, but lacked the strength to exercise his authority. He'd hunkered down in his office the entire time.

If Hou Xiaochen decided to carry out the letter of his duties... there might be some trouble then. But in that case, he would offend a large sum of institutions and organizations. Yellow Dragon smiled again. If Hou Xiaochen was unafraid of death and insisted on sticking his nose into things, then that was his prerogative. Yellow Dragon wouldn't have to do anything then for someone to teach Hou Xiaochen a lesson!

"Alright, I'll send word to the inspector general as well," Yellow Dragon acquiesced. "We shouldn't have much of an issue."

"My deepest thanks." Hou Xiaochen smiled. "I've just arrived and don't understand anything. If there's anything untoward that I engage in, I hope for some leniency from everyone."

No one discussed the matters of the North Sea any further. It was too far away for them to do anything. And with Hou Xiaochen in the mix, people couldn't say much about Silver Moon martial masters.

Hou Xiaochen looked at the old director and then at the other deputy directors. He smiled and didn't say anything further. The old director plainly wanted to set him up against Yellow Dragon. Everyone could see that and sense how helpless the old director was. However, Hou Xiaochen wouldn't underestimate the man for it.

The old man had been director of the Night Watchers when it was formed. He was still their director after all these years. The old director had been a powerhouse back in those days. How else would he

have been the first generation director? Though he seemed like a figurehead now due to many years of inaction, was he really just a figurehead?

Hou Xiaochen's thoughts turned to Earthturner Sword and the others. Those guys are seriously crazy. They either didn't make a move, or killed so many powerhouses when they did. Life... would not be easy in the days to come.

Although all sides were wary of each other and didn't want to be the first to expose themselves, taking such a high profile stance also revealed all of their capabilities.

Hou Xiaochen sighed inwardly. As each Silver Moon martial master was exposed to the public eye, powerhouses of various factions would be prepared and know more about the province. When they felt that they held most of the information they wanted about the province, that was when they would act.

Silver Moon would be in grave trouble from now on!

Should he relinquish the province?

The thought vanished from Hou Xiaochen's mind as soon as it occurred to him. That was their root, how could they abandon it? Not only was he unwilling, but so were the others.

.....

A hubbub of discussion rose on all sides.

Meanwhile, close to the North Sea.

A domineering middle-aged man with a wan complexion looked toward the North Sea. He held someone in his hand and coldly demanded, “Has the fighting stopped in the North Sea?”

“It has... stopped...” quickly answered his quarry. “Noble... sir... I was just passing by... I don’t know anything...”

The man rifled through his target’s clothes and took out a pendant. He looked at it and inclined his head. “Not bad, Earthturner Sword... has concealed his strength. and Black Widow escaped?” The man furrowed his brows, then quickly smoothed them out. “It’s fine, there’s no point in killing her. That can wait until Ying Hongyue comes.”

The person in his hand trembled ever more violently. After he finished speaking, the man tossed his quarry into the air and blew him up!

He would kill a scout of the three great organizations if he wished. The middle-aged man looked around. He’d wanted to find Yuan Shuo, but Yuan Shuo had gone missing. After learning of a battle here, he came to find Light Sword, but the fighting was over. So now what? Where should he go?

After a brief moment, the man had his answer. He would go have some fun with the North Sea King!

The Starlight Pirates were the greatest among the North Sea pirates. Their leader self-styled himself as the North Sea King. He seemed to have been involved in this operation and even sent out one of his dukes. And yet, the North Sea King himself hadn’t appeared.

The man took a step out and vanished on the spot. It wasn’t until he was gone for a very long time that a head popped out of the ground. “Was that... Tyrant Blade?” it murmured with shock.

Tyrant Blade was still alive!

He'd always been alive, but so very few people had seen him around. That did seem to have been Tyrant Blade. Many people were familiar with pictures of the thirty-six heroes of Silver Moon; those were core files of numerous organizations.

Tyrant Blade had come to the North Sea!

The scout in the dark was shocked by how strong Tyrant Blade appeared. First it was Earthturner Sword, then Tyrant Blade, just how many powerhouses were hidden in Silver Moon's martial world?

He swiftly entered words into a jade pendant and prepared to pass the message back that Tyrant Blade had appeared in the vicinity... The scout had just utilized a thread of mysterious power when...

BAM!

A massive explosive rang out as a surge of blade qi destroyed everything, including the person underground. Off in the distance, the middle-aged man who'd departed looked back coolly. He couldn't be bothered for a second look and promptly vanished. Everyone knew that Tyrant Blade should not be disrespected with surveillance!

Chapter 560: All Revealing Themselves (III)

At the same time, at a place less than fifty kilometers away from Tyrant Blade.

A genteel man raised his head and looked in a certain direction, seeming to sense something. He quickly shook his head with a smile and paid no further attention. Instead, he focused on the person warily backing away from him.

