

Star Gate 561

Chapter 561: The Windchaser Boots (I)

The period of rest and recovery endured for a very long time—a full day and night. Shards of mysterious power stones by Li Hao's body almost formed a mountain. Aside from the massive stone from Hong Yitang, Li Hao consumed eight thousand pieces from his own cache!

Indeed, eight thousand!

He'd nearly consumed all of the ten thousand pieces that the Silver Moon authorities had given to him as a deposit. If Hong Yitang's was included, this meant that they'd depleted more than ten thousand stones on this endeavor. It was a frightful figure, but one that Light Sword wasn't fully responsible for. The others had absorbed a great deal as well.

Not only that, but a lot had been stored within the little sword. He wouldn't have to replenish it first each time before he used it. Regardless, Li Hao spent the mysterious power stones to show Light Sword what a grave undertaking this was. He wanted her to know that the deposit paid by the official authorities was insufficient for her use.

Li Hao himself had absorbed a lot of sword energy and melded it into his heart's supernatural lock, but he still didn't sense its saturation. This was turning into quite a wearying endeavor.

It meant that he couldn't be like the others and explosively increase his battle strength after unsealing himself. That was so frustrating! He was strong enough at the moment, but if he could unseal himself, he might be able to match himself against those in metamorphosis, could he not?

What a damned pity!

Everyone could do it, but he could not. Was his potential too great or the actual truth that he just couldn't?

One had to saturate at least one supernatural lock or more in order to unseal one's strength for battle. Those like He Yong seemed to have reached capacity in their locks of the four limbs first, so these people should've saturated at least four, if not more.

Only then did they unseal themselves.

Light Sword had unsealed five locks of her internal organs. That didn't mean she'd saturated all five—Li Hao judged that she might've saturated only one of them before unsealing them all. That would simply affect her strength after unsealing.

Hong Yitang should've filled his by a great deal this time. Otherwise, he wouldn't be so coolly composed in each fight and find it relatively easy to suppress his energy after he unsealed them. It looked to be that the more saturated one lock was, the more easy it was to control one's strength and prevent an overload.

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An entire day and night passed. The group opened their eyes when the sky brightened again.

Light Sword heaved a long sigh and breathed out a breath of putrid air that was a bit pungent. "My thanks to you two!" She looked at Li Hao and Hong Yitang.

Hong Yitang said nothing and simply reminded her, "Just remember that you owe me three thousand mysterious power stones..."

It was the same price as what he quoted He Yong—he didn't increase it. As for what he'd absorbed, he'd consider it payment for his labor. He didn't normally include that in his bills. It wasn't unreasonable to charge a fee for labor since he'd been part of the fighting.

"I will remember the favor that I owe you." Light Sword took out a storage ring without a word. "These stones should be roughly enough."

Hong Yitang accepted the ring without protest. He smiled after looking into it. “There’s more than three thousand here. That fulfills your debt. You’re more reliable than He Yong—the guy still owes me. Bah, he’s ridiculous!”

Li Hao was slightly surprised at the prompt payment. She was rich and took out three thousand mysterious power stones without a word! Light Sword really had gotten fat from her service to the Steadfast Duke.

“That was from the storage rings from the Steadfast Duke’s generals that I killed,” said Light Sword when she saw Li Hao look over. “Five Novas have quite some savings.”

There’d been five premier Novas who were generals. Just that was enough.

“The Silver Moon authorities are their own matter. I will compensate you for what you just consumed, but I don’t have that many mysterious power stones at the moment.”

“Forget that then,” Li Hao dismissed. “I’ll take the storage rings of the peak Novas that you killed in the last battle!”

They’d killed twelve premier heavyweights in the last battle. Other than Fan Cheng and Black Widow who escaped, the rest had all been executed. Li Hao also killed two Novas and multiple Solars along the way, so he currently held many storage rings.

“That belongs to you in the first place...”

Li Hao said nothing; he glanced at Hong Yitang. Hong Yitang had also killed a few powerhouses. Apart from the storage ring belonging to the metamorphosis expert, Panther had taken the rest and given it all to the young man.

“What are you looking at?” Hong Yitang grumped. “I take the goods from whoever I killed. All of my battle spoils are mine. I have a lot of mouths to feed and you want to fleece me of my riches?!”

“.....” The look in Li Hao’s eyes turned sheepish. I... really did have that kind of thought.

The main thing was, the guy always presented himself with a noble and virtuous demeanor. He offered up whatever people needed, so the young man felt that Earthturner Sword might as well hand over the storage ring if he didn’t have a need for it.

But it turned out that Hong Yitang did need it!

Ai! Li Hao sighed and took out a storage ring. Of the twelve that’d died, Li Hao had killed five, the dog killed two, Light Sword killed three, and Hong Yitang had killed two. Unfortunately, Li Hao had killed the weaklings—one mid Nova and four late Novas.

Light Sword killed two peak Novas and one late Nova. The dog had killed a peak, a late Nova, and contributed to the one in the water, but Li Hao took credit for that one. Hong Yitang had killed a metamorphosis powerhouse and a mid Nova.

To be honest, this wasn’t how merits were calculated. Hong Yitang had suffered the brunt of all the pressure by himself and continuously maintained defense. Strictly speaking, half of the credit for Li Hao killing these people went to him, but Li Hao didn’t feel inclined to be that generous with the man because...

Most of what I get is going to your Sword Sect disciples at the end of the day.

The thirty martial masters from the Sword Sect consumed a great deal of resources. They all depended on Li Hao. But to be honest, most of those resources came from Hong Yitang.

The man almost rolled his eyes at the storage ring. Your math is quite good, huh kid? Other than Qian Feng’s ring, you really gave me a storage ring from a mid Nova.

Hong Yitang couldn't be bothered to quibble and accepted the ring. His lack of refusal put a stop to Li Hao's craftiness. Both of them started laughing.

"If Martial Uncle Hong is short on money, you can come to me anytime. We can go rob pirates if we need money. They have tons!"

"....." Hong Yitang's laughter petered out. Screw you!

Li Hao was in merry spirits. Though he'd yet to take inventory of his gains, there must be quite a bit. These were all great personages with tremendous strength, surely they had to carry at least one thousand mysterious power stones each to be worthy of their prestige!

Other than the two rings that Hong Yitang had taken, Li Hao had the gains from the ten remaining rings, the two Nova pirates, and multiple Solars... No matter how he looked at it, he'd reaped at least ten thousand stones!

There was also the twenty thousand that the Silver Moon authorities owed him and an additional origin weapon. Speaking of origin weapons, he should've gained more this time as well. Li Hao hadn't paid attention previously and stowed some bodies when he killed them. There ought to be some more for him to discover.

He'd truly struck it rich in this battle!

There were two thousand stones left from the deposit that the provincial government had given him; the young man had almost two thousand left to begin with... To think that he couldn't bear to use one stone just a few days ago, and now...

With strength comes capital. Without strength, one is just cannon fodder. Li Hao sighed to himself. Look at that, killing a few pirates gave him all the money he needed!

“You need to keep yourself in check!” Hong Yitang cut into his emotional reflection. “Silver Moon’s circumstances may not be as good as we think. I’m not certain of the particulars, but I know that we are a thorn in the side of many people. The more exemplary you are, the more easily suppressed you can be! Don’t imitate your master. He jumped around the most back in the day and was eventually confined to Silver City because of it, forbidden to go out...”

“I need to say a few words when it comes to this.” Li Hao raised an eyebrow. “Silver Moon is not weak. How did Ying Hongyue do it back then, to force my master to turtle in Silver City? Director Hou and the others...”

Although Hou Xiaochen had fought Ying Hongyue once for Yuan Shuo, he’d tacitly approved Yuan Shuo staying within Silver City after that.

This did not conform with the Silver Moon style in Li Hao’s eyes—that treatment was too cruel for Yuan Shuo. Everyone else could leave and walk around with freedom, but he could not. He’d spent the equivalent of almost two decades in jail...

Hong Yitang rolled his eyes and didn’t feel like answering. It was Light Sword who sighed softly because she knew of certain details.

“Your master... offended too many people! Silver Moon was forced to agree to this out of consideration for the greater picture. At least it wouldn’t require your master’s life. Ying Hongyue was just one of them, there was also the mountain lord of Buddha Mountain, Yama of the Yama organization, the Celestial Sword Immortal of Celestial, the lord of Yonder Mountain... Silver Moon could not have stood against them all. Fighting for survival for your master was difficult enough already.”

“No way!” Li Hao started. “Isn’t it just Ying Hongyue?”

You’re kidding! Based on this, his master had pretty much offended all of the three great organizations and seven divine mountains. All three organization leaders and two of the divine mountains shared grudges with my master?

That was nuts!

“Pretty much!” Hong Yitang coughed gently when he looked at Li Hao. “There’s much about your master that you don’t know. You just know a bit of what happened in the Silver Moon martial world. Your master once visited the central region and even traveled through the rest of the dynasty. Everywhere was his home and he traveled anywhere he could when he was young to meld the five auras together. He offended too many people in the process.”

“Then why didn’t he just kill them all...” Li Hao couldn’t help but grumble. He’d left such a huge mess behind!

“There were either people protecting the people he challenged, or it would be difficult to explain himself if he killed them, or he could pull his punches because he was the one who issued the challenge. If the disparity in strength was that great, he could not just kill them...” Hong Yitang explained. It wasn’t that Yuan Shuo didn’t want to, but sometimes he couldn’t.

It was one thing to be unable to pull one’s punches in a challenge, but if one could and still beat their opponent to death.. they would be a true demon! Old Demon Yuan was a demon, but he wasn’t crazy.

However, that created numerous enemies for him. Gratitude did not flourish just because he didn’t take advantage of the opportunity to kill someone.

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“So that means my master’s enemies are found everywhere, that all of the major factions are basically his enemies?” Li Hao asked incredulously

“Pretty much!” Hong Yitang laughed.

“Then how did my master dare leave the province a while back?” asked the curious young man. The world was such a dangerous place for his teacher! Granted, it didn’t turn out as bad as their imagination since Yuan Shuo wasn’t mobbed by the three great organizations or seven divine mountains as soon as he left.

“It was about time,” Hong Yitang explained. “Many people are facing a bottleneck. Your master might be able to help everyone resolve it, so letting him out at this stage is certain people’s tacit agreement.”

Li Hao understood! Unsealing, the five organs... Some people were thinking about his master’s Five Styles method.

Yuan Shuo was appropriately behind the times now, so he could be let out and maybe research the next step for everyone.

Li Hao snorted inwardly to himself, but frowned on the outside. “Why is everyone so confident in my teacher?”

“Your teacher...” Hong Yitang considered his response for a while. “His potential and talents are one thing, but they aren’t the greatest key. The key is that your teacher grasps too many ancient methods! You must know that he was one of the first martial masters to excavate the ancient ruins. He did so to further his cultivation, but he holds so many ancient methods that he keeps for himself. Many ancient records have become lost after encountering him.

“Perhaps you think it’s easy to train in the Five Styles, but the key is that it happens to be a method suitable for anyone and everyone. It’s appropriate for mundanes, for those with poor potential, for those with good potential. Anyone can practice it, there are no requirements!

“Have you found that the Five Styles is easy to start? But when you train other methods, do you find them difficult?”

Li Hao mulled over the question and nodded, he did to both. Whether it was the Ghost Shadow Sword, the Weeping Willow Sword, or Nine Forged Force, they were all hard to pick up. If it wasn’t for his dominant strength, he wouldn’t have done so easily either.