"Long time no see, little Spidey. How have you been?"

Cold sweat beaded Black Widow's face beneath the mask. She was more terrified of this man than she was of Earthturner Sword. She forcefully tamped down the fear in her heart. "I'm alright. Ah, Red Moon's been looking for you and wishes to engage in great affairs..."

"You're not being too honest, Spidey," chuckled the genteel man. "You're trying to scare me with Ying Hongyue. I haven't done anything and I don't like killing innocents, not to mention old friends. I only came by because I heard Light Sword was surrounded. You weren't part of that, were you? We're all old friends here..."

"N-no..."

"You're still not being too honest, Spidey!" the man chuckled again. "I've already received word. Look here, I have this too!" He took out a jade pendant. "Apparently you ran fast, you were the first one out of there. That was how I knew you were involved. Otherwise, I would never think that little Spidey would join others in attacking Silver Moon martial masters. We can kill each other ourselves, but other people cannot. Have you forgotten? Ying Hongyue's taught you poorly these years..."

"I was just watching." Black Widow sweated profusely. "I didn't bring my full strength to bear. I was surprised that Light Sword was so strong and wanted to test a thing or two..."

"You're full of lies!" sighed the genteel man with a shake of his head. "Forget it, I won't press you. We're all old friends."

"Then I'll be off," Black Widow said hurriedly. "And please call upon us when you have time..."

"Off?" laughed the man. "Alright, but you did break some rules. I tend to be a stickler for the rules, so I'll punch you once to help your memory. If Ying Hongyue wishes to kill Yuan Shuo, only his people can take the field. When was allying with outsiders a thing? That's such disrespect for the rules!"

"No..." Black Widow panicked and attempted to run!

This peak Nova was even more terrified than when Light Sword wanted to chase after her! She leapt into the air to make her getaway. The man sighed and punched!

His fist floated gently through the air, but was also stately and imposing without any extraneous complexities.

Boom!

A fist descended from the sky, its presence so vast and magnificent that it outmatched Earthturner Sword's technique.

BOOM!

The fist slammed Black Widow into the ground. Her mask shattered, revealing an exquisite face. She vomited blood, dismay writ over her face. A fist was imprinted on her chest—all of her bones were broken and most of her organs were ruptured. Her mysterious power was mostly dissipated as well.

Despair crept over her face. The genteel man laughed in the distance. "That will do, such are the rules. You won't die, all you need is some nourishment when you go back. Commit this lesson to memory and stop running around with the wrong sorts. You liked to do that before, but at least you kept to other Silver Moon folks. Now you consort with outsiders? You're better than that!"

"Gurgle..." Black Widow wanted to say something, but there was nothing she could say. In her horrified and overawed state, she just felt that she was on the verge of death.

Northern Fist!

She knew that Northern Fist must be very strong, but she'd never thought that she'd almost die from a single punch. There was absolutely no opening for her to strike back. What heights had Northern Fist reached? Where had he been all these years? Why was he suddenly here?!

The genteel man ignored her and looked around, contemplating certain things before sighing, “Forget it, I won’t go back to Silver Moon. It can’t handle more disturbance at the moment. I wanted to meet with Yuan Shuo since I heard he left the province, but he’s gone now. Tyrant Blade might also be nearby, but I can’t be bothered with him.

“I hear that Buddha King is still alive and got himself one of those divine mountains... Same goes for Sky Sword. I’ll go catch up with them. Ah, yes. I hear my ole brother He Yong’s joined the royal family as one of their lackeys. Is that true?”

“Cough cough...” Black Widow couldn’t respond as blood flowed out of her mouth.

Northern Fist frowned at her. “You disregard the rules too much. My ranking was higher than yours on the thirty-six and you should be answering when I ask you questions. Or do you want another punch?”

Fear intensified in Black Widow’s eyes. She struggled against the immense pain from her organs and managed to form some words. “At... Southern Fist... is at... the royal family...”

That was more like it!

The genteel man nodded with a smile. “Then I’ll go visit my little brother. Bring a message back with you that pretty boy Red Moon should come visit me. I’d like to see if he’s still so handsome after so many years. I want to smash his face every time I see him—I hate people who look better than me!”

“.....” Black Widow didn’t dare say a word. She simply nodded.

“Then I’m off.” Northern Fist let her off the hook and waved a hand. “Spidey, go home to your pretty boy and tell him that he should renounce his supernatural side as soon as possible. What’s the point of training the supernatural? It’s just a waste of time. Martial dao is the true path!”

He left at a moderate pace, but instantly vanished from sight.

Black Widow took out some pills long after he left and quickly swallowed them, but she still wanted to cry. That punch had broken countless bones and severely damaged her organs. She wouldn't recover without Water of Life.