In comparison, the Five Styles really was much easier. He'd treated it as an exercise routine at first, then easily learned the Breathing Method of the Five Styles as a natural development. It was just a quick change to his breathing, one that occurred incredibly smoothly.

"When the Five Styles is trained to their utmost, one comprehends the five auras. That is the equivalent of training five of the ancient daos at once, and all being under the same method. You might not understand how difficult this is, but the powerhouses do."

Li Hao looked at him with a frown. "Is that different from training five different methods and comprehending their auras?"

"Of course it's different!" Hong Yitang shook his head. "You are the most noticeable example. Have you realized how difficult it is to meld your five auras together? Do you think you could fuse the five sword auras together if you didn't have a unique sword intent acting as their general overview?"

Li Hao shook his head. Not at all!

"You can't do it as someone who is the equivalent of a Nova. Don't you find it odd that your master has done it?"

Li Hao blinked, he'd never thought of that.

"That is the advantage of a singular method. Five methods under one, sharing the same origin. Otherwise, ordinary people are not able to meld five auras together. Two would be impossible, to say nothing of five.

"Your master completed training five methods and assimilating them when he was a Sunderer. That is naturally incredible."

Li Hao nodded, but said after a while, "His strength..."

Was still too weak!

“What are you in a rush for?” Hong Yitang burst out laughing. “As opposed to worrying about him, you should think about your own five auras! What Yuan Shuo needs to do is simple—he just needs to strengthen the five organs and find an opportunity to improve his method during the process. Success will be his when the time is right!

“Once the five auras are fully combined, his Summoner of Spirit will be complete and he will be able to set foot into the next stage. But you?”

Li Hao blinked. Me?

“Can you swiftly complete the fusion of the five auras and enter the next stage beyond Summoner?”

The young man shook his head, not at all. He hadn’t even identified the inklings of a clue yet. He didn’t understand Summoner of Spirit that well, he just had a few guesses.

“So, what are you so worried about him for?” Hong Yitang laughed. “He might be greater than Nova once he progresses, he’ll be the same as us after he unseals himself. There’s no need to worry about him. You should think about yourself instead. At this stage, you can start thinking about your next steps!

“Is it the path of combining five auras as one? You have neither walked this path as far as your master, nor are you as proficient. You should really think about this, or you might surpass him in the short run with your current explosion of progress, but he’ll catch up again and leave you in the dust!”

Li Hao nodded thoughtfully.

“I can tell that your sword auras are a bit disorderly and confused, they haven’t been put in order,” Light Sword offered from the side. “Like you said, they’re just stitched together. You can try organizing them now and strengthening them one by one, then combine them. That could be a possibility.

“In addition, you seem to comprehend auras very quickly. You can consider learning a few more. You might not match your master in terms of quality, but you can surpass him in terms of quantity.

“The Ghost Shadow Sword is a dark energy sword technique. If you’re willing, I can teach you the Light Sword, as well as the Thunder and Lightning Sword...”

Li Hao blinked, stared at her, then shook his head. Not learning that! I don’t want the Light Sword technique!

“The Light Sword technique doesn’t affect men,” the woman sighed, having guessed at his thoughts. “I am a woman, which is why certain conditions occurred after I started practicing it. My yin and yang were not in balance. I might be able to change that around if I can train to the peak of the Ghost Shadow Sword, but that method was lost with the death of its wielder. Yuan Shuo should have taken it.”

Because Li Hao knew it.

“Is this what happens at the extremity of the Light Sword technique?” asked the young man. Did one turn into a man? In that case, it wouldn’t affect men and he was tempted by what Light Sword spoke of.

If melding five sword auras together was a bit disorderly and still less than his master’s system, what if he kept increasing the number? How about six? Seven? Or eight sword auras? But where would he keep them?

His limbs? His head? There were supernatural locks in all of these areas, so it wasn’t out of the question, but Li Hao was suddenly fearful. He wasn’t concerned about the five organs because his

teacher had done it, but it was still nerve-wracking to attempt something for the first time on his own.

The young man was forced to think of the matter more deeply as it might truly be a feasible possibility. He could keep everything under control for now as there was much he needed to improve for the time being. He could continue strengthening his body, his organs, and fully meld the five auras. Each breakthrough was an advancement for him.

Although his locks continued to be insatiable, he could still try infusing them with energy and thinking of more ways to build the five bridges. Li Hao was not yet at the end of his path. There was still a road ahead for him.

The three sword wielders gathered together to discuss some cultivation reflections. At the end, Hong Yitang said, "Let's take out the Windchaser Boot for a look since Li Hao's here. He might be able to use it. Otherwise, you'll have seized it for nothing!"

Li Hao was also curious, but he hadn't asked about it. Since Hong Yitang brought it up, Light Sword was equally straightforward.

"I served the Xus for twenty years for this... ai!" She sighed when she brought it out. It was a green boot that appeared very ordinary—the same as Li Hao's Stellaris.

"This Windchaser Boot..." Li Hao raised an eyebrow. "Does your Light Sword have any connection with the Windchaser Boot? Does the dark attribute suppress your light attribute?"

The boot should contain the wind attribute to his eyes—it didn't look like the dark attribute.

"No, it's that this boot has the energy of darkness!" Light Sword shook her head. "So I think it might be a dual attribute of wind and darkness. The one who used it back in the day might have wanted to craft a pair of boots that could walk through the darkness, so it should have the wind attribute as well."

Dual wind and dark attributes?

“Did you want to extract the energy within to suppress your light attribute?”

“Not suppress, but to combine!” Light Sword explained. “The Light Sword is suited for men to cultivate. If women try, complications easily occur. The best way to resolve them is to balance yin and yang. However, my sword intent is so strong that regular dark energy is useless! It’s instantly smothered when it enters my body. Only dark attribute treasures like these ones from the ancient civilization can produce power that helps me balance.”

She hesitated at this point. “Xu Feng cultivates the water attribute—the extremity of water is ice. It carries a hint of the dark attribute, so he’s able to extract some energy from the boot. If Xu Feng lived to metamorphosis, he could’ve extracted sufficient energy to balance out my yang.”

Li Hao nodded after some thought. Perhaps! He couldn’t be bothered with thinking about Xu Feng. The guy was dead. He rarely thought of those he’d killed. Instead, Li Hao looked curiously at the boot.

There was only one of it and it seemed very unremarkable in hand. There was nothing special about it. That had also been the case with the blade of the Zhangs. When Li Hao operated the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, a faint energy wafted out and surged into his body.

“You can extract the energy?!” Light Sword exclaimed with shock.

Li Hao glanced at her, chiding her for her astonishment. But he had to say, there was something odd about the breathing method. It seemed able to encompass and extract any energy. Other breathing methods did not seem to have this effect.

Chapter 563: The Windchaser Boots (III)

In that case...

Could one use the treasures of the eight families if they knew the Breathing Method of the Five Styles? That it didn't matter if they were of the bloodlines of the eight families or not?

Li Hao hadn't previously given much thought to his teacher using the blade of the Zhangs. But now as he thought more about it, perhaps it wasn't that the blade could be used by any random person, but that the breathing method really was different.

The Breathing Method of the Five Styles gave the sense of a universal method, able to extract and absorb any energy...

Of course, one may not be able to utilize the core of the weapon, yet Li Hao knew of one detail, that these weapons were afraid of existences stronger than them. If one was stronger than the weapon, then there was no consideration whether the weapon possessed a master or not. After he threatened the Flaming Phoenix Spear, it turned so incredibly docile. Li Hao even suspected that if Hou Xiaochen was here now, the young man might stand a chance of wresting the origin weapon from Hou Xiaochen.

He absorbed some energy from the boot. Sword energy was mild, blade energy was tyrannical, and boot energy gave off a dark and gentle feeling. If sword energy could nurture the body, blade energy could attack, then what of the boots?

The young man thought about it for a while and chose to meld the energy into his body. The energy darted into his feet, where supernatural locks had manifested. After the locks absorbed the energy, Li Hao attempted operating his internal force. He didn't sense any special changes.

Does it just strengthen the supernatural locks?

He abruptly picked up the boot, took off his shoe, and put it on his foot.

Light Sword sputtered for a while before saying, "The Xus just enshrine them..."

No one really wears them!

Hong Yitang, on the other hand, looked at it from another perspective. “Are you not concerned that the last guy who wore them had bad hygiene or stinky feet?”

“.....” Li Hao looked wordlessly at the man. Are you for real? This was a weapon of the eight families, there was no room for stinky feet. But after the man’s words... even Li Hao was thinking twice about his actions.

He put that out of his mind and operated the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, erupting with the deer style. The young man pushed off and... vanished!

Hong Yitang’s heart shook with shock! Light Sword also looked up with wide eyes. Li Hao landed moments later, his face pale from too much consumption of internal force.

“Holy shit!” He goggled. So fast!

That’d been so fast that he almost felt like he’d teleported! “The Xus put this on a table instead of using it?? This thing consumes a lot of internal force for sure, but it’s the perfect life-saving treasure! I broke through one thousand meters just from one usage. Even Martial Uncle Hong would need some time to cover that distance, wouldn’t you?”

“How can you use it?!” Light Sword was more shocked than the young man.

“Is the bloodline of the eight families that incredible?” Hong Yitang stroked his chin. “Or is it that the bloodline of the Lis can use any weapon?”

That wasn’t the case! Li Hao knew that he hadn’t used his blood to have the boot recognize him as its master. He’d only used the breathing method. Or rather, it was the breathing method that was the key to operating the boot. He even utilized the breathing method when drawing energy from the little sword. It... still hadn’t recognized him as its master.

Indeed, Li Hao couldn't store the little sword in his body even now. So technically speaking, he wasn't its master. He was just borrowing it, leveraging the Breathing Method of the Five Styles to do so.

Neither had his teacher used his blood to have the blade of the Zhangs recognize him. He'd been using the breathing method all along as well.

"Can you extract the dark energy from the boot??" demanded an agitated Light Sword. "Um... if you can and dual cultivation is required after..."

"Ahem!" Li Hao jerked with shock, yanked the boot off his foot, and threw it out with fear. What's a dirty old man talking to me about that for?

Neither had he forgotten that his teacher had dual cultivated with him once before. He'd absorbed too much blood energy that one time, so his teacher had to digest it with him. But Light Sword didn't seem to mean dual cultivation in the same way!

That was damned scary!

Light Sword seemed to realize something and her face contorted, revealing a different face. "That was just a disguise..." she sighed.

Li Hao grimaced and didn't say anything. Right, a disguise, but... so what? She'd turned from a crotchety old man to a coarse auntie. That's right, coarse! He couldn't just outright call her ugly, but her face was rather coarse; she had a small mustache and rather thick eyebrows!

You... were better looking as the old man! At least you looked kindly and benevolent. Now you look... I swear I'm not judging someone by their appearance, but you really... look... like a man!

Someone with heavier tastes wouldn't mind, but he absolutely did!

Light Sword sighed at the reaction. Those who were ugly lacked basic human rights. Just look at the Silver Moon martial masters. Ying Hongyue liked pretty girls, Yuan Shuo did as well. He showed Jadelight Sword mercy because she was pretty.

They weren't the only ones, many Silver Moon martial masters were in a similar vein. They liked the good looking ones. Or rather... all men were like this!

She was very resigned at Li Hao's expression and also sorrowful. So this meant there was no hope? The young man was her greatest hope now since he could use the Windchaser Boot, but his reaction truly made one sad!