Thankfully, it'd just been one punch. If another had come... she'd probably really be dead. These people...

Unable to finish her thought, she ultimately sighed and left with difficulty. It looked like Red Moon would have to wait to enter Silver Moon. Otherwise, under these circumstances, Li Hao might kill her himself without needing to wait for Huang Yu and the others.

Northern Fist had appeared, as had Tyrant Blade, Sky Sword, Earthturner Sword, Yuan Shuo, and Jadelight Sword. An era of chaos was soon upon them. Even if various factions didn't come for these personages, they might take action themselves.

.....

At the same time.

Li Hao's trio swiftly vanished among the North Sea.

The North Sea province.

Although the three northern provinces were caught in unrest, the provincial capital of Seabreeze was still a picture of tranquility.

On the outskirts, in a large hotel.

Earthturner Sword had rented a small villa close to the sea. The view was unbelievably gorgeous. Pieces of mysterious power stones floated in front of them, as well as a massive stone from Hong Yitang. The man sighed, he only had one such piece left!

Of the treasures that he'd found in Battle Heaven, one had been used on He Yong, another being used now, and the Water of Life had also been used. His fortuitous opportunity was slipping through his fingers...

Li Hao said nothing, he plunged the sword into the biggest piece. He couldn't help it since Hong Yitang wanted to offer it. The Silver Moon authorities had given him many mysterious power stones for the rescue effort.

"This operation is funded by the Silver Moon authorities. I wasn't in the mood to run to the North Sea to save people. Let me be clear, it's all from the government. But the stones they gave are so low quality and their effects too mediocre. Therefore, Martial Uncle Hong took out this piece. It's on Light Sword's head, I won't be owing up to anything."

His words were brusque and to the point. The woman simply nodded and didn't say anything.

"Thus, you have no need to think you owe me a favor. I'm suppressing your energy because the government is paying and you threatened me into a favor. There is nothing between you and me after this matter, but you bullying me still stands!"

Light Sword remained quiet.

"It's just a small matter..." Hong Yitang coughed softly.

Sword energy surged out; Light Sword swiftly started absorbing it. The three fell silent with no hint of their previous partnership to be seen. Working together to kill people was one thing, but their personal grudges would not be dissolved because of it.

Li Hao kicked Panther as he released sword energy. The dog looked innocently at him; the young man glared back! That's enough! You're too much. She's dying and you keep devouring sword energy. You're so black-hearted!

It was rather Light Sword who opened her eyes and looked at Panther. "This monster spirit came to save me as well," she coughed. "However much it absorbs can be added to my bill. I'm not as poor as you think. I served the Steadfast Duke for twenty years and saved some money over the years..."

She has money?

Li Hao promptly directed a large surge of sword energy to Panther. You should've said so earlier!

The corner of Light Sword's mouth twitched and she closed her eyes without a word. The dog happily began absorbing energy. How nice!

An entire chunk of mysterious power stone was consumed, but that was far from enough. Light Sword's supernatural locks were too badly broken. Thankfully the old man—woman—had retained some lingering connections and had the benefit of a special surge of light energy protecting her. Added to that help from a drop of Water of Life. Otherwise, Li Hao truly wouldn't have been able to rescue her.

Even so, he depleted a large sum of resources. Other than the biggest, purest chunk, he began breaking more mysterious power stones. One hundred, two hundred, five hundred...

Stones shattered by the hundreds.

Light Sword's absorption rate slowed only after three thousand pieces had shattered. However, Li Hao continued breaking mysterious power stones. This next batch was for Hong Yitang. The man absorbed everything he was given like he was a bottomless pit.

The young man himself also shattered stones and continued to absorb the energy. He was both healing his injuries and directing large quantities of sword energy into his body to saturate his supernatural locks.

The locks of his five organs, particularly the heart, had absorbed tens of thousands without reaching capacity. He wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to see if sword energy could saturate them.

Three humans and one dog absorbed energy without an end in sight, a pile of shattered stones gathering around them. The energy being exuded drew some attention, but when a Solar approached the villa and sensed the sword intent, he immediately ran away. The entire world quieted down as nearby residents vanished.

North Sea senior executives suddenly knew who was in residence, but no one dared do anything. Many of them had received word of the North Sea battle, but it'd take multiple heavyweights in metamorphosis to hold their own against these people. The North Sea had plumbed its depths, there was no one sailing the sea who could move against these people.

After this battle, Earthturner Sword and Light Sword's name was known throughout the dynasty. Li Hao was a little behind them, but he grew more famous than before. There'd been those who didn't believe that he killed the second-in-command of the White Shark Raiders, thinking that it was wild rumor. But after he killed Xu Zhen in front of many witnesses, no one doubted his strength again.

The only pity was that his master didn't receive the news. The ruins isolated one from communication.