As Li Hao gaped, Hong Yitang coughed gently. "Now what kind of attitude is that, Li Hao? She is your senior when all is said and done, what's with your overreaction? Light Sword was very pretty when she was young. It was only because of her cultivation method that... Ahem!"

Light Sword had been passable when she first entered the martial world, but to say that she was pretty... Hong Yitang coughed again when he took a walk down memory lane. That was all there was to her. There were many that matched her to be found on the streets.

However, there weren't that many female martial masters around. If she'd retained her looks, she might've been considered a flower of the martial world later on. It was an undeniable fact that there were more men than women in Silver Moon.

Li Hao flushed and laughed dryly, "I didn't mean it that way, it's just..."

Forget dual cultivation, alright? You just need the energy within, there's lots of ways to accomplish that! The breathing method did it just fine, so why do you guys think about dual cultivation all the time?

Your minds are in the gutter!

“Changing my appearance isn’t the issue,” Light Sword sighed again. “It’s that my light energy has reached the limit of what I can train it to. I’m worried it’ll explode if I continue cultivating! The Windchaser Boots thus became my last hope...”

“So stop training for now...” said Hong Yitang.

“I would rather die.” Light Sword shook her head. She would’ve stopped training a long time ago if she didn’t want to end up like this, why become so strong?

For martial masters to stop training due to fear of danger when there was a pathway to growing stronger right in front of them... then they might as well die.

“You just want the dark energy within, right?” Li Hao suddenly said after some thought.

“Right!” The woman nodded hastily.

“You might not need this particular energy then,” the young man said slowly. “I can try a kind of exceedingly pure dark energy to nourish your body. If that solves your problem, you need to give me the boot!”

Light Sword hesitated, not for the treasure, but from past experience. “Regular dark energy explodes as soon as it enters my body or is instantly smothered. I’ve tried, not even Nova level energy works! I once killed a late Nova Celestial for no use.

“Of course, you can take the boot if you can resolve my problem. I wanted it precisely for my issue. Just be careful of the Xus, they won’t give up on the Windchaser Boot. The deaths of Xu Zhen and his son are less important than the treasure...”

If regular dark energy wouldn't do, what about energy purified by the little sword? It could extract wisps elemental energy from mysterious power, what would happen if it extracted from mysterious power stones? Perhaps it would measure up to the energy with the boots.

Li Hao swiftly looked through his storage rings and found a few pieces of dark colored mysterious power stones. He would know after he gave it a try!

After crushing the mysterious power stones, he used sword energy to extract dark elemental energy out of them instead of converting it to sword energy. This was a very wasteful usage of the stones, but Li Hao didn't mind at the moment.

After extracting the energy, he directed it to Light Sword with a point of his finger. A strong recoil rose from her body, but the energy was swiftly absorbed. The woman had been very apprehensive, but her eyes brightened the next moment.

"It doesn't... seem to have been smothered!" She realized with shock. There was another feasible way! She'd tried many over the years and even seized a few dark origin weapons, but all of them proved useless. Li Hao had easily and quickly resolved the problem!

Hong Yitang's eyes darted around—Li Hao's sword was truly incredible. It looked to be able to extract pure elemental energy. The sword was a divine sword alright! Even he wanted to take it from the lad!

The man quickly suppressed his desire, repeating to himself that everything was nothing. Humans were stronger than weapons, weapons were external objects. Plus, Li Hao using it didn't mean that he could use it.

Light Sword didn't think so much, she was just agitated, "It works... it really works! Li Hao, you can have the Windchaser Boot. Let me know what else you need, I require large sums of this kind of energy..."

She might be able to take another step forward if she possessed dark energy, and that was secondary to her purpose. Most importantly was that she might be able to resolve the drawbacks of her light energy growing stronger and stronger.

Chapter 564: I Want To Keep A Low Profile (I)

Light Sword might also be able to return to her prior looks. While she wasn't a stunning beauty, no woman wanted a little mustache over her lips or eyebrows that were coarser than a man's. There was almost an Adam's apple in her throat!

As for martial dao, she may not be able to set foot into a higher level, but the strain on her organs and physical body could be alleviated. If they were strengthened, her supernatural locks would stabilize and not break as easily as before.

The stronger the organs and body were, the harder it was to break the locks. For those like her and He Yong, they could easily break theirs.

Li Hao breathed out slightly, it was good that his method worked. He really wanted the boot—but what a pity there was only one. Even so, just one of them was a lifesaving device. Earthturner Sword and the others wouldn't care. They would be able to break one thousand meters in a split second by themselves, or they wouldn't need to flee for their lives at all. But for Li Hao, having this boot meant that he was that much more confident in maneuvering through the world.

This was just one of them, where was the other?

"Why don't we head to the Steadfast Duke for revenge," Li Hao suddenly proposed upon hearing Light Sword's words. "We can take the other boot from him..."

Hong Yitang and Light Sword looked at him with shock. The hell? Are you crazy? Light Sword was especially agog with the young man's boldness.

"You can't do that!" she said hastily. "He has a lot of powerhouses. I only succeeded because Xu Qing thought I was doomed to die and therefore didn't care if I took anything from him. He's

powerful beyond compare and can fend off my attacks without unsealing himself. He only suffered a small amount of injuries...

“His strength might measure up to Earthturner Sword or even be a little stronger. His manor has received plenty of benefits over the years. He also has three major generals alive and well. The Heaven and Earth Generals are likely at the metamorphosis level. The Yellow General should be at least peak Nova. There’s also vast sums of powerhouses in his household and the various resident experts that he hosts!”

She’d succeeded on a fluke, only getting away because the duke had thought she was not long for this world and did not want to pay a bigger price. But if they went back for the other boot... he would likely bring everything he had to bear!

Li Hao found the assessment quite regretful—he really did want to take the other boot now! If just one could instantly propel one over a thousand meters, then wouldn’t the full pair manage two thousand or even three thousand meters?

Powerhouses were very capable, but there weren’t many who could catch up if one flew out thousands of meters in a split second.

“Don’t underestimate this family.” Hong Yitang was also speechless at Li Hao’s proposal. “They have two hundred years worth of foundation to draw from, don’t think to counter with your long-vanished clan. They’ve stood strong for two hundred years and are still a force to be reckoned with after the rise of the supernatural. They’ve hidden much more strength than you can imagine!

“The east is almost the sole domain of the Xus and the three great organizations somewhat rely on their support as well... You’ve got to wait if you want to seize the remaining boot!”

As for how long? Hong Yitang felt that it wouldn’t be long under current circumstances. Silver Moon might clash with various sides before long.

“Let’s go, we shouldn’t linger here. They might lob a dozen city annihilation missiles at us. This is a very dangerous place to be. As for dark energy, we’ll find a place to slowly process it!” Hong Yitang didn’t want to remain on the scene any longer. It was one thing to be bold when one’s skill

was superb, but there was no need to court death. If their enemies decided to fire a dozen missiles that were all as powerful as the one that Fan Chang had thrown out before... he wouldn't be able to withstand the barrage either.

One missile was manageable, if a dozen... He'd die all the same. Although Hong Yitang wasn't certain of how strong city annihilation missiles were, they wouldn't be weak, empty casings.

As much as Light Sword needed dark energy, she could only follow other people's lead at the moment. The trio swiftly departed with Panther and vanished among the North Sea.

It wasn't until long after they left that people carefully came by to investigate the premises. They heaved sighs of relief to see that the area was clear. The current North Sea didn't wish for these fiends to stay here indefinitely. It was a chaotic enough world outside. If their home grew disorganized, the North Sea would be in complete confusion.

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A piece of news shook the entire dynasty not only after Li Hao and the others left. It was very secret, but soon became broad knowledge among the upper echelon of power. It came from none other than Red Moon.

Perhaps the changes in Li Hao had provoked some people, or perhaps the might of Silver Moon martial masters was too humiliating for someone, particularly after Black Widow was taught a lesson. Whatever it was, news spread that the sword of the Lis could suppress and seal. Simply put, organs that were in danger of shattering could be quieted by the sword of the Lis and even strengthened.

Light Sword and Earthturner Sword were so brazen in utilizing their battle strength because the young man was available to heal them. Yuan Shuo's ruptured heart was also repaired because of the sword. Not only that, but Hou Xiaochen's earlier battle and Silver Moon's latest stirrings were all due to Li Hao. These people were completely unrestrained because of the young man and the presence of the sword!

Sealed Silver Moon heavyweights were at most the equivalent of metamorphosis, no more. Some weaker ones didn't even reach that level. All of these people were solidly stronger than Nova because of Li Hao! So long as the young man remained alive and the sword in his hands, Silver Moon would be invincible. They could not be provoked!

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The news spread quickly.

The nine ministries, three great organizations, seven divine mountains, and various clans all received word from Red Moon. The missive spoke of the uses of the divine sword of the Lis. It was effective for martial masters and even more so for supernaturals!

Why hadn't any supernaturals ascended above Nova yet?

Or one should say, they possibly existed, but none dared show their face in public or take action because their organs weren't strong. For a supernatural to reach above Nova, they needed to undo their sixth supernatural lock. Apart from the four of the limbs and one of the body for their attribute, the sixth lock usually meant a second one of the organs.

That led to conflicts between two elements and possibly even explosion of the organs!

Other than those who blazed another trail, such as heavyweights who shattered a lock of the head, the rest had to follow the known path of breaking a second lock among the organs.

Everyone had to proceed that way!

Thus, it wasn't groundless speculation when the report said that the sword of the Lis could possibly resolve the greatest trouble facing the supernaturals at the moment. All that remained to be seen if Light Sword survived her escape, if Earthturner Sword remained injured. That was easily verified!

Light Sword had broken five supernatural locks. If even she lived, then what wouldn't be proven with Li Hao's appearance? Everything was substantiated!

That would also swiftly turn Silver Moon into a land of extreme danger. Silver Moon martial masters could unseal themselves with abandon, raising them above Nova and killing large sums of supernatural powerhouses!

The news shook all of the senior executives of the dynasty.

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Li Hao and the others were yet to receive the information, but it was already raising waves throughout the land.

In the central region.

Hou Xiaochen had just accepted the position of Skystar commander when he received the report. He looked blankly at the missive and stared in a certain direction. "Ying Hongyue!" he said with a sigh after a long pause. Silver Moon martial masters knew Silver Moon martial masters the best! Fortresses fell from inside jobs.

Outsiders didn't know the specifics of martial masters or whether or not there was anything special about Silver Moon martial masters. Ying Hongyue, however, was well aware of the particulars. Not only that, but he'd always been devoted to the matter of the eight bloodlines.

People would come to the correct conclusion on their own if they carefully investigated what Ying Hongyue revealed, even though some of it was speculation or purposefully planted to frame his target.

Just as Hou Xiaochen once rigged the situation against Ying Hongyue, Li Hao now became the thorn in the side of all non-Silver-Moon martial masters. If they wished to take the province, they needed to kill him first, no matter the price!

It wasn't just to kill Li Hao, but they had to do so for the sword of the Lis. This was a weapon that could shatter their obstacles and break through beyond Nova. It could repair their organs and suppress the rampaging of their internal energy!

Hou Xiaochen took a deep breath. The situation was vastly different from before.

"Li Hao... was too blatant..." Hou Xiaochen guessed that it was Kong Jie and the others who asked Li Hao to take action. It should not have taken shape this way, but even they likely hadn't anticipated that the young man would reveal himself in front of so many, directly save Light Sword, and bring Earthturner Sword with him. They'd probably thought that he would take action in secret and have her hide for a period of time.

That was very difficult now. It was no longer the matter of a single treasure, but an issue that was relevant to the entire supernatural domain. It had to do with future supremacy, so Li Hao abruptly became a delicious morsel in the eyes of many.

Whoever killed Li Hao would win the world!

While the slogan had not yet taken form, many people were probably already forming this thought.

"Not bad... Ying Hongyue..." A solemn Hou Xiaochen looked into the distance, then at the north. He trusted that it would not be a quiet day in Skystar Dynasty. Everyone would be swiftly investigating the truth of the matter!

While most in the ruins had been killed, some had still made it out alive—Qi Gang, Hu Qingfeng, those of the Skystar Troops, He Yong... Although these people may not reveal what they knew, they would surely speak of something. Putting the pieces together might expose the truth of the expedition to others.

Added to that Light Sword and Earthturner Sword's condition, everyone would soon verify what they'd received. Though Red Moon's report might be populated mostly by speculation, it made a lot of sense regardless. The originator was also most familiar with the eight families and wouldn't reveal fake news for no reason at all.

Ying Hongyue's intentions were very clear. It was a blatant plot similar to what Hou Xiaochen had pulled off. Are you tempted? Do you want to seize the sword? Do you guys want to conquer Silver Moon?

If you do, go to Li Hao! Kill him and take the sword!

As for whether or not it could be used without him, how would one know without trying? If they couldn't, it was still better to bury the sword than to let Silver Moon have it. If Silver Moon martial masters started unsealing themselves without reservation, it would spell disaster for the rest of the dynasty!

Chapter 565: I Want To Keep A Low Profile (II)

Red Moon headquarters.

Inside the palace.

Ying Hongyue was the picture of leisure as he read a book and sipped some tea with a smile on his face. All of you think nothing of me, hmm?

Northern Fist came out to bully my people, Silver Moon killed my concubines without showing them mercy. You're all Silver Moon martial masters at the end of the day and were on the same ranking! Do you want to be this ruthless?

In that case, let's have some fun!

Ying Hongyue hadn't wanted to say anything at first—or rather, he hadn't guessed at anything. But when he theorized over Light Sword's actions, her route to Silver Moon, what Li Hao himself had revealed when he had nothing better to do, and Light Sword bullying a junior... Those pivotal clues were sufficient for Ying Hongyue to guess that Li Hao had done something similar inside the ruins.

Perhaps he'd done so for Hou Xiaochen or Earthturner Sword; Light Sword must've seen it to so doggedly force Li Hao to agree to do the same for her. Otherwise, she wouldn't have courted death in her actions at the Steadfast Duke's manor and wouldn't bully Li Hao for no good reason.

After putting everything in order, Ying Hongyue mostly guessed at the function of the sword of the Lis. Despite not being aware of the details, he trusted that he knew most of the truth. Just as the world at large hadn't known about the effects of the blood pearls before, everyone was willing to try after Hou Xiaochen disseminated the information. That was proof that in this era, those with sufficient strength were able to be as unscrupulous as they wished!

Supernaturals may not understand unsealing oneself or know much about martial masters, but Ying Hongyue did. So when he released the news, it was proof that no matter how it was tested, it would prove to be true!

As he enjoyed his tea, a masked powerhouse quickly rushed in. "Leader, Celestial, Yama, and representatives of many other organizations all wish to communicate with you. Do we accept their requests?"

Ying Hongyue grinned. My my, weren't they in a hurry!

It made sense. The sword of the Lis wouldn't just resolve martial master problems. Martial masters could keep themselves in check for a while and unseal their power. For supernaturals, this was a grave matter that had to do with their very survival!

Some supernaturals had already reached beyond Nova, but they cowered in hiding and didn't dare twitch a finger. They might die if they did.

Some were stuck at metamorphosis and didn't dare break their supernatural locks. And yet, their power would automatically break the locks if it was strong enough. That meant ascension, which

was an incredible struggle with death. Those who survived would be in the state of those old guys—hiding, shrinking away, and trying to refrain from showing themselves.

It was one thing to erupt as a single use weapon, but chronic duration of this condition could swiftly rupture their organs!

Hence, everyone was in a rush.

Ying Hongyue smiled in an exceedingly dashing fashion.

“Put them through, of course put them through. Put them all through, I can’t be bothered to explain myself over and over again. Tell them they can be quiet if they don’t want to talk and disguise themselves if they want. They can just listen to me!”

“Understood!” The masked subordinate swiftly put preparations in order.

An enormous screen appeared in front of Ying Hongyue before long. Square frames appeared on it, bracketing a figure within. Some chose to reveal their true forms, others elected to hide who they were. No one spoke.

More and more figures gathered on the screen, filling it with square frames. Ying Hongyue continued idly sipping his tea. He spoke only when all of the squares were lit up with occupants and no further attendees were joining.

“Don’t ask me if it’s true or not.” He grinned. “You can be the judge of that yourselves! Light Sword is a grown adult, she’ll show herself sooner or later. Besides, you should’ve also received news that they spent a full day and night by the North Sea. Do two men have nothing better to do than play games with an ugly shrew?”

“Even if she stays in hiding now, we all know the truth of her situation... Additionally, what you lot are most concerned about is likely how to use the sword of the Lis without its bloodline, right?”

“That’s right, we care most about that!” someone said on screen. “I don’t care whether or not Silver Moon is strong or fearless. I just care if the sword can really suppress the rampaging of the five organs and repair them?”

“There are some of us who’ve gone in different directions or use the Water of Life to maintain their life force, or those like you who use blood pearls or other treasures to strengthen their organs. All of that only treats the symptoms and not the cause! These methods can’t be used continuously and cannot be used for the next organ. Our road to come is long, it would be fantastic if the sword of the Lis can help us fully suppress our troubles!”

“It’s always Brother Yama who’s most direct.” Ying Hongyue smiled at the man. “You’re not like Celestial Sword, always hiding himself from day to night!”

No one responded to him, but he didn’t care. “It’s not much of a problem if we don’t have the bloodline of the Lis. I know of a few ways that might make the sword available to us all the same. It won’t be operating completely freely, but at least we won’t be beholden to that restriction!”

“What ways?” asked the solemn Yama from his square frame.

“You don’t know?” Ying Hongyue looked at him.

Yama thought for a bit. “Collect Li Hao’s blood or do a blood transfusion? Or sacrifice him to fully unseal the sword, making it available for general use? Or suppress the sword so that we can exert ownership over it when the sword master dies?”

“See, don’t you know a lot of ways?” Ying Hongyue chuckled. “So what are you asking me for? Do you need me to hold your hand and teach you step by step?” He looked at the rest of the assembly. “Any more questions?”

“Li Hao has Earthturner Sword and Light Sword by his side,” came a slightly high-pitched voice from the screen. “What is an unsealed battle strength like? What condition are Silver Moon martial masters in? What level do they map to when they cross over as supernatural?”

“This is difficult to determine.” Ying Hongyue considered the questions. “Everyone is different, but none of the martial masters have crossed over to the next level above Nova. They are at most above Nova when they unseal themselves—no one has named that level yet. But I know that some old farts and scheming fellows have all broken through, they just don’t dare reveal themselves yet. No worries, I’ve looked at it and find the level of strength to be similar!

“Light Sword killed five generals with one stroke, so I think those who break their sixth lock should be able to do the same. Everyone is similar—martial masters can’t sustain their condition for long after unsealing themselves, you guys can’t sustain yourselves for long after breaking your sixth lock. You’re all flashes in the pan!”

Ying Hongyue laughed delightedly after these words; he was almost unbridled in his amusement. “They won’t be able to recover so long as we capture, contain, or delay Li Hao. Light Sword’s light energy can repair a thing or two, but so can you guys if you bring Water of Life with you.

“Light Sword delayed her condition for twelve hours without dying, but she almost completely collapsed. That is her limit! The others will be worse off and collapse even faster!”

“Brother Red Moon,” someone said coolly from the screen. “We hear that the blood pearls have a similar effect. You want us to handle Li Hao and Silver Moon, and we are all willing, but are you able to support us with a thing or two? Not everyone has Water of Life. Can you spare some blood pearls?”

“Celestial Sword, why are you so cheap?” Ying Hongyue smirked. “Then I want you to spare me some women. I want your wife, your daughter...”

“Done!” declared an aloof Celestial Sword Immortal. “It is of no matter if you’re willing to offer large sums of blood pearls.”

“You’re the number one assassin of the dynasty, alright!” Ying Hongyue laughed uproariously. “Frost runs through your veins, I like it! However, blood pearls are out of the question. I don’t have enough for myself. If you’ve got the guts to, you can come directly to me for some. I’ll give you a few then, if you dare.”

Celestial Sword remained quiet. He might not have been afraid before, but now that everyone knew their effects, many were attempting to guess what level Ying Hongyue’s organs were at. And was he a supernatural or a martial master?

Regardless, whether supernatural or martial master, he might’ve already broken the limits of the body and become an invincible powerhouse that could fully utilize all of his strength. That kind of existence drew great wariness from everyone. No one wanted to erupt in open hostilities with him. Otherwise, they would’ve long ago for the matter of the blood pearls.

“It’s too difficult to nurture blood pearls.” Ying Hongyue’s laughter petered out after a while. “The higher level ones are even stronger. I know you are all tempted, but the blood pearls are trash compared to the sword of the Lis. I haven’t nurtured many over the years and have eaten most of them. The weak ones left aren’t that effective for you, but I think that it won’t need too much time or a hefty price to utilize the sword of the Lis. According to my speculations, perhaps some mysterious power stones will be sufficient.

“Everyone can see how much capital Li Hao has, it’s only been a few days since his rise. How much foundation can he truly have? Yuan Shuo might’ve already utilized the sword when he recovered from his wounds, so that means the price he paid wasn’t that great! The effects will be marvelous in our hands!”

“Has Red Moon known about this for a while since it has always wanted the sword?” another person asked in a low voice. “Or is there another reason at play?”

“What does it have to do with you?” Ying Hongyue responded brusquely. “Is that the point of today? Who are you to receive answers to anything you ask? I tell you this already so I can use you guys against Li Hao and Silver Moon. Do you really think I’m your father to answer whatever questions you have?”

“.....” Silence descended as the speaker flew into a rage! Anyone who could directly contact Ying Hongyue was no ordinary person. They were overlords of their respective fields and domains, but had suffered public humiliation in front of their peers!

The infuriated speaker sought to respond when Ying Hongyue continued in a coy tone, “Alright, it’s just a joke, don’t be mad! It’s not like you can bite me if you’re mad, so just hurting yourself with anger is a bad idea! Will you be happy only after creating a strong enemy for yourself? Be good, don’t raise a fuss. Everyone’s watching, keep your composure!”

Chapter 566: I Want To Keep A Low Profile (III)

The speaker quieted and suppressed his blooming rage. He knew that to speak further was to lose more face, so he might as well stay quiet!

“Alright, the conversation can end here,” Ying Hongyue chuckled. “You guys should keep a close eye on those fellows. Northern Fist and Tyrant Blade have all shown themselves. Sky Sword stays quiet and doesn’t make a sound, but we should still be careful of him. And don’t toy Hou Xiaochen to death, the consequences won’t be pretty!”

He raised a tea cup with a smile. “Cheers to exterminating Silver Moon and a brighter future! Let us drink to that and go out to kill Li Hao. Remember, the young man is hard to kill. Don’t think of holding back on anything—bring out all the one-time use items you have.

“Worst comes to worst, we die. If we win, that is a lifetime of glory and riches! I’m sure that we all have people who’ve broken their sixth lock. Ah, since we’re all here, why don’t we use this opportunity to name the sixth realm?”

“Nova was a nod to nine suns—I’ve always thought it to be an ugly name,” laughed a merry Ying Hongyue. “Let’s go for a prettier name for the next level. This is a metamorphosis for us, so why don’t we call it... Zenith? The ultimate culmination, the zenith of intent...”

“Enough, do you think we haven’t read the ancient tomes ourselves?” Yama said aloofly. “Why follow in their footsteps? There’s no point in that! Call it that if you want to. There will naturally be a name for it when it is officially present and more dwell within it. You don’t need to worry about this detail!”

“You’re the one who first proposed the name of Nova. It’s such an ugly name!” Ying Hongyue teased. “Then we’re settled. We can discuss the rest later. Remember to notify me when you catch Li Hao or take the sword of the Lis.”

No one responded to him and the screens swiftly dimmed. The smile slid off Ying Hongyue’s face when all of the screens were dark and he sighed. “Misery will be upon the people... Ah I have sinned and created more trouble for Silver Moon. I wonder if there will be fewer of my old friends after this... What a pity!”

As much as he lamented, a brilliant smile spread over his face again.

“Where’s Green Moon?” he asked. Only Green Moon was left in the vast headquarters of his, but there was no sign of her to be seen.

“Lady Green Moon has gone to Skystar City...” someone quickly responded from below.

“She’s being silly!” Ying Hongyue furrowed his brows and quickly relaxed them again. “Forget it, she can do as she wishes. These people all have wild natures and don’t listen. They will suffer for their impetuosity!”

“She can do as she wishes,” he smiled. “Notify the senior, second, and third elders of the elder council to go for a walk. All of them are permitted one drop of Water of Life and one peak Nova blood pearl! Don’t be in a rush to do anything. Just observe. They can be happy fishermen if Earthturner Sword and Light Sword happen to be entangled by others!”

“Understood!” Someone quickly ran off to notify the elders.

There were many powerhouses among the elder council—Tidal Wave and Red Hair had counted among their number, though their ranking hadn’t been high. Today, Ying Hongyue was sending out his three senior elders.

“Also, notify the Ancient Guard to dig three feet underground and find that gopher Yuan Shuo! The old guy’s probably gone off to rob graves again!” Ying Hongyue frowned. “The old thing spent the last couple of decades studying various ancient graves. If he finds any treasure, it won’t take him long to grow stronger again. Even if he doesn’t, he might find something or multiple somethings to give us a huge headache!”

He shook his head with a sigh. “The ignorant are fearless, or perhaps the guy doesn’t care at all. If he runs into one or two living existences of the ancient times... Heh, we’ll all be in for it then, won’t we!”

Yuan Shuo didn’t care about any of that, but Ying Hongyue did. Even if they were to unearth ancient existences, now wasn’t the time. It would create too much change in the world. It was one thing to encounter a friendly existence, but if they found one that was irritable, violent, or wanted to engage in widespread slaughter... That would be no fun for anyone.

“Understood!” Another Ghostface left. There were large numbers of Ghostfaces here, ready for orders at any time and to conduct communications.

“Have the three northern provinces grow even more chaotic. Silver Moon is too stable at the moment. Huang Yu and the rest have too much time on their hands, so let’s give them something to do! The royal family’s been quiet this entire time—let’s see if they still are now. If the sword of the Lis is lost, they won’t have another chance with their Skystar ruins.

“Oh, darn, I forgot to say that the sword can access the Skystar ruins. Heh, let’s spread this news too and have the royal family join in the fun!”

“Leader, it’s not a good time to engage in open hostilities with the royal family,” cautioned a Ghostface. “They might turn on us instead if this news is leaked!”

Ying Hongyue considered the suggestion and nodded with a smile. “That’s true! Then forget it. What’s circulating now is sufficient for everyone to take action.”

He turned quickly and left, as dashing as ever and hardly bothered by Silver Moon's troubles. Li Hao and the rest may be improving quickly, but... so what?

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Silver Moon.

The provincial government.

There was a very large group of people sitting in silence.

"Can we have Light Sword take shelter?" Kong Jie asked waspishly. "I should've thought of this, but in Hou Xiaochen's absence, I completely forgot when no one reminded me. Did the director general also overlook this point? Now that the uses of the sword have been exposed, our troubles come one after another!"

He really didn't think of this beforehand because in his eyes, not that many would consider this point. He'd always thought that supernaturals didn't understand martial masters. In doing so, he completely overlooked a few things in that some people knew martial masters all too well!

"It did occur to me, but we still had to save her." The director general breathed out gently. "Additionally, I thought that people like Ying Hongyue would keep it to themselves if they knew because they wanted it for themselves. The more that know, the worse. I hadn't thought that he would make it public..."

"Hadn't thought?" Kong Jie fretted. "Why didn't you think of it? Don't we all know what kind of person he is? He's a typical lunatic and it's not the first time he's done something that harms others without benefiting himself..."

“Alright, there’s no point in talking about any of this now!” Huang Yu interrupted. “We were in a rush to save Light Sword, so we had to do what was most convenient and practical. Sending Li Hao to save her was the best option.”

“But now Li Hao will be in grave, grave trouble!” Kong Jie raged. “I negotiated with him to have him mount a rescue mission. You two... I’m thinking that you two targeted even me in your plot! You might have foreseen all of this! You two bastards schemed against me as soon as Hou Xiaochen left, didn’t you??”

“.....” The two ignored him.

“I’m most likely right! Out with it, what do you want?! To force Li Hao out of Silver Moon? Or to have him draw all the attention so that creates space for you guys to do something? It looks like the agreement of the four institutions is null and void and you’re shunning me, aren’t you?!”

He was never one to think too much because Hou Xiaochen had been on his side all these years. Hou Xiaochen was the brains of the operation, so he listened to the man most of the time. But these two looked to have reached another agreement as soon as Hou Xiaochen left, ostracizing the inspector general.

“We don’t mean that at all.” The director general frowned. “First, this was indeed contrary to our expectations. Second, time was of the essence then! Third, the unknown danger was more severe than Light Sword dying.

“Having accepted our payment, Li Hao should’ve considered the risks within. He shouldn’t have gone out just for the sake of the mission! Fourth, we will still protect him so long as he is in Silver Moon. This matter blowing up is trouble for us too, so no one is doing this on purpose. Additionally, this fallout has much to do with Li Hao’s blatant actions. He could’ve avoided the ensuing trouble if he’d bided his time in the dark and not taken an outright stand!

“Truth be told, his actions were completely beyond our expectations. He’s always been someone who plans first before acting, and does not take action without utmost confidence. Not to mention his grudge with Light Sword. Do you think we could’ve anticipated that he would just go in with guns a-blazin’ like that?”

“But Light Sword would’ve died if Li Hao kept a low profile...” Kong Jie protested.

“I said so before that sending Li Hao was a choice that was our best. We left the rest to heaven’s will,” Director General Zhao shook his head. “But I have to say, his decision was very surprising. The trouble that he’s now in has much to do with our oversight as well.”

The old man thought quietly for a while. “I can understand if you feel apologetic about it, but don’t get too emotional over it. We’re discussing how to cope with the situation, not just venting our feelings.”

“Then what do you say should be done?” Kong Jie calmed down. “You have the most ideas, what do you think?”

The director general rubbed his temples. “We have several options. First, we make an example out of someone. Have our powerhouses take a trip outside the province and kill some people! Second, throw out the sword of the Lis and have them dog eat dog! Third, have Li Hao himself say that all of the weapons of the eight families have this function and give Ying Hongyue a taste of his own medicine. But... people might not believe him.

“Fourth, have Li Hao vanish for a while and stay out of the public eye. That will afford him greater safety. Fifth, have someone pose as Li Hao and go to the central region to raise a fuss. Draw attention to the central region!”

The director general rapidly gave out a few ideas. Kong Jie mulled them over and cursed to himself before saying, “I’ll try to contact Li Hao. Additionally, give me a transmission pendant! I’ll give it to him so he can share some of our intelligence. He can’t stay ignorant forever!”

Huang Yu and Director General Zhao looked at each other and nodded. The young man should indeed receive a pendant, or he was too uninformed otherwise. Who knew where the young man was at the moment? He might not even know what’d happened recently.

Chapter 567: I Want To Keep A Low Profile (IV)

Kong Jie quickly departed with the jade pendant. As he did so, Director General Zhao sighed. “Do you think this was an accident, or was it meant to be?”

“I don’t know!” Huang Yu responded calmly. “If he stayed in hiding and showed himself only at the last possible moment... we would naturally have a lot less trouble. But in that case, you and I both would think less of him. Now we think more highly of him, but taking a stand creates a lot of trouble for both him and us!”

The two truly hadn’t meant to land the young man in trouble. They’d anticipated a bit of fallout, but hadn’t expected him to charge into the fray. So at the moment, they didn’t know if they were happy or sad.

“Forget it, we’ll take things one day at a time!” sighed the director general. “Li Hao’s willingness to show himself and save people means that he’s changing. In that case, we can’t let him down. You should make a trip and keep an eye on him from the shadows. Don’t let him get overwhelmed.”

“If I go, then White Moon City...” Huang Yu frowned. “And the military... The others aren’t too reliable.”

“That’s fine, I’ll keep an eye on things,” responded Director General Zhao. “Take our remaining reserves of Water of Life. Li Hao is a free spirit and thinks a lot at times. He may not be willing to save you if he’s not in the right mood, so you’ll need to save yourself!”

A speechless Huang Yu said nothing further. He turned and left. Being in the military, it was a more self-contained faction. His absence could be concealed to the greatest degree possible.

Director General Zhao leaned against his chair when everyone left and sank into deep thought. After a while, he murmured softly, “Ying Hongyue...”

This guy loved to commit acts that neither benefited him nor others. What was the point of that?

Yuan Shuo, oh Yuan Shuo. This is your fault for creating trouble day in and day out, and not cleaning up after yourself. Look at the mess you've left behind, but meanwhile, you're off living your best life. You've probably gone off to dig up graves again.

.....

As winds of change rose in the outside world, countless people worried or were sent in a frenzy over Li Hao. As for the target of their attention—the trio did not have the best sources of information. They were completely oblivious despite possessing some transmission pendants. That level of information was not made public; it was shared only with some powerhouses.

Li Hao and the other two didn't receive any word. The young man had long thrown away the pendant he'd taken in the North Sea to prevent others from tracing his movements.

The trio was not thinking of the consequences of their actions, not even Hong Yitang. His thoughts were that it didn't matter, that not that many people knew about Li Hao's capabilities with the sword. He Yong wouldn't speak of it and non-martial masters didn't understand the martial master system. Those who'd cultivated to this level wouldn't carelessly share this kind of information. Light Sword's thoughts were focused on dark energy; jeopardizing her salvation was the last thing on her mind.

Li Hao sometimes considered that there might be undesired consequences from using his family treasure in this way, but as more people knew about the sword's capabilities, the less he cared. Sometimes, he wanted to go crazy for once and experience how it felt to be enemies with the entire world.

Such were the disadvantages of reading too many books. He liked to put himself in the shoes of the heroic biographies that he read, wanting to give things a try or act without caution for once. His heart was finding it difficult to come back down to earth after reading the War of Southern Jiang. Otherwise, he never would've shown himself to blatantly save Light Sword based on his previous character. If he didn't possess supreme assurance that he could eliminate everyone, he wouldn't do so even after Earthturner Sword took action.

Therefore, Li Hao wouldn't mind if he found out that he was suddenly the hottest topic in the world. Perhaps he might even sigh with appreciation that he would find himself in such circumstances one day!

No one else knew of the young man's thoughts, not even Hong Yitang next to him. Li Hao had a heart that was unwilling to be calm, to remain out of the spotlight. It agitated with a desire for action.

The trio currently hid in a small city that no one knew of. Li Hao was taking inventory of his battle spoils and also sending some dark energy to Light Sword. Of course, he didn't forget Hong Yitang. He told the man how much sword energy could be traded for what combination of mysterious power stones. Li Hao knew that Hong Yitang had claimed the storage ring of a metamorphosis expert and was attempting to empty him out the best that the young man could.

Metamorphosis was the strongest level of supernaturals in the world at the moment. They surely had a lot of treasures on hand!

Li Hao didn't intend to ask for too much—just half of his usual fee. Regular people wouldn't even have access to such treatment!

Hong Yitang was the height of speechlessness!

But he agreed after further thought. There was no helping it, Li Hao offered an exclusive good. Sword energy could strengthen the five organs and everyone wished for that outcome. Modern day martial masters and supernaturals all faced difficulties in this area.

Hong Yitang had one massive chunk of mysterious power stone left and Light Sword paying off her debt. He had some money to spare and could enjoy himself luxuriously for once.

When Light Sword saw his decision, she wanted nothing more than to empty her wallet as well! The two turned over almost everything they had to the vampiric young man. Apart from their personal swords, they itched to sell everything else to Li Hao in exchange for some sword energy.

And so, time passed for Li Hao in a haze of anguish and delight. He completely bypassed the turmoil in the outside world. It wasn't until the two powerhouses had completely transferred all of their riches to him and had nothing else to offer that he stopped supplying them with sword energy.

Hong Yitang was despondent! It was such a lovely feeling, but he'd sold even the last big chunk of mysterious power stone to the young man. He really had absolutely nothing to offer in payment.

Well, he had some treasures still, such as the Goldensky Lotus. But after repeated consideration, he decided to keep it to anchor his personal fortune. He couldn't have absolutely no treasure in his storage ring, that would be so humiliating!

If he was killed one day and his storage ring taken, his murderer would curse and laugh at Earthturner Sword! A premier martial master that could kill metamorphosis existences had an empty storage ring!

Meanwhile, Light Sword sighed plaintively. She'd absorbed a great deal of dark energy, her mustache had greatly receded and her Adam's apple had gone down quite a bit, but it still wasn't enough!

She wanted more energy, but Li Hao wouldn't supply it to her. It couldn't be helped, this was all that the Windchaser Boot was worth. The main reason was also that he'd consumed most of his mysterious power stones. Of course, his body, organs, and supernatural locks had grown much stronger as well. For the first time, it seemed that the lock of his heart might be saturated!

He'd absorbed nearly one hundred thousand cubes this time, a figure that made even Li Hao wince. It was too much!

It didn't seem like much when converted to mysterious power stones—just one hundred pieces. But Li Hao had absorbed the essence of their mysterious power, which put his consumption on an entirely different level. There was also a vast amount of waste that occurred in the process.

The trio didn't leave their hiding place until mid October and headed for White Moon City. A notification blinked in Li Hao's armor when they approached the city. Soldier Kong Jie has hailed you three hundred times...

The young man blinked. Are you crazy?? It's only been a few days, you called me once every hour, didn't you? I should block you. You never have anything good for me when you call me!

He'd yet to have a chance to call back when another notification came through from Kong Jie. This time, the inspector general was delighted!

"Fuck!" He finally connected to the kid. Li Hao was within five hundred kilometers of the capital city, but had dropped off the face of the world the past couple of days. Kong Jie would think that the kid had been assassinated if he still didn't show up or that Hong Yitang and the others had killed him for his riches!

.....

Kong Jie quickly relayed everything that had happened. Li Hao listened quietly.

"You need to come back to White Moon City as soon as possible and don't leave for the time being," Kong Jie concluded at the end. "The capital is still safe for the moment. As bold as those fellows are, they won't dare come to their deaths here."

"Okay, understood!" Li Hao didn't say much and had a calm expression on his face when he hung up. "I'm going back to White Moon City. Will you two be parting ways here or going to the city with me?"

"I'm going with you!" Light Sword immediately said. While she'd suppressed some light energy, it was far from enough, so she had to continue traveling with Li Hao.

“Whatever you wish.” The young man didn’t express an opinion. He wanted to make a trip to White Moon City and collect the rest of his fee first, then head to the ruins that contained the little tree. He’d promised the tree a large amount of benefits and the Demon Hunters were also there. There was no need to bring the other two with him, however, just in case that attracted unnecessary trouble.

Li Hao didn’t speak of what Kong Jie had said. As isolated as the other two were, they should know relatively quickly, so it didn’t matter if he brought it up or not. Not to mention, it’d been less than two days since word got out. Everyone knew that Earthturner Sword and the others were strong. No one would make a move unless they were completely prepared.

Ying Hongyue. You again.

Was life too good for this guy for him to be making trouble for Li Hao over and over again? The young man was no longer who he was. He’d seen far more of the world, his strength was great, and he was fully confident. Ying Hongyue’s little tricks could no longer scare him!

.....

Three humans and one dog made quick work of the five hundred kilometers to White Moon City. Li Hao took out the Divine Kun Ship and ferried them through the sky. They landed near the city in less than three hours. However, Hong Yitang didn’t seem inclined to head inside.

“Since you’re here, I’ll go back first...”

“Are you not going to visit Hong Qing?” Li Hao was going to bring everyone back from the ruins in a bit. Was Hong Yitang not even going to look in on his daughter?

“You can take care of her, I might not have time to in the days to come...”

“Of course, I’ll take care of everything, don’t worry!” Li Hao smiled.

Hong Yitang flicked a glance at him, his thoughts unknown.

“Martial Uncle Hong, I hear that you’re going to build a city?”

“Not a city...” Hong Yitang wanted to deny, but changed his answer. “I’m just expanding the Sword Sect.”

“Mmhmm, that’s nice.”

The two chatted for a while before Kong Jie flew out of the city. He inclined his head at the other two and turned gravely to Li Hao. “You’re finally back. I would’ve thought you were assassinated by someone if you still stayed out of sight...”

Li Hao chuckled and didn’t say anything. “I won’t die that easily. Inspector General Kong, I’ve brought back Light Sword. Where’s the rest of my stuff?”

“What stuff?”

“The terms for the mission. I only received a deposit. You guys still owe me an origin weapon and twenty thousand mysterious power stones.”

Kong Jie was speechless. Did this kid not care about his safety at all?

“I’ll give it to you tomorrow...”

“I want it now!”

Kong Jie was truly at a loss. “I don’t have that much at the moment, I need the provincial government and military to render aid...”

“Then go to them!”

“.....” Kong Jie furrowed his brows. What was this kid in such a hurry for? They wouldn’t shortchange him!

Chapter 568: Exchange (I)

Li Hao didn’t care about anything other than his pay. He still needed to visit the ruins and it wouldn’t do to show up without sufficient treasure.

Kong Jie cursed to himself and left without another word. Hong Yitang burst out laughing after the inspector general left. “You’ve got some nerve!”

Kong Jie was a premier heavyweight at the end of the day, but the little guy showed him no face at all! Li Hao was completely unfazed. When the Silver Moon authorities sent him on a rescue mission, they should’ve considered the fact that he might be exposed. He’d briefly considered it as well, but didn’t think too much of it.

No matter what, he accepted his pay with complete peace of mind. This was payment for a life! There was nothing to be embarrassed about for money that he’d risked his neck to earn. The authorities might not mention it if he didn’t demand to be paid, then ultimately forget about the second portion. There was no time to waste in pretending to be polite. Director General Zhao and the others would absolutely pay him while Earthturner Sword and Light Sword were both by his side.

Kong Jie reappeared after roughly ten minutes. He tossed a storage ring to Li Hao. “This is yours. Do you know that you’ve almost emptied out Silver Moon?”

There was no way that was true!

Thirty thousand mysterious power stones and three origin weapons were a lot, but for that to be the sum total of these guys' fortune? Li Hao would never believe it!

"Then I'll go fetch the Demon Hunters. You guys wait a moment for me. If you have other business, Martial Uncle Hong, then you can go."

"It'll be safer for you if Earthturner Sword stays at a time like this..." Kong Jie hastily protested.

Hong Yitang looked at Kong Jie, the latter quickly transmitted an explanation. Hong Yitang frowned and sharpened his look at Kong Jie, then looked at Li Hao. Ying Hongyue... seriously had too much time on his hands!

"Then I'll..."

"Martial uncle, you should go back to the Sword Sect!" Li Hao interrupted. "It may not be safe there. Once powerhouses sneak into Silver Moon, no place is adequately defended other than White Moon City. The sect is not safe if you are not present. The world knows how strong martial uncle is and may threaten you with it."

Hong Yitang hesitated. It was one thing to not know, but now that he knew... worries were beginning to creep in. And yet, tremendous trouble was coming for Li Hao.

"Don't worry, martial uncle. I'll stay at White Moon from now on," Li Hao continued. "As bold as those guys may be, they won't court death at the capital. Commander Yu, Director General Zhao, Inspector General Kong, Deputy Zhou, and Light Sword will all be at White Moon in the days to come. If anyone dares come, they'll be going to their deaths!"

"Then be careful." Hong Yitang nodded after some thought. "The Sword Sect may indeed be unsafe. Contact me anytime if you need me!"

"Alright!"

Hong Yitang no longer waffled. It was truly much safer at White Moon City. If he wasn't at the Sword Sect, however, the enemy might really steal a march on him! With that said, the man left without bidding farewell to Kong Jie.

The inspector general wanted to say something, but said nothing out of resignation. He actually wanted Hong Yitang to stay if possible. The man was very strong and the capital's defenses would spontaneously be raised to an extreme peak if he stayed. There were no faults that could be identified in Earthturner Sword's defenses.

What a pity that the Sword Sect was his territory.

Li Hao turned to leave as well. Light Sword wanted to follow him, but the young man deterred her. "You don't need to come with me, it's very close. I'll be back soon. Senior, you should chat with Inspector General Kong. He paid a lot for your rescue!"

Light Sword looked at Li Hao, then at Kong Jie. That was true, the official authorities did indeed spend a lot of resources to save her. No matter what, she needed to exchange some pleasantries with them.

Therefore, she stayed while Li Hao vanished on the spot with Panther.

.....

Li Hao's eyes sparkled after a while of flying. A light that was almost visible flashed out of his eyes and casually scanned the surroundings. He ultimately looked into the sky before quickly ducking his head with a slight frown.

Someone seemed to be following him and their presence felt a bit eye-searing, but they were keeping their distance. The young man couldn't make out who his pursuer was. Li Hao realized who it might be after a while—either Director General Zhao or Huang Yu. One of the two was keeping an eye on him, possibly for protection or for surveillance...

Li Hao didn't like it much, no matter what it was. Not to mention, he was about to visit the little tree. He didn't want their presence to elicit the tree's misunderstanding.

After some thought, he steered the Divine Kun Ship to the ground. The ship smashed a massive hole in the earth and continued its descent. Li Hao made use of the commotion to vanish from the vessel. Under his command, the origin treasure continued to make its way through the ground.

Huang Yu furrowed his brows from his position in the sky. What was the lad going beneath the ground for? A ruin? He knew that the Demon Hunters had gone to explore ruins, but wasn't aware of exactly which ruin it was. If Li Hao was descending here... was the ruin here?

Huang Yu watched silently instead of following the young man down. After a while, the giant ship settled belowground. When it remained unmoving for a while, the commander found it odd. Had something amiss occurred?

But he detected no energy ripples. Caught in contemplation, he chose to be quiet.

.....

Li Hao had long departed the area. The earth sword aura erupted when the Divine Kun Ship landed, creating a small tunnel beneath the ground. Skilled at subterfuge, the young man made use of the vessel's descent to depart. He would park the ship there for a while; Huang Yu could look after it.

This was Li Hao's first drill at avoiding pursuers in the dark. He wanted to try and see if he could escape from beneath their nose. He utilized the Windchaser Boot in his exercise, instantly clearing one thousand meters—this was the limit of many powerhouse's senses.

Using it three times in a row consumed a great deal of internal force, but it also propelled him three thousand meters beyond the Divine Kun Ship. When he took his bearings again, the young man couldn't sense that he was still being followed.

Good!

Not bad at all, the Windchaser Boot was worthy of his identity as a martial master. Combined with dark energy that concealed one's traces, it was truly impossible for ordinary people to detect anything.

After shaking off his follower, Li Hao made quick time and arrived at Mount Cat Head before long. A few flashes later brought him to the mountain cave. It'd been quite a few days since he left. Although the team had brought sufficient rations with them, they might be antsy after so long.

Li Hao jumped down the hole and felt a faint mental ripple before he landed.

"You seem to have obtained a nice weapon... and comprehended another path?" The little tree's welcoming ripple ended on a surprised note.

So fast!

Was it this era's people that possessed more potential or was the young human that strong? It'd only been a few days! The tree had thought Li Hao would require a few more opportunities with core origin before he succeeded.

Who knew that the young man would only require one trip in the outside world? It was a very short period of time for the tree, yet Li Hao had succeeded.

"I was just lucky!" Li Hao responded casually as he landed. The Demon Hunters were much more reassured to see that their leader had returned safe and sound.

"You're finally back!" Hao Lianchuan piped up. "It's been a few days. We were going to go out and find you if there was still no sign of you."

Li Hao smiled and was surprised when he looked at the man. “Peak Solar?”

That was fast!

When he looked at the others, he could see that many of the martial masters seemed to have grasped the aura, but their improvement wasn’t as obvious as the supernatural. Wang Ming hadn’t advanced for a very long period of time—he was an initial Solar now. Hu Hao, Li Meng, and Yun Yao all showed significant progress, particularly Li Meng. She had been a Plenilune before, now she was a Sunflare.

Li Hao had left behind some mysterious power stones when he left so that the little tree could release some energy for everyone to train in. It looked like the effects were wondrous.

“Training here is great for us supernaturals!” Hao Lianchuan laughed heartily. “We suffer too many latent injuries because mysterious power is too overbearing. Even though our injuries were greatly relieved by the energy you supplied before, mysterious power remains very tyrannical. Training here is a gentle, tender process that makes me feel that I’ve recovered some of my expended life force...”

“These people have consumed too much of their potential!” came a ripple from the little tree. “Especially this fatty, he’s depleted too much! The people of your time are very special. There seem to be some seals inside your body that contain your potential and protect your body. But these martial masters that walk the path of energy are a bit different... Life energy can recover some of their life force, but I can only emanate some life energy. I can’t help them fully recuperate.”

Li Hao understood! Supernaturals depleted too much potential. Under these circumstances, depleting potential was depleting life force. They would die, sooner or later!

Powerhouses of the ancient civilization could live for a very long time—a thousand years was no problem after they crafted their golden body. But whether it was modern day martial masters or supernaturals, none could do the same.

One could sense a thing or two from assessing their own life force. A martial master's mind intent was so strong that it wore away at the body. A supernatural's mysterious power was so tyrannical that it eroded vitality. That was why supernaturals cultivated so quickly and were so strong. At the same time, such abrupt eruption inevitably led to the loss of certain things, such as length of life.

Li Hao took out a wood origin weapon and ten thousand mysterious power stones, shifting them to the little tree's roots. "This is your payment!"

The little tree swayed with good spirits. Although the stones weren't worth much, having such a large sum of them was good. The origin weapon looked to have come from a plant spirit. It would be useful for the little tree. Though it'd severed off some core origin, that power wasn't very useful to it at the moment. It lacked energy more than core origin. Core origin was a matter that would be relevant only later. For now, it would recover if it possessed sufficient energy.

Li Hao suddenly flung out a lot of other items including the wind chime and boxing gloves. Eleven origin weapons clattered to the ground, not counting the one he'd just given the tree. Even the little tree was taken aback! Although none of them were high level, being presented with such a large sum of them was surprising nonetheless.

Chapter 569: Exchange (II)

"How much Water of Life can these be exchanged for?" Li Hao looked at the little tree. "Give me an exact figure."

The little tree seemed stuck in a daze. It took a while for its mental ripples to appear. "Are you sure... you want to give me all of this? These weapons should've been difficult to obtain and some of them are decent quality..."

Combined with the one it'd already been paid, it made for twelve origin weapons. Li Hao had consumed some in times past, but he'd collected an abundant amount of these items in recent times. He kept very few, only those with a special purpose like the Divine Kun Ship. The rest were of no use to him as he'd grasped the wood sword aura and wasn't particularly interested in the path of core origin.

He would rather obtain more Water of Life. It possessed a significant quality that made it more useful than sword energy—no matter how injured one was, even with a severed arm or leg, it could

regrow the missing limb. Li Hao had one such drop on hand, but that wasn't enough. He needed more!

"If I digest all of these divine weapons... I'll be able to gather more energy if they're from plant spirits, but less if they're from monster spirits. How about ten drops of life essence?"

Li Hao looked at the little sword. It'd previously said that one drop required ten thousand mysterious power stones. The value of origin weapons was difficult to estimate, but they should be more than ten thousand stones.

It depended on their rank. The Night Watchers in the central region wouldn't give up the Heavens Dictate even for one hundred thousand stones, much less ten thousand. But he could also hear a note of guilt in the plant's transmission. Plainly, eleven origin weapons could produce far more than ten drops. It must be keeping a lot of energy for itself!

But that was to be expected since the tree wished to recover.

"Fifteen drops!" Li Hao countered after some thought. "We're counting by drops, but I've read in the ancient books that the Human King even built a Lake of Life..."

"It's not the same frame of reference at all, don't think that much." The little tree swayed. You said it yourself, that was the Human King.

"Fifteen drops aren't too much, are they?"

"Very well!" agreed the little tree upon consideration. "But, do you really want to reduce all of these to energy?"

"Yes!" Li Hao responded decisively. "These items are just external objects. I have Stellaris and now a Windchaser Boot. I have no use for these things, but I lack a defensive item. The Black Tortoise in Battle Heaven suits my purposes, the rest isn't much to look at!"

“.....” The little tree didn’t respond, neither was Battle Heaven aware of Li Hao’s intent. Otherwise, the old turtle would be quite surprised. So you’ve got your eyes on me, little guy?

Li Hao’s thoughts were simple. One treasure for attack, one for defense, and one for escape. Three were enough. Stellaris, the Windchaser Boots, the Black Tortoise Seal or the Black Tortoise Shield were the ideal lineup of his heart. He didn’t care about the rest, even the Revolution King’s wind chime. If he did, he would’ve put it to use long ago.

The young man took out two more items—the bronze mirror he’d obtained from Qiao Feilong, one that could obscure the presence if worn on the body, and the long blade that he’d obtained after killing Sea Shark. The blade was of a very high caliber to not break after Stellaris hacked into it.

“Senior Tree, do you recognize these two weapons?”

The little tree gave the blade only a cursory look. “This is a weapon crafted in the late New Martial era. The quality is high and it is not made from plant or monster spirits. Sophisticated artistry forged it, it is a new innovation created from formidable skill! The blade is of good quality and a high rank.”

But that was all there was to it. Li Hao understood.

The tree then turned to the bronze mirror and answered after a long moment, “I’m... not sure what this is, but it is sealed. It might... be... an imitation of an ultimate treasure?”

It rifled through the old tree’s memories—there was a lot to scan before some names appeared in its heart. “The ultimate among mirror treasures back in the day was the Sky Gander, but it later shattered. It could peer into anything and everything! The second among mirror treasures was the Stable Sea Mirror, one that was crafted to imitate the Sky Gander. It could suppress the Forbidden Sea!

“However, there were those who said that the second was Sky Inquiry Mirror. That treasure could capture a snapshot of every being’s vitality and create a ranking of life force on a stone obelisk.

That also turned into a ranking of powerhouses...” The little tree hesitated. “Your mirror... may be an imitation of these treasures. Of course, nearly all of them originate from Sky Gander, but the specifics won’t be known unless it is unsealed.”

“How should we unseal it?” Li Hao thought of another weapon, the sword that’d been turned over to the Night Watchers. Hou Xiaochen might’ve taken it with him. He rarely saw sealed ancient weapons. Other than the bronze mirror and the weapons of the eight families, the mirror was the only instance.

“Treasures hide themselves when it’s been too long since their last usage. They will naturally seal themselves away and sometimes, you don’t need to purposefully unseal them. You just need to use them for a long period of time and use energy to nourish them. They will unseal of their own accord when sufficient time has passed.”

Li Hao understood. Just say that you don’t know and can only wear away at it bit by bit! He was much more at ease after confirming that the bronze mirror was something valuable.

The little tree didn’t say anything. A wood origin weapon shattered beneath its roots. A weapon soul seemed to appear, but it instantly dissipated.

“Senior Tree, these weapon souls...”

“They’re the spirits of plant or monster spirits. It’s good that they break, it’s a kind of release for them. These weapons fell out of use long ago. To think that so many would be left behind... Perhaps the latest technology was taken away to be used in the battlefield, leaving behind these old reserves.”

The new creations were rarely seen—such as the blade that Li Hao had obtained. But as he thought about it, perhaps the armor was also a new kind of equipment. Origin weapons were possibly scattered about outside, used by cultivators not of the ancient system and thus easier for others to obtain them.

Origin weapon upon origin weapon broke, emitting howls and roars of beasts or other oddities before the little tree's began glowing more vibrantly. Aura—or rather, mental strength—surged and grew bigger.

Li Hao furrowed his brows, but held himself back with effort. The Demon Hunters were around him and he'd made his choice. He could only passively wait for the results now. Once the little tree recovered its strength, it would be much stronger than before. Sometimes, one just had to put everything on the line!

There were countless people keeping an eye on him from outside. They all wanted to kill and dissect him, so Li Hao would have to make a large gamble!

One weapon, two, three... Origin weapons crumbled away on the ground, as did mysterious power stones. The little tree grew much taller. It was only the height of a person before, a sapling compared to the tree that'd collapsed by the side. It was now almost six meters tall and a crystalline energy circulated rapidly through its trunk.

Li Hao could clearly sense that the ruins had grown a little bigger, that the darkness in the surroundings had receded somewhat. The little tree seemed to be expanding its territory.

All of the mysterious power stones crumbled after a while and the origin weapons disappeared. An indistinct face formed on the tree's trunk. Only the outline could be seen, not its features. Another surge of mental strength washed over Li Hao, "You're very bold."

Truly!

"We both benefit," Li Hao said calmly. "No one will help the senior like this if you kill me! You have already seen the benefits of working with me. I dare say that no one, perhaps the various major factions can, but not a single person is able to collect all of the treasures that I have in a few short days. There are even fewer people who are willing to let the senior absorb them!"

“I have enemies all over the world and everyone wishes to kill me. I want to kill them too, so people like me find it easiest to obtain treasure!”

Enemies all over the world!

The little tree shook slightly upon hearing these words, finding it strange that geniuses of this age like to make enemies. All of the powerhouses of this era seemed to have enemies throughout the land.

But it made sense upon further thought. The process naturally stepped on many toes and affected their profits. On the other hand, these people were the best resources for the growth and development of these geniuses.

“You are right... and I can coalesce life essence for you...” Energy surged within the little tree as a peculiar ripple of life emanated from itself. As it spread through the premises, Li Hao and the rest felt like they’d been washed clean.

The little tree hadn’t gone back on its word because Li Hao was right. If it coveted today’s gains and refused to give Water of Life to Li Hao, then there would not be a next time. There was no need to lose sight of the bigger picture for small gains at hand. Condensing fifteen drops wasn’t much. Truth be told, it was keeping at least seventy percent of the energy from the origin weapons!

If it could only just manage to rebuff Li Hao before, the little tree was much stronger now. Drops of Water of Life floated toward the young man after a while.

“This item cannot be stored in ordinary containers. It’s best to use energy crystals to keep it...”

“What’s that?”

“The shards of the mysterious power stones that you speak of. Just craft them into a flask...”

Li Hao summoned a handful of shards to his hand, as well as the ferocious tiger of his heart. Fire blazed and melted the fragments, forming a large jug.

“.....” The little tree was dumbfounded. I’m only giving you fifteen drops, a flask will do! What did you make a jug for?

Li Hao’s thoughts had traveled ahead. It was fifteen drops now—the one on him made for sixteen. There would only be more of these things to come. Take mysterious power for instance. One cube was precious to him before, but now he couldn’t be bothered with extracting anything from a Nova. The same went for mysterious power stones...

What was special about Water of Life, in that case? He’d be better off obtaining some nice things for the little tree to absorb energy and produce more Water of Life. Therefore, he should save himself future effort and just create a large container this time. He would fill it sooner or later!

Li Hao wanted to try what it felt like to bathe with Water of Life.

Chapter 570: Walking Out of Silver Moon (I)

Fifteen drops of Water of Life landed in the jug. They rolled around like crystal droplets in the container, particularly beautiful when they caught the light.

Li Hao smiled. Sixteen drops! Each droplet could save a life. Light Sword had recovered greatly with one drop, even when she was so gravely injured. All wounds might fully recover unless the supernatural locks were completely broken!

What did this mean?

It meant that he had sixteen chances to save lives. This was an absolute lifesaver!

People outside want to kill me? It’s more like I want to kill them! I’ll kill whoever tries to kill me!

“Senior, I repeat what I said before. Are you willing to leave with me?”

“I cannot.”

Li Hao was disappointed, but said nothing else.

“Then rest well, senior, I’m leaving now.” He would drop the matter since the little tree wasn’t willing.

It seemed to be looking at Li Hao and sent a thought ripple after a while, “I’ll gift you one core origin talisman—it’s the same as before, but it’ll be stronger because I’ve recovered some strength. However, I have one request...”

Stronger? The one before could kill a mid or late Nova, so how much stronger was this one?

“What is your request, senior? How strong is the talisman?”

“It’s difficult for me to judge the strength of your powerhouses. If they are only a bit stronger than you, then you will be able to kill them! As for my request, it’s very simple. I need large sums of energy, a lot a lot of energy. If you obtain energy in the future, you can trade it with me for life essence. If you meet other people or plant spirits... Remember that I was the first to partner with you...”

What did it mean by that?

“Does senior mean that... there might be other existences surviving from the ancient times?”
Inspiration struck Li Hao.

“I don’t know about the human race, but plant spirits... live long lives. They might be like me and regrow from their father’s roots even if they wither.”

“I understand, my first choice is naturally you, senior!” Li Hao understood.

“That’s good! The one in Battle Heaven is too strong. The energy that you’ve supplied to me is not enough to resurrect even one of his roots. Therefore, there’s no need to go to him.”

Li Hao finally truly understood! So you’re afraid that I’ll focus my efforts on General Pagoda? The young man nodded without saying much more.

The little tree truly invested a great deal and coalesced another crystalline root, sending it floating toward Li Hao. “Try not to use this if possible because it is condensed from core origin. I am unaware if current martial dao can tolerate it, nor do I know what the consequences might be from using it.

“I also do not know if there is an overlord of this world. If there is none, you can naturally do whatever you like. But if there is, they might be an enemy unless they are a heavyweight of New Martial. The particulars are unknown, so use it with care!”

A great deal of information was contained in those words. Li Hao was moved, but nodded without saying anything. He put away the crystalline root—this was likely his most fatal trump card. I wonder if this is more powerful, or the bomb that the Near River director general threw out before? That thing had even left Hong Yitang with a face full of dust.

Could the root be used against experts in metamorphosis? The little tree’s previous level of strength had been mid to late Nova. It was difficult to say if it could handle experts in metamorphosis. This was just a coalescence of core origin, after all, not the little tree itself.

But no matter what, having it tucked away in his pocket was better than not having it.

“Let’s go back.” Li Hao looked at the Demon Hunters. “We’ve all had some gains this time. I hope that all of you will make it to Dominator soon!”

If they continued to dither at the Sunderer level, the Demon Hunters would start to be less useful to Li Hao. Only when they were Dominators could they swiftly improve again, due to having strong organs. That was when they would be most helpful to the young man.

The group committed the exhortation to memory and quickly jumped out of the ruins. When they were gone, the tree was momentarily quiet before the hole vanished. It chose to seal off the area since that person wouldn’t come again for a while.

It swayed as it looked at the palace in the near distance. Would this discarded palace... stand to see the return of its master? Perhaps... not!

Did its father’s persistence have meaning?

The thoughts dispersed after a while. I am a tree. Since my roots are here, then let me be rooted here.

.....

In the wilderness.

The inert Divine Kun Ship suddenly vanished and broke through the air. Up in the sky, Huang Yu blinked and quickly gave chase.

A group of people appeared in the distance. Li Hao didn’t look at anyone and directed his people into the ship as soon as it landed. They were a ways from Mount Cat Head—the commander may not find the ruins even if he was given a direction to search in.

The ship hovered in the air again and vanished on the spot. Huang Yu's eyes darted forward, tracking it in the direction it disappeared in. Had the young man discovered him, or was he purposefully setting up smoke and mirrors to prevent the enemy from ambushing him?

No matter what, Li Hao had some skill up his sleeves to disappear beneath his nose.

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Within the ship, the hold.

No one spoke, but Li Hao's voice echoed within the armor. "Trouble has come for me. Many in Skystar Dynasty these days want to kill me. I won't be sitting still to wait for death. I'd wanted to stay in Silver Moon for a while longer, but attracting too many powerhouses is not good for the province. I have no intention to harm anyone, but people want to kill me. Therefore, I'm going to leave!"

"Leader, we're coming with you!" Voices shouted in the channel, everyone vying to stay with their leader.

"Too weak!" Two words from Li Hao silenced the clamor.

Too weak!

They knew they were too weak. Apart from Liu Long and the supernaturals among them, Li Heng was the only lucky one to barely make it to Dominator. Of the rest... There were a few half step Dominators, but this level of strength was far from enough!

So far from enough!

“I killed some people on an earlier trip out,” Li Hao said. “Some late Novas, even some peak Novas. I killed the son of the Steadfast Duke, a general of the Steppe Prince, the younger brother of the lord of Buddha Mountain, and a duke of the greatest pirate faction in the North Sea...”

“I’ve finished offending all of the three great organizations and most of the divine mountains,” chuckled the young man. “There may be those in Silver Moon who are still willing to shelter me after all that, but why should I allow them to do that? I would owe favors left and right with the amount of trouble I’m bringing to the province. I hate owing favors!

“It would be a sin if I attracted large numbers of powerhouses to attack Silver Moon and cause general misery. I don’t have much tying me to the world—I’ll live much the same even after leaving Silver Moon. Some of you guys... I can’t even put a name to the face. This is good. I might grow attached to you as time goes on and won’t want to leave you.”

Let’s just leave at that! He was prepared to leave the Demon Hunters behind in Silver Moon. Their future wouldn’t be too bad in the province. They would be powerhouses sooner or later if they crossed the Dominator threshold. At that time, their strengthened organs would help them understand what they’d gained from Li Hao.

The entire ship’s hold and the communication channel within the suits of armor were eerily silent.

“Leader...” Li Heng raised. “I’m a Dominator!”

He was a Dominator! After his advancement, he could sense that he was still swiftly improving. His progress was even faster than when he was a Sunderer! With his strengthened organs, he could even begin walking the path to Summoner of Spirit.

Even if he only had one spirit, he would still rival a Solar once he broke through.

“Mmhm.” Li Hao nodded. Not bad. But... so what if he managed to make it to Summoner?

“The director took the Silver Moon Guards with him when he left, why don’t you take us with you?” The group looked at Li Hao, who looked back at them. Did they want to join him purely out of loyalty?

Not necessarily!

They hadn’t spent that much time together. Perhaps it was out of respect or worship, or perhaps they simply didn’t want to pass up the opportunity. No matter what it was, they all demonstrated a willingness to follow Li Hao out of the province, even if the path ahead was difficult.

Was this not the life that a martial master should lead?

“Leader, our Ten Rings Mountain Seal Formation is very strong. If all of us work together with a Dominator as a core, we’ll be able to kill Solars even if we can’t measure up to Novas. I’m sure that many of us will quickly become Dominators as well. By then, we’ll rival Novas. Even if we can’t kill enemies for you, we’ll be able to hold them back for a while...”

“You should stay!” Li Hao declared after some thought. “Settle in for a bit. Everyone’s progressed very quickly during this period of time and hasn’t had time to digest your gains. Stay in Silver Moon, exterminate some of the minor pirates, and also kill the three great organizations!

“I hope that everyone is a Dominator when I return. If you think there’s no motivation to be found in Silver Moon, then you can head to the three northern provinces. There’s a war there and I saw supernaturals and martial masters fighting each other on my way back...”

Li Hao made up his mind when Kong Jie told him that there were people coming for his head. He’d held the same thoughts when Hou Xiaochen left, but he hadn’t been resolute enough then. His decision had been decided for him when Kong Jie explained that people throughout the world wanted to kill him. The time had come to leave Silver Moon. There were many secrets buried here, but many things were not issues that he could resolve now.

This was not something he could take over. Whether it was Battle Heaven, the Martial University constructed by the eight families, the other seven families, the land of inheritance behind the stone door, the diagram of the eight trigrams in the sky, the palace, Human King, Star Gate...

Too many secrets were hidden here, sealed with the disappearance of the ancient civilization.

He would be back.

The tiny place of Silver City was where he'd grown up. His friend was buried there, and while his parents' grave had been dug up, that was still his home. However, it was time for him to leave now.

Those in charge had their secrets and their responsibilities. He didn't know what they were thinking, but since they were hiding something, that meant there were enemies that could not be fathomed or overcome. He was not of the mindset to force them to give up their secrets, to reveal their strength or expose their trump cards for him.

Favors were the hardest to repay.